

# Appendix B

## **Visual Study**



## **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this study is to assess the visual impacts of the proposed project, determine the significance of the impacts under CEQA, and to propose measures to avoid, minimize or mitigate adverse visual impacts associated with the construction of the Paseo Norte Housing Senior Housing project on the surrounding visual environment, if necessary.

## **2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

The Paseo Norte Senior Housing project will consist of consist of approximately 100 affordable residential units for low-income seniors, which would include 85 one-bedroom units and 15 two-bedroom units, 1,980 square foot Senior Center, 5,000 square foot PACE Wellness Center, and public park with pickleball court, tot lot, multipurpose trail, and open space preserve. The two-story residential building and the PACE Wellness Center will be 31-foot buildings (Figure B.1.) designed to be neutral-toned, with lap siding, woods details, and stone cladding, and stucco materials that would be consistent with the existing community character and the Ramona Design Review guidelines and Ramona Form Based Code.

The project will comply with the Federal, State and Local regulations and standards described below.

### **Federal Regulations**

**National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):** Federal agencies that implement the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) are required to consider aesthetic/visual resource impacts for applicable projects. This project will be reviewed for compliance with NEAP because the project is receiving federal funding.

### **State Regulations**

**California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA):** Under the CEQA State and local agencies are required to consider impacts to aesthetic resources. The State CEQA guidelines provide specific guidance to lead agencies to consider impacts to aesthetic resources such as trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway or scenic vistas. Additionally, the guidelines provide more general guidance regarding the protection of visual character and quality.

**California Scenic Highway Law:** The California Scenic Highway Law created the California Scenic Highway Program to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of adjacent lands. The State Legislature established the program through Senate Bill 1467 (Farr), which was then added to the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260-283. The program defines the process for the designation of official scenic highways. A legislatively appointed body,

the Departmental Transportation Advisory Committee (DTAC), recommends program criteria, reviews applications, and advises the Caltrans Director to revoke scenic highways that are no longer in compliance with the program.

### Local Regulations

**San Diego County General Plan:** The General Plan provides guidance for the preservation of aesthetic resources. The General Plan incorporates specific community plans; which include goals, policies, and recommendations to guide development of a region. These community plans identify a variety of specific planning considerations that may include guidelines for protecting visual character and quality through development guidelines designed to minimize adverse aesthetic affects.

**San Diego County General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element:** The primary focus of the Conservation and Open Space Element is to provide direction to future growth and development in the County of San Diego with respect the following: conservation, management, and utilization of natural and cultural resources; protection and preservation of open space; and provision of park and recreation resources. The General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element also includes specific goals and policies for visual resources that protect scenic corridors, geographically extensive scenic viewsheds, and dark skies within the natural environment.

**San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, Scenic Area Regulations:** The Scenic Area Regulations of the County Zoning Ordinance serve to regulate development in areas of high scenic value in order to exclude incompatible uses and structures, and preserve and enhance the scenic resources in adjacent areas. The regulations apply to areas of unique scenic value including but not limited to: scenic highway corridors designated by the County General Plan; critical viewshed and prime viewshed areas as designated on the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan; and areas adjacent to significant recreational, historic or scenic resources, including but not limited to Federal and State parks. The designation for scenic areas is identified on a parcel by-parcel basis by the special area designator "S".

**San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, Community Design Review Area Regulations:** The County Zoning Ordinance includes provisions to provide for the maintenance and enhancement of a community's individual visual character and identity. The provisions require that a site plan be submitted for development within those areas having a "B" Community Design Review Area Special Designator. The provisions include exemptions to the site plan requirement for certain project types and provisions for granting a site plan waiver for Community Design Review. Currently, the following communities have developed Design Guidelines: Valley Center, Sweetwater, Fallbrook, Lakeside, Ramona, Spring Valley, Bonsall, and Alpine. The "B" Design Review Area Special Designator also covers portions of Interstate 15 (I-15). The I-15 corridor has its own Scenic Preservation Guidelines and Design Review Board to review discretionary projects that are subject to the guidelines.



**San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, Design Review Area Regulations:** The County Zoning Ordinance includes provisions to ensure that future structures and development of a site will complement not only the site to be developed but also the surrounding areas and existing development. The provisions require that a site plan be submitted for certain discretionary project applications within those areas having a “D” zoning designator indicating the need for design review. The regulation requires that specific criteria be reviewed to achieve the objectives of the approving authority. These criteria include a review of building characteristics, building structure and placement, landscaping, roads, pedestrian walkways, parking and storage areas, grading, signs, and lighting. These criteria are assigned at the time of ordinance review for the project site. Applicable community planning or sponsor groups have an opportunity to review such site plans and to present their recommendations to the Director of the Planning & Development Services.

**Design Review Guidelines:** Design review guidelines have been developed for unincorporated San Diego County community of Ramona. The design guidelines specify the types of design permitted in each community; including but not limited to architecture, landscaping, building uses, designation of scenic roads, slope modifications, and overall visual effect. Design guidelines are similar in form and content from community to community, but may vary in terms of defining specific community character. Vegetation types, especially tree species, are specifically designated in the community plan. The preservation of naturally occurring topography is encouraged by minimizing grading and carefully siting structures.

**Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO):** The RPO protects a variety of resources. One of the resources the ordinance protects is steep slopes. The ordinance limits development on steep slopes through density restrictions on steep slope lands and through requirements for steep slope areas to be placed in easements. The requirements of this ordinance therefore will often result in the protection of slopes in their natural state, which provides the added benefit of protecting a potential aesthetic resource. In terms of the preservation of aesthetic resources, this policy encourages the preservation of the existing natural terrain, established vegetation, and visually significant geologic displays.

### **3.0 VISUAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PROJECT**

The existing visual environment of the Project site is vacant land with natural vegetation along and with Santa Maria Creek and boulders along project boundary and adjacent to Santa Maria Creek. Refer to Photos A.1-2, D.1 and H.1 in Attachment C. There is natural vegetation on vacant land adjacent to the north, south and east of the project site. Refer to Photos A.3, B.1, C, D.2, and F.1 in Attachment C. Vacant land, Ramona Library, State Route 67, a designated Scenic Highway, are adjacent to the south of the project site. See Photos E, D.1 and F.1 in Attachment C. Adjacent to west of the project site are commercial and SDGE storage yards with single story structures surrounded by a chain link fencing with privacy and vegetation, and a single-story commercial building with chain link fence. Refer to Photo H.2 in Attachment C. A self-storage facility with

large buildings surrounded by landscaping and chain link fencing with privacy slates. Refer to Photos A.4, F.2, F.3, and N in Attachment A. The visual environment of the surrounding community can be characterized as the Santa Maria Creek, commercial and industrial buildings, and storage yards to the north, retail and commercial buildings with landscaping to east and south, and commercial and residential buildings with landscaping to the west vacant land along the Santa Maria Creek. There is a mountain developed with single family homes further to the north that is smaller in scale and act as a visual background from the scenic highway. Refer to Photos B.1, C, G, E, M, O, and Q in Attachment A.

## **4.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

A project will generally be considered to have a significant effect if it proposes any of the following, absent specific evidence to the contrary. Conversely, if a project does not propose any of the following, it will generally not be considered to have a significant effect on visual resources, absent specific evidence of such an effect:

1. The project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials, etc.) or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines.
2. The project would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood, community, or localized area, including but not limited to landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings.
3. The project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from:
  - a public road,
  - a trail within an adopted County or State trail system,
  - a scenic vista or highway, or
  - a recreational area.
4. The project would not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning.

### **4.1 Key Views**

#### **Key View 1**

Key View (KV) 1 is located in the highly developed center of the Ramona Community, at the intersection of Main Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Street, facing northeast towards the Project site (Attachment C, Figures A.2. and A.3.). It is representative of the most visible angle of the Project site, which is partially obscured by the vacant lot to the southeast of the site. This lot contains sparse vegetation and several mature trees, with the area acting as a

partial visual buffer between the site and Main Street/SR-67, but the majority of the front of the Residential Building will be visible from KV 1.

The visual character of the Project site from KV 1 would be in harmony with the surrounding commercial structures along Main Street/SR-67, following the Ramona Community Design Manual. The outwards face of the facility would not disrupt the visual appeal of the surrounding vegetation and the Santa Maria Creek to the north of the site. Landscaping and sidewalk improvements around the Residential Facility would improve the visual character of the Project site and visually blend the area with the Ramona community. The placement of the Project site is consistent with the northward transition from retail and commercial businesses to industrial storage that can be viewed from Main Street/SR-67 and viewers at KV 1 would experience the usual transition between sparse vegetation to community spaces that already exists.

### Key View 2

KV 2 is also located in the highly developed center of the Ramona Community, at the intersection of Main Street and 13<sup>th</sup> Street, facing northeast towards the Project site (Attachment A: Figures A.4. and A.5.). It is representative of the second most visible angle of the Project site, which is heavily obscured by the Ramona Library and mature trees lining the northern sidewalk. The library and tree act as a visual buffer between the site and Main Street/SR-67, but a portion of the Residential Building will be visible from KV 2

The visual character of the Project site from KV 2 would be in harmony with the surrounding commercial structures along Main Street/SR-67, following the Ramona Community Design Manual. The outwards face of the facility would be mostly hidden by the Ramona Library and visually consistent with the surrounding area. Landscaping and sidewalk improvements around the Residential Facility would improve the visual character of the Project site and visually blend the area with the Ramona community. The placement of the Project site is consistent with the northward transition from commercial businesses to industrial storage that can be viewed from Main Street/SR-67 and viewers at KV 2 would experience the usual transition between sparse vegetation to community spaces that already exists.

### Key View 3

KV 3 is located at the intersection of SR-78 and "A" Street, facing west towards the Project site (Attachment A: Figure A.6. and A.7.). A small portion of the project is visible from the western terminus point of "A" Street but is heavily obscured by mature trees in the adjacent lot. These trees act as a visual buffer between the site and SR-78 and a negligible portion of the side of the Project site will be visible from KV 3.

The visual character of the Project site from KV 3 would be in harmony with the surrounding vegetation along SR-78, following the Ramona Community Design Manual. The side of the facility would be minimally disruptive to the visual appeal of the

surrounding vegetation. Viewers at KV 3 are not likely to notice the facility at the Project site, as the elevation of the building does not exceed the tree line (Attachment A: Figure A.7).

#### Key View 4

KV 4 is located at the intersection of SR-78 and “B” Street, facing west towards the Project site (Attachment A: Figure A.8. and A.9.). The entirety of the project is obscured from this viewpoint by a carwash and other business that lead to the western terminus point of “B” Street. This commercial area acts as a complete visual buffer between the site and SR-78, with no portion of the site or the visual simulation of the facility visible from KV 4.

The visual character of the Project site from KV 4 would be in harmony with the commercial area along SR-78, following the Ramona Community Design Manual. The entirety of the facility would be completely obscured (Attachment A: Figure A.9.) and not disruptive to the visual appeal of the surrounding area. Viewers at KV 4 are not likely to notice the facility at the Project site, as the elevation of the building does not exceed the carwash and other businesses along “B” Street.

#### Assessment

Four key viewpoints, as shown in Attachment A Figure A.1. were evaluated to determine if visual change to existing views would result from implementation of the proposed Project. Viewpoints (Attachment A Figures A.2.-A.9) are representative of views to the Project site available from public roads, residential areas, and recreational lands adjacent to the Project site. Based off this evaluation, the proposed project would not substantially change the quality of the existing views across the site.

The Project site is located in the center of the community in Ramona in an area that is highly developed, with Walnut Street and Maple Street as the northern and western border of the Project site, respectively (Attachment A, Figure AB.1.). Based on the area topography, the proposed project is not visible from a designated scenic vista, overlook, or viewpoint and will not substantially change the composition of an existing scenic vista in a way that would adversely alter the visual quality or character of the view. Therefore, the proposed project will not have an adverse effect on a scenic vista.

The Project site is located off State Route (SR) SR-67 in the center of the Ramona business district and does not contain any scenic views. Additionally, SR-67 is not designated as a state designated scenic highway. The nearest designated scenic highway is located approximately 0.3 miles north of the Project site where SR-67 terminates at the intersection of SR-78 and SR-79. SR-79 is a designated scenic highway between the communities of Ramona and Julian, and the SR-78 corridor is identified as a Resource Conservation Area. These highways are not highly visible from the project area. The view from SR-67 near intersections of 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> Streets will be softened by additional landscaping for the Project and the proposed structures will be

consistent with existing community character. Therefore, the proposed project will not have any substantial adverse effect on a scenic resource on land adjacent to or visible from a state scenic highway. The project design preserves any scenic resource on-site or adjacent to the project and will not detract from visual features surrounding the site. Therefore, no impact is identified for this issue area.

The proposed development, shall not, to the maximum extent feasible, interfere with or degrade those visual features, natural or man-made, of the site or adjacent sites which contribute to its scenic attractiveness, as viewed from either the scenic highway or the adjacent scenic, historic, or recreational resource. The proposed project will not require significant alterations to existing landforms or views of existing landforms. The project does not propose grading or development on any steep slopes.

The project design does not propose any structures or materials that would create a public nuisance or hazard. The project will conform to the San Diego County Light Pollution Code and any outdoor lighting will be downward facing and comply with the Light Pollution Code. Additionally, the proposed project will not generate excessive glare or have excessive reflective surfaces.

The project is compatible with the existing environment's visual character and quality for the following reasons: The project does not propose any major grading in areas having slopes with a gradient of 25 percent or greater. The community of Ramona does not have high profile buildings to block the surrounding mountain views or other land forms. The project does not propose construction of any buildings in excess of 35 feet in vertical height which may obstruct any scenic vistas. Therefore, the project would not obstruct any views of the surrounding mountains due to vertical height or change the existing visual character of the surrounding Project site area.

The project will not result in cumulative impacts on visual character or quality because the entire existing viewshed and a list of past, present and future projects within that viewshed were evaluated. Refer to XVII. Mandatory Findings of Significance for a comprehensive list of the projects considered. Those projects listed in Section XVII are located within the viewshed surrounding the project and will not contribute to a cumulative impact for the following reasons: no impacts to aesthetics were found in the cumulative projects.

For the reason stated above, the project will not result in any adverse project or cumulative level effect on visual character or quality on-site or in the surrounding area. Impacts are considered less than significant.

## **5.0 VISUAL MITIGATION AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

The proposed project was determined to be consistent with the identified aesthetic and visual policies and goals of the Ramona Design Guidelines and Form Based Code. The visual elements of the project would be visually compatible with the existing visual setting and natural features of the surrounding area and would not contrast with the

existing character of the Project site and surrounding community.

Visual changes associated with this development are anticipated to be relatively minor as experienced from public viewpoints such as roadways and trails, since the proposed structures would be located on relatively flat terrain that currently displays visual qualities consistent with that of graded pads. Therefore, the project would have less than significant impacts related to compliance with applicable goals, policies, or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's zoning. No visual mitigation or design considerations are necessary for the proposed project.

The proposed project will use outdoor lighting and is located within Zone B as identified by the San Diego County Light Pollution Code, and located approximately 22 miles south of the Palomar Observatory. However, the project will not adversely affect nighttime views or astronomical observations, because the project will conform to the Light Pollution Code (Section 59.101-59.115), including Zone B lamp type and shielding requirements per fixture and hours of operation limitations for outdoor lighting and searchlights. The project will not contribute to significant cumulative impact on day or nighttime views because the project will conform to the Light Pollution Code. The Code was developed by the San Diego County Planning & Development Services and Department of Public Works in cooperation with lighting engineers, astronomers, land use planners from San Diego Gas and Electric, Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories, and local community planning and sponsor groups to effectively address and minimize the impact of new sources light pollution on nighttime views. The standards in the Code are the result of this collaborative effort and establish an acceptable level for new lighting. Compliance with the Code is required prior to issuance of any building permit for any project. Mandatory compliance for all new building permits ensures that this project in combination with all past, present and future projects will not contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact. Therefore, compliance with the Code ensures that the project will not create a significant new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area, on a project or cumulative level. Impacts due to this issue area are considered less than significant.

**Attachment A**  
**Visual Study Viewpoints**

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**Figure A.1 Aerial View of Proposed Project**



Main/12th  
1



Figure A.2 Existing View of Project Site







Project site



Figure A.3 Visual Simulation of Project Site





Main/13th  
2



Figure A.4 Existing View of Project Site

6.71 ft





Main/13th  
2

Legend

Project site



Google Earth

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Figure A.5 Visual Simulation of Project Site

6.71 ft





SR-78/A St  
3



Figure A.6 Existing View of Project Site



SR-78/A St  
3

Legend

Project site



Google Earth

Figure A.7 Visual Simulation of Project Site

8.12 ft





SR-78/B St  
4



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Figure A.8 Existing View of Project Site



SR-78/B St  
4

Legend

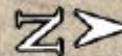
Project site



Google Earth

Figure A.9 Visual Simulation of Project Site

6.36 ft



**Attachment B  
Site Simulations**



ELEVATION  
RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

STONE CLADDING



RESIDENTIAL BUILDING  
NORTH ELEVATION

LAP  
SIDING

WOOD DETAILS

OUTDOOR FIRE FEATURE



RESIDENTIAL BUILDING WEST ELEVATION

STUCCO

WOOD DETAILS



RESIDENTIAL BUILDING NORTH ELEVATION

SENIOR/PACE BUILDING NORTH ELEVATION

Figure B.1 Photo Simulation of Senior Housing



Figure B.2 Photo Simulation of Senior Housing





Figure B.3 Photo Simulation of Senior Housing





Figure B.4 Photo Simulation of Senior Housing

**Attachment C**  
**Subject Photographs**

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# SUBJECT PHOTOGRAPH VIEWPOINTS



Figure C Viewpoints Key Map



## SUBJECT PHOTOGRAPHS



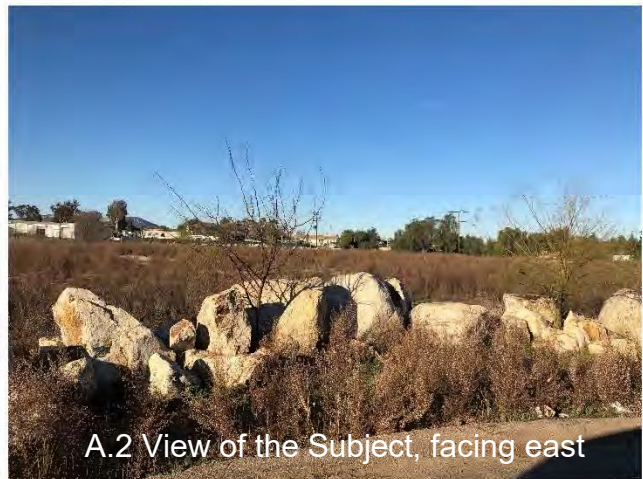
H.1 View of the Subject, facing east



D.1 View of the Subject, facing northeast



A.1 View of the Subject, facing northeast



A.2 View of the Subject, facing east



B.1 Looking north at vacant land/Industrial



B.2 Looking northwest at Industrial



**SUBJECT PHOTOGRAPHS**



C Looking east at Creek



D.2 Looking northwest at vacant land



A.3 Looking northeast at Vacant land



E Looking north at Library



F Looking south at Vacant land



A.4 Looking southeast at Storage facility



**SUBJECT PHOTOGRAPHS**



G. Looking southwest at vacant land



H.2 Looking west at industrial



I.1 Looking northwest at Transfer Station



I.2 Industrial further northwest



J Looking east at Industrial



K Looking northeast at Industrial



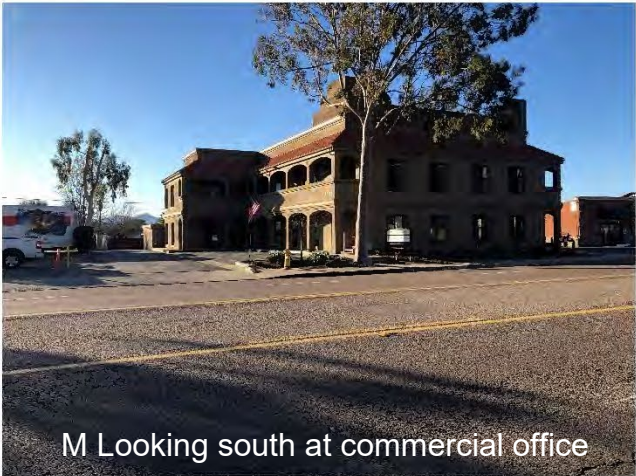
**SUBJECT PHOTOGRAPHS**



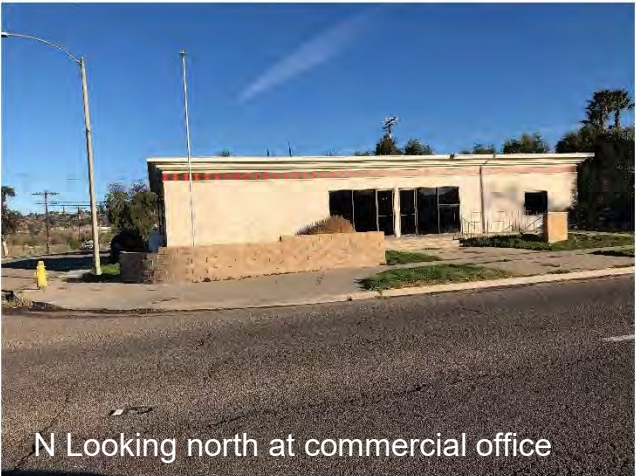
L Looking northwest at Urgent care



E.2 Looking west at retail spaces



M Looking south at commercial office



N Looking north at commercial office



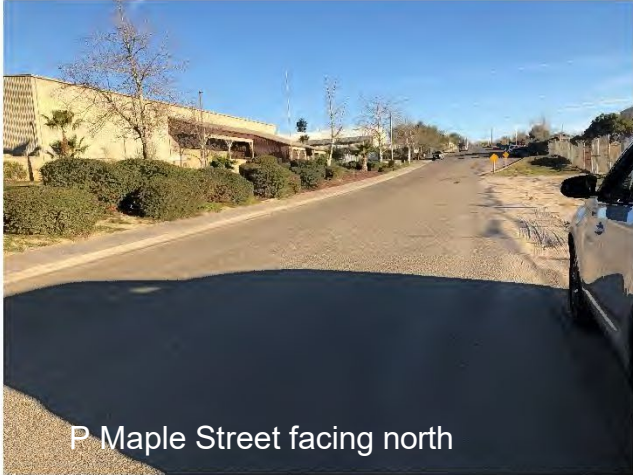
A.3 Looking northeast at vacant land



O Looking south at commercial



**SUBJECT PHOTOGRAPHS**



P Maple Street facing north



P.2 Maple Street facing south



Q 13<sup>th</sup> Street facing south



L.2 13<sup>th</sup> Street facing north



F.2 12<sup>th</sup> Street facing north



F.3 12<sup>th</sup> Street facing south