

## 4.3 Aesthetics/Visual Resources

This section addresses potential impacts associated with aesthetics and visual resources as a result of implementation of the proposed Plan. A detailed discussion of the Plan's consistency with applicable County Comprehensive Plan policies, and the LCP goals and policies is contained in Chapter 5, Consistency with Plans and Policies.

### 4.3.1 Setting

#### 4.3.1.1 Existing Visual Character

The rural character of the Gaviota Coast is one of a working agricultural landscape nestled between the mountains and the sea, a unique natural setting. Visually, the land and seascape of the Gaviota Coast is a compilation of open vistas of chaparral-covered sandstone mountains, wooded canyons, grasslands, coastal bluffs, narrow sandy beaches, and the Pacific Ocean bounded on the horizon by the Channel Islands. The complexity of this natural landscape blended with grazing lands and orchards creates a dramatic environment with a rural character. Agriculture, from grazing to row crops and orchards, has been historically prominent and continues to define the open spaces and character of the coast. The rugged mountains provide a striking backdrop to the coastal terraces and Santa Barbara Channel with the views of the mountains and ocean generally unimpeded and unfragmented.

The Gaviota Coast is lightly inhabited, visible residential structures are relatively few and generally of modest size, and agricultural structures are generally simple and functional. The Gaviota Coast is bisected by the transportation corridor of Highway 101 and the railroad with nearby utility poles and lines. However, with the exception of these corridors, the visual character of the Gaviota Coast is relatively undisturbed by these transportation and utility elements; the built environment is largely subordinate to the scenic natural features and pastoral qualities of the Gaviota Coast. Overall, the rural land uses and relative lack of development in the Plan Area does not contribute to significant or adverse light pollution.

Similar to the exceptional quality of daytime views in the area, the relative lack of development and associated light pollution (glare, light trespass, and cumulative sky glow) allow for views of nighttime skies and provide unique opportunities for astronomical observations. Exceptions to this include lighting on the offshore oil platforms in the Santa Barbara Channel, which is visible from most nighttime ocean viewing locations along the Gaviota Coast. There are three industrial developments (PXP Point Arguello, Exxon Mobil's Las Flores Canyon Facility, and the County's Tajiguas Landfill) on the coast with the most visible being the PXP Point Arguello site near the Highway 101 interchange at Mariposa Reina. The processing facilities at PXP and Las Flores Canyon are existing sources of light and glare adjacent to Highway 101.

### **4.3.1.2 Key Viewpoints/Public Scenic Resources**

The Plan Area offers diverse and dramatic views of the Pacific Ocean and Channel Islands, the rugged transverse and oblique ridgelines of the Santa Ynez Mountain range, unique geologic formations and topography, and coastal mesas. It also contains sweeping ridgeline views from West Camino Cielo Road and the inland trails in the Gaviota and El Capitan State Parks of the Santa Ynez Mountains to the Pacific Ocean and the Los Padres National Forest north to the Santa Ynez River watershed and beyond. In the far western portion of the Plan Area, the ocean currents and prevailing winds contribute to views of the rugged windswept coastal landscape near Jalama County Park. These scenic views encompass natural environments with areas of rural agricultural and occasional residential land uses. Numerous locations throughout the Plan Area provide many scenic viewing options.

Due to the striking beauty of the relatively undisturbed coastline and its visibility from Highway 101, the Plan designates a Critical Viewshed Corridor Overlay over the coastal portion of the Plan Area from Gaviota State Park to its eastern boundary as shown on Figure 4.3-1. Viewing locations available along this stretch of the highway include the public beaches and campgrounds at El Capitan, Refugio and Gaviota State Parks, in addition to informal roadside locations along Highway 101.

Important public scenic sites, trails, and formal and informal beaches in the Plan Area are located at Gaviota State Beach and Pier, Refugio State Beach, El Capitan State Beach, and the Jalama Beach County Park, and trail systems in the Santa Ynez Mountains, its foothills and coastal terraces.

A scenic vista area is located immediately south of the entrance to Arroyo Hondo Preserve on the south side Highway 101. Views from this point include coastal bluffs and the Gaviota coastline. Unique views of the Channel Islands and Gaviota Coast are also available with recreational opportunities on the Baron Ranch Trail. Viewing locations are also located along public roads, including the Calle Real frontage road segments, West Camino Cielo Road, Farren Road, and Refugio Road that all offer expansive views of the ocean, mountains, open lands, orchard and ranching lands, and large contiguous areas of native habitat. Mountain roads and trails offer occasional sweeping views of the Pacific Ocean, the Santa Ynez Mountains and the Santa Ynez River Watershed, and wilderness areas and rangelands located to the north of the Plan Area. In addition, travelers using the Coast Starlight train are offered dramatic ocean and mountain views from the railway's bluff top perspective as it traverses the Plan Area.

### **4.3.1.3 Scenic Corridors/Routes/Gateways**

There are only two officially designated scenic highways within the County, one of which is located partially within the Plan Area. Highway 1, from its intersection with Highway 101 at Las Cruces north to the southerly city limits of Lompoc, is an officially designated State Scenic Highway (see Section 4.3.2.1 below). Portions of other state highways traversing the County are in the state's master plan of highways as "eligible" for "Scenic Highway" designation. These

eligible highways may become official State Scenic Highways when a plan of preservation is implemented by the County for these routes. Highway 101, its entire length in the County, is an eligible State Scenic Highway.

In addition to resident and traveling motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists who utilize the Plan Area's recreational trails also enjoy panoramic and often unobstructed views of the area's natural beauty. There are several trails within the Plan Area. Some of the most important viewing areas of the Gaviota Coast are those that can be seen from its points of entry along Highway 101. Scenic gateways provide a physical and visual distinction from surrounding areas. Motorists traveling into the Plan Area from the north via Highway 101 and from the west via Highway 1 experience a dramatic visual gateway consisting of striking views of the steeply rising Santa Ynez Mountains covered with dense coastal sage, chaparral, and oak woodlands and the dramatic sandstone rock outcroppings that envelop the narrow winding section of Highway 101 between Highway 1 and the Gaviota Tunnel.

## **4.3.2 Regulatory Framework**

### **4.3.2.1 State**

#### **State Scenic Highway Program**

California's Scenic Highway Program was created in 1963 by the California State Legislature. Its purpose is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. A highway may be designated as scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes on the traveler's enjoyment of the view. The State Scenic Highway Program includes a list of highways that are eligible to be officially designated. For an eligible highway to be designated as a State Scenic Highway, a local jurisdiction must first adopt a scenic corridor protection program, and then apply to Caltrans for scenic highway approval. Notification from Caltrans that the highway has been officially designated a State Scenic Highway will be given to the local jurisdiction. The segment of Highway 1 from Las Cruces, northwest towards Lompoc is an officially designated Scenic Highway. The segment of Highway 101 through the Gaviota Coast Plan Area is eligible for designation as a California Scenic Highway pursuant to Streets and Highways Code Section 260-263.

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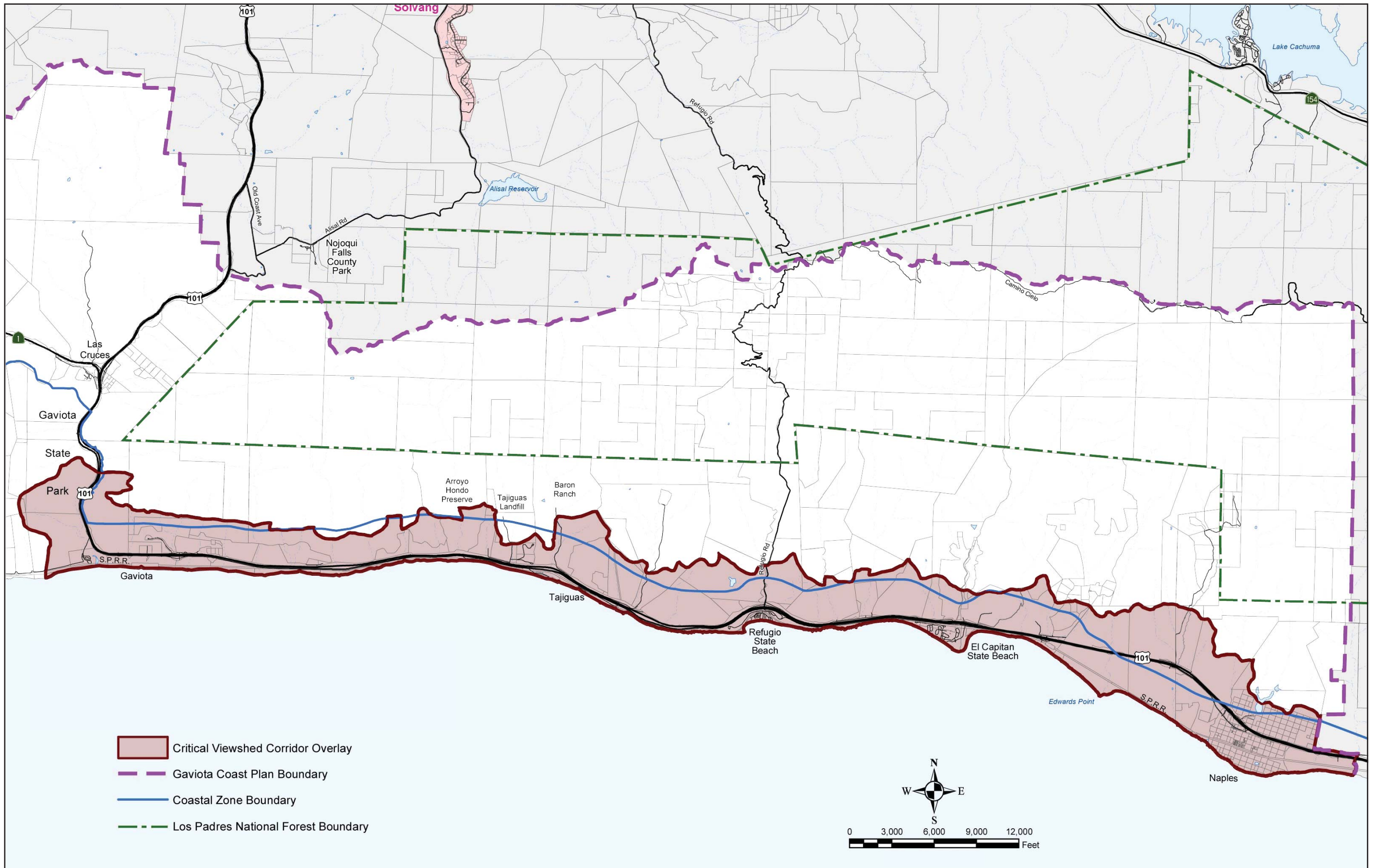


FIGURE 4.3-1 Gaviota Coast Plan – Proposed Critical Viewshed Overlay

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### **4.3.2.2 County of Santa Barbara**

#### **Comprehensive Plan**

##### ***Land Use Element***

The Land Use Element and Open Space Element (discussed below) of the Comprehensive Plan include policies to protect and enhance visual resources. New development must generally be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan's visual resource policies. The Hillside and Watershed Protection Policies address development on slopes to minimize grading, disruption of natural vegetation, and erosion. Land Use Element Visual Resource Policy 2 states that in areas designated as rural on the land use plan maps the height, scale, and design of structures shall be compatible with the character of the surrounding natural environment, except where technical requirements dictate otherwise. Structures are required to be subordinate in appearance to natural landforms; shall be designed to follow the natural contours of the landscape; and shall be sited so as not to intrude into the skyline as seen from public viewing places. Land Use Element Visual Resource Policy 4 requires signs to not detract from scenic areas or views from public roads or other viewing points (also regulated by County Zoning Ordinance Chapter 35.38) and Land Use Element Visual Resource Policy 5 requires undergrounding of new utilities associated with new developments.

##### ***Open Space Element***

The Open Space Element identifies the County's scenic beauty as a principal factor in the attraction of residents and visitors, evaluates the visual quality of natural resources and travel corridors, and emphasizes the importance of urban perimeters including Rural, Inner-Rural, and Townships Boundaries. The Open Space Element identifies and designates scenic areas providing significant aesthetic value, including scenic roadway corridors; parks and recreational areas; views of coastal bluffs, streams, lakes, estuaries, rivers, watersheds, mountains, and cultural resources sites; and designated scenic areas as providing significant aesthetic value.

A Scenic Values model in the Open Space Element includes intensity, design, and arrangement of development, preservation of natural features, and variety in natural or introduced vegetation as criteria for the protection of visual resources. The Open Space Element also includes a travel corridor evaluation to identify scenic travel corridors. Several roadways in the Plan Area were evaluated and rated by their Scenic Level and their Travel Corridor Evaluation Priority. Scenic Level One corridors are identified as having the highest scenic value, with Level Three corridors having the least scenic value. Travel Corridor Evaluation Priorities are also assigned from priority 1 through priority 12, with priority 1 being most scenic and priority 12 being least scenic. Table 4.3-1 shows the route segments within the Plan Area that were rated in the Travel Corridors Evaluation.

<b>Route Segment</b>	<b>Scenic Level</b>	<b>Segment Category (Travel Corridor Evaluation Priorities)<sup>2</sup></b>
U.S. 101: Gaviota Beach-South Coast Urban Complex	1	1
Jalama County Park-Gaviota Beach State Park	1	4
Jalama Road: Cal 1-Jalama County Park	1	4
Cal. 1: Lompoc – Las Cruces	1	4

SOURCE: County of Santa Barbara 2011b

<sup>1</sup> Open Space Element lists other roadway segments. Only roadway segments within or partially within the Plan Area are included in the table.

<sup>2</sup>Travel Corridor Evaluation Priority 1 = scenic level 1, most scenic, major capacity, primary destination route;  
Travel Corridor Evaluation Priority 4 = scenic level 1, most scenic, minor capacity, secondary destination route

### ***Scenic Highways Element***

The Scenic Highway Element of the Comprehensive Plan presents the County's policies and procedures for scenic highways and their designation. This element specifically presents the County's scenic highway goals, evaluation standards, preservation measures, and procedures for obtaining official "Scenic Highway" designation for state and County roads in the County. The Scenic Highways Element indicates the entire length of Highway 101, throughout the Gaviota Coast, is "eligible" for scenic highway status.

### ***Coastal Act***

The Coastal Act mandates that scenic and visual qualities of the coast shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. In particular, views to and along the coast shall be protected. New development shall be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas. Significant views to and along the coast continue to be protected by LCP policies, and the preservation of visually prominent ridgelines is also addressed. The LCP protects the existing character of the Coastal Zone, while still accommodating compatible new development. Within the County, the Coastal Zoning Ordinance (Article II) implements the LCP for the unincorporated coastal zone.

### ***Land Use and Development Code***

The Land Use and Development Code (LUDC) Chapter 35 (Zoning) includes development standards protecting the visual resources of the Plan Area. The Hillside and Ridgeline Protection Ordinance (Section 35.62.040) regulates development on slopes to minimize grading, disruption of natural vegetation, and erosion. Landscaping and limitations on signs, which disrupt public views, are also regulated by the LUDC. The Zoning Ordinance also contains height and size limits and requires architectural review for projects of specific types and in specific areas of the County (see below).



***Design Review Process (Section 35.82.070)***

The LUDC contains provisions that regulate the design of future development, in some cases, through review of project plans by the Board of Architectural Review (BAR). The purpose of the BAR is to “encourage development that exemplifies the best professional design practices so as to enhance the visual quality of the environment, benefit surrounding property values, and prevent poor quality of design.” In November 2005, the Board of Supervisors created four regional BARs to better serve local communities. In the Gaviota Coast area, the regional BAR is the Central County BAR (CBAR). Most projects involving construction of, or additions to, buildings and new or changed signs must be reviewed by the BAR, with the exception of agricultural structures less than 5,000 square feet. Projects on commercially zoned properties that would result in new construction or exterior changes to an existing building would be reviewed by the CBAR. Construction of single-family residences within a given approved tract may also require CBAR review, if the tract approval is conditioned to require this. Alternatively, a given tract may have design guidelines that are reviewed and approved by the BAR such that the development of individual residences are subject to design guidelines.

The thresholds for BAR review are set forth in the LUDC. The CBAR has review and approval authority over the design of all new structures or alterations to existing structures within a Design Control Overlay District, except those projects which are exempted by the LUDC. In the Design Control Overlay District, the CBAR reviews project plans and BAR applications, and evaluates the project design against the following standards:

- Overall building shapes, as well as parts of any structure (buildings, walls, fences, screens, towers, or signs) shall be in proportion to and in scale with other existing or permitted structures on the same site and in the surrounding property;
- Mechanical and electrical equipment shall be well integrated in the total design concept;
- There shall be harmony of material, color, and composition of all sides of a structure or building;
- A limited number of materials will be on the exterior face of the building or structure;
- There shall be a harmonious relationship with existing and proposed adjoining developments, avoiding excessive variety and monotonous repetition, but allowing similarity of style, if warranted;
- Site layout, orientation, and location of structures, buildings, and signs shall be in an appropriate and well-designed relationship to one another, and to the environmental qualities, open space, and topography of the property;

- Adequate landscaping shall be provided in proportion to the project and the site with due regard to preservation of specimen and landmark trees, existing vegetation, selection of planting which will be appropriate to the project, and adequate provision for maintenance of all planting;
- Signs including their lighting, shall be well designed and shall be appropriate in size and location; and
- The proposed development is consistent with any additional design standards applicable to the project site.

### ***Design Compatibility Standards (Section 35.30.060)***

This section addresses standards for design for development in different areas of the County. Within Rural Areas as designated on the Comprehensive Plan maps, the height, scale, and design of each structure shall be compatible with the character of the surrounding natural environment, as determined by the review authority, except where the review authority determines that technical requirements dictate otherwise. Structures shall be subordinate in appearance to natural landforms, shall be designed to follow the natural contours of the landscape, and shall be sited so as not to intrude into the skyline as seen from public viewing places.

### ***Outdoor Lighting (Section 35.30.120)***

The LUDC places restrictions on outdoor lighting to protect spillover onto adjacent properties and to minimize interference with vehicular traffic on private/public streets from lighting. The LUDC contains the following regulations regarding outdoor lighting and development in all zones shall comply with the following standards.

- All exterior lighting shall be hooded and no unobstructed beam of exterior light shall be directed toward any area zoned or developed residential.
- Lighting shall be designed so as not to interfere with vehicular traffic on any portion of a street.

## 4.3.3 Impact Analysis

### 4.3.3.1 Thresholds of Significance and Methodology

#### CEQA Guidelines

According to CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, implementation of the Plan would have significant environmental impacts on aesthetics and visual resources if it would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; and/or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

#### County Environmental Thresholds

The County visual aesthetic impact guidelines (County of Santa Barbara 2008) provide guidance in determining the importance of visual resources. Key factors in characterizing project site visual resources and their importance include the following:

- *Physical attributes* such as undulating topography; character and type of vegetation (native or non-native); proximity to or presence of water bodies such as ponds, lakes, creeks, or streams; and extent of open space. The presence of these attributes enhances the visual importance of the project site.
- *Relative visibility*: the more conspicuous the project site and physical attributes are as viewed from public viewpoints, the greater the importance of the visual resource.
- *Relative uniqueness*: the rarity of a particular type of view due to its natural character or the loss of similar types of visual resources from previous development increases the potential importance of the visual resource.

The Visual Aesthetic Impact Guidelines state that in terms of visibility, four types of geographic areas are especially important: coastal areas, mountainous areas, the urban fringe, and travel corridors. This EIR identifies and characterizes the change to only those visual resources experienced from public views or view corridors, as County Comprehensive Plan and Visual Resource policies in the Plan do not address the importance of visual impacts experienced from private property such as backyards, front yards, interior living spaces, or private roadways.

The following questions, included in the Thresholds Manual, are intended to provide information to address the criteria specified in Appendix G. Affirmative answers to the following questions indicate potentially significant impacts on visual resources.

- 1a. Does the project site have significant visual resources by virtue of surface waters, vegetation, elevation, slope, or other natural or man-made 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 Coastal Land Use Plan, the Comprehensive Plan or any applicable community plan to protect the identified views?
3. Does the project have the potential to create a significantly 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?

The assessment of aesthetic impacts involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective in nature, as different viewers react to viewsheds and aesthetic conditions differently. This evaluation measures visual resources with respect to the Plan's policies/programs, and land use changes, analyzing the nature of the anticipated change and its compatibility with the visual character of the area (Impact 1). Buildout of the Plan and the potential impacts on scenic views and routes are discussed in Impact 2, below. This section addresses potential impacts on priority public vistas, local scenic routes, and gateways from development of future land uses consistent with the Plan. Impact 3 identifies any new substantial sources of light or glare, which would potentially affect day or nighttime views in the area. Finally, Impact 4 addresses cumulative impacts related to aesthetics.

### **4.3.3.2 Impact Determination and Mitigation Measures**

#### **Impacts**

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#### ***Impact VIS-1: Visual Character Changes***

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Plan buildout is estimated to result in development of 167 additional single-family residences and 9 agricultural employee housing units within the Plan Area over the 20-year Plan horizon.

Potential highway commercial development is limited to an approximately 2-acre site located east of Highway 101 at Las Cruces. Zoning amendments are also proposed that could encourage expansion of agricultural land uses and uses accessory and supportive of agriculture. The Gaviota Agricultural Tiered Permit Structure would allow small-scale uses with an over-the-counter or other staff issued permit. For example, aquaponics, composting, firewood processing and sales, agricultural processing, farmstands, and small scale agricultural tourist activities such as fishing, camping and guest ranch/farmstay could be permitted if specified conditions and limitations are met. Potential visual impacts resulting from PRT Maps Amendments are discussed in Section 4.13.

The Visual/Aesthetic Impact Guidelines state that in terms of visibility, four types of geographic areas are especially important: coastal areas, mountainous areas, the urban fringe, and travel corridors. The urban fringe does not apply within the Plan Area as there are no urban areas. Travel Corridors are discussed under Impact 2. Significant visual resources as noted in the Comprehensive Plan Open Space Element which have aesthetic value include:

- Scenic highway corridors
- Parks and recreational areas
- Views of coastal bluffs, streams, lakes, estuaries, rivers, water sheds, mountains, and cultural resource sites
- Scenic areas

### **Coastal Area**

Nearly 50 percent of the Plan Area is within the Coastal Zone and therefore is subject to the policies of the Local Coastal Plan. The policies, development standards, and land use/zoning designations established in the Plan are consistent with existing Coastal Land Use Plan policies as detailed in Chapter 5. Land use designations and zoning would not increase development potential and would maintain primarily low density, agricultural land use designations to retain the rural agricultural character of the Plan Area. The Plan would allow limited residential development, and agricultural intensification could occur due to the Gaviota Agricultural Tiered Permit ordinance—Structure, which would provide flexibility for agriculture accessory uses on Agriculture II (AG-II) zoned lands, such as farm stands, agricultural processing, and rural recreational uses. These uses could result in an adverse change the visual character of the area if development is not designed with consideration of the existing rural character.

### **Mountainous Area**

The Plan would change the land use designation and zoning of public land within the Los Padres National Forest from Agriculture to MT-GAV Zone. This change would apply to the upper watershed areas in the inland area where habitat protection and slope stability is paramount. The proposed change would reflect the protected status of the National Forest lands and necessary protection of steep slope and watershed lands. There is no development potential in this area due to its Federal ownership and National Forest status. This change

would reflect the natural and undeveloped character of the National Forest lands. Additional uses such as those allowed under the Gaviota Agricultural Tiered Permit Structure would not be allowed.

Due to the potential for impairment of particularly scenic vistas and to limit potential impacts from development, Plan Chapter 6, Visual Resources contains goals, policies, actions, and development standards, which seek to augment countywide rural visual policies that direct development to: 1) be subordinate to the natural surroundings, 2) limit visual disturbance of the natural terrain, and 3) not intrude into the skyline. In general, development is required to blend into the surroundings as much as possible.

These policies address height, scale, and design of structures; views of development from public viewing places; protecting ridgelines; lighting; grading; water tanks; energy development; utility pole removal; and the protection of viewsheds.

The Plan's new policies and development standards intend to meet the goal of protecting visual resources and preserving the natural beauty and rural character specific to the Plan Area. Several tools are included in the Plan to help ensure potential impacts on visual resources that could occur as a result of development from buildout of the Plan land uses and rezones are minimized. These tools include the addition of the new MT-GAV zone (LUDC only) and the Critical Viewshed Corridor – Gaviota Coast (CVC), and Environmentally Sensitive Habitat – Gaviota Coast (ESH-GAV) overlays to address potential use impacts to steep slopes, critical viewsheds and sensitive habitat in the Plan Area. The Plan proposed ordinance amendments package are located in Appendix B (Proposed Ordinance Amendments). Development in the CVC Overlay would undergo permit screening within the Design Guidelines using a new Site Design Hierarchy that identifies priorities for site design, architecture, grading, and landscaping that are detailed in Appendix D.

The Site Design Hierarchy may allow, in certain circumstances, additional cut and fill grading to minimize visual impacts of a proposed project. For example, additional cut and fill may be allowed to avoid construction on a ridgeline or hilltop. While there would be limited circumstances under which this type of grading would be allowed, it could conflict with existing policies limiting grading and alternation of natural landforms. However, the Site Design Hierarchy considers many different criteria with site selection taking priority to avoid and minimize visual impacts, with grading being one of these issues. The Site Design Hierarchy also considers architecture, landscape, terrain, and site visibility. Therefore, on the whole, the site design hierarchy approach is protective of visual resources.

The Plan also includes a Scenic Highway Corridor/Scenic Corridor to highlight areas of potential scenic value along public travel ways without applying additional specific policy requirements. Rather, The Scenic Highway Corridor/Scenic Corridor highlights areas for visual issues related to potential development. To formalize the recognition of the scenic values from Highway 101, an application for scenic highway status for Highway 101 is included as an item for future action.

Outside of overlay areas, development would be required to be visually subordinate to the surroundings, but may have the potential to result in impacts. Impacts would be considered potentially significant, and mitigation is required.

## Mitigation

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### ***MM VIS-1 Addresses Impacts on Visual Character***

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The Gaviota Coast Design Guidelines (Appendix D) shall be adopted and used by Planning and Development and the Board of Architectural Review in approving future development. The Design Guidelines are intended to preserve the region's natural, agricultural and scenic resources by establishing architectural and aesthetic goals for the Gaviota Planning Area. To accomplish this purpose, the Guidelines are set forth to ensure all building and landscape designs are compatible with the design objectives of the Gaviota Plan, the overall environment, and the specific building site.

The Design Guidelines apply to:

- All residential structures and associated improvements, building additions, site work and landscaping within the Gaviota Plan Area and,
- All projects currently subject to Central Board of Architectural Review

The Guidelines shall be used throughout the design process to incorporate the Site Design Hierarchy, which is the interconnection of the various design disciplines including Site Selection, Architecture, Grading, and Landscape. The Guidelines detail specific requirements under each of these design disciplines that shall be met by subsequent projects implemented under the Plan.

## Residual Impacts

Potentially significant impacts associated with changes to visual character would be reduced to less than significant through the implementation of MM-VIS-1 and adherence to the Gaviota Coast Design Guidelines (Class II impact).

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### ***Impact VIS-2: Public Scenic Views, Routes, and Gateways***

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Plan buildout is estimated to result in development of 167 additional single-family residences and 9 agricultural employee housing units within the Plan Area over the 20-year Plan horizon. Potential highway commercial development is limited to an approximately 2-acre site located east of Highway 101 at Las Cruces. Zoning amendments are also proposed that could encourage expansion of agricultural land uses and uses accessory and supportive of agriculture including small-scale agricultural tourist activities such as fishing, camping, and guest ranch/farmstay.

Plan buildout and rezones, including the Gaviota Agricultural Tiered Permit Structure, could adversely affect public scenic views of the mountains to the north, coastal areas to the south, and views from the State Scenic Highway (Highway 1). Construction activities associated with new development could create potentially significant, but short-term, visual impacts on important public visual corridors. These would include:

- Blockage of views by construction equipment and staging areas
- Disruption of views by temporary signage
- Exposure of slopes and removal of vegetation

With regard to long-term impacts on public scenic views, new and enlarged buildings, signage, roadways, parking, and agricultural and recreational accessory facilities have the potential to result in significant impacts on scenic views and local scenic routes. The degree of these impacts is dependent on the siting and design of new development relative to important public scenic viewsheds and/or routes. For example, development in proximity to a scenic viewpoint could, by its location, obstruct, impair, or alter scenic views from the vicinity. In general, any development visible from the Highway 101 corridor in the eastern portion of the Plan Area would have the potential to result in a potentially significant impact on scenic views if development obstructs or detracts from existing views.

The Plan identifies a CVC Overlay in the eastern coastal portion of the Plan Area from Gaviota State Park to the eastern Plan boundary. This overlay encompasses views from Highway 101. The Plan contains policies and development standards that apply within the overlay area and within areas outside of the overlay, within the Plan Area. These policies, discussed above under Impact VIS-1, would minimize impacts on scenic views within the Plan Area by requiring development to be subordinate to the surrounding visual environment, protecting ocean and mountain views from Highway 101, requiring landscape screening, protecting ridgelines, and requiring development of design guidelines and design review requirements within the Plan Area. However, impacts on public visual corridors would be potentially significant.

## **Mitigation**

Implementation of MM VIS-1 (Gaviota Coast Design Guidelines) would also mitigate Impact VIS-2.

## **Residual Impacts**

Future development under the Plan would result some residential development potential and would allow for expansion and diversification on lands zoned Agriculture II (AG-II); however the proposed Plan contains policies and development standards which seek to minimize this impact. Potentially significant impacts on public scenic views, routes, and gateways would be reduced to less than significant through the implementation of MM-VIS-1 (Class II impact).



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### ***Impact VIS-3: Increased Light and Glare***

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Additional development in accordance with buildout of the Plan would increase the ambient nighttime lighting throughout the Plan Area. Increased light would be generated by residential lighting and lighting associated with agricultural operations or agricultural accessory uses. Lighting could adversely affect adjacent properties as well as the overall nighttime lighting levels of the Plan Area. Increased glare within the Plan Area could potentially occur as a result of new development containing building materials, roofing materials or windows which would reflect sunlight.

Outdoor lighting regulations (see Section 4.3.2) would require future projects to ensure that exterior lighting is hooded and not directed toward a nearby residential use. Also, all lighting shall be designed to not interfere with vehicular traffic. However, the regulatory framework does not address all types of lighting or lighting from all sources; therefore, impacts related to increased light and glare from buildout of the Plan and rezones throughout the Plan Area would be potentially significant.

The proposed Plan contains Policy VIS-5, which intends to protect the night sky and surrounding land uses from excessive and unnecessary light associated with development. Action VIS-1 requires development of an outdoor lighting ordinance that would be required for future development projects. Projects would also be subject to review in accordance with Gaviota Coast design guidelines.

#### **Mitigation**

Implementation of MM VIS-1 (Gaviota Coast Design Guidelines) would also mitigate Impact VIS-3. In addition, the Proposed Ordinance Amendments (Appendix B) shall be adopted and used by Planning and Development and the Board of Architectural Review in approving future development. Section 35.30.120, Outdoor Lighting, included within Chapter 35.30, Standards for Development and Land Uses, is intended to minimize light pollution, glare, and light trespass caused by inappropriate or misaligned light fixtures within the Plan Area.

#### **Residual Impacts**

Potentially significant impacts associated with increased light and glare would be reduced to less than significant through the implementation of Plan policies and development standards, including the adoption of mitigation measure MM VIS-1 (Class II impact).

### **4.3.4 Cumulative Impacts Analysis**

#### **Impacts**

The visual character of the Gaviota Coast is unique and cumulative development throughout the Plan Area and its vicinity would gradually alter the visual makeup of the region from rural to

semi-rural in areas where additional residences may develop. Several approved residential development plans exist for the lands between El Capitan and the City of Goleta that cumulatively may alter the rural agricultural and visual character in this stretch of the Plan. These projects include the Santa Barbara Ranch (Naples Townsite), Las Varas Ranch (Edwards Ranch), and the Paradiso del Mare Ocean and Inland Estates.

The largest approved residential development in the Plan Area is Santa Barbara Ranch (Naples Townsite) with 71 estate residential units, which includes conservation easements protecting 2,629 acres for agriculture and 372 acres for open space located two miles west of the City of Goleta. Las Varas Ranch has a development potential of seven estate residential units located one mile east of El Capitan State Beach. The Paradiso del Mare Ocean and Inland Estates have a residential development potential of two residential estate units one mile west from the City of Goleta, and are adjacent to the Santa Barbara Ranch project.

These previously approved projects are listed with the approved, planned, and pending projects in Table 3.1. The projects are located both in and adjacent to the coastal zone on land that is eminently visible from public viewing areas and along County roads and Highway 101. The stretch of Highway 101 through the Plan Area is recognized as scenic by the County and is eligible for scenic highway designation by the State. The previously approved projects are highly visible to the public in one of the last remaining rural, undeveloped coastlines in southern California.

The three previously approved projects' conditions of approval include mitigation addressing visual issues related to building height, scale, and design of structures; views of the development from public viewing places; protection of ridgelines; inclusion of native plants and trees in landscaping, addressing night lighting; grading; water tanks; utility pole removal; fencing; signs; and the protection of viewsheds. Therefore, individually these projects will be developed with required visual mitigation measures addressing to the extent feasible, their contribution to the visual character impacts to the section of coast from El Capitan State Park to the easternmost Plan boundary near the City of Goleta. Implementation of these measures will help ensure the previously approved projects maintain the rural character while the primary land use will change from agriculture to estate residential on the parcels approved for residential development.

Implementation of the Plan, however, would not change allowable land uses appreciably and includes program level mitigation that address potential visual character impacts of future projects on a case-by-case basis, such as the CVC Overlay, Site Design Hierarchy, and new enhanced design review measures in the Gaviota Coast Design Guidelines and Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. As a result, the cumulative development potential associated with the Plan and approved, planned, and pending projects would be potentially significant but mitigable in the Plan Area between El Capitan State Park and the City of Goleta.

As discussed above, the potential buildout of future projects from land uses in the Plan will not change appreciably with approval of the Plan (167 additional single-family residences and 9

agricultural employee housing units, and agricultural accessory buildings). Future projects in the Plan Area west of El Capitan State Park to the western Plan Area boundary would be in more remote areas with relatively less development potential due to topography, access, service, and site constraints. The overall potential residential development in the Plan Area east of El Capitan State Park to the western Plan Area boundary when considered with approved, planned, and pending projects may incrementally contribute to a cumulatively considerable change to the predominantly rural, open space, and agricultural visual character of the area.

Overall, there is limited new development planned for this portion of the Plan Area. Where proposed, it will be low density and primarily single-family or agricultural second units, agricultural support, visitor serving, and highway commercial. As previously detailed, the proposed Plan includes program level mitigation that address potential visual character impacts of future projects on a case-by-case basis, such as the Critical Viewshed Corridor Overlay, Site Design Hierarchy, and new enhanced design review measures in the Gaviota Coast Design Guidelines and Outdoor Lighting Ordinance. As a result, cumulative impacts related to visual character in from El Capitan State Park to the western boundary of the Plan Area would be less than significant with the incorporation of mitigation.

According to the Plan, the County has policies to minimize direct visual impacts from development and protect against the degradation of existing broader scenic vistas from public viewing places. The key goals of the countywide rural visual policies are for development to: (1) be subordinate to the natural surroundings, (2) limit visual disturbance of the natural terrain, and 3) not intrude into the skyline. In general, development is required to blend into the surroundings as much as possible. Cumulative development in and around the Plan Area could result in potential impacts related to view obstruction and degradation if future development were to occur in rural areas, or residential, commercial, or other development was to be located along local scenic routes or adjacent to public viewsheds, or located along a state-designated Scenic Highway. However, screening landscaping or other design solutions are required to avoid or lessen visual impacts. The site design hierarchy and policies in this Plan and surrounding communities augment the existing countywide regulations to protect the unique visual character of the Gaviota Coast. Additional development in neighboring jurisdictions would be in areas that are already largely urban with similar policies or development standards that protect important public scenic views. Therefore, impacts would be significant but mitigable.

With continued development related to buildout of the Plan the total amount of lighting and glare in the greater Gaviota Coast area is expected to increase. Lighting is typically associated with additional residential or agricultural development even in rural areas and would be combined with lighting for parking lots and signage associated with commercial and recreational facilities in the Plan Area. However, all proposed residential development and larger scale agricultural structures in the Plan Area would be subject to the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance and undergo the Design Review process of the BAR, which addresses the effect of future development which could alter the night sky. The BAR review would consider potential lighting and glare impacts for such larger-scale projects in the Plan Area, and standard conditions of approval addressing new

sources of light and glare would be applied, thus reducing their contribution to cumulative impacts. Implementation of MM-VIS-1 and the proposed Plan's mitigative policies related to avoiding excessive lighting and glare would apply, as discussed above; therefore, impacts would be significant but mitigable.

### **Mitigation**

MM-VIS-1 would also apply to cumulative impacts related to visual resources.

### **Residual Impacts**

Cumulative visual impacts would be less than significant with mitigation (Class II impact).