

4.1 AESTHETIC RESOURCES

The Aesthetic Resources section assesses visual impacts which may result from the proposed construction and development of the *Grover Beach Lodge and Conference Center* (Grover Beach Lodge). This analysis determines if a change in the visual environment would occur, whether that change would be perceived as a positive or negative one, and the degree of any change relative to the existing setting. The focus of the Aesthetic Resources section is on the potential for the project to result in impacts to sensitive coastal visual resources primarily as seen from public viewing areas.

4.1.1 Project Setting

The project site is located at the end of West Grand Avenue, within the Pismo State Beach area, and is bounded by Pismo State Beach to the west, the Pismo State Beach Restaurant and Golf Course to the north, Le Sage Riviera Recreational Vehicle (RV) Park to the east, and West Grand Avenue and Pismo State Beach to the South.

The visual character within and surrounding the project site is a diverse combination of natural areas, residential, commercial, recreational, and industrial uses. The fore and back dune areas surrounding the western and southern sides of the project are described in the City of Grover Beach Local Coastal Program (LCP) as being a "unique visual resource for it is one of the few areas remaining along the California coast that still offers extensive unobstructed coastal vistas easily accessible to urbanized areas."

Figure 4.1-1. Coastal Dunes and Pacific Ocean West of the Project Site



In contrast to the visual quality of the dunes, the area east of the project along Highway 1, the Southern Pacific Railroad tracks, and Front Street are identified as having "low visual quality," with an overall visual impression of being a "back door" to the city.

Figure 4.1-2. Southern Pacific Railroad Tracks East of the Project Site



The area along the west side of Highway 1, which includes portions of the project site, is of better visual quality than the east side of the highway; however, partial views of RVs and mobile homes diminish view quality.

Figure 4.1-3. RV Park West of Highway 1



The vegetation and landscaping associated with Pismo State Beach Golf Course and North Beach Campground north of the project site provide a visual continuity in those areas.

Figure 4.1-4. Pismo State Beach Golf Course North of the Project Site



Although Meadow Creek, which runs along the eastern perimeter of the site, is somewhat degraded, the riparian vegetation offers some degree of visual connection to the natural landscape of the dunes south of West Grand Avenue.

Figure 4.1-5. Meadow Creek along the Eastern Perimeter of the Project Site



The commercial area along Grand Avenue east of Highway 1 serves as a primary access route to the project site. The development along Grand Avenue east of the railroad has undergone a revitalization effort over the past several years resulting in a more cohesive appearance and visual theme.

Figure 4.1-6. Revitalized Grover Beach along Grand Avenue



Residential neighborhoods are visible at a distance of approximately 0.3 mile on the gentle slope rising to the east.

Figure 4.1-7. Residential Neighborhood Visible on the Hillside to the East



Within the project site, the wide variety of public uses and spaces contributes to a somewhat disharmonious visual pattern and reduced visual quality. RV staging, horse trailers and horses, golf course parking, the restaurant and parking, public restrooms, the boardwalk terminus, and beach access parking all cohabit the project site. As a result, the project site for the most part has moderate to low visual unity.

Figure 4.1-8. View of the Project Site Looking North from West Grand Avenue



4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

The proposed project is located within the jurisdiction of the City of Grover Beach (City) and is within the Coastal Zone. The regulatory setting pertaining to visual resources includes review of the proposed development's consistency with various elements of the City of Grover Beach General Plan, LCP, and Municipal Code, in addition to the review of findings made in this document per CEQA Guidelines.

4.1.3 Thresholds of Significance

The determinations of significance of project impacts are based on applicable policies, regulations, goals, and guidelines defined by CEQA and the City.

In addition to comparing the project to relevant policies and standards, the aesthetic resources assessment identified which specific criteria contribute most to the existing quality of each view, and if change would occur to that criteria as a result of the project. If a change in visual criteria was identified, this change was analyzed for its potential effect on the existing scenic character. This analysis was combined with the potential number of viewers, their sensitivities, and viewing duration in order to determine the overall level of impacts. Specifically, the project would be considered to have a significant effect on the environment if the effects exceed the significance criteria described below.

4.1.3.1 California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines

The significance of potential aesthetic resources impacts are based on thresholds identified within Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. According to the Guidelines, aesthetic impacts would be considered significant if the proposed project would:

Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

A substantial adverse impact to a scenic vista would occur if the proposed project would significantly degrade the scenic landscape as viewed from public roads, or from other public areas. The degree of potential impact on scenic vistas varies with factors such as viewing distance, duration, viewer sensitivity, and the visual context of the surrounding area.

The aesthetics section analyzes the extent that the proposed development would alter the visual quality of the project site and its surroundings. The specific characteristics that define important vistas are identified, and the project's effect on those characteristics is assessed. If the fundamental quality of the vistas are substantially reduced, significant impacts would result.

City of Grover Beach planning documents and regulations do not by themselves set a specific threshold regarding the degradation of a scenic vista or visual resources. However review of applicable planning document language indicates that among other features, views of the ocean, shoreline and dunes are among the resources considered aesthetically important.

Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

State Highway 1, located adjacent to the project site is not identified by the State of California as an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway. As a result, this CEQA threshold does not apply to the project.

Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Project related actions would be considered to have a significant impact on the visual character of the site if they altered the area in a way that significantly changed, detracted from, or degraded the visual quality of the site and was inconsistent with community policies regarding visual character. The degree to which that change reflects documented community values and meets viewers' aesthetic expectations is the basis for determining levels of significance. Visual contrast may be used as a measure of the potential impact that the project may have on the visual quality of the site. If a strong contrast occurred where project features or activities attract attention and dominate the landscape setting in a negative way, this would be considered a potentially significant impact on visual character or quality of the site. Consideration of potential significance includes analysis of visual character elements such as land use and intensity, visual integrity of the landscape type, and other factors.

Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The project would result in a significant impact if it subjected viewers from public roads, public recreation areas, or adjacent residences to a substantial amount of point-source lighting visibility at night, or if the collective lumination of the project resulted in a noticeable spill-over effect into the nighttime sky, increasing the ambient light over the region. The placement of lighting, source of illumination, and fixture types combined with viewer locations, adjacent reflective elements,

and atmospheric conditions can affect the degree of change to nighttime views. The degree of impact caused by night lighting would consider the type of lighting proposed by the project along with the lighting reasonably expected to be generated by future users of the property.

4.1.3.2 Consistency with the City of Grover Beach Plans and Policies

The City planning documents do not contain specific criteria for determining thresholds of significance regarding aesthetic resources. However, in comparing the project to the above CEQA Guideline thresholds, substantial consideration was given to the project's consistency with public policies, plans, goals, and regulations concerning scenic vistas, scenic roadways, visual character, and night lighting. The following goals, policies, and guidelines provide a basis for determining levels of potential impact as well as an indication of aesthetic values and sensitivity to visual change. Note that the proposed project is consistent with the Scenic Routes Element of the General Plan.

The City of Grover Beach Local Coastal Program Section 2.2 Part II.

The Local Coastal Program Section 2.2.2 defines nine "Visual Resource Areas" within the city having distinct visual qualities and characteristics. The majority of the project site lies within Visual Resource Area 3, which generally includes the area north of West Grand Avenue and east of the dunes, including the Highway 1 and railroad corridor. The area of the project south of West Grand Avenue and the westernmost portion of the project are located within Visual Resource Area 1. The Local Coastal Program also identifies policies intended to protect and enhance the visual quality of each of the Visual Resource Areas as follows:

Section 2.2.4 Recommendations states:

A. AREA 1

1. Policy: Dunes, beach and shoreline shall continue to dominate the area visually. All structures shall be subordinate or complimentary to these natural features and to existing structures.
2. Policy: In the relatively small portion of Area 1 where development may occur, development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the shoreline and dunes. The scenic and visual quality of this area shall be considered, protected, and enhanced where feasible.

C. AREA 3

1. Policy: As the Coastal Planned Commercial area west of Highway 1 redevelops into consistent visitor serving uses, the allowed development shall be sited and designed to protect the existing view corridors perpendicular to Highway 1, along Grand Avenue and Le Sage Drive, and create one to three additional view corridors perpendicular to Highway 1 north of Le Sage Drive. The development in this area shall be complimentary and subordinate to the character of the shoreline and dune setting to the fullest extent feasible.

Please refer to Chapter 3 of this EIR, Environmental Setting, for consistency evaluation with other sections of the Local Coastal Program. The project may have some inconsistencies related to the recommended height of the buildings.

The City Of Grover Beach General Plan Land Use Element

LU-6.2 Beachfront Lodge. The City will actively pursue development of the Beachfront Lodge site with a hotel/convention center that incorporates at least the following general features:

- a. The hotel/convention center design should be in context with the surrounding dune complex and beach. The project should consist of more than one building with staggered heights and bulk to break up the building mass and allow for view corridors from the site.
- f. Protection of sensitive biological, scenic, and cultural resources;

Municipal Code - Zoning Regulations

Part 22 - Coastal Planned Commercial District or "C-P-C" District

Sec. 9122.1. Purpose. (C-P-C)

The Coastal Planned Commercial District is intended to provide for visitor-serving needs in a manner that is sensitive to the environmental, visual, and archaeological resources within and adjacent to the boundaries of the District by sensitively siting and designing structures. (Am. Ord. 10-04)

Sec. 9122.6. Maximum Allowable Height. (C-P-C)

The maximum allowable height in the "C-P-C" District shall be three (3) stories but not to exceed forty (40) feet for sixty (60) percent of any project and shall be two (2) stories but not to exceed twenty-eight (28) feet for the remaining forty (40) percent of any project. In each case the protection of existing view corridors shall be required. (Am. Ord. 10-04)

Sec. 9122.12. Development Standards. (C-P-C)

All development plans and subsequent construction shall implement the following standards:

- (A) That all development in this area be sited and designed to protect existing view slots or corridors from Highway 1 and upland areas to the dunes and shoreline.
- (B) That all development in this area be sited and designed to enhance or create new view slots from Highway 1 to the dunes and shoreline.
- (E) That native plant material shall be the major theme in all landscape designs.
- (F) That all roads, parking lots, and structures shall be sited and designed to prevent impacts which would significantly degrade the adjacent environmentally sensitive area.
- (G) That the architectural theme of development in this area shall generally follow the criteria set forth in the adopted Advisory Architectural Design Guidelines

and additionally said architectural theme shall be compatible and complimentary to the existing natural vegetation and land forms. The architecture and site design shall include the following characteristics, in order to reduce massing and reduce the sense of verticalness of structures:

- (1) Use of structural, architectural design elements, i.e., corridors, heavy beams, posts, arches, columns, colonnades, canopies, cornices, etc.
- (2) Strong textured look, using woods, tiles, pavers, stuccos, stones, blocks and bricks, colors, plant material, recesses, etc.
- (3) Strong feeling or overhead treatment such as roof overhangs, balconies, or dark fascias.
- (4) Earthen colors. Colors with warm, natural tones. Colors range from whites, yellows, browns, clays, slates, etc.
- (5) Wall relief (graphic, three dimensional design, landscaping, heavy textured stucco, wood tiles, etc.).
- (6) Strong window statement (treatment of frame, mullions, border, etc.).
- (7) The minimum distance separating buildings shall be equal to the sum of the height of any two adjacent buildings divided by two, but in no case less than ten (10) feet between buildings.

The City of Grover Beach Visioning Project Final Report

(Note: Although this report has no direct regulatory authority, it is included here as an indicator of community values and sensitivity regarding visual resources relating to the project site).

B. The Vision

In April 2004, the City of Grover Beach initiated a city-wide Visioning Project in anticipation of completing an update to the Land Use Element of the General Plan and to support its current economic development efforts. This report provides a summary of the results of the Visioning Project. The Visioning Project provided a forum for Grover Beach residents to discuss how they would like their community to change over time. In particular, residents and other stakeholders discussed the type and intensity of future land uses and development that they envision for their community. The goal of the process was to define a general "Consensus Vision" for the future of Grover Beach, to inform the Land Use Element update and to help direct the City's current efforts to attract new commercial development and broaden its tax base.

2. Grover Beach Lodge (Beachfront Lodge)

There was broad support for developing a lodging facility and conference center on the Beachfront Lodge site at Pismo State Beach, at the end of Grand Avenue adjacent to the Pacific Coast Highway. As the discussions unfolded over the course of the workshops, participants agreed that the development on the site should not be a high-rise hotel but a low-slung lodge and conference center with

public grounds, similar in scale to the Asilomar Conference Center in Monterey or the Ahwahnee Hotel in Yosemite Valley. Workshop participants agreed that the development on this site should preserve and enhance the coastal experience, and enhance public access to the dunes, beach, and ocean.

4.1.4 Assessment Methodology

The findings of this study are based on multiple field visits conducted over several weeks, including review of the entire site as well as the surrounding area. Resource inventories were conducted both on foot and from moving vehicles. Existing visual resources and site conditions were photographed and recorded on aerial maps and field notes. Assessment of project elements and programs was based on plans and descriptions provided by the project applicant. City planning documents and previous studies relevant to the project and surrounding area were referred to for gaining an understanding of community aesthetic values.

Locations of critical structure elements were identified based on site plan information and architectural elevations provided by the project applicant. These critical project features were surveyed and staked in the field, and corresponding horizontal and vertical location data was developed. The architectural appearance of the buildings for inclusion in the photo-simulations was provided by the project architect. Reference flags were positioned at each critical point. These flags were used as a visual scale reference for confirming structure height and massing, ensuring accuracy of photo-simulations, and for determining overall project visibility.

The reference flags were then viewed from all potential public viewer group locations on Highway 1, Grand Avenue, local roads and neighborhoods, the railroad tracks, and from recreational areas such as Pismo State Beach, Pismo State Beach Restaurant and Golf Course, and the Pismo Beach/Grover Beach boardwalk. Resulting from this initial review, representative viewpoints were determined for further analysis, based on dominance of the site within the view, duration of views, and expected sensitivity of the viewer group. Of those representative viewpoints, Key Viewing Areas (KVA) were selected which would best illustrate the visual changes proposed by the project (refer to Figure 4.1-12). Photographs were taken from the KVAs, and photo-simulations were prepared illustrating the appearance of the project as proposed by the applicant. Visibility of the surveyed reference flags was used to ensure accuracy of the photo simulations. The completed simulations were used to quantify potential project visibility and to assess related impacts. The project site was then field-reviewed to assist in determining possible mitigation measures. Images of the existing views, along with photo-simulations of the proposed project can be seen in Figures 4.1-13 through 4.1-16. All photo-simulations have been updated to accurately reflect the proposed revisions to the project (relocation of the conference center).

4.1.4.1 Photo-Simulations

Photographic images and simulations are a valuable tool for understanding and disclosing the estimated visual effect of the proposed project. It is important to note however that photographs do not represent the same level of visual acuity and sensitivity to detail as the human eye. As a result, photo-simulations tend to understate the anticipated perception of impacts.

4.1.5 Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The project is proposed on a sensitive site in terms of community and coastal aesthetic character. The parcel is clearly visible from Highway 1, as well as from West Grand Avenue and from several other local roads in the area. The project site serves as an important gateway to Pismo State Beach as well as the city of Grover Beach. The potential effect the project could have on the visual environment is of likely to be of concern to the community based on review of City planning policy and established goals.

The analysis considers the existing development as part of the visual baseline. This includes the existing uses of the property, neighborhoods and natural areas surrounding the project, as well as other areas of the community that define the overall character of the city of Grover Beach. The visual quality of the community has as much to do with the built environment as it does the natural setting. Patterns of development, architecture, scale, massing, and vegetation combine to define how the community is perceived by residents and visitors alike.

In determining levels of impact, this study also compares the proposed project to the specific visual resource goals of the City. When the stated goals demonstrate that a high degree of value is placed on the visual environment, the standards to which the project must be compared are equally high. As a result of the valued small-town beach setting, combined with an awareness of scenic quality as reflected in City planning policy, it is anticipated that community and viewer sensitivity to visual changes on this prominent site will be high.

For the purpose of this report, the project is analyzed according to the following Study Areas, as identified in Figure 2-6, as follows: Area A, Lodge and Conference Center; Area B, State Park Improvements; Area C, Equestrian Parking, and Area D, RV Sewer Dump Station.

4.1.5.1 Scenic Vistas

Overview

Scenic vistas within and surrounding the project area include views of the Pacific Ocean, expanses of sand along the beach, as well as the fore and back dunes. Distant hillsides to the northwest also provide a scenic vista backdrop for the area. Presently, the fore dunes block views to the ocean and beach from most areas within the project site as well as from Highway 1, much of Grand Avenue, and Le Sage Drive. In addition, the existing Le Sage Riviera RV Park, mobile home park, and vegetation along Meadow Creek substantially block views to much of the project site and the ocean. From the westernmost portion of the site and from the fore dunes themselves, high quality scenic vistas are available up and down the coast. The ocean and portions of the beach are visible from elevated inland areas east of the project, including a brief section of westbound Grand Avenue and nearby residential neighborhoods.

Figure 4.1-9. Looking West toward the Project Area from Third Street and Ramona Avenue



Passengers traveling on the Amtrak train east of the project site also have some limited views of the ocean in the distance. Overhead utility poles and lines run along the north side of West Grand Avenue, interrupting scenic views to the south as seen from the project site.

Figure 4.1-10. Looking West toward the Project Site from the Southern Pacific Railroad Tracks



Lodge and Conference Center (Area A)

The most visible components of the project would be the ~~four~~^{three} buildings associated with the lodge and conference center. ~~The conference center (Building 1)~~ would be located near the center of the site and would be the tallest of the structures, at approximately ~~40~~⁵⁰ feet in height (or 51 feet in elevation ~~40 feet Grover Beach datum~~). Buildings 2 and 3 would provide lodging and would extend approximately ~~34~~⁴⁷ feet in height (or 47 feet in elevation ~~37 feet Grover Beach datum~~). Building 2 would be north of Building 1 ~~the conference center~~ and separated by a distance of approximately 90 feet. Building 3 would be located approximately 80 feet south of Building 1 ~~the conference center~~. The conference center (Building 4) would be approximately 28 feet tall and would be located 140 feet northeast of Building 1.

Since existing views to the ocean and beach, as seen from viewpoints along Highway 1, Grand Avenue, Le Sage Drive, and the eastern portion of the site are already substantially limited, the addition of the new buildings would have minimal effect on scenic vistas from those areas. From portions of the project near the golf course, existing views to the fore dunes would be reduced by Building 2. In addition, as seen from the westernmost section of West Grand Avenue, views of the distant hills to the northeast would be partially blocked by Buildings 1, 3 and ~~3~~⁴. As seen from the beach area and the boardwalk, the lodge improvements would not block or adversely affect scenic vistas of the ocean, dunes, or coastline.

From elevated viewpoints east of the project in the vicinity of Third Street, the buildings would affect a small portion of the ocean view. Because of the viewing height and distance however, the project would occupy only a small portion of the overall viewshed, and quality ocean views would remain over the tops of the buildings and to the north and south.

A small portion of the available ocean view as seen by Amtrak passengers would also be affected. The existing ocean view is mostly filtered by intervening development and vegetation. The new buildings would further reduce that view, but the effect on the scenic vista would be minor since the existing view is already compromised.

The spacing of the buildings and the associated gaps would allow views through the site at certain locations. Generally the heights of the buildings would not be a factor on the project's effect on scenic vistas, except from the distant views to the east. From those viewpoints, the visual effect of the building heights would be minimal relative to the overall viewshed and view quality. The upper floors of ~~the lodge facility~~ Buildings 1, 2 and 3 are expected to provide increased opportunities for viewing the ocean, beach, dunes, and scenic vistas.

State Park Improvements (Area B)

State Park improvements would generally consist of relocating and refurbishing the existing uses within the southwest and northeast portions of the project site. Rebuilt public restrooms and picnic areas would be provided, as well as new paths and walkways, beach drop off areas and parking. The existing Fin's Restaurant would remain in the same location and be enlarged somewhat. Dune restoration and enhancement would occur along the western edge of this study area. At the golf course, the existing pro shop and event tent would remain, and the practice putting green, parking, and access would be relocated.

As previously described, the fore dunes block views to the ocean and beach from the eastern portion of the project site as well as from Highway 1, Grand Avenue, and Le Sage Drive. Because the proposed improvements within the State Park improvements area (Area B) would be of the same general scale as the existing features in that area, effects on existing scenic

vistas would be minimal. The existing view corridor looking southwest from the western segment of Le Sage Drive would be maintained due to the proposed gap between buildings 1 and 2.

The project would be expected to increase public access and the number of potential viewers to the area, and the improvements proposed for the western portion of the project would create increased opportunities for public views of scenic coastal vistas.

Equestrian Parking (Area C)

The equestrian area would accommodate both parking and staging for equestrian activities. Approximately 0.5 acre in size, the parking area would be decomposed granite or some other permeable material. The proposed equestrian staging area would be built south of West Grand Avenue, in an area which is currently vegetated dunes and undulated topography

Figure 4.1-11. Looking South across West Grand Avenue toward the Proposed Equestrian Staging Area



In order to build the parking and staging area, the dunes would be excavated and leveled, resulting in a cut slope around the southern, western, and eastern perimeters of the site. The cut slope would range from approximately 7 to 18 feet in height. A 6 to 8-foot berm is proposed between the two driveways along the West Grand Avenue frontage. Fencing would be required in order to minimize disturbance to adjacent dune habitat and direct activities.

Since no structures are proposed for the equestrian staging area, no views would be blocked from nearby viewpoints. As seen from West Grand Avenue, existing ocean views to the south are currently limited by the dunes. The construction of the berm along the front side of the equestrian area would somewhat limit views to the remaining dunes and also to the proposed cut slopes to the south.

The fore and back dunes are identified as a coastal visual resource. As seen from much of the project site and from parts of West Grand Avenue, the dunes contribute to the scenic vista to the south. The grading required for the equestrian area, along with the associated truck and trailer activity, although partially screened would have an adverse affect on the scenic vista in that area.

RV Sewer Dump Station (Area D)

The existing sewer dump station located off Le Sage Drive would be relocated to within the North Beach Campground. The existing dump station at the North Beach Campground would be expanded to accommodate the additional use. The campground and proposed dump station location area are generally well-vegetated, and views to the area from outside the park are limited. No scenic vistas are identified in this area, and the proposed dump station elements would not block important views of coastal visual resources.

Summary of the Project's Affect on Scenic Vistas

Because views to the Pacific Ocean and beach are already limited from the majority of the project site and the surrounding areas, construction of the project would result in only a minor adverse affect on scenic vistas. The ~~four three lodge~~ buildings in Area A would have the greatest affect on views through the site. A small portion of ocean views would be lost as seen from the distant neighborhoods to the east and from the train, but quality views would remain over and beyond the project. As seen from West Grand Avenue, scenic views to the hillsides in the distance north of the project would be partially blocked. The proposed equestrian area (Area C) south of West Grand Avenue would also have a negative effect on dune views to the south.

AES Impact 1 The equestrian staging area, Area C, would require removal of scenic dunes, visibility of excavated slopes and parked vehicles in a visually sensitive area, resulting in a direct long-term impact to the scenic vista of the dunes.

AES/mm-1 Prior to issuance of a grading permit for Area C, plans of the proposed equestrian staging and parking area shall be submitted showing the following:

- a. All slopes (including the berm) surrounding the equestrian area shall be contour-graded to resemble and blend with the surrounding natural undulating dune formations.*
- b. All disturbed areas shall be densely revegetated with native, dune-specific plant material.*
- c. Required fencing shall be the minimum size and amount necessary to provide safety and resource protection goals. No chain link shall be used.*
- d. Required signage shall be the minimum size and amount necessary to provide safety and resource protection goals. Only natural-appearing signage materials shall be used.*

Residual Impacts

With implementation of this mitigation, impacts to the scenic vistas of the dunes would be considered significant but mitigable.

4.1.5.2 Scenic Highway

This CEQA threshold does not apply because the project is not within the view corridor of any officially designated State Scenic Highway. Highway 1 is not classified as “Eligible” or “Officially Designated” within the State Scenic Highway system.

4.1.5.3 Visual Character

Overview

The project site occupies one of the more visible locations within the city of Grover Beach as well as throughout the south coast of San Luis Obispo County. The proximity to Highway 1 and West Grand Avenue greatly increases the potential number of viewers of the project. West Grand Avenue adjacent to the project serves as a primary point of coastal access, particularly for off-highway vehicle enthusiasts. The project site is popular to a wide range of activities, including RV users, golfers, equestrians, surfers, beach-goers, hikers, restaurant patrons, and others. Because of this large number of potential viewers and highly visible location, the appearance of the project would have a substantial influence on the visual character of the community and the State Park. The project would serve as a visual landmark for the city of Grover Beach and the coast.

Any development of the site would include an inherent change of visual character. The change in character brought about by the project would be the result of a complete alteration of the number, size and massing of structures, reconfigured spatial qualities, new landcover and surfaces, and new uses, use patterns and intensity of development.

Lodge and Conference Center (Area A)

The lodge buildings in Area A would be the most dominant visual elements of the project. The buildings would be the tallest buildings in the vicinity as well as throughout the city of Grover Beach. Building 1, ~~the conference center~~, would be 40 feet tall (50-51 feet in elevation), and Buildings 2 and 3 would each be 34-37 feet tall (47 feet in elevation). Building 4, the Conference Center, would be 28 feet tall. The maximum building height currently allowed by the City Building Code for this site is 40 feet tall.

The existing visual character of the project site and surroundings is neither exclusively natural nor urban. The site's proximity to the open beach and dunes to the west and south influence the visual character in terms of a natural, undeveloped context. However the commercial, industrial, residential, and recreational land uses to the north and east have an equal affect on defining the site and its setting as a built environment. The site itself also has both natural and developed visual elements. The dunes, creek and open areas are seen in the same vicinity as the golf course and restaurant, RV and equestrian staging areas, paved parking lots, material storage, lighting and overhead utilities. Although the architectural style of the golf course clubhouse and the public restroom are similar, the existing project site lacks a unified visual identity. The visual quality of much of the project site is only moderate. However in many ways, the site serves as a visual transition between the natural dune and beach areas and the built character of the city to the east.

The new buildings and the large parking areas would occupy most of the eastern portion of the project, with the exception of a proposed 50-foot wide natural buffer along Meadow Creek. The placement of these more urbanizing elements away from the beach and dunes and closer to the existing areas of development and the town would help maintain the transitional character of the site and would reduce the project's visual affect on the natural coastal areas to the west.

The architectural style of the buildings tends toward an urban, modern appearance, with flat and shed roof forms and generous use of clerestory windows. The building exterior materials include hardie-plank siding and stucco with wood trellises. The proposed colors range from off-white to earth tones. Roofing materials would be a combination of standing seam metal and asphalt shingles.

The visual scale of the buildings, both in terms of height and mass would greatly contrast with the immediate surroundings. The structure designs effectively utilize a great deal of form and surface articulation in order to reduce the overall perceived scale and visual mass of the buildings. In spite of their forms, the underlying height and breadth of the structures would likely still be understood by most viewers. The building heights would not exceed the City zoning standard, and the scale of the structures would not be uncharacteristic of many hotel and resorts in other urban/beach settings. The structures would inherently dominate the visual character of the site; however, the scale of the buildings would likely be accepted by many viewers as being consistent with a resort-style project of this type in a semi-urban setting.

State Park Improvements (Area B)

As stated previously, the project site currently provides a visual transition from the natural dune and beach areas located west and south, to the more developed areas of the community to the east and north. The majority of the State Parks Improvement Area occupies the western portion of the site. Proposed improvements in this area include the more passive and recreational aspects of the project such as beach access trails, picnic shelters, and interpretive areas. The majority of the dune restoration efforts would occur in this area as well. These lower density uses would provide an appropriate visual transition from the beach area to the more developed portions of the project, and would help the developed areas better fit the surroundings. Along with building architecture, the consistency of site design, including pathways, site furnishings, signage, and landscaping would help unify the area and establish a visual identity for the setting.

The reconfiguration of the golf course parking lot, event tent, and practice green relocation would maintain the existing visual character of the golf course. Site improvements and layout would create a stronger visual continuity with the remainder of the project and setting.

Equestrian Parking (Area C)

The location proposed for construction of the equestrian staging area is part of a large dune complex extending south of the project site, and identified in the Local Coastal Program as a valuable visual resource. The portion of the dunes visible from West Grand Avenue and the project site contribute to the natural visual character of the area. The extensive earthwork required in order to level the equestrian staging area site would be noticeable from several viewpoints, in spite of the proposed berm along the roadway. The berm itself would appear as a constructed element in the landscape. Vehicles and trailers would also be seen through the two access drive openings. As a result of these visible conditions, the character of the area would change from a mostly natural dune landscape to that of an unpaved parking area.

RV Sewer Dump Station (Area D)

The existing dump station at the North Beach Campground would be expanded to accommodate the additional use proposed by the project. The project elements would be similar to the features which are already present at the RV sewer dump station, and would add more paving and connection facilities. The expanded station would not be out-of-scale with the setting, and would not alter the existing visual character of this RV-oriented setting.

Summary

The project site presently has both natural and urban elements and as such serves as a visual transition between the natural dune and beach areas and the built characteristics of the city. In general the existing project site lacks a unified visual identity, and the visual quality of much of the project site is only moderate.

The conference center and lodging buildings would dominate the visual character of the site. The conference center meets the City height ordinance. ~~The three proposed b~~ Buildings 1, 2, and 3 meet the maximum height requirements of the City's height ordinance, and although they would visually contrast with the existing site conditions, ~~A~~ after project completion they would likely appear to many viewers as being characteristic of a resort-type coastal development located in a semi-urban area.

The site layout of placing most of the urbanizing features such as the buildings and parking lots on the eastern portion of the site near other existing development, and the less intense uses such as paths, picnic and open areas closer to the beach, creates an appropriate transition from the natural setting to the built areas.

The proposed equestrian staging area would result in an adverse change to the existing visual character because of the extensive grading and the visibility of vehicles and trailers in what is now a mostly natural dune landscape.

AES Impact 2 The equestrian staging area, Area C, would require removal of scenic dunes, visibility of excavated slopes and parked vehicles in a visually sensitive area, resulting in a direct long-term impact to the visual character of the area.

Implement mitigation measure AES/mm-1.

Residual Impacts

With implementation of mitigation measure AES/mm-1, impacts to the visual character of the site and surroundings would be considered significant but mitigable.

AES Impact 3 The use of non-native ornamental landscaping in Area A and C in the vicinity of the dunes and Meadow Creek would reduce the project's visual transition from the natural areas to the developed core, resulting in a direct long-term impact to the scenic character of the site and surroundings.

AES/mm-2 Prior to issuance of a grading permit for Areas A and C, landscaping plans shall be submitted for Areas A and C showing the following:

- a. *Planting restoration along Meadow Creek shall have a random-appearing, undulating western edge to enhance the appearance of the natural riparian corridor*
- b. *Only native vegetation, or non-invasive, non-native vegetation shall be used throughout the project area west of the existing or any proposed retaining walls.*
- c. *Natural appearing berms and additional landscaping shall be included along the north side of West Grand Avenue adjacent to the lodge and public parking lots to screen views of the vehicles and expansive pavement.*

Residual Impacts

With implementation of this mitigation, impacts to the visual character of the site and surroundings would be considered significant but mitigable.

AES Impact 4 Existing overhead utilities along West Grand Avenue cause visual clutter and affect views from public roads and the project site, resulting in long term visual impacts to visual character and scenic vistas.

AES/mm-3 Prior to issuance of a grading permit for Area A, the applicant shall submit revised plans for undergrounding of all utilities along West Grand Avenue.

Residual Impacts

With implementation of this measure, the project's cumulative effect on the visual character of the site and surroundings would be considered significant but mitigable.

4.1.5.4 Lighting and Glare

At the time of this report, no specific information has been provided regarding lighting proposals. The project generally describes the lighting objectives as follows:

Lighting would be provided along the trails and within the complex. Lighting would be focused inward or downward and would be shielded where necessary to avoid nuisance lighting affecting the nearby RV campground and the Le Sage Riviera Mobile Home Park, as well as ambient lighting discouraged by LEED design guidelines. Since the parking areas would be occupied at night, lighting directed downward in the parking areas would be provided. Lighting would be kept to a minimum necessary to ensure safety of guests at the lodge and the public in public areas accessible during nighttime hours. Beachfront access ways and picnic areas are not anticipated to be lighted since these are day-use areas only.

Because of the project's multi-story configuration, size, public safety requirements, and its proximity to public viewing areas, night lighting would be seen from the surrounding area. Unshielded light sources or bright-lights reflected on exterior walls would result in potential impacts. The large buildings, bright interior and exterior lights, large windows and wall openings, parking, and pedestrian areas may result in highly visible illumination as seen from Highway 1, Pismo Beach State Park, and the surroundings. Fog is a common atmospheric condition of the area and increases the "glow-effect" as potentially seen from great distances. Daytime reflection and glare from south and west facing surfaces would be highly noticeable.

AES Impact 5 Visibility of night lighting and daytime glare in Areas A and B would adversely affect views resulting in a direct long-term impact.

AES/mm-4 Prior to issuance of a grading permit for Areas A and B, a comprehensive lighting plan shall be submitted for review and approval. The lighting plan shall be prepared by a qualified engineer who is an active member of the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America. The lighting plan shall be prepared using guidance and best practices endorsed by the International Dark Sky Association. The lighting plan shall address all aspects of the lighting, including but not limited to all buildings, infrastructure, parking lots and driveways, paths, recreation areas, safety, and signage. The lighting plan shall also consider effects on wildlife in the surrounding area. The lighting plan shall include the following in conjunction with other measures as determined by the illumination engineer:

- a. The point source of all exterior lighting shall be shielded from off-site views.*
- b. Light trespass from exterior lights shall be minimized by directing light downward and utilizing cut-off fixtures or shields.*
- c. Lumination from exterior lights shall be the lowest level allowed by public safety standards.*
- d. Exterior lighting shall be designed to not focus illumination onto exterior walls.*
- e. “White” colored light shall not be used for exterior lighting.*
- f. Any signage visible from off-site shall not be internally luminated.*
- g. Monument signs shall not be internally luminated.*
- h. Any required lighting poles shall be colored dark to reduce reflectivity.*

AES/mm-5 Prior to issuance of a grading permit for Areas A and B, the applicant shall submit building plans and elevations for review and approval consistent with the following conditions:

- a. No highly reflective glazing or coatings shall be used on west and south facing windows.*
- b. No highly reflective exterior materials such as chrome, bright stainless steel, or glossy tile shall be used on the south and west facing sides of the development where visible from off-site locations.*

Residual Impacts

With implementation of these mitigation measures, impacts due to lighting and glare would be considered significant but mitigable.

4.1.6 Cumulative Impacts

The discussion of cumulative impacts relates to the potential for the project to contribute to an aggregate change in visual quality from the surrounding public viewing areas, taking into consideration existing as well as proposed development. The city of Grover Beach has undergone a certain amount of visual change within the last several years due to new and reconstructed residential and commercial development. These changes have resulted in a slightly increased built-character throughout the community and along Grand Avenue.

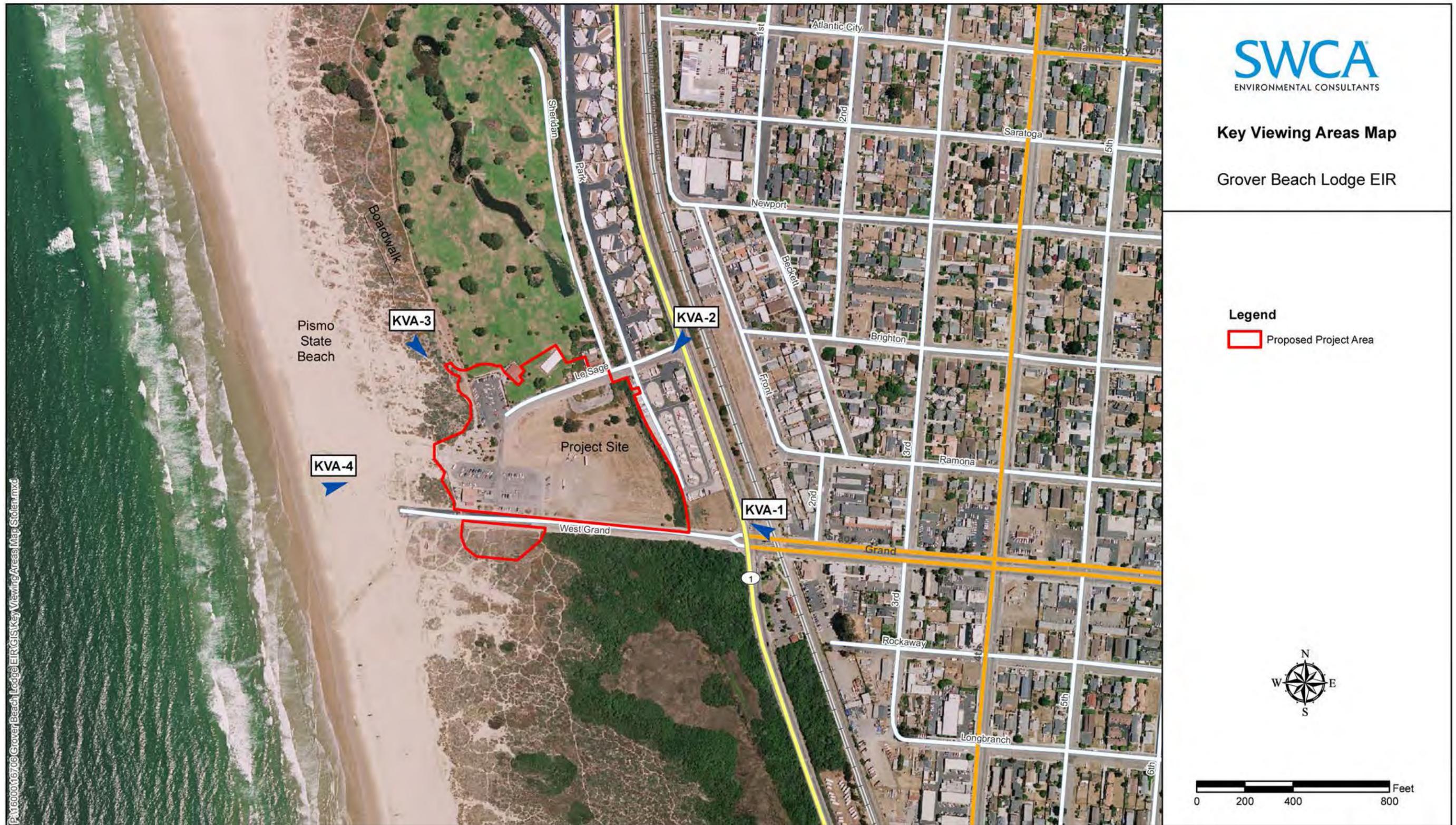
As mentioned previously, the project's location and size would have a great influence on the community's identity and visual character. The alteration of the project site from a somewhat disorderly combination of spaces and uses to a large-scale development would totally redefine the community west of Highway 1 along West Grand Avenue. The fundamental visual change may appear substantial to viewers currently familiar with the area, but to many casual observers the project would likely not be considered out of character for a semi-urban coastal and gateway setting such as this. City and State Parks planning, zoning, and visioning documents anticipate and support the use of the site for a large-scale conference center development.

The potential cumulative effects of the proposed project along with the proposed Pacific Coast Hotel project were considered; however, the proposed Pacific Coast Hotel project has not proceeded further with development and timing of development of the site is unknown. Therefore, the current existing setting is the basis for determining impacts. If the proposed Pacific Coast Hotel project proceeds, it will almost entirely block the proposed Grover Beach Lodge project views from the intersection of Highway 1 and West Grand Avenue. The height and scale and building materials identified for the Pacific Coast Hotel project are compatible with the proposed Grover Beach Lodge.

As a result, the project in conjunction with the identified mitigation measures recommended in this section would result in less than significant cumulative visual impacts to community.

This page intentionally left blank.

Figure 4.1-12. KVA Location Map



P:\16000\16706 Grover Beach Lodge EIR\GIS\Key Viewing Areas Map Stolan.mxd

This page intentionally left blank.

Figure 4.1-13. KVA 1 – From the Corner of Highway 1 and Grand Avenue looking West



This page intentionally left blank.

Figure 4.1-14. KVA 2 – From the Corner of Highway 1 and Le Sage Drive looking West



This page intentionally left blank.

Figure 4.1-15. KVA 3 – From the Boardwalk looking South



This page intentionally left blank.

Figure 4.1-16. KVA 4 – From Pismo State Beach looking East



This page intentionally left blank.