

3.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

This section provides an overview of the visual resources in the project vicinity and the eastern Montecito area, with particular attention to those resources present within the project site. In a rural or semi-rural context, the visual resources of an area are often related to the natural character of the area, as well as to the developed character of buildings, architectural design, and setbacks from public roads and landscaping. Viewers often desire and anticipate visual continuity within a region, and development that is incompatible or inconsistent with the agricultural and/or open character of a rural area can be considered disruptive to the aesthetic character of such regions. This section also addresses the potential for the proposed project to create visual impacts as defined by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), by applicable Santa Barbara County visual resources policies and guidelines, and by the Montecito Board of Architectural Review (MBAR) architectural compatibility standards. Visual resource issues identified in the Initial Study are emphasized in the aesthetic and visual resources impact analysis (MFPD 2011). Amec Foster Wheeler staff visited the project site and vicinity on November 27, 2014 and December 5, 2014 to review aesthetic conditions.

3.1.1 Existing Conditions

3.1.1.1 Regional Setting

Montecito is a semi-rural community that lies between the Pacific Ocean and foothills of the Santa Ynez Mountains. The City of Santa Barbara lies to the west and the unincorporated communities of Summerland and Toro Canyon are located to the east. Montecito's unique community character encompasses a mix of lower density and large lot semi-rural development with areas of open space, woodlands, beaches, and steeper foothills regions. The topography of the area varies greatly; however, most of Montecito is on gently to moderately sloping hills that rise toward the Santa Ynez Mountain Range (County of Santa Barbara 1992). Numerous open spaces, creek corridors, recreation areas (e.g., equestrian facilities, golf courses), pastures, and orchards are scattered throughout the community, and interspersed with large, single family residences and estates typical of lower density and semi-rural development.

Development in Montecito primarily consists of large residences and estates located on lots of 1 acre or greater, generally with extensive landscaping. Scattered neighborhoods of smaller lots with older houses add to the residential mix. Residences tend to be shielded from often narrow winding roadways by walls and trees and other vegetation

that create a forested character in much of the community. The majority of roadways lack sidewalks and traffic and street lights, which contributes to the community's semi-rural character and maintains views of the nighttime sky.

There are no "State Scenic Highways" located in Montecito (County of Santa Barbara 2009). However, the Montecito Community Plan (MCP) encourages consideration of East Valley Road as a State Scenic Highway (County of Santa Barbara 1995).

3.1.1.2 Visual Character of the Project Vicinity

The proposed project is located in the inland portion of eastern Montecito along State Highway 192/East Valley Road between Sheffield Drive on the west and Ortega Ridge Road on the east. To the west of this area lie dozens of residences within the Birnam Wood Golf Club and medium density neighborhoods off Romero Canyon Road. To the east are more rural areas of Toro Canyon. The immediate project vicinity is characterized by larger lots, is generally less developed than other



The area immediately south of the project site is developed with two residences of two stories and a large complex of an older barn, paddocks and stables, now being remodeled for private automobile storage.

areas in the community, and retains substantial areas of orchards and open space. In addition, large recreational facilities, including Birnam Wood Golf Club and Valley Club Golf Course, provide substantial open space in the area. East Valley Road through Montecito is considered a significant Scenic View Corridor by the County in the MCP Update EIR (County of Santa Barbara 1992).

Natural Character

Large orchards and undeveloped lands on Rancho San Carlos and Featherhill Ranch contribute to the semi-rural visual character of the project vicinity and provide views through to the Santa Ynez Mountains for travelers on East Valley Road.

East Valley Road in the project vicinity extends from Sheffield Drive east to Ortega Ridge Road and is relatively wooded along much of this reach, with large oaks and other specimen trees and shrubs lining the roadway and property frontages. Residences are generally well setback from the road edge and frequently are partially screened from view by hedges, walls, and trees. The western reach of this segment from Sheffield



Residences at the western end of the project vicinity maintain extensive, mature landscaping that obscure structures from the roadway and create a heavily forested feel.

Drive to Romero Creek is lined with dense vegetation associated with residential development to the north, which obscures nearly all distant mountain views, and the Valley Club landscaping to the south.

East of Romero Creek and its corridor of riparian trees, views from the roadway become somewhat more expansive due to more widely spaced trees, fewer walls and hedges, and the orchards north of the road on Featherhill and San Carlos Ranches. Although East Valley Road in the vicinity of the project site is generally lined with coast live oaks, views of the Santa Ynez Mountains to the north remain available. These relatively open views to the north are obstructed by the densely-vegetated riparian corridor of Picay Creek as East Valley Road approaches near Ortega Ridge Road. To the south of East Valley Road in this reach, scattered estate residences and equestrian uses allow some views through to Ortega Ridge.

Developed Character

Six residences border East Valley Road in the immediate project vicinity -- two across from the project site south of East Valley Road and four north of East Valley Road across Romero Creek to the west. These residences consist of four two-story homes and two one-story structures (Table 3.1-1). Mature vegetation and perimeter walls or fences often obscure views of these structures from East Valley Road. Typical residential parcel frontages for these homes average approximately 200 feet, and residences are typically setback approximately 45 feet from East Valley Road.

Table 3.1-1. Scale and Relation to East Valley Road Residences in the Project Vicinity

Address	Stories	Approx. Setback (ft) ¹	Approx. Frontage (ft) ²
2220 East Valley Road	2	45	190
2222 East Valley Road	1	40	190
West of Stonehouse Drive	1	55	200
East of Stonehouse Drive	2	55	220
2347 East Valley Road	2	40	180
2351 East Valley Road	2	35	300

¹ The approximate setback is from the edge of East Valley Road to primary structures, and does not include perimeter fences, patios, etc.

² The approximate frontage includes the distance that each property fronts East Valley Road, including the residence, and associated perimeter fence, lawns, patios, and landscaped areas.



The two-story residence located south of the project site has minimal setbacks off East Valley Road.



The two-story residence and larger outbuildings located south of the project site on East Valley Road is visible from Ortega Ridge Road.



A two-story residence located west of the project site is setback approximately 50 feet and largely obscured by landscaping from East Valley Road.



A two-story residence located southwest of the project site is visible from the driveway off East Valley Road.

The two residences across East Valley Road south of the project site support two-story development. Each structure extends for approximately 160 feet along East Valley Road and is partially visible from the roadway. The residence directly across from the proposed project site is particularly visible from the public road due to limited roadside landscaping and the structure's white exterior and red tile



A two-story residence is located south of the project site.

roof. In addition to these two residences, a large outbuilding located south of the site supports open paddocks bordered by white split rail fences, as well as a one-story building of approximately 370 feet in length now being remodeled for private automobile storage, which is located 320 feet south of East Valley Road. Coast live oaks spaced along the frontage of these properties provide partial screening of views of existing residences from the road.

Nighttime Conditions

The semi-rural land uses and few residences in the project vicinity generate very little night lighting. Residences generate only minimal exterior lighting, and views of the nighttime sky are well preserved.

3.1.1.3 Visual Character of the Proposed Project Site

The visual character of the site comprises regularly spaced oaks in the foreground with a backdrop of ordered rows of lemon trees extending north toward the Santa Ynez Mountains. Areas of dense stands of oaks border the intermittent drainage channel on the site's western boundary. Mature coast live oaks and clusters of younger oaks are spaced approximately 20 feet apart along the roadway with denser oak canopies beginning at approximately 15 feet or higher above the ground. This spacing permits some degree of openness for views available to travelers on East Valley Road.

3.1.1.4 Existing Views of the Proposed Project Site

Travelers on East Valley Road now have a view of the proposed project site. Intermittent views are available from Ortega Ridge Road and distant views from area hiking trails. In the project vicinity, East Valley Road carries approximately 2,620 average daily trips

(ADT) and is an important east-west route for motorists traveling through eastern Montecito (California Department of Transportation 2014). Ortega Ridge Road is removed from the site and offers only intermitted glimpses of the project vicinity.

Views of the site for eastbound travelers approaching the project site are obscured due to dense stands of oak trees on the Archdiocese property to the west and along the drainage channel on the site's western boundary. Eastbound travelers in vehicles moving along East Valley Road at 35 miles per hour (mph) could view the project site through the existing line of oak trees for approximately 4.5 seconds by looking directly north as they transit the 300-foot length of the site.

For westbound travelers in vehicles proceeding downhill toward the site from Toro Canyon, views are largely obscured by oaks that line the roadway for the majority of this approach. Distant views of the Santa Ynez Mountains are available north across the lemon orchards of Rancho San Carlos; however, views to the northwest (towards the project site) are largely obstructed by tree trunks and foliage. Westbound on East Valley Road at 35 mph, views across the project site occur for approximately 6.5 seconds.¹ It should be noted that while the posted speed is 35 mph, actual speeds of 45 mph or more are typical along this road and reduce viewer exposure to the site.

East Valley Road is a popular route for cyclists and is used by a limited number of pedestrians. Views across the project site for these users occur for more time than for travelers viewing the site by vehicle. Viewer exposure for cyclists is moderate due to the relatively limited number of daily viewers. However, these viewers are in close proximity to the natural landscape and have a greater exposure to existing views. Although the number of pedestrians is limited, they experience views of the greatest duration. Romero Canyon Trail is the most heavily used public hiking trail with potential views of the site; however, viewing locations from this trail are generally 1 to 2 miles away and over 1,000 feet in elevation above the site.

3.1.2 Regulatory Setting

3.1.2.1 Applicable State Policies

California Scenic Highway Program: California's Scenic Highway Program was designed to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors. Jurisdictions nominating a

¹ Views across the project site are available from a greater distance to westbound travelers than to those traveling eastbound because of the spacing between oaks, which affords views starting approximately 250 feet before the project site.

Scenic Highway for official designation have in place or adopt ordinances to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor, including policies to preserve scenic resources through land use regulations, site planning, control of outdoor advertising (including a ban on billboards), grading, and measures to direct structural design and appearance (California Streets and Highways Code § 260 et seq.).

3.1.2.2 Applicable County Policies

County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element Hillside and Watershed Protection Policies: Policy 1 requires minimization of cut and fill operations. Policy 2 requires all development to fit the site topography, to be oriented so that grading and other site preparation is kept to an absolute minimum, and to ensure that natural features, landforms, and native vegetation be preserved to the maximum extent feasible.

County Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element Visual Resources: Policy 3 requires new structures to be in conformance with the scale and character of the existing community in urban areas.

Montecito Community Plan (MCP): The MCP reinforces the importance of preserving the community's scenic qualities. The MCP contains several policies pertaining to the protection of visual and open space resources, particularly the protection of views of the Santa Ynez Mountain Range and Pacific Ocean. Relevant policies include:

Goal VIS-M-1: Protect the visual importance of the Santa Ynez Mountain Range and Ocean View as having both local and regional significance and protect from development which could adversely affect this quality.

Policy VIS-M-1.1: Development shall be subordinate to the natural open space characteristics of the mountains.

Policy VIS-M-1.2: Grading required for access roads and site development shall be limited in scope so as to protect the viewshed.

Policy VIS-M-1.3: Development of property should minimize impacts to open space views as seen from public roads and viewpoints.

Visual Resource Policy 3: In areas designated as urban on the land use plan maps and in designated rural neighborhoods, new structures shall be in conformance with the scale and character of the existing community. Development, varied circulation patterns, and diverse housing types shall be encouraged.

Visual Resource Policy 4: Signs shall be of size, location, and appearance so as not to detract from scenic areas or views from public roads and other viewing points.

Visual Resource Policy 5: Utilities, including television, shall be placed underground in new developments in accordance with the rules and regulations of the California Public Utilities Commission, except where cost of undergrounding would be so high as to deny service.

Montecito Architectural Guidelines and Development Standards: The Montecito Architectural Guidelines were developed as mitigation under the MCP EIR, which identified adverse impacts to visual resources resulting from buildout of the community. Through application of these guidelines on a project-specific basis, the MBAR addresses the visual character of the plan area and visually incompatible structures. Extensive site preparation and landscaping guidelines are included as well as residential development Floor Area Ratios (FARs) for interpretation of neighborhood compatibility. These Guidelines state that all educational, institutional, and other public and quasi-public uses should be developed in a manner compatible with the community's residential character.

3.1.3 Environmental Impacts

3.1.3.1 Thresholds for Determining Significance

CEQA Guidelines

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines identifies the following four circumstances that can lead to a determination of significant visual impact:

- (1) The project has a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- (2) The project substantially damages scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway.
- (3) The project substantially degrades the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. (This may include loss of major onsite landscape features, or degradation by change of character when placed in the context of the existing surroundings.)
- (4) The project creates a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

A fifth circumstance potentially resulting in significant visual impacts is:

- (5) The project results in an inconsistency with laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards applicable to the protection of visual resources.

County of Santa Barbara Thresholds of Significance

The County's Thresholds of Significance acknowledge the subjective nature of aesthetic impacts and includes five questions to guide visual impacts analysis rather than a defined threshold. Affirmative answers to the following guiding questions indicate potentially significant impacts to visual resources.

- 1a. Does the project site have significant visual resources by virtue of surface waters, vegetation, elevation, slope, or other natural or manmade features which are publicly visible?
- 1b. If so, does the proposed project have the potential to degrade or significantly interfere with the public's enjoyment of the site's existing visual resources?
- 2a. Does the project have the potential to impact visual resources of the Coastal Zone or other visually important area (i.e., mountainous area, public park, urban fringe or scenic travel corridor)?
- 2b. If so, does the project have the potential to conflict with the policies set forth in the County's CLUP, the Comprehensive Plan or any applicable community plan to protect the identified views?
3. Does the project have the potential to create significant adverse aesthetic impact through obstruction of public views, incompatibility with surrounding uses, structures, or intensity of development, removal of significant amounts of vegetation, loss of important open space, substantial alteration of natural character, lack of adequate landscaping, or extensive grading visible from public areas?

3.1.3.2 Impact Assessment Methodology

In preparing this EIR, Amec Foster Wheeler undertook baseline data collection and reviewed existing project documents and relevant County visual resource protection policies and standards (i.e., MCP, Montecito Land Use and Development Code [MLUDC], Montecito Architectural Guidelines and Development Standards, etc.). Following review of available documentation, Amec Foster Wheeler conducted field reconnaissance to identify existing public views of the site; this field reconnaissance was updated in 2014. In addition, Amec Foster Wheeler staff reviewed incremental changes in project design that were considered by the County's Planning and Development Department staff during its review of Montecito Fire Protection District's (MFPD's) permit application. While not finalized, such changes in design include adjustments in project landscaping and grading. These potential incremental changes are accounted for in the analysis below.

To assess visual resource impacts, Amec Foster Wheeler paid particular attention to five areas with public views of the site that constitute public “Key Viewing Locations” (KVLs). These are primarily located along East Valley Road (Figure 3.1-1). Timed drive-bys were taken to assess the duration of view exposure for vehicle travelers to determine the level of exposure for potential viewers. Views from nearby public trails were also considered to ascertain if changes in views from popular recreation locations could occur. Private views are briefly discussed; however, changes to private views are typically not considered impacts under CEQA.

To evaluate potential visual impacts, this analysis considers both *visual impact susceptibility* and *visual impact severity*. Visual impact susceptibility is the degree to which existing visual resources could be impacted by development of a project. This accounts for *visual quality*, *viewer exposure*, and *viewer sensitivity*. Visual quality relates to the overall impression or appeal of an area. Viewer exposure describes the degree to which viewers are exposed to views of the landscape. Viewer sensitivity considers the level of interest or concern of viewers regarding an area’s visual resources.

Visual impact severity considers the potential negative effect of a proposed project on an area. Key factors considered in determining visual impact severity include the proposed project’s *visual contrast* with the natural and developed characteristics of an area, its potential for *visual dominance* over the existing landscape and *view impairment* through either the blocking or substantial alteration of existing views. While assessment of aesthetic and visual impacts is by nature somewhat subjective, use of these criteria provides a context by which to consider such potential impacts.

To support this analysis, a description of the existing landscape was compiled, including consideration of visual quality, potential viewer sensitivity, and site visibility and potential viewer exposure. The evaluation of viewer exposure also included consideration of the potential numbers of viewers and distance and duration of views. These factors helped support both visual impact susceptibility determinations and potential visual impact severity at each KVL. Potentially affected landscapes were photographed using the same focal length as the human eye, and the analysis then considered potential project visual contrast, visual dominance and potential for view impairment.

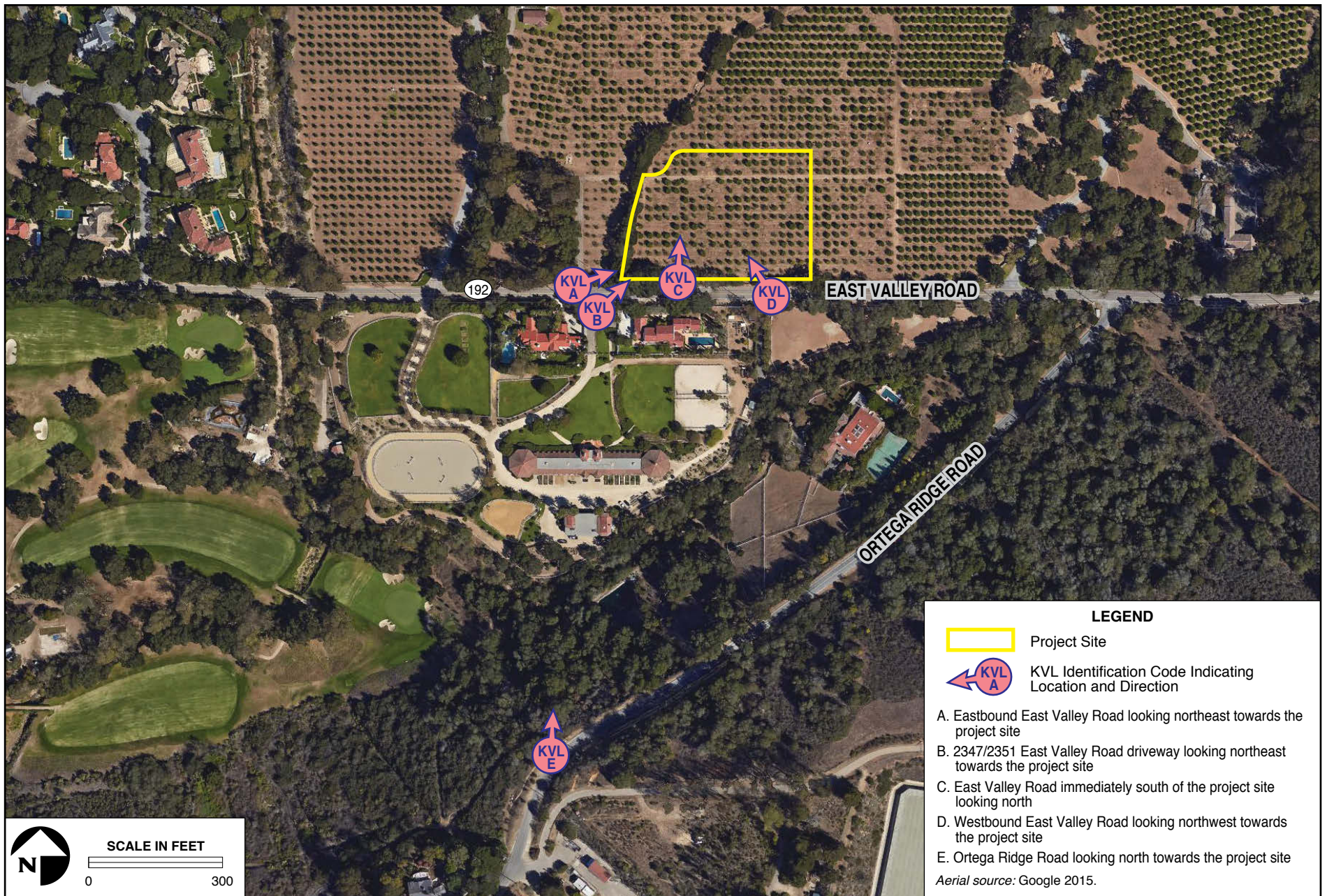


Figure 3.1-1. KVL Locations Overview

3.1.3.3 Mitigation Measures Included in the Proposed Project

The applicant has proposed a series of design measures to reduce potential project visual impacts including:

- Partial undergrounding of the hose tower, in order to maintain a maximum height above ground of 35 feet.
- Exterior building and site lighting would use hooded fixtures to shield and reduce the spread of light.
- Emergency floodlights would be strategically placed in locations on the site that minimize glare and lighting impacts to the adjacent neighbors. Lighting is to be used in an emergency situation only.
- A detailed landscape plan has been developed with the intent to substantially screen and/ or break up building masses of buildings as viewed from public roads and surrounding parcels. The plan would consist primarily of native trees and shrubs such as coast live oak and California sycamore with native shrubs and understory and small areas of retained or newly planted orchard. Many plants would be drought tolerant and/ or fire resistant. This plan may be further modified through planning review and consultation with adjacent property owners to maximize visual compatibility (refer to Figure 2-2).
 - A densely landscaped buffer of generally 50 feet in width on the northern and eastern sides of the site, providing aesthetic screening of structures from surrounding parcels (refer to Figure 2-2)
 - A 50-foot habitat restoration buffer from the top of the bank of the drainage along the western side of the site. Restoration would include planting of native oaks and riparian species, and would adhere to a detailed Habitat Restoration Plan to be approved by the County.
 - Setbacks of a minimum of 50 feet from the edge of paving on East Valley Road, with a mix of small and medium stature shrubs and trees (e.g., oaks) designed to partially screen and break up building masses when viewed from East Valley Road.

3.1.3.4 Impact Analysis

Proposed Project Characteristics

The proposed project would consist of development of three structures that would total 12,560-square feet (sf) all surrounded by landscape buffer areas (refer to Figure 2-2, Section 2.4, *Project Description*). The closest structure to East Valley Road would be the main fire station building, which would be set back at least 60 feet from East Valley Road and fronted by a line of existing oak trees along East Valley Road and a newly installed landscape buffer along this road frontage. A proposed Training and Hose Tower

Building on the project site's west end would include a 35-foot high tower used for hose drying and training purposes (Figure 3.1-2). This structure would be set back approximately 205 feet from East Valley Road. The proposed Maintenance Building on the project site's east would be located approximately 180 feet from East Valley Road.

The project would consist of one- to three-story structures. While the majority of development is single-story, given the institutional use and needs of a fire station for storage of fire engines and training exercises, some taller elements would be necessary. The roof ridgeline of the proposed structures would be 27 feet located above the two Apparatus Bays in the main fire station building, 25 feet above the two Apparatus Bays in the Maintenance Building, and 26 feet above the two-story training house. A 35-foot tall three-story hose drying tower would be attached to the Training and Hose Tower Building located at the rear of the site behind the main fire station building. Two proposed driveways off East Valley Road would provide the most open views into the site through gaps in the line of oaks along East Valley Road. Parking and paving would cover approximately 0.78 acres of the 2.55-acre site.

The architectural style would be consistent with other structures in the Montecito community, with thick plaster walls, deep inset windows and doors, and clay and mortar tile roofs. Although the project includes three separate buildings, the orientation and massing of the buildings combined with extensive landscaping would minimize the visual bulk of structures from the roadway.

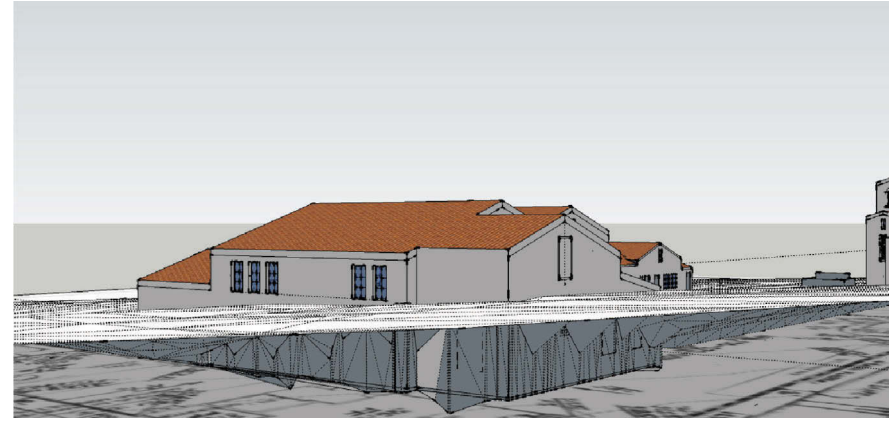
Landscaping would consist of an approximately 60-foot-deep buffer along East Valley Road, vegetated with a mix of trees and shrubs. The north, west, and east project boundaries would all have landscape buffers of 30 to 50 feet in width. Landscape concepts for the proposed project have evolved over time, and all landscape proposals considered by MFPD or suggested by County design review bodies include substantial screening vegetation along the project's frontage on East Valley Road and along site perimeters. When combined with existing oak trees along East Valley Road and the drainage bordering the site to the west, unobstructed views of the site would be limited.

Short-Term Construction Impacts

Evaluation of construction impacts focuses on the short-term visual impacts resulting from project construction, the presence of equipment and material storage, as well as alteration of the existing landscape by excavation and earthmoving. In a visual sense,



View of Main Station from Southwest



View of Maintenance Building from Southwest



View of Main Station from Northeast



View of Main Station from Southeast

Figure 3.1-2. Conceptual Station Renderings

short-duration construction impacts from the proposed project would be obtrusive and out of character with the surrounding natural landscape. The visual changes created by the presence of construction equipment, disruption of site landscape, and unfinished structures would alter the visual character of the site for a 12-month period. While this impact would be adverse, it would be short-term, and is thus determined to be less than significant. Further, existing oaks would partially screen construction activities and project landscaping would begin to break up and eventually largely screen the structures from public viewing areas. Should site landscaping and existing oaks be subject to fire-related disturbance from future wildfires, impacts would be short-term and similar to those associated with construction.

Long-Term Visual Impacts

Long-term project impacts focus on the visual impacts resulting from project operation and the permanent presence of new structures and development. It should be noted that existing views can change over time. For example, trees that currently screen a project site could be burned during wildfire events or die from old age or disease. However, oak trees typically live for 100 to 200 years or more and, as noted in the arborist report, onsite oaks are generally in good health. In addition, oaks are known for their post-fire regenerative capabilities and are therefore assumed to be part of the long-term landscape character of the area.

Evaluation of Visual Impact Susceptibility

As previously discussed, the *visual impact susceptibility* analysis accounts for the project site's *visual quality*, as well as *viewer exposure* and *viewer sensitivity*. The visual quality of views from this location is *high* because of the mature oaks and largely unobstructed orchards, and views of the Santa Ynez Mountains to the north. The combination of scenic mature oaks in the foreground, lemon orchards in the middle ground, and the Santa Ynez Mountains in the background creates a scenic semi-rural or natural ambiance. The MCP reinforces the importance of preserving the community's scenic qualities. Although not a State Scenic Highway, East Valley Road in this area is identified in the MCP as a scenic corridor. Therefore viewer sensitivity is considered *high* as well. However, viewer exposure is *low to moderate* due to very short-duration, limited public views through to the site (e.g., brief glimpses 4.5 seconds or less through vegetation) and the relatively low number of viewers.

Evaluation of Visual Impact Severity by Key Viewing Location

As discussed above, the visual impact severity analysis accounts for the project's visual contrast, potential dominance, and possible impairment of important views. The following analysis discusses potential visual impacts based on KVLs.

KVL A: Eastbound East Valley Road Looking Northeast Toward the Project Site



KVL A: Looking northeast from East Valley Road toward the project site; existing oak trees and proposed landscaping largely obscure views of the project site.

From KVL A, the site is largely obscured to eastbound travelers approaching the site on East Valley Road. This KVL represents the easternmost view of the proposed project available while looking northeast and traveling eastbound on East Valley Road. This KVL was selected because it represents the first view of the project site for eastbound travelers not completely obstructed by dense stands of the oaks in the area.

Because the proposed project structures would be largely obscured by site landscaping and existing vegetation, the visual contrast of the project almost indiscernible. No views would be blocked or substantially altered, and the project would not dominate this view. Therefore, the *visual impact severity* from this KVA would be *low*.

KVL B: 2347/2351 East Valley Road Driveway Looking Northeast Towards the Project Site



KVL B: Looking northeast towards the project site from 2347/2351 East Valley Road. The project site is partially visible through existing oak; however, views would be limited by new landscaping.

This KVL represents a view of the project site looking northeast from the public road at the driveway of 2347 and 2351 East Valley Road, which is a shared entrance for the residence across from the proposed project site and the residence to the southwest. It was selected to illustrate direct views of the proposed project site that would be experienced briefly by travelers on East Valley Road and local residents.

The proposed project structures would be partially visible from this KVL through the line of existing oaks; however, the structures would be set back 60 feet or more from the roadway and screened with additional landscaping. The proposed structures would not block any existing mountain views from this KVL; however, the new development would disrupt existing views of the orchards, creating moderate visual contrast and dominance of the proposed project with the surrounding landscape. The proposed project would introduce a new partially visible fire station and support structures into this view that would contrast with surrounding orchards. Therefore, *visual impact severity* would be *moderate*.

KVL C: East Valley Road Immediately South of the Project Site Looking North



KVL C: Looking north from East Valley Road directly south of the project site. Brief views would be available to passersby; proposed setbacks and landscaping would soften views of new structures.

This KVL represents a view of the project site looking north from East Valley Road, immediately south of the proposed project site. This KVL was selected because it is the closest view of the project site briefly available to travelers and cyclists along East Valley Road.

The proposed project would contrast with and break up the nearly contiguous orchard and woodlands on the north side of East Valley Road in this area, one of the least developed stretches of East Valley Road in Montecito. However, due to mature oaks in the foreground, the new structures would not substantially block any existing mountain views from this KVL. Construction of project driveways would entail removal of one mature oak, opening up some views of the new structures; however, while contrasting with the immediately surrounding orchards, the proposed project would be visually similar in design, bulk, and character to other area residences and would be setback farther from the road edge than existing residences in the vicinity. In addition, while the proposed structures include taller elements, they would include few of the two-story elements found in four of the six residences visible along this reach of East Valley Road. Therefore, *visual impact severity* would be *moderate*.

KVL D: Westbound East Valley Road Looking Northwest Towards the Project Site

KVL D: Looking northwest towards the project site. Brief views are available to passersby through a 100-foot gap in oak trees; new landscaping would limit views of proposed structures.

Visual screening provided by a row of oaks along the roadway limits distant views of the project site for westbound travelers on East Valley Road. KVL D was selected because it represents a view of the proposed project site available to westbound travelers on East Valley Road through a short gap in the oaks that line the north side of the road. The proposed project would contrast with and somewhat dominate surrounding orchards; however, the proposed 50-foot landscape buffer along the site's east end combined with the backdrop of the oak-lined drainage would lessen this effect. The proposed project would not block any existing mountain views from KVL D due to proposed setbacks. Therefore, visual impact severity would be *moderate*.

KVL E: Ortega Ridge Road Looking North Towards the Project Site



KVL E: Ortega Ridge Road looking north toward the project site. Distance and proposed landscaping would soften views of new structures.

This KVL was selected to provide a view of the project site and general vicinity looking north from Ortega Ridge Road. This elevated vantage would provide brief views of the proposed project through a gap in the oaks which line this road and obstruct views of project site.

The proposed project would alter views of the existing lemon orchard and oak groves from Ortega Ridge Road. However, potential visual dominance would be limited in context of views of residences, the large outbuilding south of the project site, the distance of the site from KVL E, and proposed landscaping that would surround the structures. While the view would be changed to include additional structures on the perimeter of an extensive orchard, existing views would not be substantially altered as no scenic elements would be blocked and the visual continuity of the larger rural area would remain. Therefore *visual impact severity* from this location would be *moderate*.

Additional Visual Considerations

Additional visual concerns include the architectural compatibility of the proposed project with other development in eastern Montecito and potential effects related to scenic

resources such as trees, particularly if the project would have the potential to “substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings” (CEQA Guidelines Appendix G).

Architectural Compatibility

The proposed fire station would consist of 12,560 sf of one- to three-story structures with a 35-foot maximum height, which would exceed the size of most residences in the vicinity, but would be consistent with the size of structures on the residential estate to the south. The overall potential visual effects of this larger facility would be reduced due to existing dense vegetation, greater setbacks from public roads than typical for the area, and proposed substantial landscaping. In addition, total site grading would consist of an estimated 8,000 cubic yards of cut, with up to 600 cy of export. This export of soil would lead to slight changes in overall site topography with much of the site being lowered 1 to 2 feet below existing grade, and more limited areas being lowered from 3 to 5 feet below existing grade. Installation of dense project landscaping would help mask these changes in topography.

The proposed project’s single-story construction with taller elements, such as the 27-foot-high ridgeline over the main fire station Apparatus Bays and the 35-foot-high Hose Tower would be consistent with or lower than the two-story elements of many surrounding structures, including residences adjacent to the site south of East Valley Road and the four tower projections on the large barn south of East Valley Road. Proposed structures would also not exceed the height of existing oaks that border the site. Horizontally, the 107-foot length of the main fire station structure frontage viewed from East Valley Road and the 46-foot length of the Training and Hose Tower Building frontage, set back approximately 205 feet from East Valley Road, would be generally consistent with the 160-foot length of the residences across East Valley Road to the south and substantially less than the 370-foot length of the large barn. The design and detail of the proposed project would also be architecturally consistent with the Spanish Colonial style of structures in vicinity, including features such as a low perimeter wall facing East Valley Road, tile roof, deep recessed windows, and color scheme. Therefore, project design would be generally compatible with surrounding uses and would be subject to further refinement by the MBAR.

Loss of Trees

Project construction is expected to result in removal of three mature oak trees and trimming of a number of oaks along East Valley Road. The loss of mature trees would incrementally reduce the number of oaks along East Valley Road and reduce screening of the site. However, most of the large existing oaks along East Valley Road would remain intact and additional oaks and other trees would be planted in project landscape buffers that would more than offset the loss and would provide substantial new visual screening of the proposed structures. Therefore, visual impacts associated with the loss of trees are considered less than significant.

3.1.3.5 Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact

VIS-1 The proposed project would result in adverse, but less than significant, impacts to views from East Valley Road (Class III).

As detailed in the KVL analysis, the proposed project would result in new development in a semi-rural area that would change existing visual continuity and agricultural uses of the site. However, the proposed fire station would be only moderately visible from East Valley Road, with no significant distant views of the project site afforded to either westbound or eastbound travelers on East Valley Road. Views for eastbound travelers would be almost entirely obstructed by oak trees until nearly directly south of the site. Views for westbound travelers would be intermittent, partially obscured by existing trees, and limited by proposed landscaping (refer to KVLs A, C, and D). In general, viewer exposure to the structures would be intermittent and of short duration, occurring for approximately 5 seconds for travelers driving at 35 mph, though slightly longer for cyclists. The proposed structures' limited visibility, location at the margin of agricultural operations, and screening provided by surrounding oaks and proposed landscaping would substantially reduce potential visual disruption of the area. In addition, proposed changes in site topography of generally 1 to 2 feet lower than existing grades would also be masked by proposed landscaping. This lowering of the site would also have the effect of incrementally reducing building profiles to passers-by on East Valley Road. Although the project would contrast with immediately surrounding orchards, it would be visually consistent with the size, bulk, height, and design of residences and other structures in the vicinity.

Construction of the proposed project would not obstruct mountain or other scenic views. The project would not result in adverse effects related to glare, as none of the project buildings contain large glass or mirrored facades. In terms of lighting, an increase to nighttime lighting would result from limited exterior lighting; however, such lighting would be consistent with Montecito standards (e.g., hooded) and would not result in a substantial increase in outdoor ambient light. Therefore, changes in views from East Valley Road would be an *adverse, but less than significant impact* (Class III).

Impact

VIS-2 The proposed project would result in an adverse, but less than significant impact on views from elevated vistas, including Ortega Ridge Road and nearby foothills (Class III).

Views from the elevated vantages would not be significantly impacted by the proposed project because of limited visibility of the project site from surrounding public viewing areas such as Ortega Ridge Road and local trails, as well as the relatively small project footprint in relation to the larger setting. Although located within a contiguous semi-rural landscape, the project's proximity to East Valley Road, residences, a large outbuilding, and the oak-lined drainage channel would lessen the visual disruption of the larger rural landscape character from elevated vantages. In particular, considering the site's proximity to East Valley Road and the visually dominant residences and equestrian facilities that are adjacent to the south of the project site, the visual contrast with and project dominance over the existing landscape would be less than significant. The visual contrast and dominance would be further reduced with the proposed project's additional landscaping and vegetative screening, including large stature native trees such as coast live oak and California sycamore. Therefore, changes in views from the elevated vantages would be an *adverse, but less than significant impact* (Class III).

3.1.3.6 Cumulative Impacts

The proposed project would result in the conversion of approximately 2.55 acres of orchard use. It should be noted that there are no currently pending major development projects along the East Valley Road or Ortega Ridge corridors. Although Rancho San Carlos is designated for large lot residential uses, no development is pending on the site. Therefore, no substantial cumulative aesthetic impacts would occur related to individual developments along the two major public roads in the immediate project vicinity.

At the planning level, as identified in the MCP EIR, future development of open spaces in Montecito, Summerland, and Santa Barbara would result in cumulatively significant changes to the visual character of the region. Wildfires may also continue to affect surrounding views through damage and removal of hillside vegetation. However, the implementation of the proposed project would not substantially contribute to this potential cumulative impact, as the site would be well-shielded by oak trees and landscaping and its scale and design would be similar to existing residential development in the area and would therefore be visually compatible with the area's existing semi-rural setting.

Given that the project would be consistent with MCP and the Montecito Growth Management Ordinance (MGMO) development guidelines and zoning, the project's contribution to the reduction of farmland and associated rural aesthetics in Santa Barbara County is considered insignificant.

3.1.3.7 Residual Impacts

As no significant impacts to visual resources would occur as a result of the proposed project, no residual impacts would remain after project implementation. Incorporation of proposed mitigation measures such as landscaped buffers and setbacks would further decrease potential for adverse visual changes.