

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

This section provides a discussion of the existing visual and aesthetic resources on the project site and in the surrounding area, and evaluates the potential for changes in the visual character that could result from implementation of the Tirador Residential Development Project (proposed project). This section also evaluates the potential loss of existing visual resources, effects on public views, visual compatibility with existing uses, and light and glare impacts.

Information presented in this section is based on the City of San Juan Capistrano General Plan Community Design Element (1999, revised 2002); the Conservation and Open Space Element (1999, revised 2002); the Land Use Element (1999, updated September 2014); and the City Municipal Code (adopted 1980).

### 4.1.1 Scoping Process

The City of San Juan Capistrano (City) received 11 comment letters during the public review period of the Initial Study/Notice of Preparation (IS/NOP). For copies of the IS/NOP comment letters, refer to Appendix A of this Environmental Impact Report (EIR). None of the comment letters included comments related to Aesthetics.

### 4.1.2 Methodology

The assessment of aesthetic impacts is subjective by nature. This analysis attempts to identify and objectively examine factors that contribute to the perception of aesthetic impacts that would be caused by implementation of the proposed project. The potential aesthetic impacts of the proposed project have been assessed based on consideration of several factors, including scale, mass, proportion, and the concepts described below.

- **Scenic Resources:** Scenic resources are defined as natural or man-made elements that contribute to an area's scenic value and are visually pleasing. Scenic resources include landforms, vegetation, water, or adjacent scenery and may include a cultural modification to the natural environment. The degree to which these resources are present in a community is clearly subject to personal and cultural interpretation. However, it is possible to qualify certain resources as having aesthetic characteristics and establish general guidelines for assessing the aesthetic impacts of new development.
- **Scenic Vista:** A scenic vista is a generally public viewpoint that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the public's benefit. It is usually viewed from some distance away. Aesthetic components of a scenic vista include (1) scenic quality, (2) sensitivity level, and (3) view access. A scenic vista can be impacted in two ways: a development project can have visual impacts by either directly diminishing the scenic quality of the vista or by blocking the view corridors or "vista" of the scenic resource. Important factors in determining whether a proposed project would block scenic vistas include the project's proposed height, mass, and location relative to surrounding land uses and travel corridors.
- **Sensitive Views:** Sensitive views are generally those associated with designated vantage points and public recreational uses, but the term can be more broadly applied to encompass any

valued public vantage point. Sensitivity level has to do with the (1) intensity of use of a visual resource; (2) visibility of a visual resource; and (3) importance of the visual resource to users.

- **Scenic Corridors:** Scenic corridors are channels that facilitate movement (primarily by automobile, transit, bicycle, or foot) from one location to another with expansive views of natural landscapes and/or visually attractive man-made development. Scenic corridors analyzed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) typically include State-designated scenic highways and locally designated scenic routes.
- **Scenic Quality:** The scenic quality of a streetscape, building, group of buildings, or other man-made or natural feature that creates an overall impression of an area within an urban context. For example, a scenic vista along the boundary of a community, a pleasing streetscape with trees, and well-kept residences and yards are scenic resources that create a pleasing impression of an area. In general, concepts of scenic quality can be organized around four basic elements: (1) site utilization, (2) buildings and structures, (3) landscaping, and (4) signage. Adverse scenic quality effects can include the loss of aesthetic features or the introduction of contrasting features that could contribute to a decline in overall scenic quality.
- **Glare:** A continuous or periodic intense light that may cause eye discomfort or be temporarily blinding to humans.
- **Light Sources:** A device that produces illumination, including incandescent bulbs, fluorescent and neon tubes, halogen and other vapor lamps, and reflecting surfaces or refractors incorporated into a lighting fixture. Any translucent enclosure of a light source is considered to be part of the light source.
- **Regulations Governing Scenic Quality.** Visual impacts have been evaluated based on the project's consistency with goals and policies established in the Land Use and Community Design Elements of the City's General Plan and development standards related to aesthetics in the City's Municipal Code.

The impact analysis focuses on aesthetic-related changes to the project site and surrounding area that may result from the approval of the proposed project.

#### 4.1.3 Existing Environmental Setting

The 16.1-acre project site is irregular in shape and is currently undeveloped and vacant. As such, the existing project site is primarily characterized by dirt and scattered ruderal vegetation and is relatively flat with a slight slope to the east/southeast. The eastern portion of the project site, which is the lowest topographic area on site, is adjacent to San Juan Creek and El Horno Creek and associated trails and vegetation. In addition, there are two existing wells located on the project site. The undeveloped nature of the site allows for much of the site to be visible from vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians along Calle Arroyo. However, an existing chain-link fence currently surrounds the perimeter of the site, which restricts views of the property from the north, east, and south. The western portion of the project site is visible and accessible from the San Juan Creek Trail area.

The project site is bordered on the north by Calle Arroyo, with commercial and institutional uses located beyond. El Horno Creek (a tributary of San Juan Creek) and San Juan Creek are adjacent to the south of the project site; a portion of the San Juan Creek Trail is located along the southern portion of the project site. The San Juan Hills Golf Club and multi-family residential developments are located further south of the project site. Paseo Tirador is located along a portion of the eastern boundary of the project site with the Ortega Equestrian Center located further east. The I-5 freeway forms the western boundary of the project site with the Del Obispo Shopping Center located beyond (refer to Figure 3.2, Project Vicinity, in Chapter 3.0, Project Description).

According to the United States Census Bureau, the City of San Juan Capistrano is located within the Mission Viejo-Lake Forest-San Clemente, CA Urbanized Area,<sup>1</sup> which also includes the Cities of Aliso Viejo, Dana Point, Laguna Beach, Laguna Hills, Laguna Niguel, Laguna Woods, Lake Forest, Mission Viejo, Rancho Santa Margarita, San Clemente, and the unincorporated communities of Coto de Caza, Ladera Ranch, and Las Flores. As described in the *State CEQA Guidelines* Section 15387 and defined by the United States Census Bureau, an “urbanized area” is a central city or a group of contiguous cities with a population of 50,000 or more people, together with adjacent densely populated areas having a population density of at least 1,000 people per square mile.<sup>2</sup> Because the City is located in an urbanized area, the project site is also located within an urbanized area. Further, surrounding land uses in the vicinity of the project site are representative of urban densities.

The project site has a General Plan land use designation of Planned Community. According to the City’s General Plan Land Use Element (1991, revised 2014), the Planned Community land use designation denotes large areas of land under common ownership for the detailed planning and development of residential, commercial, industrial, institutional, recreational, or open space uses. There are also small portions of the project site designated as General Open Space and Community Park. The proposed land uses are consistent with these designations. Existing land uses surrounding the project site include office, commercial, and religious uses in the Ventanas Business Center to the north; Assisted Care Facilities and the Ortega Equestrian Center to the northeast and east; General Open Space and Open Space Recreational to the south and southeast; and General Commercial to the west (across I-5).

The project site is zoned as a Planned Community District associated with the adopted Ortega Planned Community Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP 78-01). The purpose of the Planned Community zone is to encourage the use of modern land planning and design techniques to create developments integrating a mixture of different types of land uses. Existing zoning classifications surrounding the project site include a Planned Community District (CDP 78-01) to the north and northeast (same zoning classification as the project site), Public and Institutional District and Office Commercial District to the south, General Open Space and Open Space Recreational to the south and southeast, and General Commercial to the west (across I-5).

<sup>1</sup> United States Census Bureau (Census Bureau). Mission Viejo-Lake Forest-San Clemente, CA Urbanized Area No. 57709. Website: [https://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/UAUC\\_RefMap/ua/ua57709\\_mission\\_viejo--lake\\_forest--san\\_clemente\\_ca/DC10UA57709.pdf](https://www2.census.gov/geo/maps/dc10map/UAUC_RefMap/ua/ua57709_mission_viejo--lake_forest--san_clemente_ca/DC10UA57709.pdf) (accessed December 24, 2019).

<sup>2</sup> Census Bureau. 2010 Census Urban Area FAQs. Website: [https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/ua/2010ua\\_faqs.pdf?#](https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/reference/ua/2010ua_faqs.pdf?#) (accessed December 24, 2019).

The proposed project is consistent with the existing General Plan land use and zoning designations.

#### 4.1.4 Regulatory Setting

##### 4.1.4.1 Federal Regulations

No federal policies or regulations pertaining to aesthetics are applicable to the proposed project.

##### 4.1.4.2 State Regulations

**Caltrans Scenic Highway Program.** The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Scenic Highway Program protects the natural scenic beauty of the State's highways and corridors through its designated scenic highways throughout the State. Caltrans defines a scenic highway as any freeway, highway, road, or other public right-of-way that traverses an area of exceptional scenic quality. Other considerations given to a scenic highway designation include how much of the natural landscape a traveler may see and the extent to which visual intrusions degrade the scenic corridor.

As described in Section 4.1, Aesthetics, of the IS/NOP (Appendix A of this EIR), no officially designated scenic highways are located in the vicinity of the project site.

##### 4.1.4.3 Regional Regulations

No regional policies or regulations pertaining to aesthetics are applicable to the proposed project.

##### 4.1.4.4 Local Regulations

**City of San Juan Capistrano General Plan.** The City of San Juan Capistrano General Plan was approved by the City Council in December 1999, with the exception of the Housing Element, which was updated and adopted by the City Council in January 2014. In May 2002, the City Council approved a General Plan Amendment, which included a variety of changes to several of the General Plan Elements.

The City's General Plan is the principal land use document guiding development within the City. The City's General Plan is a comprehensive plan that establishes goals, objectives, and policies intended to guide growth and development in the City. The General Plan also serves as a blueprint for development throughout the community and is the vehicle through which the community needs, desires, and aspirations are balanced. The San Juan Capistrano General Plan is the fundamental tool for influencing the quality of life in the City.

**Community Design Element.** The Community Design Element (1999, revised 2002) addresses the conservation and enhancement of the visual quality of the City. The goals and policies in the Community Design Element aim to protect natural hillsides and features in the City (e.g., creeks and floodplains), preserve and enhance the historic character of the community, incorporate new development into existing developed neighborhoods, and maintain the community's "small-village" and "rural atmosphere."

The following goals and policies applicable to the proposed project and related to aesthetics and scenic quality are presented in the Community Design Element:

**Goal 1:** Encourage and preserve a sense of place.

**Policy 1.2:** Encourage high-quality and human scale design in development to maintain the character of the City.

**Goal 2:** Preserve the historic character of the community.

**Policy 2.1:** Encourage development which complements the City's traditional, historic character through site design, architecture, and landscaping.

**Goal 3:** Preserve and enhance natural features.

**Policy 3.1:** Limit development of important natural characteristics such as ridgelines, unique hillside features and creeks.

**Policy 3.3:** Preserve and enhance scenic transportation corridors, including Interstate 5 and the railroad.

**Policy 3.4:** Preserve important viewsheds.

**Conservation and Open Space Element.** The Conservation and Open Space Element addresses the conservation and enhancement of the visual quality of the City. The goals and policies in the Community Design Element aim to protect natural hillsides and features in the City (e.g., creeks and floodplains), preserve and enhance the historic character of the community, incorporate new development into existing developed neighborhoods, and maintain the community's "small-village" and "rural atmosphere."

The following policies applicable to the proposed project and related to aesthetics and scenic quality are presented in the Community Design Element:

**Policy 5.1:** Encourage high-quality design in new development and redevelopment to maintain the low-density character of the City.

**Policy 5.3:** Ensure that no buildings will encroach upon any ridgeline designated for preservation.

**Land Use Element.** The Land Use Element (1999, revised 2014) presents goals and policies pertaining to how existing development is going to be maintained and enhanced and new development occur. The Land Use Element identifies the proposed distribution, location, and extent of land uses. The Land Use Element goals and policies directly affect the establishment and maintenance of existing neighborhoods, districts, corridors, and open spaces that distinguish and contribute to the City's livability, vitality, and image, while enhancing the City's existing setting through new development. A key ingredient to successful implementation of this vision is through the management and appropriate mix of land uses. To this end, a Land Use Map was adopted and included in the Land Use Element to guide future development decisions.

The following goals and policies applicable to the proposed project and related to aesthetics and scenic quality are presented in the Land Use Element:

**Policy 2.2:** Assure that new development is consistent and compatible with the existing character of the City.

**Goal 7:** Enhance and maintain the character of neighborhoods.

**Policy 7.1:** Preserve and enhance the quality of San Juan Capistrano neighborhoods by avoiding or abating the intrusion of non-conforming buildings and uses.

**Policy 7.2:** Ensure that new development is compatible with the physical characteristics of its site, surrounding land uses, and available public infrastructure.

**San Juan Capistrano Municipal Code.** The City's Municipal Code was adopted in 1980 and includes the following regulations related to aesthetics and scenic quality.

**Zoning Code.** The City of San Juan Capistrano Zoning Code, Title 9 of the Municipal Code, ensures consistency between the City's General Plan and proposed development. The Zoning Code identifies development standards for various land uses, which aim at regulating aesthetics and scenic quality.

**Lighting Standards.** Municipal Code Section 9-3.529 regulates lighting standards throughout the City. The purpose of the City's Lighting Standards is to maintain a small-village character while also providing for the safe movement of people and vehicles in the City. Recommended lighting levels are defined at minimum levels to allow for public safety and enhance buildings and landscaping to represent the desired atmosphere of the community.

#### 4.1.5 Thresholds of Significance

The thresholds for aesthetics impacts used in this analysis are consistent with Appendix G of the *State CEQA Guidelines* and the *City's Local Guidelines for Implementing the California Environmental Quality Act (2019)*. The proposed project may be deemed to have a significant impact with respect to aesthetics if it would:

**Threshold 4.1.1:** Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

**Threshold 4.1.2:** Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

**Threshold 4.1.3:** In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

**Threshold 4.1.4:** Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The Initial Study, provided as Appendix A, substantiates that there would be no impacts associated with Threshold 4.1.2 because no officially designated State Scenic Highways are located in the vicinity of the project site. In addition, the Initial Study substantiates that impacts associated with Thresholds 4.1.1 and 4.1.4 would be less than significant. The project would result in less than significant impacts on views of the surrounding hills from adjacent roadways and sidewalks due to a maximum proposed building height of approximately 40 feet (ft) and the prominence of surrounding hillsides. Additionally the proposed project would result in less than significant impacts related to light and glare because the project would not incorporate design features that would result in excessive lighting or the generation of glare on the site, and the project would comply with lighting standards established in Section 9-3-529 of the City's Municipal Code. These thresholds will not be addressed in the following analysis.

#### 4.1.6 Project Impacts

**Threshold 4.1.3:** In non-urbanized areas, would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

**Less Than Significant Impact.** Construction of the proposed project would require excavation, grading, and construction activities. Construction activities would be visible to travelers along I-5 and Calle Arroyo, as well as visitors traveling along the San Juan Creek Trail. Construction activities would be short-term in nature, and all construction vehicles and equipment would be staged on the project site throughout the duration of the construction period. Visual impacts associated with construction would be temporary and would cease upon project completion. Therefore, construction impacts related to the degradation of the existing visual character of the project site would be less than significant, and no mitigation would be required.

The proposed project would allow for the development of the currently vacant project site with a residential community. All structures developed on the project site would be of either California Spanish or Farmhouse architectural styles. The architectural style and design of the proposed residences would be consistent with the visual character of the surrounding area, including the nearby 24 Hour Fitness facility, office uses, and senior apartments, which all have Spanish design elements such as red tile roofs.

The proposed project would incorporate ornamental landscaping along Calle Arroyo and Paseo Tirador, along the site's boundary with the shared 24 Hour Fitness, and along the southern boundary of the site. The project would also include decorative landscaping and a monument sign near the three proposed access points to the property. A variety of 24- and 36-inch box trees, shrubbery, and groundcover would be scattered throughout the site. The project would also include the installation of privacy walls to visually screen the project site from surrounding roadways and uses, including the adjacent 24 Hour Fitness facility. Privacy walls would also be installed within the interior of the site to visually screen private rear yards associated with on-site residences from Calle Arroyo and Paso Tirador as well as other on-site residences and open areas. The proposed project would be visible to pedestrians travelling along Calle Arroyo, the San Juan Creek Trail, the adjacent

24 Hour Fitness facility, and other nearby accessible areas. However, the installation of landscaping and privacy walls would help to partially screen the residential development from pedestrians in the project vicinity. The project site is also visible from the I-5 freeway. However, the finished grade of the project site will be approximately 7 ft lower than the freeway grade. Therefore, although the proposed project and any associated perimeter or sound walls will be visible, the proposed project would not substantially block views of the project site or more distant views from the I-5 freeway. Views of the Santa Ana Mountains beyond would be preserved. Overall, the architectural design features and landscaping proposed as part of the project would ensure that the site's visual character would not be degraded and impacts would be less than significant.

As discussed in detail below, project implementation would not conflict with applicable zoning and General Plan regulations governing scenic quality. Additionally, as discussed above, implementation of the proposed project would not degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the project site and its surroundings.

**Zoning.** The project site is currently zoned as a Planned Community District associated with the adopted Ortega Planned Community Comprehensive Development Plan (CDP 78-01). This zoning classification allows for the use of modern land planning and design techniques to create developments integrating a mixture of different types of land uses. The CDP 78-01 zone allows for Very High Density residential development (18.1–30.0 du/ac). The residential density of the proposed project would total 8.2 du/ac, which is substantially lower than the maximum of 30.0 du/ac allowed on the site under CDP 78-01. As such, implementation of the proposed project would not necessitate a zone change.

Because the project will include residential units restricted to households of moderate income, the Project Applicant will request incentives, concessions, and waivers from certain development standards. In total, 14 of the townhomes, or approximately 10.6 percent of the total units, would be designated as restricted affordable units. The project is therefore entitled to one incentive or concession under the State density bonus law and the City's affordable housing ordinance. The project is also entitled to waiver of development standards as necessary to prevent physical preclusion of the project to the extent those waivers do not have a specific adverse impact upon health, safety, the physical environment, or a designated historical resource. The concession requested by the Project Applicant would negate the requirement that the second-story floor area not exceed 80 percent of the first-story floor area.

Imposition of all of the design standards applicable to the project site would result in a significant reduction of the floor area and the number of units the project proposes to yield, making it infeasible to include restricted affordable units. Construction of the project, including the designated affordable units, would therefore be physically precluded if certain City development standards are applied. The Project Applicant will therefore request waiver of those standards as permitted by the State density bonus law and the City's affordable housing ordinance. The requested waivers will allow a building separation of 8 ft in lieu of the otherwise required 20 ft; a 0 ft setback from the property line between the site and Assessor's Parcel Number (APN) 666-131-08, where the City of San Juan Capistrano water well is located; a 10 ft setback from the property line between the site and the property to the north, which has been



developed with a 24 Hour Fitness, rather than 20 ft as required under the zoning code; and the elimination of recreational vehicle parking spaces.

Section 9-3.301 of the Municipal Code outlines permitted uses and minimum development standards allowed in residential zones. One purpose of these regulations is to ensure compliance with appropriate standards related to aesthetics and scenic quality. According to CDP 78-01, design standards for the project site are governed by Planning Sectors B-3 and C. Table 4.1.A shows the proposed project’s consistency with development standards outlined in CDP 78-01.

**Table 4.1.A: Ortega Planned Community Development Standards Consistency Analysis**

Development Standards	Proposed Project Consistency
<b>CDP 78-01 Planning Sector B-3</b>	
<b>Maximum Density: 30 du/ac</b>	<b>Consistent.</b> The project proposes a density of 8.2 du/ac, which would not exceed the maximum allowable density of 30 du/ac. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the maximum density requirement in CDP 78-01 Planning Sector B-3.
<b>Minimum Lot Area: 1 acre</b>	<b>Consistent.</b> The project site is 16.09 acres in size, which exceeds the minimum required lot area of 1 acre. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the minimum lot area requirement in CDP 78-01 Planning Sector B-3.
<b>Minimum Street Frontage: 150 ft</b>	<b>Consistent.</b> The project proposes a street frontage of approximately 635 ft. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with the minimum street frontage requirement in CDP 78-01 Planning Sector B-3.
<b>Two-Story Minimum Front Yard: 20 ft</b>	<b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would include a minimum of 20 ft front yard setbacks. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the minimum front yard requirement in CDP 78-01 Planning Sector B-3.
<b>Two-Story Minimum Side Yard: 20 ft</b>	<b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would include a minimum of 20 ft side yard setbacks, with exception to two units that are proposed to be located 0 ft from APN 666-131-08, where the City of San Juan Capistrano water well is located, and a 10 ft setback from the property line between seven units on the site and the property to the north, which has been developed with a 24 Hour Fitness. Reducing the setbacks will allow adequate space for construction of the planned 14 restricted affordable units. Under the provisions of Government Code Section 65915(e)(1), the City must therefore approve the waiver requested in order to prevent the physical preclusion of including affordable units and applying derivative incentives. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the minimum side yard requirement in CDP 78-01 Planning Sector B-3.
<b>Two-Story Minimum Rear Yard: 20 ft</b>	<b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would include a minimum of 20 ft rear yard setbacks. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the minimum rear yard requirement in CDP 78-01 Planning Sector B-3.
<b>Two-Story Maximum Lot Coverage Ratio: 35%</b>	<b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would cover 13% of the lot, which does not exceed the maximum lot coverage ratio of 35%. Therefore, the proposed project is consistent with the maximum lot coverage requirement in CDP 78-01 Planning Sector B-3.
<b>Two-Story Maximum Second-Floor/First-Floor Ratio: 80%</b>	<b>Consistent.</b> The proposed project would be entitled to a FAR of 0.93:1 in lieu of the otherwise maximum permitted FAR of 0.80:1 if an adequate proportion of restricted affordable units is provided and a concession is warranted as a part of the project. In total, 14 of the townhomes, or approximately 10.6 percent of the total units, would be designated as restricted affordable units. The project is therefore entitled to one incentive or concession under the State density bonus law and the City’s affordable housing ordinance. Therefore, upon project approval, the proposed project would be consistent with the maximum second-floor/first-floor ratio in CDP 78-01 Planning Sector B-3.



**Table 4.1.B: General Plan Consistency Analysis**

Goals and Policies	Proposed Project Consistency
<b>Community Design Element</b>	
<p><b>Community Design Goal 1:</b> Encourage and preserve a sense of place.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would be designed with California Spanish- and Farmhouse- style elevations for both the single-family residential units and townhomes. Incorporation of this architectural style would ensure the project would be visually and historically consistent with San Juan Capistrano’s Mission and Spanish character and would preserve a sense of place. Additionally, the multi-use trail would allow equestrian use and would complement the City’s equestrian heritage, thereby preserving a sense of place established in the City. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Community Design Goal 1.</p>
<p><b>Community Design Policy 1.2:</b> Encourage high-quality and human scale design in development to maintain the character of the City.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would be constructed using high-quality building materials. By incorporating both farmhouse style and a California Spanish architectural design, the project would be visually consistent with surrounding development and the general character of San Juan Capistrano. Further, the multi-use trail and associated recreation amenities proposed as part of the project would incorporate human-scale features, such as gathering areas, a climbing boulder, play areas, an equestrian hitching post, and exercise stations. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Policy 1.2 in the Community Design Element.</p>
<p><b>Community Design Goal 2:</b> Preserve the historic character of the community.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would be designed with California Spanish- and Farmhouse- style elevations for both the single-family residential units and townhomes. Incorporation of this architectural style would ensure the project would be visually and historically consistent with San Juan Capistrano’s Mission and Spanish character. Additionally, the multi-use trail would allow equestrian use and would complement the City’s equestrian heritage. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Community Design Goal 2.</p>
<p><b>Community Design Policy 2.1:</b> Encourage the development which complements the City’s traditional, historic character through site design, architecture, and landscaping.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would be designed with California Spanish- and Farmhouse- style elevations for both the single-family residential units and townhomes. Incorporation of this architectural style would ensure the project would be visually and historically consistent with San Juan Capistrano’s Mission and Spanish character. Additionally, proposed improvements to the San Juan Creek Trail would include a multi-use trail and associated recreation amenities. Recreation amenities and landscaping improvements proposed as part of the project would enhance the existing natural features of the adjacent San Juan Creek. Further, the multi-use trail would allow equestrian use and would complement the City’s equestrian heritage. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Community Design Policy 2.1.</p>
<p><b>Community Design Goal 3:</b> Preserve and enhance natural features.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The project site is located adjacent to San Juan Creek; however, the proposed residential development is located in a developed portion of San Juan Capistrano (directly north of the San Juan Creek) and would not infringe on the natural characteristics of the creek. Recreation amenities and landscaping improvements proposed as part of the project would preserve and enhance the existing natural features of San Juan Creek and would allow improved public access to the San Juan Creek area. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Community Design Goal 3.</p>

**Table 4.1.B: General Plan Consistency Analysis**

Goals and Policies	Proposed Project Consistency
<p><b>Community Design Policy 3.1:</b> Limit development of important natural characteristics such as ridgelines, unique hillside features and creeks.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The existing project site is primarily characterized by dirt and scattered ruderal vegetation and is relatively flat with a slight slope to the east/southeast. Although the project site is located adjacent to San Juan Creek, the proposed residential development is located in a developed portion of San Juan Capistrano and would not infringe on the natural characteristics of the creek. As part of the project, proposed improvements to the San Juan Creek Trail would improve pedestrian, cyclist, and equestrian access and use of the trail. Further, proposed recreation amenities and landscaping improvements would enhance the existing natural features of San Juan Creek. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Community Design Policy 3.1.</p>
<p><b>Community Design Policy 3.3:</b> Preserve and enhance scenic transportation corridors, including Interstate 5 and the railroad.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The project site is visible from I-5. Currently, views of the project site from I-5 consist of a vacant lot, as well as views of adjacent commercial uses and the Ortega Equestrian Center. Following project implementation, the finished grade of the project site will be approximately 7' lower than the freeway grade. Therefore, the project site, and any associated perimeter or sound walls, would be visible but would not significantly block views of the project site or more distant views from the freeway. Views of the Santa Ana Mountains beyond would be preserved. All structures developed on the project site would be of either California Spanish or Farmhouse architectural styles. As such, the architectural style and design of the proposed residences would be consistent with the visual character of the surrounding area, including the nearby 24 Hour Fitness facility and senior apartments. Further, improvements associated with the proposed project are anticipated to enhance views of the project site from I-5 and would serve to provide increased visual cohesion between the project site and the surrounding area. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Community Design Policy 3.3.</p>
<p><b>Community Design Policy 3.4:</b> Preserve important viewsheds.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The project site contains scenic views of the Colinas Hills, Saddleback Mountain, and the Santa Ana Mountains, and is near public scenic corridors associated with San Juan Creek Road and La Novia Avenue. Implementation of the proposed project would not substantially affect viewsheds in the vicinity of the project due to the prominence of the surrounding hillsides. Further, landscaping proposed throughout the project site would enhance and frame important viewsheds. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Community Design Policy 3.4.</p>
<p><b>Conservation &amp; Open Space Element</b></p>	
<p><b>Conservation &amp; Open Space Policy 5.1:</b> Encourage high-quality design in new development and redevelopment to maintain the low-density character of the City.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would be constructed using high-quality building materials. The project would be designed with California Spanish- and Farmhouse-style architectural influences, and both designs would feature contemporary architectural elements, multi-level rooflines, and a complementary color scheme. The California Spanish-style units would feature tile roofs and accents, wrought-iron window planters, painted exteriors, steel garage doors, and a cement plaster exterior finish. The Farmhouse-style units would feature asphalt shingle roofing, wooden window planters and trim, horizontal siding, steel garage doors, and a cement plaster exterior finish. Further, the proposed project includes open space and recreation amenities, such as a multi-use trail, gathering areas, a climbing boulder, play areas, an equestrian hitching post, and exercise stations, which are representative of the low-density and equestrian character of San Juan Capistrano. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Conservation &amp; Open Space Policy 5.1.</p>

**Table 4.1.B: General Plan Consistency Analysis**

Goals and Policies	Proposed Project Consistency
<p><b>Conservation &amp; Open Space Policy 5.3:</b> Ensure that no buildings will encroach upon any ridgeline designated for preservation.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> According to Figure COS-2, Major Ridgelines, in the Conservation &amp; Open Space Element, there are no major ridgelines in the vicinity of the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Conservation &amp; Open Space Policy 5.3.</p>
<b>Land Use Element</b>	
<p><b>Land Use Policy 2.2:</b> Assure that new development is consistent and compatible with the existing character of the City.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The proposed residential development would be designed with California Spanish- and Farmhouse- style designs, which would be visually consistent with existing Mission and Spanish character of San Juan Capistrano. Further, the styles are cohesive and would provide for consistent design throughout the project site. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Land Use Policy 2.2.</p>
<p><b>Land Use Goal 7:</b> Enhance and maintain the character of neighborhoods.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The proposed project is surrounded by a variety of residential, commercial, recreational, and open space land uses. The proposed project would allow for the development of up to 132 residential units and recreational amenities on the project site. Additionally, the project would include a 20 ft wide multi-use trail along the southern boundary of the site, which would connect recreational amenities on the site (i.e., the gathering areas, climbing boulder, play areas, equestrian hitching post, and exercise stations) to off-site amenities (e.g., the Ortega Equestrian Center and Cook La Novia Park). As such, the development of the proposed project would enhance and maintain the quality of the City’s neighborhoods because it would be compatible with surrounding land uses. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Land Use Goal 7.</p>
<p><b>Land Use Policy 7.1:</b> Preserve and enhance the quality of San Juan Capistrano neighborhoods by avoiding or abating the intrusion of non-conforming buildings and uses.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The proposed project is surrounded by a variety of residential, commercial, recreational, and open space land uses. The proposed project would allow for the development of up to 132 residential units and recreational amenities on the project site. Additionally, the project would include a 20 ft wide multi-use trail along the southern boundary of the site, which would connect recreational amenities on the site (i.e., the gathering areas, climbing boulder, play areas, equestrian hitching post, and exercise stations) to off-site amenities (e.g., the Ortega Equestrian Center and Cook La Novia Park). Further, the proposed project would be consistent with the site’s General Plan land use designations, and would also be consistent with development standards required by CDP 78-01 following approval of a concession and waivers related to affordable housing incentives. As discussed in Table 4.1.A, above, the proposed concession and waivers would ensure the project’s consistency with development standards required by CDP 78-01. The concession and waivers would not result in the intrusion of non-conforming buildings and uses. For the reasons stated above, the development of the proposed project would preserve and enhance the quality of the City’s neighborhoods because it would not introduce incompatible land uses. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Land Use Policy 7.1.</p>
<p><b>Land Use Policy 7.2:</b> Ensure that new development is compatible with the physical characteristics of its site, surrounding land uses, and available public infrastructure.</p>	<p><b>Consistent.</b> The existing project site is primarily characterized by dirt and scattered ruderal vegetation and is relatively flat with a slight slope to the east/southeast. The proposed project is surrounded by a variety of residential, commercial, recreational, and open space land uses. The proposed project would allow for the development of up to 132 residential units and recreational amenities on the project site. Additionally, the project would include a 20 ft wide multi-use trail along the southern boundary of the site, which would connect recreational amenities on the site (i.e., the gathering areas, climbing boulder, play areas, equestrian hitching post, and exercise stations) to off-site amenities (e.g., the Ortega Equestrian Center and Cook La Novia Park). Further, the project site receives domestic water service, sewer service, and storm drain service from the City of San Juan Capistrano Utilities Department. As part of the project, several utilities line improvements (including water, private recycled</p>

**Table 4.1.B: General Plan Consistency Analysis**

Goals and Policies	Proposed Project Consistency
	water, well water, sewer, and storm drains) would be installed on the project site; however, the project site would be compatible with the available public infrastructure because project implementation would not result in significant impacts to utilities and service systems (as discussed in Section 4.19 of the IS/NOP [provided as Appendix A of this EIR]). For the reasons stated above, development of the proposed project would be compatible with the physical characteristics of its site, surrounding land uses, and available public infrastructure. Therefore, the proposed project would be consistent with Land Use Policy 7.2.

Sources: San Juan Capistrano General Plan Community Design Element (1999, revised 2002); Conservation and Open Space Element (1999, revised 2002); and Land Use Element (1999, revised 2014).

CDP = Comprehensive Development Plan

ft = foot/feet

I-5 = Interstate 5

IS/NOP = Initial Study/Notice of Preparation

As shown in Table 4.1.B, the project would be consistent with the General Plan goals and policies related to aesthetics and scenic quality.

**Summary.** The proposed project would not degrade the character or quality of the project site, nor would the proposed project contribute to an overall degradation of the visual character or quality of the surrounding area. Further, the proposed residential development is consistent with all applicable General Plan goals and policies governing aesthetics and scenic quality.

Upon approval of the waivers requested as part of the project, the proposed residential development would be consistent with all applicable zoning regulations governing aesthetics and scenic quality on the property. Therefore, the proposed project would not substantially degrade the visual character of the project site nor conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality, and no mitigation would be required.

**4.1.7 Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation**

There would be no potentially significant impacts related to aesthetics.

**4.1.8 Regulatory Compliance Measures and Mitigation Measures**

**4.1.8.1 Regulatory Compliance Measures**

No regulatory compliance measures are required for the proposed project.

**4.1.8.2 Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is required for the proposed project.

**4.1.9 Level of Significance after Mitigation**

There would be no significant unavoidable adverse impacts of the proposed project related to aesthetics. No mitigation would be required.

#### 4.1.10 Cumulative Impacts

As defined in Section 15130 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, cumulative impacts are the incremental effects of an individual project when viewed in connection with the effects of past, current, and probable future projects within the cumulative impact area for aesthetics. The cumulative impact area for aesthetics related to the proposed project is the City of San Juan Capistrano. Several residential and commercial development projects are approved and/or pending within the City. Each of these projects, as well as all proposed development in the City, would be subject to its own consistency analysis for policies and regulations governing scenic quality and would be reviewed for consistency with General Plan goals and policies and Zoning Code development standards applicable to each site.

For the reasons outlined above in Section 4.1.6, Project Impacts, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a significant cumulative impact related to aesthetics. The proposed project and all related projects are required to adhere to City and State regulations designed to reduce and/or avoid impacts related to aesthetics. With compliance with these regulations, impacts related to aesthetics would be less than cumulatively significant. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not result in a significant cumulative impact related to aesthetics.

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