

CYPRESS POINT PROJECT AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 CHANGES SINCE LAST VERSION

This version of the Aesthetics and Visual Resources report provides updates to the April 2019 version in order to include changes to the project made by Mid-Pen in response to comments from community members. These changes include:

- Increasing the minimum setback of buildings from the property line to 20 feet;
- Reducing the maximum height of all buildings to 28 feet;
- Increasing the number of parking spaces from 1.8 to 2.0 spaces per unit; and
- Re-routing the pedestrian path providing access to Sierra Street.

Other minor changes to the text have been made to correct errors and improve readability. None of these changes resulted in any changes to impact conclusions or mitigation measures.

1.2 INTRODUCTION

This report addresses the potential impacts of the proposed Cypress Point project on the visual resources of the project site and adjacent areas, including the existing visual character of the project site and the visibility of the project site from offsite viewpoints. This assessment evaluates the potential visual quality impacts associated with implementing the project, including impacts to scenic resources, views, visual character, and light and glare.

Following this introduction is a section providing background information on visual resources. Next is a section describing the visual resources of the project site and its surroundings. This is followed by a description of local policies with respect to visual resources, the methods used to analyze the impacts of the proposed project on visual resources, and an assessment of the impacts of the proposed project on visual resources, including mitigation recommended for any significant impacts.

1.3 BACKGROUND

This section defines key terms used in assessing impacts on aesthetics and visual resources.

Aesthetics refers to visual resources and the quality of what can be seen. It also refers to the overall visual perception of the environment, and may include such characteristics as building height and mass, development density, design character, and landscaping. View analysis

evaluates visual access to, and obstruction of, prominent visual features, including both specific visual landmarks and panoramic vistas.

Viewsheds are defined as the visual qualities of a geographical area including the horizon, topography, and other natural features that give an area its visual boundary and context. It may also include development that has become a prominent visual component of the area. Viewshed impacts are typically characterized by the loss and/or obstruction of existing scenic vistas or other major views in the area of the site.

Light and glare impacts are analyzed by evaluating the effects of the proposed project on neighboring properties related to nighttime light conditions and daytime glare created by exterior building materials.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

2.1 LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

The subject area consists of approximately 10.88 acres of land off near the northeast corner of Carlos and Sierra streets in Moss Beach, County of San Mateo (see Figures 1 and 2). The elevation of the project site ranges from approximately 80 to 190 feet above mean sea level (MSL).

2.2 PROPOSED PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

Implementation of the proposed Cypress Point project would include the construction of 71 affordable housing units consisting of 18 two-story buildings containing 2-16 units each. The heights of the residential buildings would not exceed 28 feet, measured as the vertical distance from any point on the finished grade to the topmost point of the building directly above with a simple traditional roof shape and slope (4:12¹). The project would also include a single building housing a general office, manager's office, community room, kitchen, computer room, laundry, and maintenance and storage areas. The project plan (see Figure 3) also includes several outdoor amenities, including: landscaping; a community garden; a children's play area; an upper and a lower green; BBQ areas; and a public walking trail. The site would be graded to develop building pads at elevations from 187 feet MSL for the buildings nearest the easterly site boundary to 158 feet for buildings nearest Carlos Street. Approximately one-half of the site would be developed, and the remainder would remain undeveloped.

Much of the existing vegetation on the project site, especially along its perimeters would remain undisturbed by the proposed project. Areas within the interior of the site that would be cleared during site grading and construction would be revegetated as shown in Figure 4.

¹ A small number of buildings will have a 5 1/2":12" slope, and the community building will have a roof with slope 6:12.

3. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

3.1.1 REGIONAL VISUAL CHARACTER

The general topography of the San Mateo County area is characterized by northwest trending mountain ranges and intervening valleys. Seventy-four percent of County land, primarily in the area west of Interstate (I-280), is in agricultural, watershed, open space, wetlands or parks use. The Pacific Ocean, sea cliffs and beaches, abundant natural resources, rolling green foothills, stands of old redwoods, and creeks characterize western San Mateo County, providing many areas with high visual quality.

Western San Mateo County is primarily accessed by State Route 1 (Highway 1), which follows the Pacific coast through much of California. Along the San Mateo County coastline, Highway 1 (Cabrillo Highway) is a well-known, highly recognized county designated scenic corridor, and Highway 1 north of Half Moon Bay (including in the project vicinity) is eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway by Caltrans. South of Half Moon Bay, Highway 1 is a state designated scenic highway (California Department of Transportation 2018). The westerly 1/3 of the project site is located within the Cabrillo Highway County Scenic Corridor (Figure 5).



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Base Map Source: ESRI, 2017
 Map Date: July 2020

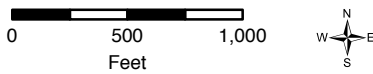


Figure 1
Project Location
 San Mateo County, CA



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Aerial Source: NAIP (2016)
Map Date: July 2020

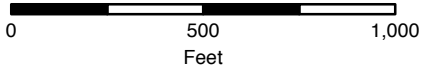
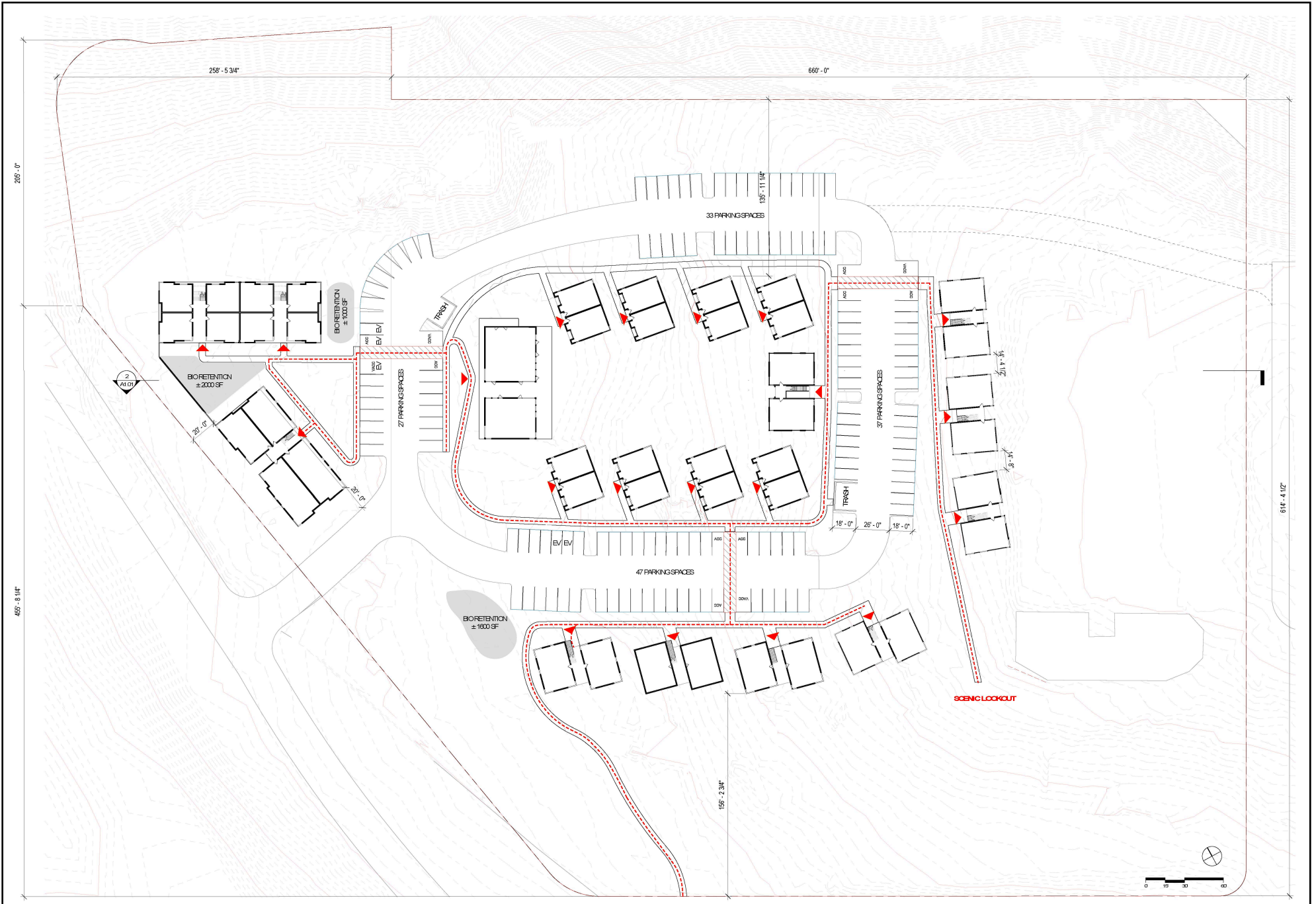


Figure 2
Project Vicinity
San Mateo County, CA



Source = MidPen Housing Corporation and Pyatok Architects, July 2020



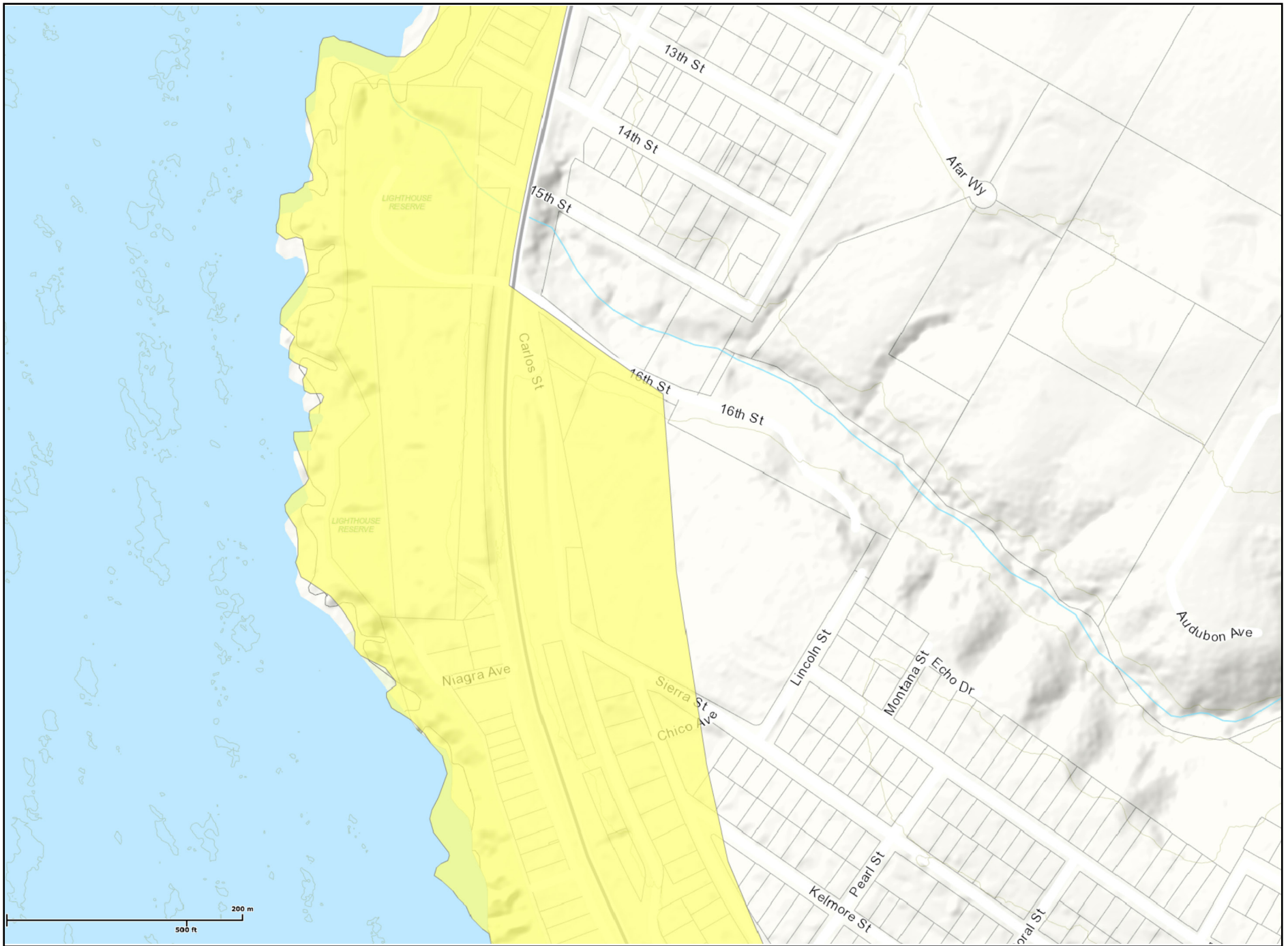
Figure 3
Cypress Point Proposed Site Plan
 San Mateo County, CA



Source = Midpen Housing Corporation and Joni L. Janecki & Associates, July 2020



Figure 4
Cypress Point Proposed Landscape Plan
 San Mateo County, CA



Source = San Mateo County GIS, July 2020



San Mateo County Coastal Scenic Corridor in the Project Vicinity
San Mateo County, CA

Figure 5

According to the San Mateo County General Plan, the project site is located in the Montara-Moss Beach El Granada community plan area (CPA). The CPA extends along the Pacific Coast from Martini Creek, at the base of Montara Mountain, to the northern city limits of Half Moon Bay. The CPA is characterized by a series of streams and arroyos, the Pacific Ocean, eucalyptus and cypress trees, as well as the Montara Mountains. The CPA includes the communities of Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, and Princeton by the Sea.

3.1.2 LOCAL VISUAL CHARACTER IN THE VICINITY OF THE PROJECT SITE

The site is adjacent to an existing residential neighborhood, with single-family houses located to the east and south of the site. To the north is a steeply-sloped wooded area leading to the ravine containing Montara Creek, and to the west, across Carlos Street, is a steep slope down to Highway 1. The Highway 1 corridor in the project vicinity is characterized by extensive evergreen vegetation and a substantial change in grade between the highway and the project site. See Figures 6a through 6c. Additional potential locations of sensitive viewers to the west include hikers on the California Coastal Trail and recreationists within the James V. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. Together, vegetation and topography act to shield the project site from the view of travelers on Highway 1 and from views from west of Highway 1.

Beyond the wooded area to the north of the site are a few rural homes, and then another wooded area that separates this area from the developed community of Montara further to the north. Other than several rural residences, the ravine containing Montara Creek is undeveloped to the north and east of the site.

The site is nominally delineated by Carlos Street on the west, the Montara Creek canyon and 16th Street on the north, Lincoln Street on the east, and Sierra Street on the south. Except for a single residence at the northeast corner of Carlos Street and Sierra Street, there are no developed uses immediately adjacent to Carlos Street in the project vicinity (see Figures 7a and 7b). The Highway 1 corridor is located approximately 150 feet to the west of Carlos Street. Developed uses north of the project site include 16th Street and several rural, large lot single-family residences. Sixteenth Street and the several residences are located at a substantially lower elevation within the canyon than the area of the Cypress Point project site to be developed, and dense vegetation between the project site and 16th Street provides additional visual screening of the site (see Figures 8a and 8b). Several residences are located to the east of Lincoln Street and at the base of Buena Vista Street, east of the project site. These residences are located at approximately the same elevation as the site's eastern boundary (see Figures 9a and 9b). Several residences with views of the project site are located south of Sierra Street (see Figures 10a and 10b). Additional residences with potential views of the site are located along the north and south sides of Sierra Street from the eastern project boundary to its intersection with Pearl Street, and along Buena Vista Street from Lincoln Street to slightly east of Montana Street. For most of the identified residences on Sierra Street and Buena Vista Street, views of the site would be interrupted by intervening residences and vegetation.



Figure 6a: Highway 1 & Carlos St.



Figure 6b: Highway 1



Figure 6c: Highway 1



View Context Key



Figure 7a: Highway 1 & Carlos St.



Figure 7b: Carlos St.



View Context Key



Figure 8a: 16th St.



Figure 8b: 16th St.



View Context Key



Figure 9a: Lincoln St.



Figure 9b: Lincoln St.



View Context Key



Figure 10a: Sierra St. Looking Southwest



Figure 10b: Sierra St. Looking Southeast



View Context Key

Existing screening vegetation characterized by shrubs and trees is present on the site along its Carlos Street frontage, and along the slope down the Montara Creek canyon. Additional screening vegetation is present along and within the eastern area of the site west of Lincoln Street, and intermittently along the Sierra Street frontage.

Changes in grade and vegetation between the project site and residences along its Sierra Street frontage hinder direct views of the site, and these views are further impaired by intermittent vegetation.

3.1.3 EXISTING VISUAL RESOURCES OF THE PROJECT SITE

The project site slopes up gently to moderately to the east/northeast with the exception of a north-facing slope along the northern side of the site, which slopes moderately down to the Montara Creek canyon, and some localized flat areas near the center and eastern portions of the site. The site is currently vegetated with a variety of native and non-native grasses, plants, shrubs, and trees. Perimeter vegetation on the site ranges from very dense trees and shrubs (north and west) to scattered shrubs and trees (east and south).

The site has been altered from its natural state by its previous development as a military facility during World War II. The foundations for buildings from that era are present on the site. Two existing water tanks maintained by the Montara Water and Sanitary District are within the boundaries of the project property, but are not a part of the proposed Cypress Point project

3.1.4 SCENIC VISTAS

The San Mateo County General Plan and the San Mateo County Local Coastal Program (LCP) do not define or identify scenic vistas. However, in general, a “scenic vista” is typically considered an aesthetically-pleasing view, as seen through an opening or passageway. The General Plan does not include a description or list of vantage points within the County from which vistas are considered “scenic.” Given the many steep-trending hillsides, hilltops, knolls, and ridgelines in the County, a multitude of potential “scenic vistas” are available throughout the region. However, at several vantage points in the project vicinity, various surrounding topographic characteristics partially obstruct these vistas.

The project is located in a hilly area, the top portion of which provides vistas encompassing the ravine containing Montara Creek, and the forested hills and ridgelines of the Montara Mountains towards the east, and the Pacific Ocean towards the west. Many of the residences east and south of the site along Lincoln and Sierra Streets are oriented to the Pacific Ocean and feature decks and large windows to capture the view of the ocean.

3.1.5 SCENIC RESOURCES

In general, per the CEQA Guidelines for Aesthetics as modified by San Mateo County, scenic resources are thought of as objects, natural or manmade, that are aesthetically pleasing to view (i.e., trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway). There are no rock outcroppings or historical structures located within or adjacent to the project site.

According to the San Mateo County General Plan, visual resources are defined as: “those attractive visible elements of the natural and developed landscape, such as landforms, vegetative forms, water bodies, structures, and communities.” Additionally, scenic corridors are defined as: “land adjacent to a scenic road right-of-way which, when seen from the road, provides outstanding views of natural landscapes and attractive man-made development.” As further defined by the General Plan, a scenic roadway is: “a designated travel route providing outstanding views of natural landscapes and attractive man-made development.” The General Plan has designated several “scenic” roadways within the County.

Highway 1 is a County-designated scenic highway from Junipero Serra Freeway (SR 280) to the northern limits of the City of Half Moon Bay) and is located within the Cabrillo Highway County Scenic Corridor. The portion of Highway 1 adjacent to the project site is not a State-designated scenic roadway, but is eligible for such designation (California Department of Transportation 2018).

3.1.6 OPEN SPACE

Open space, as defined by Government Code Section 65560, is any parcel or area of land or water that is essentially unimproved and devoted to an open-space usage and designated in a local, regional or state open-space plan for preservation of natural resources, managed production of resources, outdoor recreation, or public health and safety. The General Plan establishes the uses that may be allowed on land with a General Open Space designation. Uses are limited to resource management and production, recreation and limited residential or service.

The project site is designated for residential development in the San Mateo County General Plan, the Local Coastal Plan, and through its zoning designation. Neither the project site nor any adjacent areas are formally designated as open space.

3.1.7 RIDGELINES AND SKYLINES

The General Plan defines ridgelines as: “the tops of hills or hillocks normally viewed against a background of other hills.” Meanwhile, skylines are defined as: “the line where sky and land masses meet.” Views to the east from portions of the project site include both ridgelines and skylines, but views from most of the site do not include these features, due to the presence of slopes and vegetation. The project site is lower in elevation when viewed from Lincoln Street, and would not appear as a ridgeline or skyline to residences along Sierra Street south and east of the of the project. For viewers south of the project on Sierra Street, the project site would appear at a higher elevation, but though higher in elevation the site would not qualify as either a ridgeline or skyline.

3.1.8 LIGHT AND GLARE

“Light spill” is typically defined as the exposure of properties adjacent to a project site to unwanted and/or misdirected light from project-related illumination. Light spill can emanate from the interior of structures through windows or from exterior sources, such as street lighting, security lighting, and landscape lighting.

Perceived glare is an unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation experienced by a person when looking directly into the light source of a lighting fixture, or from sunlight reflection off of flat building surfaces, with glass typically having the highest degree of reflectivity.

The only existing sources of light and glare on the proposed project site are lights associated with the Montara Water and Sanitary District storage tanks, as the remainder of the site is currently undeveloped. Existing development is located to the southeast, south, and southwest of the project site, which does produce some light at night. Other sources of light or glare within the vicinity of the project site are from the headlights or windshields of vehicles on adjacent roads.

4. REGULATORY SETTING

4.1 CALIFORNIA COASTAL ACT

Article 6: Development, Section 30251 of the California Coastal Act states that:

The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas such as those designated in the California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation and by local government shall be subordinate to the character of its setting.

4.2 SAN MATEO COUNTY LOCAL COASTAL PROGRAM

The San Mateo County Local Coast Program (San Mateo County Planning and Building Department 2013) is the vehicle by which the County of San Mateo assumes responsibility for implementing the State Coastal Act. In late 1980, the County Board of Supervisors and the California Coastal Commission approved the San Mateo County LCP, and in April 1981, the County assumed responsibility for implementing the State Coastal Act in the unincorporated area of San Mateo County, including issuance of Coastal Development Permits.

The policies contained in the Local Coastal Program that have a bearing on visual resources are presented below.

4.2.1 HOUSING COMPONENT

Policy 3.15 (d(3)) Comply with Structural and Community Features

Development must comply with all of the regulations established for Structural and Community Features (Urban), as established in the Visual Resources Component.

4.2.2 VISUAL RESOURCES COMPONENT - NATURAL FEATURES - LANDFORMS

Policy 8.5 Location of Development

On rural lands and urban parcels larger than 20,000 sq. ft.:

- a. Require that new development be located on a portion of a parcel where the development: (1) is least visible from State and County Scenic Roads; (2) is least likely to significantly impact views from public viewpoints; and (3) is consistent with all other LCP requirements, best preserves the visual and open space qualities of the parcel overall. Where conflicts in complying with this requirement occur, resolve them in a manner which, on balance, most protects significant coastal resources on the parcel, consistent with Coastal Act Section 30007.5. Public viewpoints include, but are not limited to, coastal roads, roadside rests and vista points, recreation areas, trails, coastal accessways, and beaches.

This provision does not apply to enlargement of existing structures, provided that the size of the structure after enlargement does not exceed 150% of the pre-existing floor area, or 2,000 sq. ft., whichever is greater. This provision does not apply to agricultural development to the extent that application of the provision would impair any agricultural use or operation on the parcel. In such cases, agricultural development shall use appropriate building materials, colors, landscaping and screening to eliminate or minimize the visual impact of the development.

- b. Require, including by clustering if necessary, that new parcels have building sites that are not visible from State and County Scenic Roads and will not significantly impact views from other public viewpoints. If the entire property being subdivided is visible from State and County Scenic Roads or other public viewpoints, then require that new parcels have building sites that minimize visibility from those roads and other public viewpoints.

Policy 8.6 Streams, Wetlands, and Estuaries

- a. Set back development from the edge of streams and other natural waterways a sufficient distance to preserve the visual character of the waterway.
- b. Prohibit structural development which will adversely affect the visual quality of perennial streams and associated riparian habitat, except for those permitted by Sensitive Habitats Component Policies.

- c. Retain the open natural visual appearance of estuaries and their surrounding beaches.
- d. Retain wetlands intact except for public accessways designed to respect the visual and ecological fragility of the area and adjacent land.

Policy 8.9 Trees (Natural Features-Vegetative Forms)

- a. Locate and design new development to minimize tree removal.
- b. Employ the regulations of the Significant Tree Ordinance to protect significant trees (38 inches or more in circumference) which are located in urban areas zoned Design Review (DR).
- c. Employ the regulations of the Heritage Tree Ordinance to protect unique trees which meet specific size and locational requirements.
- d. Protect trees specifically selected for their visual prominence and their important scenic or scientific qualities.
- e. Prohibit the removal of trees in scenic corridors except by selective harvesting which protects the existing visual resource from harmful impacts or by other cutting methods necessary for development approved in compliance with LCP policies and for opening up the display of important views from public places, i.e., vista points, roadways, trails, etc.
- f. Prohibit the removal of living trees in the Coastal Zone with a trunk circumference of more than 55 inches measured 4 1/2 feet above the average surface of the ground, except as may be permitted for development under the regulations of the LCP, or permitted under the Timber Harvesting Ordinance, or for reason of danger to life or property.
- g. Allow the removal of trees which are a threat to public health, safety, and welfare.

Policy 8.10 Vegetative Cover (with the exception of crops grown for commercial purposes)

Replace vegetation removed during construction with plant materials (trees, shrubs, ground cover) which are compatible with surrounding vegetation and is suitable to the climate, soil, and ecological characteristics of the area.

Policy 8.12 General Regulations

- a. Apply the Design Review (DR) Zoning District to urban areas of the Coastal Zone
 - (2) For all other development (*other than one or two-family dwellings*), apply the design standards contained in Section 6565.17 and the design criteria set forth in the Community Design Manual.
- b. Locate and design new development and landscaping so that ocean views are not blocked from public viewing points such as public roads and publicly-owned lands.

Policy 8.13 Special Design Guidelines for Coastal Communities

- a. Montara-Moss Beach-El Granada-Miramar
 - (1) Design structures that fit the topography of the site and do not require extensive cutting, grading, or filling for construction.
 - (2) Employ the use of natural materials and colors that blend with the vegetative cover of the site.
 - (3) Use pitched roofs that are surfaced with non-reflective materials except for the employment of solar energy devices. The limited use of flat roofs may be allowed if necessary to reduce view impacts or to accommodate varying architectural styles that are compatible with the character of the surrounding area.
 - (4) Design structures that are in scale with the character of their setting and blend rather than dominate or distract from the overall view of the urban landscape.
 - (5) To the extent feasible, design development to minimize the blocking of views to or along the ocean shoreline from Highway 1 and other public viewpoints between Highway 1 and the sea. Public viewpoints include coastal roads, roadside rests and vista points, recreation areas, trails, coastal accessways, and beaches. This provision shall not apply in areas west of Denniston Creek zoned either Coastside Commercial Recreation or Waterfront.

Consistency Assessment: Final designs for the proposed project are not required at this stage of project approval, but such designs will be provided when MidPen applies for a Coastal Development Permit. However, as noted above, the proposed project would not block any views of the ocean from public viewpoints between Highway 1 and the sea.

Policy 8.32 Regulation of Scenic Corridors in Urban Areas

- a. Apply the regulations of the Design Review (DR) Zoning Ordinance.
- b. Apply the design criteria of the Community Design Manual.
- c. Apply specific design guidelines for Montara, Moss Beach, El Granada, Princeton-by-the-Sea, Miramar, San Gregorio, and Pescadero as set forth in Urban Design Policies of the LCP.

4.3 SAN MATEO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN POLICIES

The San Mateo County General Plan (County of San Mateo Environmental Services Agency 1986) was adopted in 1986. It serves as a guide for land development and conservation in the unincorporated portions of the county. The plan contains goals and policies to guide future development of the County, in part by encouraging the preservation and enhancement of aesthetic resources. The Visual Quality chapter of the San Mateo County General Plan contains the following relevant goals and policies.

4.3.1 VISUAL QUALITY

Policy 4.1 Protection of Visual Quality

Encourage positive visual quality for all development and minimize adverse visual impacts.

Policy 4.4 Appearance of Rural and Urban Development

Promote aesthetically pleasing development in rural and urban areas.

Policy 4.15 Appearance of New Development

- a. Regulate development to promote and enhance good design, site relationships and other aesthetic considerations.
- b. Regulate land divisions to promote visually attractive development.

Policy 4.17 Protection of Coastal Features

Regulate coastal development to protect and enhance natural landscape features and visual quality through measures that ensure the basic integrity of sand dunes, cliffs, bluffs and wetlands.

Policy 4.21 Utility Structures

Minimize the adverse visual quality of utility structures, including roads, roadway and building signs, overhead wires, utility poles, T.V. antennae, windmills and satellite dishes.

Policy 4.22 Scenic Corridors

Protect and enhance the visual quality of scenic corridors by managing the location and appearance of structural development.

Policy 4.28 Ridgelines and Skyline

- a. Discourage structures on open ridgelines and skylines, when seen as part of a public view in order to preserve visual integrity.

- b. Allow structures on open ridgelines and skylines as part of a public view when no alternative building site exists.
- c. Require structures on ridgelines in forested areas, which are part of a public view to: (1) blend with the existing silhouette; (2) not break or cause gaps within the ridgeline silhouette by removing tree masses; and (3) relate to the ridgeline form.
- d. Define public view as a range of vision from a public road or other public facility.

Policy 4.29 Trees and Vegetation

- a. Preserve trees and natural vegetation except where removal is required for approved development or safety.
- b. Replace vegetation and trees removed during construction wherever possible. Use native plant materials or vegetation compatible with the surrounding vegetation, climate, soil, ecological characteristics of the region and acceptable to the California Department of Forestry.
- c. Provide special protection to large and native trees.

Policy 4.30 Landscaping and Screening

- a. Provide a smooth transition between development and adjacent forested or open space areas through the use of landscaping.
- b. Limit landscaping in open grasslands to areas immediately surrounding structures.
- c. Where it is appropriate to screen uses from view, use natural vegetation rather than solid fencing.

Policy 4.36 Urban Area Design Concept

- a. Maintain and, where possible, improve upon the appearance and visual character of development in urban areas.
- b. Ensure that new development in urban areas is designed and constructed to contribute to the orderly harmonious development of the locality.

Policy 4.40 Scenic Roads

Give special recognition and protection to travel routes in rural and unincorporated urban areas which provide outstanding views of scenic vistas, natural landscape features, historical sites and attractive urban development.

Policy 4.47 Regulation of Development in Scenic Corridors

Institute special controls to regulate both site and architectural design of structures located within rural scenic corridors in order to protect and enhance the visual quality of select rural landscapes.

Policy 4.57 Tree and Vegetation Removal

- a) Allow the removal of trees and natural vegetation when done in accordance with existing regulations.
- b) Prohibit the removal of more than 50% of the tree coverage except as allowed by permit.

Policy 4.60 Outdoor Lighting

Minimize exterior lighting in scenic corridors and, where used, employ warm colors rather than cool tones and shield the scenic corridor from glare.

Policy 4.61 Roads and Driveways

- a) Design and construct new roads, road improvements and driveways to be sensitive to the visual qualities and character of the scenic corridor, including such factors as width, alignment, grade, slope, grading and drainage facilities.
- b) Limit number of access roads connecting to a scenic road to the greatest extent possible.
- c) Share driveways where possible to reduce the number of entries onto scenic roads.

Policy 4.62 Parking and Paved Areas

Integrate paved areas with their site and landscape and/or screen them to reduce visual impact from the scenic corridor.

Policy 4.63 Storage Areas

Screen areas used for the storage of equipment, supplies or debris by fencing, landscaping or other means so they are not visible from scenic roadways, trails, parks, and neighborhoods.

Policy 4.64 Utilities in County Scenic Corridors

- a. Install new distribution lines underground.
- b. Consider exceptions for certain circumstances including, but not limited to, financial hardship, topographic conditions or land use conflicts.

4.3.2 URBAN LAND USE

Policy 8.1 Urban Land Use Planning

Plan for a compatible and harmonious arrangement of land uses in urban areas by providing a type and mix of functionally well-integrated land uses which meet general social and economics.

Policy 8.14 Residential Land Use Compatibility

- a. Protect and enhance the character of existing single-family areas.
- b. Protect existing single-family areas from adjacent incompatible land use designations which would degrade the environmental quality and economic stability of the area.

Policy 8.27 Parcel Consolidation

Where necessary to achieve quality site planning and greater design flexibility, encourage the consolidation of smaller parcels which are designed for intense land uses, including, but not limited to, Industrial, Medium High and High Density Residential.

4.4 COMMUNITY DESIGN MANUAL

The San Mateo County Community Design Manual (San Mateo County 1976) contains the following relevant goals and policies.

Structures and accessory structures should be located, designed, and constructed to retain and blend with the natural vegetation and natural land forms of the site (i.e., topography, rock outcroppings, ridgelines, tree masses, etc.), and should be complementary to adjacent neighborhood structures.

Grading

To ensure minimal impact on the physical setting of the site and adjacent properties, site preparation, grading and structure location should be carefully controlled to reduce erosion, soil exposure, impacts on natural drainage systems, and to maintain surface runoff at or near existing levels. Grading or removal of vegetation which could contribute to the instability of the site or adjacent property should not be permitted.

Vegetation Preservation

Structures should blend with the natural vegetative cover of the site and only that vegetation should be removed which is necessary for the construction of the structure;

Structures should be designed around major trees or tree stands.

Landscaping

Landscaping material should have an informal character and should provide a smooth transition between the development and adjacent open space areas;

Only tree and plant materials native to the area should be used to assure against non-native plant intrusion to reduce irrigation and maintenance requirements, and to minimize visual impact.

Water

With the exception of trails and paths, and related appurtenances, structural development should be set back from and not permitted to be constructed where such development will adversely affect a stream, drainage area, or body of water.

View Preservation

Views should be preserved by limiting structure height. Introduced vegetation should be located so as to not block views from uphill structures or views from scenic corridors and vista points;

Public views within and from scenic corridors should be protected and enhanced, and development should not be allowed to significantly obscure, detract from, or negatively affect the quality of these views. Visual screening or increased setbacks may be used to mitigate such impacts;

Structures should be located to retain views of prominent scenic features, i.e., bodies of water, mountains, valleys, etc.

Open Space Preservation

Structures should be sited to retain maximum open space and to reduce the visual impact in scenic open space areas;

Where possible, structures should be clustered near existing natural and man-made vertical features such as tree masses, hills, and existing structures;

Cliffs and Bluffs

Structures should be set back from bluffs and cliffs so as to not destroy natural land forms;

Intrusion of structures into views from scenic areas should be minimized.

Accessory Structures

- Fences should be built to fit the natural contours of the land. Use of living (vegetative) fences in conjunction with earth berms, and fences made of natural materials are encouraged
- Paved areas
- Paved areas such as parking lots, driveways, sidewalks, etc., should be well integrated into the site, relate to existing and proposed structures and landscaped to reduce visual impact
- Small separate paved parking lots are preferred to large single paved lots
- Parking areas should be screened from residential areas and from scenic roadways
- Driveways should be shared when feasible to reduce curb cuts, especially along major arterials and scenic roads
- Paving materials used for pathways, sidewalks, driveways, and parking areas should be varied, textured, colored or patterned to add visual interest, especially where visible from above.

Scale

Structures should relate in size and scale to adjacent buildings and to the neighborhood in which they are located.

4.5 MONTARA-MOSS BEACH-EL GRANADA COMMUNITY PLAN

The Montara-Moss Beach-El Granada Community Plan (Montara-Moss Beach-El Granada Community Plan website, undated) contains the following relevant goals and policies. The consistency of the proposed project with each of these policies is assessed in the report.

1.2 Design Characteristics

Encourage good design in new construction which reflects the character, and is compatible with the scale of the neighborhood in which it is located.

2.7 Commercial Development Buffers

Buffer commercial areas from surrounding residential development with landscaping, fencing, and/or buildings designed for compatibility between these land uses.

2.9 Appearance of Commercial Development

A. Employ the design guidelines of the Community Design Manual in all new commercial development.

3.1 Circulation System

Develop a circulation system, and road standards for residential streets, which complement the small-town character of the community.

4.1 Housing Design

Build housing which relates to its physical setting, does not destroy the natural features of the land, and is compatible with the neighborhood scale and coastal character of the community.

7.1 Preserving Visual Quality

Preserve and enhance the visual qualities of the coastal community which give it a unique character and distinguish it from other places.

7.2 Preserving Community Character

- a. Maintain community character and ensure that new developments are compatible with existing homes in scale, size, and design.
- b. Maintain the small-town character of the area by preventing construction of massive structures out of scale with the community.

7.3 Preserving Natural Amenities

Preserve the natural amenities of the community through appropriate location of new structures designed to harmonize with their surroundings.

7.6 Protection of Scenic Vistas

Preserve and protect scenic vistas of ocean, beaches, and mountains for residents of the community.

7.7 Tree Planting

Encourage the planting of trees along streets and walkways.

7.8 Preservation of Landforms and Vegetation

Preserve the existing landforms and vegetation.

7.11 Design Review

Apply the Design Review Overlay Zoning District in the urbanized areas of the community to regulate siting of structures, to protect natural features, and to provide for design compatibility with surrounding development.

4.6 SAN MATEO COUNTY CODE

4.6.1 ZONING REGULATIONS GENERALLY

The San Mateo County Zoning Code contains specific provisions pertaining to lighting, signage, building height, setbacks, and other design elements specific to the zoning designations of the project site. In the County, development and building improvements requiring a building permit are subject to review to determine their adherence with County standards, regulations, and policies. Compliance is ensured by conditions of approval attached to discretionary development permits.

4.6.2 STANDARDS FOR DESIGN IN OTHER AREAS

Section 6565.17 of the Zoning Code establishes the following design standards for the development of land uses that are not single- or two-family residences within the Coastal Zone. Though the Cypress Point project site is not currently zoned to require design review, Section 8.12.a.2 of the Local Coastal Plan extends the authority for design review to all other development types (*other than one or two-family dwellings*) within the Coastal Zone. The following standards listed in Section 6565.17 would apply to the proposed project.

- a. Proposed structures are designed and situated so as to retain and blend with the natural vegetation and landforms of the site and to ensure adequate space for light and air to itself and adjacent properties.
- b. Where grading is necessary for the construction of structures and paved areas, it blends with adjacent landforms through the use of contour grading rather than harsh cutting or terracing of the site and does not create problems of drainage or erosion on its site or adjacent property.
- c. Streams and other natural drainage systems are not altered so as to affect their character and thereby causing problems of drainage, erosion or flooding.
- d. Structures are located outside flood zones, drainage channels and other areas subject to inundation.
- e. Trees and other vegetative land cover are removed only where necessary for the construction of structures or paved areas in order to reduce erosion and impacts on natural drainage channels, and maintain surface runoff at acceptable levels.
- f. A smooth transition is maintained between development and adjacent open areas through the use of natural landscaping and plant materials which are native or appropriate to the area.
- g. Views are protected by the height and location of structures and through the selective pruning or removal of trees and vegetative matter at the end of view corridors.
- h. Construction on ridgelines blends with the existing silhouette by maintaining natural vegetative masses and landforms and does not extend above the height of the forest or tree canopy.

- i. Structures are set back from the edge of bluffs and cliffs to protect views from scenic areas below.
- j. Public views to and along the shoreline from public roads and other public lands are protected.
- k. Varying architectural styles are made compatible through the use of similar materials and colors which blend with the natural setting and surrounding neighborhoods.
- l. The design of the structure is appropriate to the use of the property and is in harmony with the shape, size and scale of adjacent building in the community.
- m. Overhead utility lines are placed underground where appropriate to reduce the visual impact in open and scenic areas.
- n. The number, location, size, design, lighting, materials, and use of colors in signs are compatible with the architectural style of the structure they identify and harmonize with their surroundings.
- o. Paved areas are integrated into the site, relate to their structure, and are landscaped to reduce visual impact from residential areas and from roadways.

5. METHODOLOGY

A field reconnaissance of the project site and surrounding areas was conducted by Stevens Consulting and Pyatok Architects on October 17, 2017. The purpose of the visit was to document existing visual conditions at the project site and views of the site from neighboring properties and from Highway 1. Numerous photos were taken from vantage points at the project site and from areas surrounding the project site from which the site is visible, in order to analyze the representative views and the potential aesthetic impacts associated with the proposed project. See Figures 6 through 10.

In addition, computer-generated visual simulations illustrating “before” and conceptual “after” visual conditions at the project site as seen from three representative vantage points are presented as part of the analysis. See Figures 11, 12, and 13. The “after” condition photos were developed using digital photographs, computer modeling, and rendering techniques. These photos are not meant as an exhaustive collection of the views from all vantage points that include the project site, but instead are intended as representative views from within the project site as well as views of the site from the surrounding areas. It should be noted that because final design of the proposed project has not yet been completed, these visual simulations provide only generalized representations of project buildings, and do not represent how the buildings will actually look.

This report evaluates potential aesthetic impacts associated with implementation of the project, including impacts to scenic resources, views, visual character, and light and glare. The visual impacts of the proposed project were completed by evaluating the compatibility of the physical components of the proposed project with its surroundings land uses. Visual impacts are also analyzed through an examination of views and/or viewsheds, scenic resources, visual character, changes in light or glare, and compatibility with pertinent local policies.



Before



After



View Context Key



Before



After



View Context Key



Before



After



View Context Key

5.1 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

In accordance with guidance provided in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines as modified by San Mateo County, the proposed project could have a potentially significant impact if it were to result in one or more of the following:

- a) Have a significant adverse effect on a scenic vista, views from existing residential areas, public lands, water bodies or roads;
- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- c) Significantly degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, including significant changes in topography, or ground surface relief features, and/or development on a ridgeline;
- d) Create a new source of significant light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area;
- e) Be adjacent to a designated Scenic Highway or within a State or County Scenic Corridor;
- f) If in a design review District, conflict with applicable General Plan or Zoning Ordinance provisions; or
- g) Visually intrude into an area having natural scenic qualities.

6. IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact: *Have a significant adverse effect on a scenic vista, views from existing residential areas, public lands, water bodies or roads?* **Less than significant Impact.**

The County General Plan and Local Coastal Program do not specifically identify scenic vistas within the County. In absence of a specific “scenic vista” designation, this analysis will focus on the definitions that are included in the 1986 General Plan and Local Coastal Program.

Scenic vistas to the east of the project site beyond Lincoln Street include both ridges and skylines, while the vistas to the west include coastal bluffs and the Pacific Ocean, all of which are identified by the General Plan as important aesthetic features. No sensitive viewing locations are west of the project site that would have views of the ridges and skylines to the east. Views of the project site by travelers on Highway 1 are blocked by existing vegetation and changes in grade, neither of which would be modified by the proposed project. See Figures 6a through 6c. Together, vegetation and topography act to shield the project site from the view of travelers on Highway 1. Additional potential locations of sensitive viewers to the west include hikers on the California Coastal Trail and recreationists within the James V. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve. In the vicinity of the Cypress Point project, the California Coastal Trail is routed through the entrance drive of the Montara Water and Sanitary District office and thence to Vallamar Street. The views to the east from this Trail also are blocked by changes in grade and existing vegetation, neither of which would be modified by the project at this location. In the

vicinity of the project, the area within the James V. Fitzgerald Marine Reserve is limited to the rocky shore at the base of 50- to 60-foot cliffs and adjacent ocean waters. Views to the east for visitors within the Reserve near the project site would be blocked by the cliffs.

Westerly scenic vistas seen from points east and southeast of the site are dominated by the Pacific Ocean, and the skyline at the western horizon. Sensitive viewers with direct views of western vistas that could be affected by implementation of the Cypress Point project include residents of the 3 homes on Lincoln Street and 2 homes at the base of Buena Vista Street, and several residences on Sierra Street near the southeastern site boundary. Because the site would not be in the ocean viewshed for residences along Stetson Street or Carlos Street, there would be no potential for significant visual interference for these viewers.

As previously noted, the project site slopes down from east to west. The elevation of the project site ranges from approximately 80 to 190 feet MSL. With implementation of the Cypress Point project, the site would be graded to develop building pads at elevations from 187 feet MSL for the buildings nearest the easterly site boundary to 158 feet MSL for buildings nearest Carlos Street. Within the developed area of the site, 18 two-story buildings and a community building with roof heights at a maximum of 28 feet, with a simple traditional roof shape and slope (4:12) would be constructed. Approximately one-half of the site would be developed, and the remainder would remain undeveloped. Building pad elevations for the buildings nearest to Lincoln Street would range from 183 feet MSL to 187 feet MSL. All other building pad elevations on the site would be lower. Buildings nearest Carlos Street will be set back 20 feet from the property line. Buildings nearest Lincoln Street and Buena Vista Street would be set back approximately 230 feet from the nearest offsite residences on Lincoln Street or Buena Vista Avenue. Within this setback area, existing trees would be retained, as would trees along the northerly site boundary.

The floor elevations for the existing residences along Lincoln Street and the base of Buena Vista Street range from 186 feet MSL to 193 feet MSL. As shown in Figure 12², the tops of project buildings would be visible from Lincoln Street and the western end of Buena Vista Street. They would appear similar in height and mass to the existing water storage tanks, and lower in height than the background vegetation. All other proposed buildings on the project site would be located at lower elevations and more distant from Lincoln and Buena Vista Street. Because of the change in elevation between onsite building pads, the distance of the buildings from sensitive viewers, and intervening vegetation that would not be affected by the project, vistas of the Pacific Ocean would not be blocked with project implementation.

For the foregoing reasons, there would be no significant interference with scenic vistas as viewed from existing residential areas, public lands, water bodies or roads. Therefore, this impact on scenic vistas would be less than significant.

² Note that Figures 11, 12, and 13 show the representative massing of the project buildings, but do not show how the buildings will look when finished, nor do they include the landscaping that will be part of the project.

Impact: *Significantly damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?* **Less than significant Impact.**

There are no designated state scenic highways near to the project site, though Highway 1 is a County-designated scenic highway, and the westerly third of the project site is within the Cabrillo Highway County Scenic Corridor (see Figure 5). Further, there are no rock outcroppings or historic buildings on the project site. While some trees on the project site would be removed through project implementation, the project site is not visible from Highway 1. Therefore, impacts related to damage to views from a state scenic highway would be less than significant.

Impact: *Significantly degrade the existing visual character of the site and its surroundings, including significant changes in topography, or ground surface relief features, and/or development on a ridgeline?* **Less than significant Impact.**

Development of the project as proposed would result in changes to the existing visual character of the site by replacing an existing undeveloped area with 18 residential buildings, a commons building, parking lots, landscaping, and other improvements. No buildings would be more than two stories (28 feet) tall. Approximately one-half of the project site would remain in open space. Existing vegetation within open space areas that would be maintained and additional proposed landscaping would provide a buffer between the project and the existing residential uses along Carlos Street, Sierra Street, Stetson Street, Buena Vista Street, and Lincoln Street. All developed areas of the site would be set back from adjoining residences by a minimum of 167 feet (230 feet adjacent to Lincoln Street) except for buildings north of the project entrance on Carlos Street where the nearest project building would be set back approximately 60 feet from the street, though a retaining wall would be setback approximately 53 feet from Carlos Street.

Although the existing visual character of the site would be altered by implementation of the project, the change would not be a significant degradation. Site grading and fill to construct building pads, roadways, and parking areas, or install utilities would not be visible or apparent from areas outside of the project site. The only site features visible to viewers from surrounding areas would be the buildings themselves. As noted above, the buildings would be set back from adjacent viewers so that their apparent mass would be reduced. See Figures 11 through 13. Further, the project site would represent an additional residential use within an already developed residential area that already includes many two-story buildings.

Development onsite would be subject to the policies of the San Mateo County 1986 General Plan, the San Mateo County Local Coastal Program, the San Mateo County Community Design Manual, and Section 6565.17 of the San Mateo County Zoning Code. The project would be required to comply with all applicable County visual quality policies, which would, "...promote and enhance good design, site relationships, and other aesthetic considerations," and would, "...promote visually attractive development." To ensure compliance with County visual resource policies, the project will be subject to review by the Coastside Design Review Committee (CDRC).

In summary, proposed onsite uses would be sited with large setbacks from Carlos, Sierra, Buena Vista and Lincoln streets, approximately one-half of the project site would remain in open space, existing (except for the removal of dead or diseased) vegetation would be maintained to screen the project from adjacent viewers. Further, the project would be subject to future design review and will comply with all applicable design standards and guidelines. With implementation of the proposed site plan, the project would not result in a substantial degradation to the visual character of the project area. This impact would be less than significant.

Impact: *Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?* **Less than significant with Mitigation Incorporated.**

The proposed project would introduce additional sources of lighting and reflective surfaces to the project site. New lighting sources would include outdoor street lighting and security lighting, indoor lighting, and light generated by vehicle headlights. Lighting would be used as a design tool to highlight architectural elements and landscaping. Lighting would also provide security and safety in parking areas, service passages, and common areas of the project. A detailed lighting plan is not available at this time, but MidPen has agreed to an Environmental Commitment to use “Night-sky” compliant site lighting. It appears the project would not introduce new sources of light or glare on the project site that would be incompatible with the areas surrounding the project site or which pose a safety hazard. However, because a lighting plan for the project has not yet been prepared, this impact is considered significant. To reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level, implement the following mitigation measure:

Mitigation Measure VIS-1: Submit Detailed Lighting Plan to San Mateo County for Approval

Prior to the approval of final project plans, a detailed lighting plan shall be submitted to San Mateo County for review and approval by the Community Development Director, consistent with County requirements. The lighting plan shall prohibit light spillover across property lines and limit lighting to the minimum necessary for security and exterior lighting purposes, as determined by the Community Development Director. All lighting shall be designed to be compatible with surrounding development. The project shall not propose light sources that are atypical of the surrounding environment.

Reflective glass or other glaring building materials shall be discouraged. The exterior of the proposed building shall be constructed of non-reflective materials such as, but not limited to, high-performance tinted non-reflective glass, metal panel, and pre-cast concrete or cast in-place or fabricated wall surfaces. The proposed materials shall be reviewed and approved by the Community Development Director prior to approval of the Coastal Development Permit.

Implementing Mitigation Measure VIS-1 would ensure that the lighting design for the proposed project meets all San Mateo County lighting standards.

Impact: *Be adjacent to a designated Scenic Highway or within a State or County Scenic Corridor?* **Less than significant Impact.**

State Route 1 in the vicinity of the project site, although eligible, has not been designated as a State Scenic Highway. San Mateo County has designated this portion of Highway 1 as the Cabrillo Highway County Scenic Corridor. The westerly one-third of the project site is located within this County Scenic Corridor. Based on the discussion provided in Questions a, b, and c, the project poses no significant impacts due to its location alongside and within the County Scenic Corridor.

Impact: *If within a Design Review District, conflict with applicable General Plan or Zoning Ordinance provisions?* **Less than significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated.**

The project site's PUD-124/CD zoning includes the Design Review (DR) Overlay District. As noted in the discussion of Question c, the project would be subject to review by the Coastside Design Review Committee (CDRC) pursuant to Section 6565.17 of the San Mateo County Zoning Code. At the time of preparation of this report, project design details and materials have not been finalized, nor has design review been initiated or completed. This impact would be significant. To reduce this impact to less than significant and to ensure that the project complies with San Mateo County design policies and standards, the following mitigation measure is required.

Mitigation Measure VIS-2: Submit Detailed Design Plans to San Mateo County for Review and Approval

Prior to the approval of a Coastal Development Permit, detailed design, materials, and landscaping plans shall be submitted to San Mateo County for review and approval by the Community Development Director, consistent with County requirements. The plans shall address design standards (a) through (o) set forth in Section 6565.17 of the Zoning Code, as well as all other applicable County design standards. The project shall be constructed consistent with the approved plans.

Implementing Mitigation Measure VIS-2 would ensure that the design, materials, and landscaping for the proposed project would meet San Mateo County design standards.

Impact: *Visually intrude into an area having natural scenic qualities?* **Less than significant Impact.**

The project site is a vacant parcel on the margin of an existing single-family neighborhood (see Figure 2). Scenic resources on the site consist of native and non-native trees, shrubs, and other vegetation. Other features of the site include concrete foundations of buildings from the former military use of the site. Several of the foundations have been disfigured by graffiti. Several dirt roads and paths cross the site. In addition, two water storage tanks maintained by the Montara Water and Sanitary District are located within the boundaries of the project, although they are not a part of the proposed development.

Much of the vegetation of the site will be preserved during development as approximately half of the site will be maintained in open space. Except for the removal of dead or diseased trees and shrubs, vegetation adjacent to 16th Street, Sierra Street, and Lincoln Street will be maintained. The only additional perimeter vegetation taken along Carlos Street would be to accommodate the project driveway.

Because of existing changes in grade and dense vegetation, views of the project site from adjacent areas along 16th Street, Carlos Street, and Sierra Street tend to be short range. Views from upper Sierra Street, Buena Vista Street, and Lincoln Street tend to be mid-range, although even from these vantage points the entirety of the site is not visible. As discussed in Question c, site grading and fill to construct building pads, roadways, and parking areas, or install utilities would not be apparent from areas outside of the project site. The only site features visible to viewers from surrounding areas would be the buildings themselves. As noted above, the buildings would be substantially set back from adjacent viewers so that their apparent mass would be reduced.

While the site currently provides some visual relief to the adjacent neighborhoods, because the perimeter shrubs and trees (the site's primary visual asset) would be preserved, and because only portions of the interior developed portion of the site would be visible to nearby viewers, this would be a less than significant impact, and no mitigation is necessary.

7. REFERENCES

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