
V. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

B. AESTHETICS

INTRODUCTION

This section describes the visual setting of the proposed project and evaluates the potential for impacts to the visual (aesthetic) environment due to the development of the proposed project.

This examination of aesthetics is based upon an evaluation of two categories of values: visual character and the attributes of the related views and/or viewsheds.

Visual character is comprised of a combination of elements making up the aesthetic qualities of both existing conditions on the project site and the proposed project itself, such as land use, building scale and mass, proportion and balance, and ambience. The visual character of a project and site is typically evaluated with respect to its physical components and within the context of its neighborhood through an analysis of its compatibility with the land uses of the immediately surrounding areas. The values and issues generally associated with visual character and the degree of associated environmental impact tend to be subjective - more so with respect to the aesthetic qualities of the project, in and of themselves; less so with respect to the compatibility of the aesthetic qualities with the surrounding environment. The inherent subjectivity of issues and values relative to visual character often makes it difficult to conclusively determine what constitutes a "significant impact" under CEQA.

Visual impacts are also analyzed through an examination of views and/or viewsheds. Viewsheds refer to the visual qualities of a geographical area. The geographical area is defined by the horizon, topography, and other natural features that give an area its visual boundary and context. Viewshed impacts are typically characterized by the loss and/or obstruction of existing scenic vistas or other major views in the area of the site which are available to the general public. For the purposes of this analysis, views are categorized by distance from the observer into three classifications: foreground (the view within approximately 500 feet of the observer), middleground (the view generally beyond 500 feet of the observer to approximately 2,700 feet) and background (the view beyond 2,700 feet of the observer). View analysis is also based upon relative visibility with regard to viewing location and future development onsite. Views treated within this analysis assume fair-weather daytime conditions.

This section will also address the likelihood that adjacent uses (sensitive receptors) would be disturbed by light and glare generated or reflected by the proposed project.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The general surrounding area of the project site is characterized by suburban development consisting of mostly residential and some commercial land uses. The irregularly-shaped project site is bounded by San

Feliciano Drive to the west and north, Mulholland Drive to the south and east, the Girard Reservoir to the northeast, and single-family residences to the west. Consisting of a single parcel of land, the project site is currently surrounded by a chain link fence and is occupied by a vacant, two-story single-family residence, sheds, and an aged kennel at the east-central portion of the property along Mulholland Drive. The remaining portions of the site consist of undeveloped, open space that is occupied by various trees, shrubs, low-lying weeds, and grasses.

Land uses surrounding the 6.19-acre project site include one- and two-story single-family homes to the north, east, and west, the Girard Reservoir and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Pumping Station to the northeast, a private parochial high school and convent to the southeast, and a two-story commercial office building with a surface parking lot and a small shopping center to the southwest. The City of Calabasas begins approximately 365 feet south of the project site, along Mulholland Highway. The private parochial high school, called Louisville High School, and convent property houses multiple structures and contains a surface parking lot that parallels Mulholland Drive. The two-story commercial office building, called Mulholland Plaza, is located at the southwest corner of the intersection between Mulholland Drive and Mulholland Highway. The shopping center, called Gelson's Village Calabasas, is located in the jurisdiction of the City of Calabasas adjacent to Mulholland Plaza, and consists of retail and commercial stores, including a Gelson's Supermarket, yoga studio, Washington Mutual Bank, and dry cleaners. Adjacent to Gelson's Village Calabasas is a Shell gas station.

Project Site

The project site is an irregularly-shaped 6.19-acre property located entirely within the inner corridor of the Mulholland Drive Scenic Parkway Specific Plan area. The most visually prominent feature of the project site is the grove of Coast Live Oak trees that occupies a large portion of the northern and central portions of the property). There are 153 Coast Live Oak trees in the grove, many of which form a dense canopy that extends across the site from Mulholland Drive to San Feliciano Drive. In addition to the oak trees, there are 44 other trees on the project site including Southern California Black Walnuts, Willows, Mexican Elderberry and a variety of ornamentals (see Table IV-1, Section IV, Environmental Setting). Along Mulholland Drive the oak trees form effective screens that restrict offsite views into the interior of the project site (see Photograph K and L, Figure V.B-2). Along San Feliciano Drive, the continuous canopy of the oak trees creates shaded woodland in the northern portion of the site, but does not entirely block offsite views of the project site (see Photograph L, Figure V.B-2).

A vacant, two-story single-family residence, sheds and an aged kennel occupy the east-central portion of the property near Mulholland Drive. A couple of security lights are maintained on the abandoned house, which is visible from Mulholland Drive. However, the house, sheds and kennels are not visible from San Feliciano Drive. The remaining portion of land is undeveloped, open space.

As previously discussed, the 5.91-acre Girard Reservoir and the City of Los Angeles Department of Water and Power Pumping Station are located adjacent to and northeast of the project site (see Photographs I and J, Figure IV-8). The Girard Reservoir, a raised earthen structure, is visible through the shade of the oak tree grove. Because the project site wraps around the southern portion of the Girard Reservoir, the two properties appear to be a single island of open space of approximately 12 acres located in the midst of fully built-out suburban single-family neighborhood. Together, the project site and the Girard Reservoir create a bucolic ambiance for the neighborhood. However, several features detract from the area's aesthetic qualities: poorly maintained chain-link fencing along the western property line of the reservoir and the project site (Photograph M, Figure V.B-3); overhead power lines along the San Feliciano frontage (Photograph N, Figure V.B-3); a poorly maintained low concrete block retaining wall along a portion of the project site's San Feliciano frontage; the abandoned and deteriorating house, shed and kennels (Photograph B, Figure IV-4; and Photograph C, Figure IV-5); and neglected weedy growth, particularly where it is growing up against and through the perimeter chain-link fencing (Photograph M, Figure V.B-3).

The central portion of the project site is an open weed covered field. There are no trees in the field area and views into the interior of the project site are unobstructed. The overhead power lines that run through the middle of the field visually dominate this area. The southern portion of the project site is tucked behind existing homes and is less easily seen from the roadway.

There are no National Register or California State Historic Resource properties, California Historical landmarks, California Points of Historic Interest or City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monuments on the project site. In addition, there are no rock-outcroppings or other major geologic or topographic features on the project site that are of particular note. Furthermore, there are no views of offsite rock-outcroppings or other major geologic or topographic features that may be seen looking through the project site. However, because the project site is located adjacent to the Mulholland Scenic Parkway, it is a visible element within the vista provided by the scenic parkway.

Views of the Project Site and Protection of the Viewshed

The project site is primarily visible from three public roadways: Mulholland Drive, Mulholland Highway and San Feliciano Drive. It is also visible from nearby private homes located to the southwest, west and northwest. There are also partial views of the project site from portions of Louisville High School, the Mulholland Plaza commercial office building and grounds, and to a lesser extent, from portions of the Gelson's Village Calabasas shopping center. There may also be limited views of the project site from other locations in the general vicinity, but these are the major view locations. The project site is also visible from a few private residences in the immediate area. However, the viewshed protection provisions of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan are directed at preserving, complementing and/or enhancing the public views from Mulholland Drive (see Section 2.E of the Specific Plan). Therefore, for the purposes of this EIR, impacts on surrounding homes and land uses are discussed; however the focus

of this aesthetic analysis is on the project's impact on public views, particularly those from Mulholland Drive.

Views of the Project Site from Mulholland Drive

Because of the project site's relatively small size (6.19 acres), adjacency to the Mulholland Drive right-of-way and constraints on roadway lines-of-sight, passengers in westbound vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists primarily experience the project site in terms of foreground views. There are no background views of or through the project site and only limited foreground/middle-ground views. Views of the project site first become available in the vicinity of the Girard Reservoir property, a few hundred feet to the northeast of the project site. Obstructions in the line-of-sight along Mulholland Drive caused by a roadway curve, a change in roadway gradient and the intervening dense tree canopy along the north side of Mulholland Drive combine to limit views of the project site from the east.

The oak tree canopy along the Mulholland Drive right-of-way is the first visual evidence of the project site for approaching vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists. However, views into the interior of the project site only become available as vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists pass a dilapidated white wooden fence that stretches several hundred feet along the north side of Mulholland Drive adjacent to the project site (see Photograph O, Figure V.B-4). To the casual observer, the dense growth of oak trees along the Mulholland Drive right-of-way dominates the foreground visual field, although the existing abandoned house on the property is briefly visible from passing cars, and for a more extended time for pedestrians and bicyclists. From the street, the interior of the project site is dominated by the shaded grove of trees. There are no views from Mulholland Drive through the project site to the existing homes along San Feliciano Drive.

The oak trees on the site range from trees with a diameter of canopy of as small as four feet (4') by five feet (5') to trees with a canopy of 108 feet by 78 feet. There are a few smaller trees with canopies of less than 15 feet by 15 feet, but on average the smaller trees have canopies of approximately 20 feet by 20 feet. Similarly while there are a few larger trees with canopies of approximately 80 feet by 70 feet on average the trees have canopies ranging from approximately 40 feet by 40 feet to 60 feet by 70 feet. Of the 197 trees on site only seven (7) have an aesthetic value of excellent and an additional 56 have an aesthetic value of good as defined by the arborist's report. The largest oak tree is considered to be in excellent condition. However, the majority of the trees on site are considered to have an aesthetic value of fair to poor.

For vehicles and pedestrians/bicyclists approaching on Mulholland Drive from the west, the project site first comes into view as the cars begin their descent from a low saddle in the roadway heading toward the intersection of Mulholland Drive and Mulholland Highway. There are no background views of or through the project site from the west. The first limited middle ground views are of the dense tree canopy as it rises above and behind the roof line of adjacent homes (see Photograph P, Figure V.B-4; and

Photograph Q, Figure V.B-5). There are no middle ground views through the project site to the existing homes along San Feliciano Drive. Dense vegetation along the project site's property line, a curve in the roadway, and the necessity to pay attention to the signalized intersection, typically combine to draw the driver's attention away from the project site until their vehicle passes the intersection (see Photograph R, Figure V.B-5). Of course, pedestrians (and bicyclists to a somewhat lesser degree), are not so limited. Once past the intersection, breaks in the dense vegetation along the right-of-way gives fleeting foreground glimpses into the interior of the site. The interior too appears to be dominated by the dense tree canopy that obscures views of open patches of land within the site.

Views of the Project Site from Mulholland Highway

For passengers in vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists traveling northbound on Mulholland Highway, the first views of the project site become available in the vicinity of Freedom Drive, approximately 900 feet south of the project site. From this general area the views are panoramic. Foreground views to the west encompass a Shell gas station, Gelson's Village Calabasas shopping center and the Mulholland Plaza office building and grounds. In the middle ground, behind and rising above the Gelson's Village Calabasas shopping center, multiple-family housing is prominently visible. To the east, a single family residential subdivision dominates the foreground and blocks more distant views. Looking straight ahead (north) over the tree canopy on the project site, the single-family homes of Woodland Hills extend visibly north toward the flatlands of the Valley. The sizes and shapes of the individual trees are lost in the massing of the dense green tree canopy. The vegetation along the southern perimeter effectively obstructs the views into the interior of the project site (see Photograph P, Figure V.B-4; and Photograph R, Figure V.B-5).

Views of the Project Site from San Feliciano Drive

San Feliciano Drive, a typical Woodland Hills single-family residential street, borders the project site on the west and northwest. Its winding north-south alignment closely follows the terrain of the foothills. To the north and south of the project site San Feliciano is developed with homes on both sides of the street. The homes are attractive and well maintained.

Because of its winding alignment, there are no distant views of the project site from San Feliciano Drive. For southbound vehicles, pedestrians and bicyclists, the first view of the project site occurs at the approach to Cerrillos Drive. Views of the northern portion of the project are dominated by the foreground oak tree grove and, to a lesser extent, by the partially visible Girard Reservoir (see Photograph N, V.B-3). As vehicles pass the central portion of the project site there is a brief view into the flat field area. The southern portion of the project site is only briefly visible. For pedestrians and bicyclists, these views can be prolonged.

There are also constraints to the line-of-sight for northbound vehicles on San Feliciano Drive. Roadway curves, a downhill slope and the intervening line of existing homes combine to block views of the interior

until the passing vehicle, pedestrian or bicyclist has practically reached the project site (see Photograph M, V.B-3). For northbound vehicles, there are no views of the southern portion of the project site. Views into the central portion are unrestricted but brief for passing motorists, but prolonged for pedestrians, bicyclists and residents. The northern portion is dominated by the grove of oak trees.

Views of the Project Site from Surrounding Land Uses

The project site is visible from the yards and windows of a few nearby homes along San Feliciano Drive (see Photograph G, Figure IV-7). Primarily, it is visible from the existing homes on the west side of San Feliciano, across from the project site. The closest of these homes are built on raised pads with front yards that are oriented toward the project site. The project site is also visible from a few homes on the east side of San Feliciano Drive, southwest of the project site. Except for the home that is immediately adjacent to the southwest property line, the homes further south have only partial views of the project site from their front yards and some limited potential for partial views from their side and back yards.

There are existing homes along Mulholland Drive to the northeast of the Girard Reservoir. However, the reservoir is an effective barrier to views of the project site from these homes.

There are also existing homes along Mulholland Drive immediately to the west of the project site. With the exception of the closest of these homes, it is unlikely that the residents of these homes have direct views of the project site. Foremost, there is dense vegetation along the western perimeter of the project site to block views into the interior. Also, these homes face south and are not oriented toward the project site (see Photograph R, Figure V.B-5).

Louisville High School is located directly across Mulholland Drive from the project site. A school parking lot is located at street grade on the south side of Mulholland Drive. A row of large oleander bushes breaks up the view of the project site from the parking lot, but the project site is still readily visible from large gaps between the parking lot's oleanders (see Photograph H, Figure IV-7). The project site is mostly not visible from Louisville High School classrooms and convent, which are set back from Mulholland Drive. Views of the project site from the Louisville High School classrooms and convent are mostly blocked by a retaining wall, fencing and landscaping.

The project site is mostly not visible from the commercial uses to the southwest (i.e., Gelson's Village Calabasas and the Mulholland Plaza). The dense growth of vegetation along the project site's southern perimeter forms an effective barrier that prevent views into the interior of the project site from these commercial uses..

Figure V.B-1, Photograph Location Map

Figure V.B-2, Photographs K and L

Figure V.B-3, Photographs M and N

Figure V.B-4, Photographs O and P

Figure V.B-5, Photographs Q and R

Night Lighting

With the exception of a couple of security lights which are maintained on the abandoned house, the project site has no night lighting and is dark at night. However, the perimeter of the project site receives some spillover light from nearby offsite lighting sources. In particular, some of the homes on San Feliciano Drive maintain bright outdoor security and landscape lighting. There are also a few, widely spaced street lights on San Feliciano Drive. The closest street light is located at the intersection of San Feliciano Drive and Cerrillos Drive. A greater source of lighting in the area is the pole mounted street lights that are evenly spaced on the south side of Mulholland Drive between Topanga Canyon Boulevard and Mulholland Highway, and on the north side of Mulholland Drive west of the Mulholland Highway intersection. Also, the adjacent signalized intersection of Mulholland Drive and Mulholland Highway is brightly illuminated by street lighting. However, the Gelson's Village Calabasas shopping center, and to a lesser extent the Mulholland Plaza, is the major source of night lighting in immediate vicinity of the project site. Louisville High School and convent is also a source of night lighting in the immediate vicinity, but contributes far less light than the shopping center. There is no observable night lighting at the Girard Reservoir.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G to the State CEQA Guidelines, the proposed project would have a significant Aesthetic impact 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; or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Proposed Project

The proposed project is the development of 37 detached single-family homes on a 6.19-acre project site located entirely within the inner corridor of the Mulholland Drive Scenic Parkway. Grading for the building pads, access roadways, drainage improvements and utility installation would affect approximately 3.83 acres (or 61 percent of site). In order to reduce the size of the grading footprint, the project proposes to utilize retaining walls, where practical, rather than manufactured slopes.

Approximately 3.3 acres (or 53 percent of the project site) would remain as open space; and, of the total open space approximately 2.4 acres (or 39 percent of the site) would remain undisturbed. The proposed homes would have a maximum height of three stories or 36 feet, as established by the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan Inner Corridor regulations. However, their architectural style has not yet been determined. No street lighting is proposed on the private drive between Mulholland Highway and San Feliciano Drive. Rather, primary nighttime illumination would be provided by low intensity carriage lights mounted on the exterior walls of the homes. A forty-foot setback would be maintained along Mulholland Drive and a twenty-foot setback would be maintained along San Feliciano Drive. As per the requirements of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan, although the type of ownership would be detached single-family condominium, the resulting project would look like a conventional single-family project.

Viewshed Analysis

The Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan Design and Preservation Guidelines require that a viewshed analysis be prepared for any project within the Inner Corridor, in order to determine the extent to which building heights negatively impact view. The viewshed analysis and discussion for this project are presented in Section V.F (Land Use), below.

As shown in Section V.F, Table V.F-3, the viewshed analysis indicates that intervening topography, vegetation and/or future structures would eliminate the potential to see a majority of the proposed homes from Mulholland Drive. Of the 37 new homes, 30 homes (or approximately 81%) would be entirely screened from view at all points along the Mulholland Drive right-of-way contiguous with the property. The homes that would not be visible are Units 2, and 7 through 35. Five homes (or approximately 14 %) may be partially visible from one or more points along Mulholland Drive, but are substantially screened by intervening vegetation, topography and/or structures as indicated. The homes that would be partially visible are Units 1, 5, 6, 36 and 37. Only two (2) residences, Units 3 and 4 would be wholly visible from Mulholland Drive, although these two homes would be blocked from view at some points along Mulholland Drive.

The homes that would be visible from Mulholland Drive would be seen through gaps in the existing screening vegetation along Mulholland Drive. As presented in Figure III-5 (Conceptual Landscape Plan), the project proposes to fill the gaps in the existing screening vegetation with additional native trees and shrubs. According to the landscape architect, once the new landscaping has matured (in approximately five years), none of the homes would be visible from Mulholland Drive.

Retaining Wall Impacts

The project proposes to install a number of retaining walls that may be visible from the Mulholland Drive right-of-way. As a substitute for manufactured slopes, retaining walls can be used to reduce the area of the project site that would otherwise be graded in preparation for project construction. In turn, a reduction

in the project's grading "footprint" may result in fewer impacts to oak trees on the project site. Hence retaining walls, when not visually intrusive, can serve to reduce a project's aesthetics impacts. However, retaining walls that are visible from the Mulholland Drive right-of-way may be considered incompatible with the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan's purpose of "maximum preservation and enhancement of the parkway's outstanding and unique scenic features and resources".¹

The following is a brief discussion of the location, length, height and visibility of the project's proposed retaining walls:

- A retaining wall is proposed to wrap around the backside of units 1 through 6. This irregularly shaped wall would have an over all length of approximately 372 feet and would have varying heights that range from 0.5 to 10 feet. The highest point along this wall would be behind Unit 5. This wall would be minimally visible from Mulholland Drive because: (1) it is located behind Units 1-6; (2) it mostly faces inward toward the center of the project site and not toward the scenic parkway (see Viewshed Sections, Figure V.B-6; and Section Profiles A-A through E-E, Figure V.B-7); (3) the top of the wall would be below the grade of the adjacent portion of Mulholland Drive; (4) it maintains a minimum setback of 135 feet from the edge of the existing Mulholland Drive pavement; and, (5) there are a substantial number of oak trees within the Mulholland Drive right-of-way that would partially block views toward the wall (see Figure V-F-4, Viewshed Impact Analysis).
- A second retaining wall would be located behind Units 7-9. This wall would have an overall length of approximately 145 feet and a maximum height of 11.6 feet. The highest point along this wall would be behind Unit 8. This wall would also be minimally visible from Mulholland Drive because: (1) it is located behind Units 7-9; (2) it faces inward toward the center of the project site and not toward the scenic parkway (see Section Profiles F-F through I-I, Figure V.F-2); (3) a portion of an existing knoll within the right-of-way rises approximately 10 feet above the street grade and forms a barrier to views of the interior (see Section Profile I-I, Figure V.F-2; (4) the top of the wall would generally be about 10 feet or more below the grade of the adjacent portion of Mulholland Drive; (4) it maintains a minimum setback of approximately 240 feet from the edge of the existing Mulholland Drive pavement; and, (5) there are a substantial number of oak trees within the Mulholland Drive right-of-way that would partially block views toward the wall (see Figure V.F-4, Viewshed Impact Analysis).
- A third, irregularly-shaped wall is proposed to run from the main Mulholland Drive entrance south, in front of Units 36 and 37, to the knoll where the existing sheds and kennel are located. At this point the wall makes a 90 degree turn, runs along the side of Unit 36, then turns south

¹ *Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan, Section 2, page 3.*

again and runs behind the existing hill mass, and then turns again and runs along the side of Unit 35. In total this wall would be approximately 522 feet in length and would have variable heights ranging up to 19.6 feet. This wall would also be minimally visible from Mulholland Drive for similar reasons as the two previously discussed walls: (1) it mostly faces inward toward the center of the project site and not toward the scenic parkway (see Section Profile G-G through L-L, Figure V.F-3); (2) where the wall faces outward, it is located behind a knoll which is an effective barrier to views of the development (see Section Profile L-L; Figure V.F-3); (3) the top of the wall would generally be at or below the grade of the adjacent portion of Mulholland Drive; (4) it maintains a minimum setback of 75 feet from the edge of the existing Mulholland Drive pavement; and (5) there are a substantial number of oak trees within the Mulholland Drive right-of-way that would partially block views toward the wall (see Figure V.F-4, Viewshed Impact Analysis).

- Lastly, there are two small, low walls in the western portion of the project site. One wall is located in the vicinity of Unit 25 and the other wraps around Unit 24. These walls would be minimally visible from Mulholland Drive because: (1) the wall by Unit 25 has a maximum height of 3.9 feet, while the wall supporting Unit 24 has a maximum height of 4.6 feet; (see Section Profiles E-E through G-G; Figure V.F-2); (2) they are located behind Units 18-21; and (3) they maintain a minimum setback of 367.5 feet from the edge of the existing Mulholland Drive pavement.

Impacts to Trees

The proposed project would convert the 6.19-acre project site from its current partially developed condition to a residential setting. As a result, 37 of the 197 trees on the project site would require removal, including 9 (nine) Coast Live Oaks and 9 (nine) Southern California black walnut trees. Coast Live Oaks and Southern California black walnut are afforded protected tree status by the City of Los Angeles' Protected Tree Ordinance, Ordinance 177,404 (see Section V.F, Land Use, for further discussion). Figure V.B-6, Tree Impact Map, shows the locations of all the trees listed in Table V.B-1, as well as all the trees to be retained.

**Table V.B-1
Summary of Tree Removals**

Tree ID	Common Name	Aesthetic Rating
39	Coast Live Oak	D
40	Apple	C
41	Mexican Fan Palm	B
42	Mexican Fan Palm	C
43	Mexican Fan Palm	C
44	Mexican Fan Palm	C
45	Mexican Fan Palm	C
46	Mexican Fan Palm	C
47	Mexican Fan Palm	C
48	Mexican Fan Palm	B
49	Mexican Fan Palm	B
53	Coast Live Oak	D (lying down)
54	Coast Live Oak	F (dead)
57	King Palm	B
58	Coast Live Oak	D
59	Fig	C
60	Coast Live Oak	D
61	Coast Live Oak	D
62	So. Calif. Black Walnut	D
79	English Walnut	C
89	So. Calif. Black Walnut	C
90	So. Calif. Black Walnut	D
91	So. Calif. Black Walnut	B
92	Mexican Elderberry	D
93	Mexican Elderberry	D
94	Mexican Elderberry	D
95	Mexican Elderberry	D
96	Mexican Elderberry	D
97	Mexican Elderberry	D
109	So. Calif. Black Walnut	B
110	Coast Live Oak	B
111	Coast Live Oak	B
187	So. Calif. Black Walnut	C
188	So. Calif. Black Walnut	C
189	So. Calif. Black Walnut	C
190	So. Calif. Black Walnut	C
191	Coast Live Oak	C
A. <i>Excellent – This tree is a healthy and vigorous tree characteristic of its species and free of any visible signs of disease or pest infestation</i>		
B. <i>Good – This tree is healthy and vigorous. There are minor visible signs of disease and pest infestation</i>		
C. <i>Fair – This tree is healthy in overall appearance, but there is a normal amount of disease and/or pest infestation</i>		
D. <i>Poor – This tree is characterized by exhibiting a greater degree of disease and/or pest infestation or structural instability than normal and appears to be in a state of decline</i>		
E. <i>Very Poor – This tree exhibits extensive signs of dieback</i>		
F. <i>Dead – This tree exhibits no signs of life at the time of field evaluation</i>		

Figure V.B-6, Tree Impact Map

A review of Figure V.B-6 demonstrates that all of the nine (9) oak trees and the nine (9) Southern California black walnuts and most of the other trees proposed for removal are located within the interior of the project site and are not readily visible from offsite locations. The oak trees are primarily situated behind groves of existing trees and/or behind intervening knolls. Additionally, six (6) of the nine oak trees to be removed have an aesthetic rating of poor or dead (D and F), the remaining three are rated fair to good (C and B); two of the walnuts are rated as poor (D), five are rated as fair (C), with the remaining two rated as good (B). While the oak woodland on the project site has high aesthetic values, the individual oak trees slated for removal have not acquired a distinctive significance with reference to the other trees or monuments on the project site. See Section V.F for further discussion of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan, which prohibits the removal of any oak trees without the prior written approval of the Planning Director after making the required findings.

Night Lighting

The proposed project would convert the site, with limited lighting, to an illuminated residential setting. There would be lighting from the low intensity carriage lights proposed to be mounted on the exterior walls of the homes. Also, there would be window glow and exterior landscape and security lighting. Car headlights, although both infrequent and intermittent, would contribute to light on the project site. The level of lighting is expected to be low for a variety of reasons: 3.3 acres (or 53% of the project site) would be retained as open space and would not be illuminated; and additional area of 0.86 acre (or 13.9% of the project site) would be devoted to landscaping and would receive only low levels of lighting; there would be no pole mounted street lighting; and substantial tree canopy would be retained to shield much of the site illumination from offsite locations. Nevertheless, some glow from the development area would be visible from offsite locations.

Lighting would be visible from Mulholland Drive, although it would not be expected to cause disability, discomfort or nuisance glare.² As indicated above, the lighting would be largely screened by the retained tree canopy. Further, as discussed above, 30 of the homes would be entirely screened from view at all points along the Mulholland Drive right-of-way contiguous with the property. Only two homes would be wholly visible from Mulholland Drive, although these two homes would be blocked from view at some

² *Glare is the sensation produced by a bright source within the visual field that is sufficiently brighter than the level to which the eyes are adapted to cause annoyance, discomfort or loss in visual performance and visibility (i.e., blinding light). Disability glare is caused by stray light scattered within the eye, which reduces the contrast of the retinal image. Streetlights, pedestrian lights, floodlights, and landscape lights as well as bright reflectors, can contribute to disability glare. Discomfort glare is caused by high contrast or a non-uniform distribution of luminance in the field of view. Discomfort glare can be reduced by decreasing the luminance of the light source, by increasing the background luminance around the source, or by adjusting the aiming angle of the source. Nuisance, or annoyance, glare occurs when light appears where it does not belong. (Source: Illuminating Engineering Society (IES) Handbook, 9th Edition).*

points along Mulholland Drive. The remaining five homes may be partially visible from one or more points along Mulholland Drive, but are substantially screened by intervening vegetation, topography and/or structures, as indicated. Lastly, Mulholland Drive in the vicinity of the project site (i.e., from Topanga Canyon Boulevard to Valley Circle Drive) is already illuminated by pole mounted street lighting.

Night lighting from the project site would also be visible from San Feliciano Drive, immediately adjacent to the development area, and from neighboring homes. As previously mentioned, there are widely spaced pole mounted street lights on San Feliciano Drive and some of the homes in the area have installed bright landscape and security lighting in their front yards facing. Consequently, the lighting from the proposed project is expected to be comparable to the existing lighting in the surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Lastly, the project site is located immediately adjacent to the brightly illuminated intersection of Mulholland Drive and Mulholland Highway. Furthermore, just to the southwest of this intersection is the brightly illuminated Gelson's Village Calabasas shopping center. These existing sources of lighting in the immediate vicinity of the project site substantially moderate the affect of new lighting from the project site on the Mulholland Scenic Parkway and on existing land uses in the area.

Thresholds of Significance Analysis

Would the proposed project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

The purpose of the Specific Plan and Design and Preservation Guidelines is to preserve and enhance the unique character and scenic features of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway. In the immediate vicinity of the project site, the scenic corridor is developed with single-family and multiple-family housing, an office building, a shopping center, a high school and street lighting. As a consequence of this development, the aesthetic values of the scenic vistas along this portion of the parkway have been compromised and no longer retain high scenic character that distinguishes other portions of the parkway. As discussed in greater detail in Section V.F, Land Use, while the proposed project would transform a wooded area into a residential setting, 30 (or approximately 81%) of the 37 proposed homes would be entirely screened from view at all points along the Mulholland Drive right-of-way contiguous with the property by existing vegetation or topography. The five (5) homes that may be partially visible and the two (2) homes that would be otherwise wholly visible from Mulholland Drive would be screened from view by the implementation of the Landscape Plan. The consulting landscape architect has indicated that full screening from the new landscaping would occur in approximately five years following planting. Because, through project design and landscaping, the proposed homes would not be visible from the scenic parkway, the project can be found to "preserve and enhance the unique character and scenic features of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway". Therefore, project impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant and mitigation measures are not required. Nevertheless, recommended **Project Enhancement B-19** restates that the project applicant/developer must: (1) implement a proposed master

landscape plan that is in conformance with the Design Review procedures and landscape guidelines established by the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan; and (2) that the proposed master landscape plan must achieve total screening of project homes through the planting of new native trees and shrubs.

Because the proposed walls would only be minimally visible from Mulholland Drive, the retaining walls would not be expected to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Therefore, the aesthetic impact of the retaining walls on a scenic vista would be less than significant and additional mitigation is not required.

The proposed project would remove 37 trees, including 18 protected trees from the project site, including nine oaks and nine Southern California black walnuts. Due to the large number of trees and dense tree canopy on the project site, the trees slated for removal are not prominently visible from Mulholland Drive. Furthermore, the trees have not acquired a distinctive significance with reference to the other trees or monuments on the project site nor would the removal of the trees be expected to increase soil erosion on the project site. While the removal of any one of the trees would not be expected to have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, the combined effect of the removal of 37 trees, including 18 protected trees would diminish the tree canopy and the scenic vista as seen from Mulholland Drive. Therefore the removal of the 37 trees would result in a potentially significant impact to scenic vistas and mitigation is required.

Section 46.00 et seq. of the Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC), and Los Angeles City Ordinance No. 177,404 set forth regulations for the preservation of protected trees in the City and further provide that a protected tree cannot be removed or relocated without first obtaining a permit from the Board of Public Works. In addition, the proposed project site is within the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan (MSPSP) and is thus subject to the regulations and requirements of the MSPSP. The MSPSP calls for the preservation of as many mature trees on a project site as possible and requires that trees that are removed be replaced as follows: a minimum of two oak trees (minimum of 36-inch box size) are to be planted for each one that is removed, any native tree removed must be replaced at a two for one ratio (minimum of 15 gallon size) with individuals of the same tree type, and any non-native tree removed must be replaced at a one for one ratio (minimum of 15 gallon size). Further, as required by Los Angeles City Ordinance No. 170,978, a comprehensive landscaping program would be implemented for the proposed project. Therefore, while construction-related impacts to protected trees and other mature non-native trees on the project site may be considered potentially significant; these impacts would be reduced to a less-than-significant level through the implementation of **Mitigation Measure D-6** (see Section V.D, Biological Resources), and project development in accordance with the requirements under the MSPSP and the LAMC. **Mitigation Measure D-6** provides for the protection and preservation of the 144 coast live oak (*Quercus agrifolia*) trees, the two Southern California black walnuts, and the 15 other non-native trees that will be maintained on-site, and for the mitigation for the loss of nine coast live oaks, nine Southern California black walnut trees and six native trees (Mexican elderberry) and 13 non-native trees that will

be removed during project construction. With implementation of **Mitigation Measure D-6**, project-related impacts to protected trees within a scenic vista would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Would the proposed project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The major scenic resource on the project site is its trees. There are no rock outcropping, historic buildings, and so forth on the project site. As discussed above, oak and walnut trees are specifically protected by ordinance in the City of Los Angeles, particularly along the Mulholland Scenic Parkway; therefore, any removal of an oak or walnut tree must be considered a potentially significant aesthetic impact on scenic resources. As discussed above, with implementation of **Mitigation Measure D-6**, project-related impacts to trees as a scenic resource would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

The retaining walls would only be minimally visible from Mulholland Drive and San Feliciano Drive and none of the trees would be removed to accommodate the retaining walls; rather, the walls have been proposed as an alternative to more extensive grading to reduce impacts to oak trees. Therefore, the retaining walls would not substantially damage scenic resources and their impact with respect to scenic resources would be less than significant.

The construction of the proposed homes and the proposed mitigation to screen the homes would reduce visibility of the onsite oak woodland, the site's major scenic resource. Because the reduced visibility of the oak trees could be considered damage to a scenic resource, the proposed project would be considered to have a potentially significant aesthetic impact on scenic resources.

Would the proposed project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

Because the assessment of aesthetic impacts involves subjective judgments, there is always the possibility of a difference of opinion regarding the determination whether a proposed change in the visual environment constitutes a significant impact. While some may consider the introduction of a residential development into this oak woodland as a significant intrusion under any circumstances, others may consider the proposed project to be an attractive addition to the community and desire to purchase homes there. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this analysis, since the proposed development would affect the existing visual character or quality of the project site, its impact with respect to existing visual character is considered potentially significant.

Because the retaining walls would only be minimally visible from Mulholland Drive and San Feliciano Drive the use of retaining walls would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

The loss of views of the onsite oak woodland would substantially affect the existing visual character or quality of the project site; this impact is considered potentially significant.

Would the proposed project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The proposed project would create a new source of light that would be visible from the Mulholland Scenic Parkway. As previously discussed, the project proposes to provide low intensity lighting and the tree canopy on the project site would be an effective screen for the new lighting. In addition, the area surrounding the project site (on Mulholland Drive, San Feliciano Drive, and Mulholland Highway) is already subjected to substantial levels of night lighting. When considered together, these various sources of existing night lighting in the surrounding area combined with the low level of lighting that would be visible from the project site, it is concluded that the new illumination from the project site would not be a source of substantial light or glare which would affect nighttime views in the area. Therefore, the aesthetic impact of the proposed project's night lighting would be adverse but less than significant.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

A review of Figure IV-9 reveals that most of the related projects are located along the Ventura Freeway Corridor or north of the corridor. There is also a cluster of six related projects located in the City of Calabasas approximately 1.5 miles to the west. The nearest related project (No. 26) to the project site is a proposed 6,744 square foot office which would be developed at 22231 Mulholland Highway, within the existing Gelson's Village Calabasas shopping center. There are direct lines-of-sight between the project site and Related Project No. 26. The only other related project in the vicinity of the project site is Related Project No. 27, the proposed development of nine single family homes located at 4200 Topanga Canyon Boulevard, in close proximity to an existing mobile home park. Due to an intervening mountain spur, there are no direct lines-of-sight between this related project and the project site. All other related projects are not near the project site and there are no lines-of-sight between these related projects and the proposed project. Therefore, with the exception of Related Project No. 26, none of the related projects would combine with the proposed project to create the loss of scenic vistas, damage to scenic resources, alteration of existing visual character or the creation of substantial light and/or glare. The combined effect of a 6,744 square foot office in an existing shopping center and the proposed project would be the intensification of suburban development in the Mulholland Scenic Parkway corridor. This will adversely affect to scenic values of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway. However, given the extensive development that already occurs in the immediate vicinity of these two projects, the cumulative effect would not be significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

The proposed project would have potentially significant impacts with respect to (1) scenic resources and (2) the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. The following standard City of Los Angeles and Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan mitigation measures would mitigate potentially significant impacts to scenic resources to a less-than-significant level:

- B-1** Prior to the issuance of a grading permit or building permit, the project applicant shall submit a tree report and landscape plan prepared by a Municipal Code-designated tree expert as designated by City of Los Angeles Ordinance No. 177,404, for approval by the Mulholland Scenic Corridor Specific Plan Design Review Board, the City of Los Angeles' Planning Department and the Urban Forestry Division of the Bureau of Street Services.
- B-2** A minimum of two trees (a minimum of 36-inch box in size) shall be planted for each oak tree that is removed, and a minimum of two trees (a minimum of 15-gallon size) shall be planted for each protected species and native tree that is removed. The value of the protected species trees planted shall be in proportion to the value of the protected species trees removed per Ordinance 177,404, the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan and to the satisfaction of the Urban Forestry Division of the Bureau of Street Services and the decision maker.

The following mitigation measures, recommended by the proposed project's Horticultural Tree Report, would reduce the impact to oak trees, as scenic resources, to a less than significant level:

- B-3** The replacement trees shall be planted in the "landscape" areas of this project.
- B-4** The "preserved trees", especially the protected species trees, within 50' from the proposed construction shall be fenced with a temporary chainlink (or similar) protective fence at their driplines (or at the location of approved encroachment) prior to the start of any onsite grading. This fencing shall remain intact until the City of Los Angeles' Planning Department or Street Tree Division, Bureau of Street Maintenance allows it to be removed or relocated.
- B-5** All footing excavations within the driplines shall be dug by hand work only, to a maximum depth of 5' (or to a depth that CAL_OSHA, OSHA or local codes allow). Any excavation below the "approved" depth may be done with acceptable machinery. All footings within the preserved tree driplines shall be of "post type" rather than of "continuous type" to lessen potential root damage.
- B-6** No other onsite protected species trees shall be encroached upon within their driplines other than what is being requested.

- B-7** No “over-excavation” outside of any cut and/or fill slopes (“tops” or “toes”) for the proposed construction shall occur within the dripline of any onsite oak trees, unless required by the project’s structural engineer.
- B-8** No landscape, irrigation lines, utility lines and/or grade changes shall be designed and/or installed within the dripline of any protected species trees, unless approved by the City of Los Angeles’ Planning Department or Street Tree Division, Bureau of Street Maintenance.
- B-9** The “bare” areas within the driplines of any onsite or “over-hanging” protected species trees, or within 50’ of approved grading/construction near protected species trees shall be covered with an insect and disease free organic mulch (minimum depth of 2” thick and no closer than 6” from their trunks and extending to approximately ten feet outside the dripline
- B-10** All work to this project’s protected species trees shall be in accordance with the City of Los Angeles’ Protected Tree Ordinance , the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan and LAMC 46.00 et. seq.
- B-11** Mature protected species trees to be retained shall be examined by a qualified arborist prior to the start of construction. Some of the project’s saved protected species trees are in need of minor dead wood removal. No major structural pruning shall be permitted. A qualified arborist shall complete all dead wood removal and/or pruning.
- B-12** Examination of the trees to be retained shall be performed monthly by a qualified arborist to ensure that they are being adequately protected and maintained. Prior to the completion of the proposed project, a qualified arborist shall certify in a “letter of compliance” that all concerned tree policies have been adhered to.
- B-13** Copies of the proposed project’s Horticultural Tree Report the City’s Protected Tree ordinance and the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan shall be maintained onsite during all project construction.

The following standard City of Los Angeles mitigation measures would mitigate potential impacts to non-protected trees, as scenic resources, to a less than significant level:

- B-14** Prior to the issuance of a grading permit or building 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 decision maker and the Urban Forestry Division of the Bureau of Street Services. All trees in the public right-of-way shall be provided per the current Urban Forestry Division standards.

B-15 The plan shall contain measures recommended by the tree expert for the preservation of as many trees as possible. Any (non-protected) native tree removed must be replaced at a two for one ratio (minimum of 15 gallon size) with individuals of the same tree type, and any non-native tree removed must be replaced at a one for one ratio (minimum of 15 gallon size) to the satisfaction of the Urban Forestry Division of the Bureau of Street Services and the decision maker.

B-16 The genera of the non-native replacement trees shall provide a minimum crown of 30'-50'.

Potentially significant impacts to the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings would be reduced to a less than significant level by implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1 through B-16. In addition, implementation of the following mitigation measures are also required to reduce project impacts to the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings to a less than significant level.

B-17 All project homes shall incorporate earth-tone palettes and non-reflective, more naturalistic building materials for exterior surfaces.

B-18 All public utilities shall be situated underground.

PROJECT ENHANCEMENTS

Based on the effectiveness of the proposed Landscape Plan to block views of project homes, impacts to scenic vistas have been determined to be less than significant and, hence, mitigation measures are not required under CEQA. Nevertheless, the following project enhancement is recommended to provide more detailed direction for the preparation and implementation of the Landscape Plan. Implementation of this project enhancement would further reduce the project's less than significant impacts to scenic vistas.

B-19 The project applicant/developer/builder shall prepare and implement a Landscape Plan that is in substantial conformance with the Landscape Plan shown in Figure V.B-5. The Landscape Plan provides planting and maintenance guidance for common landscaped areas, slopes, and undeveloped building pads. The project applicant/developer/builder shall be responsible for the Plan's implementation until such time as a homeowners' association is prepared to take over landscape maintenance responsibilities. The Landscape Plan shall be subject to the review and approval by the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan Design Review Board and the City of Los Angeles' Planning Department prior to issuance of the grading permit. To ensure its implementation, the Landscape Plan shall be incorporated into the project's Conditions, Covenants, and Restrictions (CC&Rs). Major features of the landscape plan shall include:

- 1) A listing of plant species appropriate for use for both temporary slope stabilization purposes and long-term landscaping designs for common slope and private yard areas. The plan shall emphasize the use of drought-tolerant, fire retardant, native plant species.

Only non-invasive non-native plant species shall be included in the listing of acceptable planting materials. In addition, wherever practical, plants which are relatively pest resistant and which require a minimum of added nutrients shall be utilized in landscaping;

- 2) Retention of a landscape contractor thoroughly familiar with the provisions of the Landscape Plan, by the project's homeowners' association, for ongoing implementation of the Landscape Plan; and
- 3) Preservation and protection of existing trees and shrubs, wherever possible. Procedures for the care and maintenance of native trees retained on the project site shall be specified. The project applicant shall provide protected tree maintenance information to the homeowners' association and to purchasers of individual homes within the proposed project.
- 4) A design that achieves the total screening of project homes through the planting of new native trees and shrubs.

Light and glare impacts have been determined to be less than significant and mitigation measures are not required under CEQA. Nevertheless, the following project enhancements are recommended to reduce the less-than-significant artificial light impacts even further:

- B-20** Entrance and all forms of street lighting shall focus illumination downward and into the project site. A combination of shielding, screening, and directing the lighting away from off-site areas shall be utilized to minimize "spill-over" effects onto adjacent roadways, properties and open space areas. Wherever possible, lighting fixtures shall be located on the shielded side of the visual barriers.
- B-21** Lighting fixtures that cut-off light directed to the sky shall be installed in combination with an expanded tree canopy to minimize atmospheric light pollution.
- B-22** The use of exterior up-lighting fixtures for building facades and trees shall be prohibited. Only downlighting for exterior-building mounted fixtures shall be permitted.
- B-23** Use of "glowing" fixtures that would be visible from existing communities or public roads shall be prohibited. A glowing fixture is a lantern style fixture, or any fixture that allows light through its vertical components

The following project enhancements are recommended to reduce potential glare impacts:

- B-24** Exterior buildings finishes shall be non-reflective and use natural subdued tones.
- B-25** All roofs visible from Mulholland Highway shall be surfaced with non-reflective materials.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Impacts to scenic resources (including individual protected trees and the oak woodland) would be reduced to less-than-significant levels by the implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1 through B-16.

Impacts to the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings would be reduced to a less-than-significant level by implementation of Mitigation Measures B-1 through B-16, plus Mitigation Measures B-17 and B-18.

With implementation of the proposed landscape plan, impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant. Implementation of Project Enhancement B-19 would further reduce the project's less-than-significant impact.

Impacts from the project's introduction of new sources of light on the project site would be less than significant. However, implementation of Project Enhancements B-20 through B-23 would further reduce these less-than-significant impacts.

Impacts from the project's introduction of new sources of glare on the project site would be less than significant. However, implementation of Project Enhancements B-24 through B-25 would further reduce these impacts.