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## IV.B. VISUAL RESOURCES

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### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### Existing Visual Character

##### *Project Site*

The project site is located at 17331-17333 Tramonto Drive in the Pacific Palisades community of the City of Los Angeles (Figure IV.B-1). The project site is a southeast-facing slope situated just south of Tramonto Drive and consists of an irregularly shaped parcel containing approximately 3.98 acres of hillside terrain (Figure IV.B-2). Site elevations range from approximately 85 feet to 200 feet. The site is currently occupied by two apartment buildings consisting of two stories each and a total of 20 occupied dwelling units. In addition, there is a swimming pool located between the two buildings, a carport area for 32 cars, and surface parking for additional cars. The existing apartments are accessed from Tramonto Drive via a private driveway. Carports for the apartments are located at the same elevation as the private drive. The existing apartment buildings were built in 1962 and 1965. Refer to Figure IV.B-3 for views of the apartment buildings on the project site.

The project site contains a portion of the Revello Landslide, which occurred in 1965 to the west and southwest of the existing on-site apartment buildings. The landslide demolished twelve apartment units formerly on the western portion of the project site. This landslide occupies an area of approximately five acres and extends generally from Revello Drive to the north and to Castellammare Drive to the south. See Figure IV.B-4 for views of the Revello Landslide.

As illustrated in Figure IV.B-2, the on-site vegetation consists of a moderately thick assemblage of cultured trees, chaparral, shrubs, and grasses. Specifically, thirty-six non-native trees are located on the site. The primary tree species present include Monterey and Aleppo pines followed by Eucalyptus and a few other species. There are no oak or other indigenous species found on the project site. Refer to Appendix E for a tree survey of the project site.

##### *Surrounding Locale*

The project area is characterized by a mix of single-family and multi-family residential land uses, as well as commercial office and retail buildings. Land uses situated immediately below the project site are developed with apartment and commercial buildings, except the area of the Revello Landslide, which remains vacant. Properties upslope and north of the site are developed with single-family

**Figure IV.B-1      Vicinity Map**

**Figure IV.B-2      Aerial Photo of Project Site**

**Figure IV.B-3 Views of the Project Site**

**Figure IV.B-4      Views of the Project Site**

residences and condominium buildings. There are also vacant properties and a plant nursery to the north. Offices and commercial uses are situated further downslope from the project site to the southeast and front Sunset Boulevard. Properties directly south of the site, which front Castellammare Drive, consist of the vacant landslide area and multi-family dwelling units. The vacant parcel downslope of the site has been approved for 21 condominium units via the Tract Map process (G.H. Palmer Project), and is also located within the lower portion of the Revello Landslide. Buildings in the project area range from one to two stories for single-family residences; two to ten stories for multi-family dwellings; and one to six stories for commercial uses. See Figures IV.B-5 and IV.B-6 for views of the surrounding land uses.

### **Existing Viewsheds**

Viewsheds refer to the visual qualities of the geographical area that is defined by the horizon, topography, and other natural features that give an area its visual boundary and context, or by artificial developments that have become prominent visual components of the area. In the area of the project site, the existing viewsheds are defined primarily by the existing commercial and residential development along PCH, Sunset Boulevard and various other local and collector streets. Portions of the Pacific Ocean, coastline and the Santa Monica Mountains also define many of these existing viewsheds.

### ***Views from the Project Site***

As discussed above, the project site is situated at the foothills of the Santa Monica Mountains at elevations ranging from approximately 85 feet to 200 feet. As a result, various areas of the project site, particularly the balconies, swimming pool deck area, private driveway and apartment windows, provide views of nearby commercial and residential uses as well as portions of the Pacific Ocean, coastline, PCH and the Santa Monica Mountains. Existing views to the immediate north (upslope) of the project site are limited to the single-family dwelling units and associated landscaping located on the downslope side of Revello Drive, and the four-story condominium building that shares the same access driveway as the project site. More distant northern views of single-family homes along Paseo Miramar and several other adjacent streets (e.g. Via Lucia, Lucero Avenue), as well as portions of the Santa Monica Mountains are also available from the project site. Existing views to the south (downslope) from the project site include but are not limited to the office and retail uses and associated surface parking lots located along Sunset Boulevard and PCH, Gladstones restaurant and parking lot, and the Pacific Ocean. The shoreline is not visible within this southern viewshed due to the grade difference between the shoreline and Gladstones parking lot. Views to the southeast and east of the project site include office and retail buildings, a grocery store, high-rise condominiums, and the Pacific Ocean. Further southeast, portions of Will Rogers State Beach and Santa Monica State Beach, as well as the coastline development in Santa Monica are visible from the project site. Such distant views are typically clearer

**Figure IV.B-5 Views of Surrounding Land Uses**

**Figure IV.B-6 Views of Surrounding Land Uses**



in the absence of certain weather conditions such as fog, haze, rain and sunshine glare from the ocean. Refer to Figure IV.B-7 for views from the project site.

### ***Views of and Towards the Project Site***

Due to the orientation of the on-site apartment buildings on the hillside overlooking Sunset Boulevard, PCH and the Pacific Ocean, the existing buildings and landslide on the project site are visible from various areas to the south, southeast, east, and to a lesser extent to the north. As shown in Figure IV.B-8, the site is visible from portions of both Sunset Boulevard and PCH, as well as many of the commercial and residential uses located along both roadways. Both Sunset Boulevard and PCH are designated by the City of Los Angeles as a Scenic Major Highway II; however, neither roadway is designated as a State Scenic Highway in the project area.<sup>1</sup> Portions of the project site are also visible from local streets such as Castellammare Drive, Tramonto Drive, and to a lesser extent, Los Liones Drive and Paseo Miramar. Excluding Los Liones Drive, the site is visible from residential land uses along these local roads. However, intervening topography, landscaping and buildings block views of the site from some of the residential uses along these local roads. There are distant views of the northern side of the project site from portions of Topanga State Park and the Santa Monica Mountains, but most of these views are screened by topography, the four-story condominium adjacent to the site, and existing landscaping at the site and along Tramonto Drive. As shown in Figure IV.B-9, distant views of the project site are also available from Will Rogers State Beach, PCH and the Pacific Ocean (away from the shoreline, at or east of Sunset Boulevard). However, views of the site from the beaches south of the site (adjacent to Gladstones restaurant near the intersection of PCH and Sunset Boulevard) are not available due the grade separation between the shoreline and PCH. Other than the single- and multi-family residential uses above the site, motorists on PCH and residential areas further west do not have views of the site due to intervening natural and man-made features, such as hillside topography, native vegetation, residential land uses and landscaping. Views of the site from areas to the northeast and east are also obstructed for the same reasons. For example, the site is not visible from Palisades Drive or Sunset Boulevard between Paseo Miramar and Palisades Drive. However, the site can be seen from Sunset Boulevard just east of Palisades Drive (Figure IV.B-8).

### **Existing Zoning and Building Height Regulations**

The project site is located within the Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan area. The land use designation for the project site is “Multiple Family, Low Medium II Density” to reflect the site’s underlying zoning, which is RD2-1 (Multiple Family). The project site is located in Height District 1,

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<sup>1</sup> *Sunset Boulevard is designated as a major highway, but is not planned to be widened for the purpose of increasing capacity during the twenty year life of the Brentwood – Palisades Community Plan.*

**Figure IV.B-7 Views from the Project Site**

**Figure IV.B-8 Views of and Towards the Project Site**

**Figure IV.B-9            Views of and Towards the Project Site**

which allows a floor area of not more than three times the buildable area of the lot and a maximum height of 45 feet above grade. The project site is also designated by the City of Los Angeles zoning map as being within a Coastal Zone Commission Approval area. Height limitations and maximum allowable building area for adjacent properties are similar to those for the project site.

## **ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

### **Thresholds of Significance**

For the purposes of this EIR, the development of an incongruous structure relative to its location, loss of a major scenic view, or loss of a major open space resource would be considered a significant visual impact. Based on the City of Los Angeles CEQA Thresholds Guide, the proposed project would also result in a significant aesthetics impact if it exceeds any of the following thresholds:

- The amount or relative proportion of existing features or elements that substantially contribute to the valued visual character of image of a neighborhood, community, or localized area;
- The amount of natural open space to be graded or developed;
- The degree of contrast between proposed features and existing features that represent the area's valued aesthetic image;
- The degree to which the project would contribute to the area's aesthetic value;
- Applicable guidelines and regulations;
- The nature and quality of recognized or valued views (such as natural topography, settings, man-made or natural features of visual interest, and resources such as the mountains or the ocean);
- Whether the project affects views from a designated scenic highway, corridor, or parkway;
- The extent of obstruction (e.g. total blockage, partial interruption, or minor diminishment); and
- The extent to which the project affects recognized views available from a length of a public roadway, bike path, or trail, as opposed to a single, fixed vantage point.

### **Project Characteristics Relevant to Aesthetics**

As described in detail in Section III, Project Description, the proposed project is a residential development consisting of 82 condominium units (Figure IV.B-10). The 82 units will be split into six buildings: three buildings are proposed to contain three levels and include 25 three-bedroom townhomes with parking below each unit; and three buildings are proposed to include four stories consisting of 57 three-bedroom flats with parking being provided in a subterranean garage. None of the proposed buildings will exceed 45 feet in height. Figure IV.B-11 shows an artist's rendering of the proposed townhomes.

**Figure IV.B-10**

**Site Plan**

**Figure IV.B-11**

**Artist's Rendering of Proposed Townhomes and Flats**

All existing on-site structures will be removed, including two apartment buildings, a swimming pool, and a carport area. A total of 29 of the existing non-native 36 trees would be removed (Figure III-1, Vesting Tentative Map Tract 52928). The grading for the proposed project will require 130,000 cubic yards (cy) of cut and 80,000 cy of fill. Approximately 100,000 cy of the cut material would be exported off-site and approximately 75,000 cy of fill would be imported to the site for landslide repair. The on-site portion of the Revello Landslide would also be permanently stabilized and repaired.

## **Project Impacts**

### ***Post-Project Views of and Towards the Project Site***

Due to the height, increased density and location of the proposed project on a hillside overlooking Sunset Boulevard, PCH and the Pacific Ocean, the proposed townhomes and apartment flats would be visible from all of the viewing locations previously described for the existing on-site apartments and landslide. Such viewing locations include portions of Sunset Boulevard, PCH and local streets in the project area (e.g. Castellammare Drive, Tramonto Drive, and to a lesser extent, Los Liones Drive and Paseo Miramar), as well as from some of the commercial and/or residential uses along these roadways (Figure IV.B-8). Distant views of the proposed project would also be available from portions of Will Rogers State Beach (including bike path), PCH, the Pacific Ocean, and to a lesser extent from some areas of Topanga State Park and Santa Monica Mountains north of the site (Figure IV.B-9). Similar to the existing apartment buildings on the project site, the proposed project would not be visible from the beaches immediately to the south of the site due to the grade separation between PCH and the shoreline. Excluding the single- and multi-family residential uses above the site, the proposed project would not be visible to motorists on PCH and residential areas further west of the site due to intervening natural and man-made features, such as hillside topography, native vegetation, residential land uses and landscaping. The proposed project would not be visible from areas to the northeast and east for the same reasons cited above (e.g. Palisades Drive, Sunset Boulevard between Paseo Miramar and Palisades Drive, etc.). Visibility of the proposed project from adjacent land uses and roadways, including two City-designated Scenic Major Highways II (PCH and Sunset Boulevard), is not considered to be a significant impact. This is because the project area is highly urbanized with a mix of commercial and single- and multi-family residential uses, including multi-story office, apartment and condominium buildings, and because the proposed project is consistent with the site's zoning and height requirements.

The proposed project would not result in the obstruction of any public scenic views. While the site would be visible from portions of public areas such Topanga State Park, Will Rogers State Beach, Pacific Ocean, PCH and Sunset Boulevard, it would not obstruct any scenic views (e.g. ocean, mountains, coastline) from these viewing locations (Figures IV.B-8 and IV.B-9). Impacts relative to public scenic views would be less than significant.



Conversely, the proposed project would result in the obstruction and partial obstruction of scenic views from private properties located immediately north-northwest of the project site. As shown in Figures IV.B-12 through IV.B-15, the proposed project would obstruct and partially obstruct private views of the Pacific Ocean and shoreline as seen from the four-story condominium building located immediately north of the project site. As shown in Figure IV.B-16, the proposed project would also partially obstruct private views of the shoreline and Pacific Ocean as seen from the single-family homes located immediately north-northwest of the project site along Revello Drive. The existing on-site apartment units partially obstruct private views of the shoreline and Pacific Ocean from the adjacent four-story condominium building, but not from the adjacent single-family dwellings (Figure IV.B-17). Figure IV.B-18 illustrates the post-project view of the site from PCH and how the project would affect the private views seen from the adjacent (upslope) single- and multi-family residential uses. The project's obstruction and partial obstruction of scenic views from the adjacent private properties is considered to be a significant unavoidable impact.

As previously stated, the project site is located in an urbanized area characterized by a mix of commercial and residential uses with varying elevations and building heights. As shown in Figure IV.F-2, Zoning Designations, in Section IV.F of this report, the project site is situated in an area where the zoning designations transition (east to west) from commercial to multi-family residential, and then to single-family residential. The project site was rezoned in 1998 from [Q]R3-1 to RD2-1 pursuant to the Pacific Palisades Specific Plan. The proposed project is considered to be visually compatible with the adjacent multi-family residential and office uses (Figure IV.B-11). While the project is consistent with the permitted density and building height for the site, the increase in density and height compared to the existing on-site apartments represent a potentially significant building massing impact in relation to the upslope single-family homes located along Revello Drive. In addition, a landscape plan has yet to be prepared for the proposed project. Building massing impacts are considered to be potentially significant but can be mitigated to less than significant levels by implementing the recommendations listed in the mitigation measures subsection in this section.

### ***Lighting***

The project site is located in an urban area characterized by a mix of residential and commercial land uses that are sources of nighttime lighting and daytime glare. With the exception of the Revello Landslide area, the on-site apartment buildings are also a source of nighttime lighting and daytime glare. Due to the increased density of the proposed project compared to the existing apartment buildings, the proposed project would introduce a greater amount of nighttime lighting to the project site. Such lighting sources include interior lighting, exterior security lighting, and headlights associated with motor vehicles using the main driveway off of Tramonto Drive and the townhouse access driveway. Some of the project building materials (i.e., windows) as well as automobile windshields also represent sources of daytime glare. Light and glare impacts would be potentially significant but

**Figure IV.B-12  
(Cross Section A)**

**Existing and Proposed Line of Sight from Adjacent Condominiums**

**Figure IV.B-13  
(Cross Section A)**

**Existing and Proposed Line of Sight from Adjacent Condominiums**

**Figure IV.B-14  
(Cross Section A)**

**Existing and Proposed Line of Sight from Adjacent Condominiums**

**Figure IV.B-15  
(Cross Section A)**

**Existing and Proposed Line of Sight from Adjacent Condominiums**

**Figure IV.B-16 Existing and Proposed Line of Sight from Adjacent Single-Family Dwelling (Cross Section B)**

**Figure IV.B-17**

**Existing View of the Project Site from Pacific Coast Highway**

**Figure IV.B-18**

**Post-Project View of the Project Site from Pacific Coast Highway**



can be mitigated to less than significant levels by implementing the proposed light and glare mitigation measures below.

## **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

According to the related projects list presented in Section II.B (Related Projects) of this EIR, there are a total of 11 related projects proposed in the vicinity of the project site. However, only related projects 2, 3, 4 and 7 appear to be within the same viewsheds as the proposed project. Related project 2 is located at 16800 PCH, related project 3 is located at 321 Los Liones Drive, related project 4 is located closest to the project site at 17325 Castellammare Drive, and related project 7 is located at 501 Paseo Miramar (see Figure II-12, Related Projects Map, in Section II of this report). Related project 4 (G.H. Palmer Project) is a proposed 21-unit condominium complex at 17325 Castellammare Drive that has been approved for construction by the City of Los Angeles. This related project is located at the toe of the Revello Drive Landslide, immediately downslope of the proposed project site. Development of the proposed project in conjunction with the related projects would result in an intensification of existing prevailing land uses in the project area. Development of the related projects is expected to occur in accordance with adopted plans and regulations. It appears that all related projects would be compatible with the zoning and land use designations for each site and their existing surrounding land uses. While many of the related projects and the proposed project would be visible from public and private properties, the related projects and proposed project would not combine to obstruct existing public scenic views. Provided the proposed project implements the mitigation measures listed below, cumulative visual resources impacts would be less than significant.

## **MITIGATION MEASURES**

The following mitigation measures are required to ensure the proposed project does not result in any significant impacts to visual resources:

1. The proposed project shall comply with the City's Hillside Development Guidelines.
2. Prior to the issuance of a grading permit, a plot plan prepared by a reputable tree expert, indicating the location, size, type, and condition of all existing trees on the site shall be submitted for approval by the Department of City Planning and the Street Tree Division of the Bureau of Street Services. All trees in the public right-of-way shall provide per the current Street Tree Division standards.
3. The plan shall contain measures recommended by the tree expert for the preservation of as many trees as possible. Mitigation measures such as replacement by a minimum of 24-inch box

trees on the site, on a 1:1 basis, shall be required for the unavoidable loss of desirable trees on the site, and to the satisfaction of the Street Tree Division of the Bureau of Street Services and the Advisory Agency.

4. All open areas not used for buildings, driveways, parking areas, or walkways shall be attractively landscaped and maintained in accordance with a landscape plan, including an automatic irrigation plan, prepared by a licensed landscape architect to the satisfaction of the City Planning Department.
5. Landscape buffers shall be planted between the project site and adjacent residential uses.
6. Outdoor lighting shall be directed on-site and designed and installed with shielding so that the light source can not be seen from adjacent land uses.
7. The exterior of the proposed buildings shall be constructed of non-reflective building materials.

#### **LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION**

Impacts related to public views, building massing and lighting would be would be less than significant. Impacts related to private views would be considered significant and unavoidable.