

Aesthetics and Visual Resources

3.1.1 Introduction

Licensing and permitting of cannabis cultivation and manufacturing by the County of Santa Cruz (County) under the may result in environmental impacts to aesthetics and visual resources, including the degradation of scenic resources and introduction of new sources of light and glare. This section evaluates issues related to aesthetics and visual resources from the Project and More Permissive Project scenarios of the Commercial Cannabis Cultivation and Manufacturing Regulations and Licensing Program (Program). Scenic resources are highly variable throughout the County and are characterized by the planning region in which they occur (i.e., North Coast, Mountain, Urban, and South County Regions). Existing visual resources in the Program area are described, as well as applicable regulations. Potential impacts to existing baseline environmental conditions related to aesthetics and visual resources that would result from implementation of the Program are evaluated, along with effectiveness of proposed Program development standards at addressing adverse effects on visual

Program Impact Analysis At a Glance

Commercial cannabis cultivation and manufacturing under the Program could have adverse effects on visual resources in the County, including cultivation and site development in rural and visually sensitive areas. Compliance with the County's visual resource protection regulations and mitigation to minimize visual effects of the Program would ensure impacts are less than significant. Unregulated cannabis activities would not be subject to County regulations and may have significant and unavoidable adverse effects.



Scenic resources in Santa Cruz County include densely forested stands of coast redwoods, such as in Felton and Ben Lomond in the Mountain Region and Bonny Doon in the North Coast Region.

resources. Where potentially significant impacts are identified, mitigation measures are recommended. Key resources or data used in the preparation of this chapter include the California Scenic Highway Program, Santa Cruz County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element and Community Design Element, Santa Cruz County Code (SCCC), including Zoning Regulations and Coastal Zone Regulations, and cannabis cultivation registration data and manufacturing data collected to inform the Program in 2016/2017 by the County.

3.1.2 Environmental Setting

3.1.2.1 Visual Resources

Santa Cruz County is characterized by scenic ocean coastlines along its western and southern boundaries, and by rugged coastal mountains inland along its northern and eastern boundary (Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments 2014). One of the distinct visual features of Santa Cruz County is the extensive forest cover of the Santa Cruz Mountains in the north and northeast, including stands of coast redwoods. The Santa Cruz Mountains are the southern edge of this species' range in coastal California (County of Santa Cruz 1994). A large portion of the County's population is in small urban communities within the mid-County coastal terraces, while the alluvial south County is mainly in rural agricultural use, combining extensive fields of row crops and greenhouses with foothill grazing and orchard lands. In urban areas, the built environment consists of a mix of small-scale residential neighborhoods of varied scale, styles, and age; it is also characterized by public open spaces and recognized landmark, iconic, and historic structures. Elevations in the County range from sea level to more than 3,200 feet above sea level at Mt. Bielawski (Association of Monterey Bay Area Governments 2014).

The County is highly scenic and supports diverse important scenic resources, from ocean views along the rugged coastline, open agricultural land along the northern and southern coasts of the County, and the rolling hillsides and ridges of the Santa Cruz Mountains. These scenic resources include redwood forests, coastal cliffs and estuaries, and rural agricultural fields and orchard areas. Scenic resources also include public vistas of ocean, agricultural lands, rivers, streams, watersheds, reservoirs, and selected vegetative communities. Steep slopes and high elevations are identified for their potential to provide scenic vistas. Scenic roads and highways, such as Highways 1, 9, 17, 35, 152, and 236, afford public views of the Monterey Bay, agricultural fields, dense redwood forests, open meadows, and mountain hillsides (see Figure 3.1-1).

Open lands within the County's state parks contribute to the County's forested aesthetic, such as Big Basin Redwoods and Wilder Ranch State Parks and a series of state parks beaches along the shoreline in the North Coast Region; Henry Cowell Redwoods, Castle Rock, and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Parks in the Mountain Region; portions of Henry Cowell Redwoods and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Parks in the Urban Region; and Manresa and Sunset State Beaches in the South County Region. Additionally, the Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument provides rich aesthetic value associated with undeveloped coastal terraces connecting to the San Vicente Redwoods in the North Coast Region. Such rural lands are considered visual resources within the County.



**Santa Cruz County
Scenic Roads and Resources**

**FIGURE
3.1-1**

3.1.2.2 Scenic Highways and Roads

State Scenic Highways

The California Scenic Highway Program, managed by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), preserves and protects scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to designated scenic highways. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of Eligible or Designated scenic highways. Official scenic highway designation requires a local jurisdiction to enact a scenic corridor protection program that protects and enhances scenic resources. At present, there are no state highways in the County that have been officially designated as State Scenic Highways, however there are six Eligible State Scenic Highways that have the potential to be officially designated in the future (see Figure 3.1-1). State-designated Eligible Scenic Highways within areas of Santa Cruz County are included within Table 3.1-1 below.

Table 3.1-1 Eligible State Scenic Highways in Santa Cruz County

| State Highway | Location/Description | Countywide Region(s) |
|--------------------|--|--------------------------------------|
| Highway 1 | Monterey to San Mateo County lines | North Coast, Urban, and South County |
| Highway 236 | Highway 9 near Boulder Creek to Highway 9 northeast of Big Basin Redwoods State Park | Mountain and North Coast |
| Highway 9 | Highway 1 near Santa Cruz to Santa Clara County line | Mountain and Urban |
| Highway 17 | Highway 1 near Santa Cruz to Santa Clara County line | Mountain and Urban |
| Highway 35 | Highway 17 to Santa Clara County line | Mountain |
| Highway 152 | Highway 1 to Santa Clara County line at Hecker Pass | South County |

Source: Caltrans (2011).

Santa Cruz County Scenic Roads

Scenic roads provide the broadest range and greatest visual access to the various aesthetic resources within the County, offering important viewing areas and scenic corridors. Panoramic views, ridgelines, redwood forests, and agricultural and ocean vistas are common features that influence the aesthetic quality of these roads. County General Plan Policy 5.10.10 designates state highways and County roads as scenic due to their aesthetic value and public vistas (see Figure 3.1-1). Any public vistas from County-designated scenic roads are afforded the highest level of protection by the County (County of Santa Cruz 1994).

In addition to Highway 1, the North Coast Region has seven County designated scenic roads: Bonny Doon Road, Pine Flat Road, Martin Road, Empire Grade, Ice Cream Grade, Smith Grade, and Swanton Road. Highway 1 provides the primary transportation corridor in this region along the coast overlooking the Pacific Ocean. Highway 236 (Big Basin Highway) and Skyline Boulevard (Highway 35) provide access to rural areas within the Mountain Region and are both Eligible State Scenic Highways. Public roads are limited in this region with access to rural mountain neighborhoods outside the town centers provided by small rural roads and private drives. The Urban Region contains three County designated scenic roads (Highway 1, Highway 9, and Highway 17) that provide regional access and are all Eligible State Scenic Highways. Highway 1 and Highway 152 are Eligible State Scenic

Highways within the South County Region, and most County-designated scenic roads occur within the low-lying peaks and foothills of the South County Region. These roads and highways contain high quality agricultural landscapes and scenic public vistas. Primary scenic roads within the South County Region vary between coastal areas where roads afford scenic ocean vistas, such as Beach Road, Sand Dollar Drive, and Shell Road; and inland areas where roads contain scenic vistas of canyons and foothills, such as Eureka Canyon Road, Corralitos Road, Browns Valley Road, and Hazel Dell Road.

Table 3.1-2 Designated Scenic Roads in Santa Cruz County

| County Road Name | Location/Description | Countywide Region(s) |
|--|---|----------------------------------|
| Amesti Road | Varni Road to Browns Valley Road | South County |
| Beach Road | Highway 1 to Palm Beach | South County |
| Bonita Drive & San Andreas Road | Highway 1 to Beach Road | South County |
| Bonny Doon Road | Highway 1 to Pine Flat Road | North Coast |
| Browns Valley Road | Eureka Canyon Road to Hazel Dell Road | South County |
| Buena Vista Drive | San Andreas Road to Larkin Valley Road | South County |
| Casserly Road | Mile marker 1.75 to Highway 152 | South County |
| Corralitos Road | Freedom Boulevard to Browns Valley Road | South County |
| Empire Grade | Santa Cruz City limits to end of Empire Grade | Urban, Mountain, and North Coast |
| East Cliff Drive | 33 rd Avenue to 41 st Avenue | Urban |
| Eureka Canyon Road | Highland Way to Corralitos | South County |
| Graham Hill Road | Lockwood Lane to Highway 9 | Mountain and Urban |
| Hazel Dell Road | Browns Valley Road to Mt. Madonna Road | South County |
| Highland Way | Summit Road to Eureka Canyon Road | Mountain and South County |
| Ice Cream Grade | full length | North Coast |
| Martin Road | Pine Flat to Ice Cream Grade | North Coast |
| Mt. Hermon Road | Scotts Valley City limits to Graham Hill Road | Mountain and Urban |
| Mt. Madonna Road | Gaffey Road to Hazel Dell Road | South County |
| Pine Flat Road | Bonny Doon Road to Empire Grade | North Coast |
| Sand Dollar Drive | full length | South County |
| Smith Grade | full length | North Coast |
| Summit Road | Highway 17 to Highland Way | Mountain |
| Sunset Beach & Shell Road | full length | South County |
| Swanton Road | Highway 1 at Davenport Landing to Highway 1 at Greyhound Rock | North Coast |

Source: County of Santa Cruz (1994).

3.1.2.3 Light and Glare

Primary sources of light include building interior and exterior lighting, street lighting, security lighting, landscape lighting, and vehicle lights. New sources of lighting can be a nuisance to sensitive viewers through light spill, or can create an ambient light glow that emanates upward and diminishes views of the clear night sky. If uncontrolled, light spill and ambient light glow can disturb wildlife in natural habitat areas. The Program would apply to a wide range of aesthetic settings in the County, including remote and semi-remote areas primarily located in the North Coast and Mountain Regions, such as Zayante and Bonny Doon. These remote areas generally contain few nighttime light sources, which are typically limited to outdoor lighting on structures. The Program would also apply to urban and developed areas in the Urban and South County Regions that contain common nighttime light sources such as street lighting, building lighting, and greenhouse lighting in agricultural areas.

Glare is caused by either direct light from the sun or moon, artificial light sources (direct glare) or by a reflective surface (reflective glare). In rural and semi-developed areas, natural sources are the primary source of glare. Land cover, including soil, row crops, orchards, pasture, and forests produce varying levels of glare based on surface area, reflectiveness, and coloring. Areas of dense natural vegetation tend to produce the least amount of glare. Where land has been denuded of natural vegetation for agriculture, light and glare are notably higher. Similarly, greenhouses that provide mixed use light sources may be another primary source of glare. Mixed light greenhouses supplement natural light with light suppression shielding and artificial lights that can create more glare than passive greenhouses, which only use natural light and allow for areas of shade and light absorption.

3.1.2.4 Existing Visual Character of the Program Area

North Coast Region

The North Coast Region is in the northwestern portion of the County and includes the unincorporated communities of Bonny Doon and Davenport. The North Coast provides a mix of rugged coastline, sandy beaches, coastal agricultural terraces, pastoral grasslands, and densely forested uplands and riparian corridors. This Region includes agricultural and timberlands and low density residential development. Public lands include Big Basin Redwoods and Wilder Ranch State Parks, Cotoni-Coast Dairies National Monument, and state parks and beaches along the coast. Coastal terraces in this region provide area for cultivated agriculture and some cattle grazing; pockets of agricultural use also occur in the hillside and mountainous areas, including larger acreage residential lots in the community of Bonny Doon.



Scenic ocean vistas, coastal agricultural terraces, and rugged mountains canyons of the North Coast Region are visual resources highly visible from public roads and are valued by residents and visitors of Santa Cruz County.

The North Coast affords many scenic vistas of the Pacific Ocean that also provide visually interesting views of natural features, such as wet meadows and unique trail corridors; these vistas are predominantly available along the coastal bluffs and areas of high topography. The coastal mountains partially confine this Region, resulting in a high level of biodiversity. Natural vegetation in this region include coastal sage scrub, grasslands, oak woodland, chaparral, redwood and mixed conifer hardwood forest habitats, and riparian woodland habitats that line the streams, often with estuaries at the shoreline. Areas of the rare Santa Cruz Sand Hills habitat area also lie within this region.

Mountain Region

The Mountain Region is in the northeastern portion of the County, extending from the ridgelines west of San Lorenzo Valley to the Santa Clara County line. The Mountain Region includes small communities in the San Lorenzo Valley with rural residential neighborhoods and timber operations in foothill and mountainous areas. The unincorporated towns in this Region include Felton, Ben Lomond, and Boulder Creek, which are small mountain communities along Highway 9. Each of these communities identify unique features that represent the character of these small rustic towns within their adopted Specific Plans. The aesthetic of these towns is characterized as rustic with individualistic architecture that represent the towns' historic roots as western settlements. Public lands in the Mountain Region include Henry Cowell Redwoods, Castle Rock, and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Parks, as well as the Loch Lomond Reservoir.

The Mountain Region encompasses much of the Santa Cruz Mountain range, which comprises deep valleys and forested slopes that provide public vistas and numerous recreational trails and bike paths used by hikers, equestrians, and cyclists with unobstructed views of the area's natural landscapes. Natural scenic resources in this region include dense redwood forest with clearings of oak woodland and chaparral, as well as the Santa Cruz Sand Hills habitat area. The headwaters of the San Lorenzo River watershed originate in this region above Boulder Creek; the river and its tributaries flow through Boulder Creek on the east and south through Brookdale, Ben Lomond, and Felton.

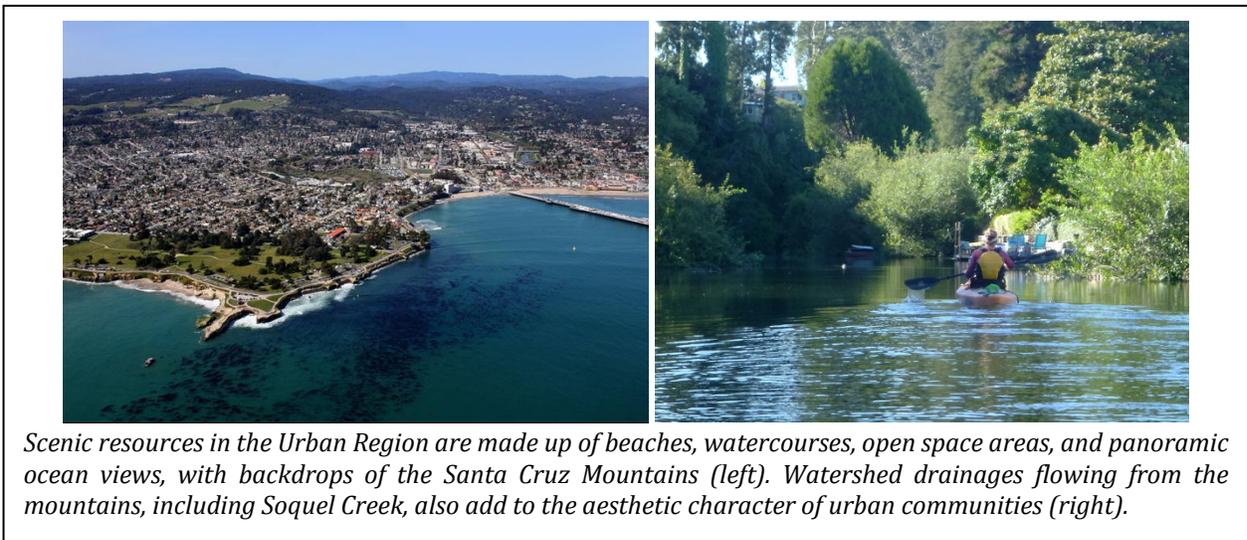


The Mountain Region contains high quality scenic vistas of watershed areas, deep valleys, and natural landscapes situated before backdrops of steep slopes with dense redwood forest cover.

Urban Region

The Urban Region is in the central portion of the County and supports urban and suburban areas including the unincorporated communities of Carbonera, Live Oak, Soquel, and Aptos, and rural residential, agricultural, and forest lands in the inland hills. The Urban Region also contains much of the County's commercial and manufacturing/industrial land uses. Public lands include portions of Henry Cowell Redwoods and the Forest of Nisene Marks State Parks. The aesthetic of the Urban Region is characterized by coastal terraces, coastal vistas, and stream valleys running southward from the Santa Cruz Mountains. Urban communities are strongly influenced by their coastal location and scenic ocean vistas and contain both natural features and historic neighborhoods. The developed portions of the region are a mix of historic buildings and newer buildings. Developed communities within the Urban Region have retained a distinctive look and feel, with a mix of suburban residential neighborhoods and a more intensely-developed commercial and industrial areas, primarily along Soquel Drive and Soquel Avenue in Live Oak and Soquel (City of Santa Cruz 2011).

Scenic resources in this region can be found along watershed drainages flowing from the mountains to the region's lagoons and beaches and include riparian vegetation, redwood forest, oak woodland, and chaparral, as well as the Santa Cruz Sand Hills habitat area in some areas. Other scenic resources in this region include Soquel Creek, which flows to the Pacific Ocean through the City of Capitola and bisects residential and tourist districts (County of Santa Cruz 2017). Key natural and open space features include the coastline and beaches, multiple rivers and other watercourses, and parks and open space, such as the City of Santa Cruz's greenbelt (City of Santa Cruz 2011). The Santa Cruz Mountains and its foothills provide a backdrop of open space views, and offer panoramic views of the ocean and Urban Region.



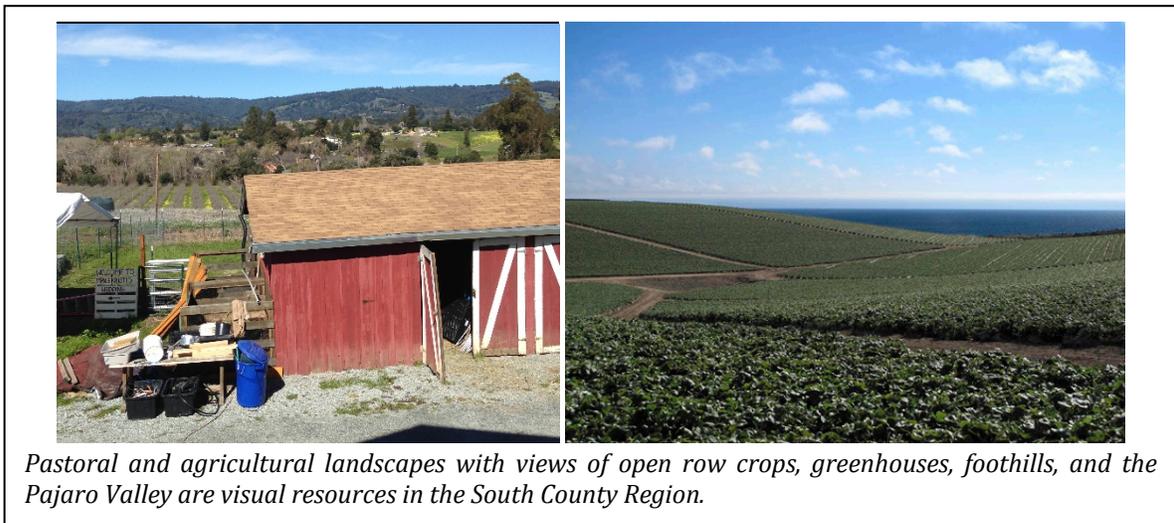
Scenic resources in the Urban Region are made up of beaches, watercourses, open space areas, and panoramic ocean views, with backdrops of the Santa Cruz Mountains (left). Watershed drainages flowing from the mountains, including Soquel Creek, also add to the aesthetic character of urban communities (right).

South County Region

The South County Region is in the southeastern portion of the County and includes the unincorporated communities of Corralitos, Freedom, La Selva Beach, Larkin Valley, and Amesti. Unincorporated pockets of residential development are commonly separated by agricultural lands under cultivation with in-ground crops, orchards, or greenhouses, particularly on low-lying coastal areas. Inland areas

support rural residential and agricultural uses, including greenhouses, orchards, and equestrian facilities. Land uses in the South County Region are predominantly commercial agriculture, but include residential uses in small communities and in low density neighborhoods in the foothills. Public lands include Manresa and Sunset State Beaches. Redwood and mixed conifer hardwood forests, oak woodlands, chaparral vegetation, and the topography of the inland foothills make up most natural landscapes in the Region, with riparian areas extending to the coast, and multiple large sloughs and wetlands amidst coastal agricultural fields.

The South County Region is characterized by high quality agricultural and natural landscapes on the Pajaro Valley floor situated before backdrops of the inland foothills and Santa Cruz Mountains. The rural, scenic qualities unique to the South County Region are highly valued by the County's residents and visitors. Visually scenic features include the varying topography of valleys and ridgelines, the Pajaro River and its tributaries traversing east-west across the valley floor, wetlands, grassland meadows, ranches, and rural agricultural landscapes. Agricultural landscapes typically consist of open row crops and greenhouses.



3.1.3 Regulatory Setting

This analysis was conducted in conformance with the goals and policies of federal, state, and local regulations. The following section summarizes the most applicable policies and regulations which would relate directly to future cannabis cultivation and product manufacturing under the Project and More Permissive Project and their associated impacts. Additional federal, state, and local policies and regulations are provided in Appendix A.

3.1.3.1 State

California Scenic Highway Program

California's Scenic Highway Program was designed to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors. Jurisdictions nominating a Scenic Highway for official designation have in place or adopt ordinances to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor, including policies to preserve scenic resources through land use regulations, site planning, control of outdoor advertising (including a ban on billboards), grading, and measures to direct structural design and appearance (California Streets and Highways Code § 260 et seq.). Eligible State Scenic Highways within Santa Cruz County are described above in Section 3.1.2, *Environmental Setting – State Scenic Highways* (refer to Table 3.1-1).

3.1.3.2 Local

County of Santa Cruz General Plan and Local Coastal Program

Conservation and Open Space Element

The Conservation and Open Space Element, Chapter 5 of the County of Santa Cruz General Plan and Local Coastal Program contains objectives, policies, and programs that designate and protect scenic resources within the County. The intent of these programs and policies is to promote protection of important visual resources and ensure that new development is compatible with the community and the surrounding environment. Figure 3.1-1 indicates specific scenic areas designated by the General Plan. Significant visual resources as noted in the Conservation and Open Space Element include: scenic roads and highways; coastal special scenic areas; public, agricultural, and ocean vistas; views of coastal bluffs, streams, lakes, estuaries, rivers, watersheds, mountains, and cultural resource sites; open space areas; and resource conservation lands. The following objectives and policies of the Conservation and Open Space Element highlight the objectives and policies that are pertinent to the Program. For a comprehensive list of all objectives and policies, see Chapter 5 of the General Plan.

Objective 5.10a: Protection of Visual Resources. To identify, protect, and restore the aesthetic values of visual resources.

Objective 5.10b: New Development in Visual Resource Areas. To ensure that new development is appropriately designed and constructed to have minimal to no adverse impact upon identified visual resources.

Policy 5.10.2: Development within Visual Resource Areas. Recognize that visual resources of Santa Cruz County possess diverse characteristics and that the resources worthy of protection may include, but are not limited to, ocean views, agricultural fields, wooded forests, open meadows, and mountain hillside views. Require projects to be evaluated against the context of

their unique environment and regulate structure height, setbacks, and design to protect these resources consistent with the objectives and policies of this section. Require discretionary review for all development within the visual resource area of Highway 1, outside of the Urban/Rural boundary, as designated on the General Plan/Local Coastal Program Visual Resources Map, and apply the design criteria of Section 13.20.130 of the County's zoning ordinance to such development.

Policy 5.10.3: Protection of Public Vistas. Protect significant public vistas as described in policy 5.10.2 from all publicly used roads and vista points by minimizing disruption of landform and aesthetic character caused by grading operations, timber harvests, utility wires and poles, signs, inappropriate landscaping, and structural design. Provide necessary landscaping to screen development which is unavoidably sited within these vistas.

Policy 5.10.5: Preserving Agricultural Vistas. Continue to preserve the aesthetic value of agricultural vistas. Encourage development to be consistent with the agricultural character of the community. Structures appurtenant to agricultural uses on agriculturally designated parcels shall be considered to be compatible with the agricultural character of surrounding areas.

Policy 5.10.6: Preserving Ocean Vistas. Where public ocean vistas exist, require that these vistas be retained to the maximum extent possible as a condition of approval for any new development.

Policy 5.10.9: Restoration of Scenic Areas. Require on-site restoration of visually blighted conditions as a mitigating condition of permit approval for new development. The type and amount of restoration shall be commensurate with the size of the project for which the permit is issued. Provide technical assistance for restoration of blighted areas.

Policy 5.10.11: Development Visible from Rural Scenic Roads. In the viewsheds of rural scenic roads, require new discretionary development, including development envelopes in proposed land divisions, to be sited out of public view, obscured by natural landforms, and/or existing vegetation. Where proposed structures on existing lots are unavoidably visible from scenic roads, identify those visual qualities worthy of protection and require the siting, architectural design, and landscaping to mitigate the impacts on those visual qualities.

Policy 5.10.13: Landscaping Requirements. All grading and land disturbance projects visible from scenic roads shall conform to the following visual mitigation conditions: (a) Blend contours of the finished surface with the adjacent natural terrain and landscape to achieve a smooth transition and natural appearance; and (b) Incorporate only characteristic or indigenous plant species appropriate for the area.

Policy 5.10.16: Designation of Coastal Special Scenic Areas. Designate the following as Coastal Special Scenic Areas and require development to comply with design criteria set forth in the Coastal Zone Regulation ordinance: (a) Bonny Doon sandstone formations, generally found within the borders of Pine Flat Road, Laguna Creek, Ice Cream Grade, and Martin Road; (b) The area enclosed by the Swanton Road and Highway 1 scenic roads.

Policy 5.10.17: Swanton Road Coastal Special Scenic Areas. In the Swanton Road Coastal Special Scenic area (north of Last Chance Road towards Highway 1), require new development to be hidden from public view. Utilize parcel recombination and other techniques as appropriate to accomplish this; and at a minimum, require dense landscape screening when it would be impossible to locate otherwise permissible development so as to place it out of public view.

Vegetative screening shall be consistent with patterns and type of existing vegetation and comprised of indigenous species.

Community Design Element

The Community Design Element, Chapter 8 of the County of Santa Cruz General Plan and Local Coastal Program also contains objectives and policies that provide guidance for protection of visual resources through development standards and design criteria. This chapter guides development activity to: protect open space for its aesthetic, recreational, and environmental values; to foster high quality residential areas; and to enhance the quality of development to achieve an aesthetic and functional community. The following objectives and policies of the Community Design Element highlight the objectives and policies that are pertinent to the Program. For a comprehensive list of all objectives and policies, see Chapter 8 of the General Plan.

Objective 8.1: Quality Design. To achieve functional high quality development through design review policies which recognize the diverse characteristics of the area, maintains design creativity, and preserves and enhances the visual fabric of the community.

Objective 8.6: Building Design. To encourage building design that addresses the neighborhood and community context; utilizes scale appropriate to adjacent development; and incorporates design elements that are appropriate to surrounding uses and the type of land use planned for the area.

Policy 8.6.5: Designing with the Environment. Development shall maintain a complementary relationship with the natural environment and shall be low-profile and stepped-down on hillsides.

Policy 8.6.6: Protecting Ridgetops and Natural Landforms. Protect ridgetops and prominent natural landforms such as cliffs, bluffs, dunes, rock outcroppings, and other significant natural features from development.

Objective 8.8: Villages, Towns, and Special Communities. To recognize certain established urban and rural villages as well as Coastal Special Communities for their unique characteristics and/or popularity as visitor destination points; to preserve and enhance these communities through design review ensuring the compatibility of new development with existing character of these areas.

Policy 8.8.1: Design Guidelines for Unique Areas. Develop specific guidelines and/or standards for well-defined villages, towns, and communities including commercial and residential uses as appropriate. New development within these areas and any other subsequently adopted area plan, shall conform to the adopted plans for these areas, as plans become available.

Policy 8.8.2: Coastal Special Community Designation. Maintain a Coastal Special Community designation for the following areas shown on the General Plan and LCP Land Use Maps: Davenport, Seacliff Beach Area, Rio del Mar Flats/Esplanade, Harbor Area, and East Cliff Village Tourist Area.

County of Santa Cruz Zoning Regulations

Santa Cruz County Zoning Regulations, Chapter 13.10.636 of the SCCC includes design criteria for greenhouse development. New greenhouses of 500 square feet or smaller only require administrative approval. New greenhouses larger than 500 square feet require a public hearing by Zoning Administrator (Approval Level V). Section 13.10.636 provides development standards for

replacement, reconstruction, or structural alteration of existing conforming and nonconforming greenhouses.

Design criteria for new greenhouses over 500 square feet, where allowed pursuant to a development permit in the basic zone district, shall be developed and maintained to the following standards:

- (1) Mitigations shall be required for any adverse visual impacts of greenhouses which will be visible from designated scenic roads, beaches or recreation facilities. Mitigations may include such measures as vegetative screening or other landscaping, materials which produce less glare, berming, and/or arrangement of structures on the site to minimize bulky appearance. Greenhouses shall not be located where they would block public ocean views. Mitigations shall be compatible with light and ventilation needs of the greenhouse operations.
- (2) Storm water runoff drainage shall be retained on-site in areas of primary groundwater recharge capacity; in other areas, the drainage shall be detained on-site such that the rate of runoff leaving the site after the project is no greater than the rate before the project. Drainage plans may be prepared by the applicant unless engineered plans are required by the building official.
- (3) Discarded greenhouse coverings shall be disposed of promptly according to plans submitted by the applicant.
- (4) On-site parking shall be provided commensurate with the need created by the proposed use.
- (5) The removal of indigenous prime farmland soil used as a growing medium for container plants which are sold intact shall not be allowed.
- (6) Flooring or impervious surfacing within the greenhouse structure which impairs long-term soil capabilities shall be limited to the minimum area needed for access, loading and storage. The use of long-term sterilants under impervious surfacing shall not be allowed.
- (7) Greenhouse structures shall be designed to maximize energy efficiency and to use alternative energy sources, where feasible.
- (8) Open ventilation shall be provided, when feasible. When exhaust fans are shown to be necessary, the fans should be located away from nonagricultural land uses and should maximize energy efficiency.
- (9) Irrigation systems shall be water conserving.

County of Santa Cruz Coastal Zone Regulations

Santa Cruz County Coastal Zone Regulations, Chapter 13.20 of the SCCC includes design criteria for development in coastal zones and in scenic resource areas. All applicable and/or required development standards and design criteria of Chapters 13.10 and 13.11 of the SCCC shall be met in addition to the criteria of this section. Sections 13.20.141 and 13.20.142 define design criteria for Bonny Doon and Swanton Road special scenic areas, respectively. Section 13.20.143 defines special community design criteria for Davenport. Section 13.20.130 defines design criteria for development projects proposed in the Coastal Zone and in scenic resource areas outside of the Urban/Rural Services Line. Criteria include:

- **Location of Development.** Development shall be located, if possible, on parts of the site not visible or least visible from public view. Development shall not block views of the shoreline and/or ocean from scenic roads, turnouts, rest stops, or vista points;

- **Site Planning.** Development shall be sited and designed to fit the physical setting so that its presence is subordinate to the natural character of the site, including through appropriately maintaining natural features (e.g., streams, riparian corridors, major drainages, mature trees, dominant vegetative communities, rock outcroppings, prominent natural landforms, tree groupings, etc.) and requiring appropriate setbacks therefrom. Screening and landscaping suitable to the site shall be used to soften the visual impact of development unavoidably sited in the public viewshed.
- **Building Design.** Structures shall be designed to fit the topography of the site with minimal cutting, grading, or filling for construction. Pitched rather than flat roofs, which are surfaced with nonreflective materials (except for solar energy systems that unavoidably reflect) shall be encouraged. Natural materials and colors which blend with the patterns and colors of the vegetative cover and landform of the site and surrounding area shall be used, and if the structure is located in an existing cluster of buildings, colors and materials shall also repeat or harmonize with those in the cluster.
- **Large Agricultural Structures.** The visual impact of large agricultural structures shall be minimized by: locating the structure within or near an existing group of buildings; using materials and colors which blend with the building cluster, or the natural vegetative cover, or landform where there is no vegetative cover, of the site; and using landscaping to screen or soften the appearance of the structure.
- **Restoration.** Feasible elimination or mitigation of unsightly, visually disruptive or degrading elements such as junk heaps, unnatural obstructions, grading scars, or structures incompatible with the area shall be included in site development. The requirement for restoration of visually blighted areas shall be proportional to the size of the proposed project and its visual impacts.

3.1.4 Methodology and Assumptions

This analysis of potential aesthetics and visual resources impacts reviews the existing visual character described in Section 3.1.2, *Environmental Setting*, and determines the Program's potential visual impact. As stated in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the County is divided into four general regions for planning purposes: North Coast, Mountain, Urban, and South County regions. Visual resources occur throughout the County and are sometimes characterized in this analysis by the region in which they occur. Refer to Section 3.0, *Introduction and Approach to Analysis*, for a detailed discussion of projected cannabis activities in the County due to Program implementation.

The Program is reviewed for the potential to result in a significant physical change from the existing visual/aesthetic setting or loss/damage of a specific visual resource. Impacts to visual resources are assessed through the evaluation of existing visual resources, community values, review of existing policy framework for the protection of visual resources, and review of proposed development standards. The analysis takes into consideration the existing General Plan policies that identify and protect visual resources including ocean views, agricultural fields, wooded forests, open meadows, and mountain hillside views; and public vistas including ocean vistas and that of agricultural landscapes. This analysis also assesses potential impacts to General Plan designated scenic areas and scenic roads. The analysis also accounts for provisions of the Program, including the proposed requirement that: "All licenses issued under [the Program] must be consistent with the County's policies, objectives, laws, regulations, and programs related to land use, including those related to the County's General Plan and Local Coastal Program."

3.1.5 Significance Criteria

CEQA Guidelines Thresholds

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines identifies the following four circumstances that can lead to a determination of significant visual impact:

- The Project has a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- The Project substantially damages scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway.
- The Project substantially degrades the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. (This may include loss of major onsite landscape features, or degradation by change of character when placed in the context of existing surroundings.)
- The Project creates a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

3.1.6 Environmental Impact Analysis and Mitigation

This section discusses the potential aesthetics and visual resource impacts associated with the Program. A detailed discussion of each impact follows. The loss, alteration, or obstruction of visually significant features, or the introduction of disparate features that conflict with the existing visual character and quality of the Program area, may be considered significant aesthetic and visual effects. Where there are potentially significant or significant and unavoidable impacts, mitigation measures are proposed and the residual impact is determined. See Section 3.0, *Introduction and Approach to Analysis* for a discussion of the overall environmental impact analysis and mitigation planning methodology.

3.1.6.1 Program Impacts

Impact AV-1. Commercial cannabis cultivation under the Program would have adverse effects on scenic resources and vistas, existing visual character, and effects from nighttime lighting and glare. With mitigation, this impact would be less than significant.

Impact AV-1.1. Direct Cultivation. Commercial cannabis cultivation under the Program could result in visual impacts by altering scenic vistas or degrading scenic resources through the introduction of opaque fencing, greenhouses, buildings, accessory structures, security lighting, and other development directly related to cannabis cultivation. Potential for impacts between the Project and More Permissive Project scenarios would be similar in character. However, the More Permissive Project could allow impacts at more locations due to less restrictive criteria for parcels eligible to be cultivated. Under either scenario, licensed cannabis cultivation under the Program could result in a total of 44.3 up to 79.1 acres of licensed canopy Countywide by registrants, with an additional 147 acres of canopy cultivated by farmers on lands zoned CA who had been farming for 3 years prior. As reviewed in Chapter 2, it is projected that Program implementation would result in a total of 190.1 acres of cannabis cultivation, with 12 percent (22.8 acres) being grown outdoors, and 88 percent (167.3 acres being grown indoors in buildings or greenhouses. Additionally, some existing cultivation

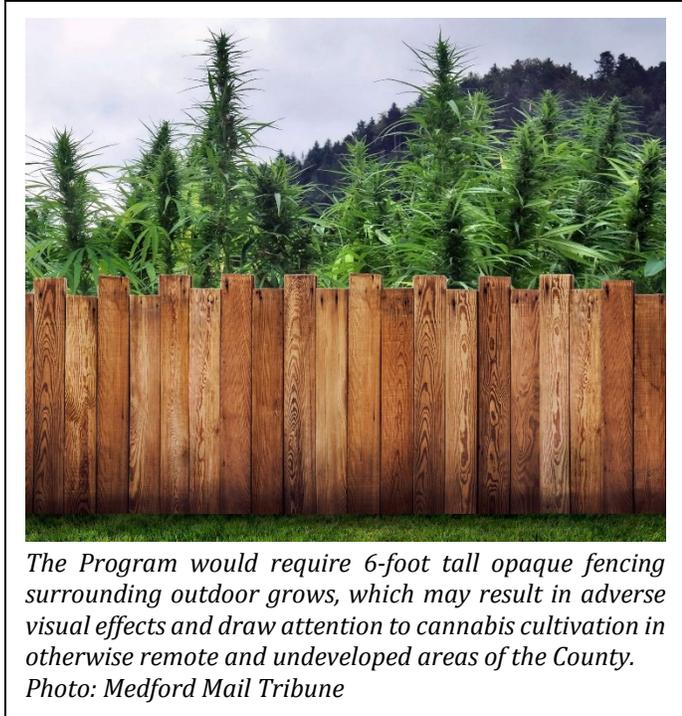
would likely require changes under the Program, including moving the canopy to a different location within the current site or relocating to a new site. Further, future cultivation on CA zoned land is projected to occur within existing greenhouses located on parcels zoned CA. Licensed cultivation may result in cannabis-related development, such as fencing, removal of vegetation (land clearing), topographical changes from site grading, introduction of new sources of light or glare, placement of new development into open and more visible areas, and the conversion of undeveloped or undisturbed rural lands, thereby potentially affecting naturally scenic features and public views. The degree of visual impacts would depend on the siting and design of cannabis cultivation sites relative to viewsheds and visual resources.

Outdoor grows are expected to be prevalent in the Mountain and South County Regions, as these regions contain the greatest acreage and number of parcels eligible for cultivation, where 38 percent of the registrant-provided cultivation sites would be in the Mountain Region and 27 percent are in the South County Region under the Program. The Program requires that if cannabis cultivation occurs outdoors, the growing area must be fully secured and enclosed within an opaque fence at least 6 feet high. Construction of opaque fences as required for outdoor grows would potentially have adverse effects on scenic resources in rural or agricultural areas, particularly in the Mountain and South County Regions. Many cultivation sites in these regions would be remote and removed from urban areas, and opaque fencing in certain locations would not be visually consistent with the surrounding area. The South County Region is a heavily-used agricultural region containing open agricultural landscapes, orchards, and open space, and the introduction of fencing could be visible from a distance and may disrupt such landscapes. In addition to the presence of opaque fencing, cannabis cultivation in the Mountain Region may result in grading, vegetation clearing, and construction on publicly visible slopes that could have adverse impacts on scenic resources.

Greenhouses and indoor grows may require clearing and grading to create level pads which could result in changes to existing visual character and topography, as well as the incremental loss of open space and conversion of undeveloped land. Construction of new buildings for greenhouse and indoor grows would potentially be visible from public viewing areas and within General Plan Scenic Areas within the North Coast, Urban, and South Coast Regions. However, site design criteria in the County's Coastal Zone Regulations (SCCC Chapter 13.20) and proposed by the Program provide guidelines for siting development when in a potentially scenic area to reduce visual inconsistencies between new development and existing character of scenic resources. Similarly, design criteria in the Program and the County's Zoning Regulations (SCCC Chapter 13.10.636) would require new greenhouse development and replacement/reconstruction of existing greenhouses to reduce visual impacts, including vegetative screening and materials that produce less glare.

Greenhouses are already used for cultivation throughout the County, particularly the South County Region and the addition of greenhouses for cannabis cultivation would not significantly degrade the existing character of agricultural areas where greenhouses are already present. Further, indoor and greenhouse cannabis cultivation proposed within the Coastal Zone + 1-mile buffer may only occur within existing greenhouses; development of new greenhouses is prohibited in this delineated area under the proposed Project and would therefore not cause adverse effects on ocean vistas, community character, or scenic resources in coastal areas, particularly in the North Coast and South County Regions. The More Permissive Project also prohibits development of new greenhouses for cannabis cultivation within the coastal zone, although under this scenario such development would be allowed to occur within the Coastal Zone + 1-mile buffer area.

Cultivation may also introduce a more or additional nighttime lighting into rural regions that typically experience little light pollution and generally maintain dark night skies. Nighttime operations of indoor or greenhouse grows using light suppression may require lighting within buildings and of useable outdoor areas. However, the Program requires that, except for security, lighting sources shall not be visible at cultivation sites from sunset to sunrise. This requirement would eliminate the potential for light spillover from cultivation using artificial light on a 24-hour schedule. This would be particularly important to control light spillover from greenhouse operations; indoor cultivation would be better situated to control light and glare within the building.



*The Program would require 6-foot tall opaque fencing surrounding outdoor grows, which may result in adverse visual effects and draw attention to cannabis cultivation in otherwise remote and undeveloped areas of the County.
Photo: Medford Mail Tribune*

Cannabis cultivation sites may have a visual impact if they are visible from designated County scenic roads, Eligible State Scenic Highways, or highly scenic areas identified by the County Conservation and Open Space Element. However, the Program prohibits siting cannabis cultivation in a location that is visible from a public right of way; therefore, there would be no impact to scenic roadways.

The Program includes development criteria and restrictions that can reduce potential impacts to scenic resources (Chapter 2, *Project Description*). These include:

- Restrictions on structural development and canopy size, including square footage limitations;
- Prohibition of lighting for cultivation purposes, except for security, that would be visible from cultivation sites from sunset to sunrise;
- Minimization of visibility of cannabis cultivation sites through siting, landscaping, and screening; and
- Cannabis cultivation shall not be visible from any adjacent public right-of-way.

These proposed development criteria and restrictions would assist in the protection of visual resources and scenic views. Review of license applications to ensure that operations meet criteria will improve design, siting and visual screening of licensed cannabis cultivation development, as compared to existing baseline conditions. If cannabis cultivation development were to occur within the boundaries of General Plan Scenic Areas (refer to Figure 3.1-1) or designated special scenic areas as defined by the SCCC, siting requirements and design standards would apply to ensure compatibility with existing resources; this would ensure that significant scenic resources are not adversely affected.

However, cannabis cultivation sites situated in rural and agricultural areas would be required to install a 6-foot tall opaque fence around any outdoor cultivation area. While this requirement aims to address public safety by limiting access to the cultivation site, it also may create visual impacts in

areas where the natural setting would be adversely affected by new highly visible fencing. This is particularly true in areas of the County where registrants' proposed locations are clustered, such as the Mountain Region and the South Coast Region. Taken together, the licensed site that would be required to install opaque fencing could alter scenic views and resources. Given the potential for this fencing to alter the visual character of scenic areas of the County, this impact is considered *potentially significant*, for both the Project and the More Permissive Project.

Mitigation Measures

MM AV-1.1. Fencing Requirements. To reduce direct visual impacts associated with the opaque fencing for outdoor grows in rural areas, proposed SCCC Section 7.128 shall be amended to remove the mandatory requirement for 6-foot tall opaque fencing for outdoor cultivation, and a new provision shall be included to give discretion to the Licensing Official to determine on a case-by-case basis whether a licensed outdoor grow site requires fencing. The Licensing Official shall also be permitted to determine the appropriate type of fencing (i.e., height, materials, design, location, etc.). If a fence is required, it shall be sited and designed to avoid tree removal. To the maximum extent feasible, fencing for cannabis cultivation sites in Mountain and South County Regions shall consist of natural barriers and deterrents (e.g., poison oak or native blackberry [*Rubus ursinus*]) to prevent trespass from humans, and shall be visually consistent to the maximum extent possible, with surrounding agricultural and open space lands. Fencing requirements shall be noted on final licensing conditions and any site plans. The Licensee shall submit fencing plans to the County Cannabis Licensing Office for review and approval to ensure appropriateness of proposed fencing (e.g., use of natural materials and compatibility of proposed fence color with surroundings and compliance with applicable fence requirements of the SCCC in Chapter 13.10) prior to issuance of a cultivation license. The Licensee shall demonstrate to the County Cannabis Licensing Office through a site visit or photographs compliance with any fencing requirements and that all perimeter fencing is in place as required prior to cultivation activities.

Plan Requirements and Timing. If required by the County Licensing Official, the Licensee shall submit a Fence Plan with submittal of all other license application materials. The County shall review the plan for completeness and for compliance with any other applicable regulations of the SCCC prior to issuance of a cannabis cultivation license.

Monitoring. The County shall review and approve the Fence Plan prior to issuance of a license. The County shall review site conditions periodically, as determined necessary.

Post-Mitigation Level of Impacts

With the implementation of MM AV-1, residual direct visual impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation* for both the Project and the More Permissive Project. The County would ensure that visual impacts related to fencing are minimized and fencing requirements are considered on a case-by-case basis.

Impact AV-1.2. Indirect Cultivation. Indirect impacts of the Program would result from the construction of up to 228 new onsite residential units that are required at cultivation sites, along with any associated roads, utility infrastructure, and site improvements, including up to 568 water tanks for fire protection to support onsite cannabis cultivation operations. These water tanks could potentially be sized to contain 120,000 gallons each, although multiple water tanks rather than a single tank could be used. Residences would be required for eligible parcels within A, RA, TP, and SU zone districts under both the Project and More Permissive Project scenarios. The More Permissive

Project would allow cannabis activities in more locations within the County than the proposed Project, potentially increasing such visual impacts, but would also be subject to the need to be consistent with applicable General Plan land use policies and development standards when a discretionary land use permit is required. While the County Housing Element documents a potential capacity for over 17,000 dwelling units to be created within the unincorporated area, including urban and rural new home development as well as Accessory Dwelling Units and agricultural employee housing, the Program may induce development of parcels that might not otherwise occur. However, residences may be built in the future even if the Program is not implemented.

The construction of homes and support structures would potentially alter the existing character near each cultivation site. Construction of these residences and associated infrastructure could involve grading for building pads, roads, and driveways, in addition to grading and site preparation activities required for cannabis cultivation. Such grading and site preparation would have the potential to change the topography of the site and may be visible from scenic roads or public vistas. However, the total amount of new construction that could occur under the Program depends on existing limits imposed by the SCCC and no additional development that is not already allowed would be directly allowed by the Program.

To further evaluate potential impacts of dwelling units, potential acreage and scale of development for the required onsite residential units is conservatively assumed to be the size of a typical rural residential development in Santa Cruz County at roughly 0.5 to 1.0 acre per residence, including roads, driveways, utilities, and outbuildings. However, the SCCC allows homes to be as small as about 300 square feet, which would reduce potential disturbed areas. In the South County and North Coast Regions, development of supporting uses to cannabis cultivation could result in the conversion of agricultural and grazing lands related to road widening, extensions, or construction of supporting facilities. Scenic areas designated by the County General Plan are generally confined to coastlines or areas with ocean vistas within the South County and North Coast Regions (Figure 3.1-1) and additional development could alter the character of these areas. Impacts to public vistas along scenic roads and scenic areas from development of new structures and support facilities would be more prevalent in the Mountain and South County Regions; the Mountain Region has four Eligible State Scenic Highways and the South County Region has 12 County designated scenic roads.

The development of new homes and ancillary uses to cannabis cultivation would occur incrementally, be distributed throughout the County, and would likely be less than the maximum potential new homes due to potentially remote/inaccessible parcel locations, and other constraints, including economics. Further, pursuant to the County's Coastal Zone Regulations (SCCC Chapter 13.20), along with the County's Zoning Regulations (SCCC Chapter 13.10.636), development related to cannabis cultivation would be required to blend with the site's scenic resources and existing visual character. All supporting development, including required water storage tanks up to 120,000 gallons, would be subject to the SCCC and General Plan policies, which would enforce protection of scenic resources and encourage proposed cultivation sites to be evaluated against the context of their unique environment in terms of structure height, setbacks, and design to protect scenic resources in the surrounding area, which would reduce visual resource impacts.

Any development of a cannabis activities site that involves grading greater than 100 cubic yards or large cuts or fills would be subject to separate permit and environmental review processes to ensure compliance with existing County regulations and policies. The application of existing design criteria and guidelines to minimize cuts and avoid siting cannabis-related development in publicly visible areas or in scenic areas would reduce impacts, particularly those related to road and driveway

widening, and residences and water tanks .Nevertheless, given the dimensions of a typical single 120,000-gallon water tank (30 feet in diameter by 24 feet in height), any site that would require a water tank of this size would have potentially significant impacts on aesthetics and visual resources. Therefore, indirect impacts associated with aesthetics and visual impacts under the Program would be considered *potentially significant*, for both the Project and the More Permissive Project.

Mitigation Measures

MM AV-1.2. Visual Blending Plan for Cannabis Infrastructure. To reduce the visual impacts associated with cannabis infrastructure, namely the requirement for water storage tanks on sites with cannabis-related buildings pursuant to the Santa Cruz County Fire Code, the Licensing Official shall determine on a case by case basis whether a cannabis infrastructure on a licensed grow site requires specific conditions to minimize visibility, such as a requirement to install multiple small tanks in place of one large tank so that tank does not project above a local ridge or tree line, and/or require specific color palettes for infrastructure that blend in with the surrounding environment.

The Licensee shall submit the visual blending plan to the County Cannabis Licensing Office for review and approval to ensure appropriateness of the proposed color palette and techniques to be used to minimize visibility of cannabis-related infrastructure. The Licensee shall demonstrate to the County Cannabis Licensing Office, Building Official, and/or Fire Marshal as appropriate, through plans, a site visit, or photographs the site's compliance with any screening, painting, or other approved visual blending technique applied to required water storage tanks are completed prior to cultivation activities, or within a timeframe established by the Licensing Official.

Plan Requirements and Timing. The Licensee shall submit the visual blending plan to the County Cannabis Licensing Official with submittal of all other license application materials. The County shall review the plan for completeness prior to the issuance of a cannabis cultivation or manufacturing license.

Monitoring. The County shall review and approve the visual blending plan prior to issuance of a license. The County shall review site conditions periodically, as determined necessary, and during license renewal.

Implement MM LU-1.1.4. Master Planned Cannabis Facilities. As appropriate, use of a Master Plan to coordinate multiple adjoining properties to meet site development requirements on a case-by-case basis would apply to Impact AV-1.2.

Implement MM LU-1.1.5. Reduction of Excessive Grading. Implementation of County Grading Ordinance amendments to prevent excessive grading would apply to Impact AV-1.2.

Post-Mitigation Level of Impacts

With implementation of MM AV-1.2, MM LU-1.1.4, and MM LU-1.1.5, site design would consider visual blending of required infrastructure with surrounding visual setting, and the area of disturbance for site development with homes and infrastructure would be minimized. Therefore, residual indirect visual resource and aesthetic impacts would be *less than significant with mitigation*.

Impact AV-2. Cannabis product manufacturing under the Program would have adverse effects on scenic vistas, existing visual character, and effects from nighttime lighting and glare. This impact would be less than significant with mitigation.

Impact AV-2.1. Direct Manufacturing. Direct visual impacts could occur where licensed cannabis product manufacturing facilities are constructed or expanded within an area of scenic resources or value, particularly if the facilities introduce new sources of light or glare which would change the existing character of the landscape. Cannabis manufacturing would be licensed under the Program in commercial or manufacturing spaces in industrial/commercial and agricultural zoning districts, predominantly within the Urban, Mountain, and South County Regions, as well as for limited cannabis home occupation uses in residential zoning districts. While cannabis manufacturing may most commonly occur within existing buildings, construction of new buildings may occur, with potential for direct impacts. The degree of these impacts would be depend on the siting and design relative to view sheds and visual resources.

However, under the Program, no source of exterior night lighting except for downward directional, hooded security lighting related to cannabis manufacturing would be allowed to avoid the degradation of scenic resources and would adhere to existing and proposed SCCC design criteria that would reduce visual impacts associated with cannabis product manufacturing development, including limitation on signage/advertising, lighting management, outside hours of operation, and activity levels. Proposed development criteria for manufacturing uses, including design review criteria and limitations on lighting for security purposes, are designed to ensure compatibility with the surrounding landscape to reduce the visual impacts associated with cannabis product manufacturing so that the Program would not substantially degrade the visual character in the County. Therefore, Program impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact AV-2.2. Indirect Manufacturing. Indirect impacts of cannabis product manufacturing would occur when related infrastructure, including up to 120,000-gallon water storage tanks for firefighting, are constructed for manufacturing operations in areas outside municipal water service districts. As described in Impact AV-1.2, site preparation, including new road cuts and widening activities for manufacturing buildings and support facilities could potentially change the existing character of scenic resources in the vicinity of each cultivation site, such as with conversion of undeveloped land. The Program would potentially allow for site development to serve cannabis manufacturing uses in scenic areas and within areas visible from scenic roads or public vistas.

The specific location of manufacturing activity is too speculative to consider, and future environmental review may be required for proposed development projects. Cannabis manufacturing development, including potential greenhouses, warehouses, commercial buildings, and residential structures, would be subject to County policies and Program guidelines that address scenic resources and existing visual character as those previously described in Impact AV-2.1. New commercial/industrial buildings are subject to design review criteria as a development permit application is reviewed. Manufacturing licenses and associated permits would be reviewed by the County to ensure compliance with the County's Zoning Regulations and Coastal Zone Regulations (Sections 13.10 and 13.20 of the SCCC). These regulations require proposed sites in scenic areas to be evaluated against the context of their unique environment with criteria for structure height, setbacks, and design to protect scenic resources in the surrounding area. However, given the dimensions of a typical 120,000-gallon water tank (e.g., 30 feet in diameter by 24 feet in height), any site that would require a water tank of this size would have potentially significant impacts associated with aesthetics

and visual resources. Therefore, indirect impacts associated with aesthetics and visual impacts under the Program would be considered *potentially significant*, for both the Project and the More Permissive Project.

Mitigation Measures

Implement MM AV-1.2. Visual Blending Plan for Cannabis Infrastructure. To reduce the visual impacts associated with cannabis infrastructure, MM AV-1.2, addressing visual quality of cannabis-related site improvements such as the requirement to develop multiple smaller water tanks where feasible, shall apply to Impact AV-2.2.

Implement MM LU-1.1.4. Master Planned Cannabis Facilities. As appropriate, use of a Master Plan to coordinate multiple adjoining properties to meet site development requirements on a case-by-case basis would apply to Impact AV-2.2.

Implement MM LU-1.1.5. Reduction of Excessive Grading. Implementation of County Grading Ordinance amendments to prevent excessive grading would apply to Impact AV-2.2.

Post-Mitigation Level of Impacts

With the implementation of MM AV-1.2, MM LU-1.1.4, and MM LU1.1.5, residual indirect visual impacts would be lessened to *less than significant with mitigation* for both the Project and the More Permissive Project. The County would ensure that visual impacts related to cannabis infrastructure, namely water storage tanks for firefighting, are considered on a case-by-case basis.

3.1.6.2 Summary of Program Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

Table 3.1-3 below provides a summary of the aesthetics and visual resources impacts resulting from the Program.

Table 3.1-3 Summary of Aesthetics and Visual Resources Impacts

| Aesthetics and Visual Resources Impacts | Level of Significance | Mitigation Measures | Post-Mitigation Level of Significance | |
|---|-------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| | | | Project | More Permissive Project |
| Impacts from Commercial Cannabis Cultivation | | | | |
| Impact AV-1. Commercial cannabis cultivation under the Program would have adverse effects on scenic resources and vistas, existing visual character, and effects from nighttime lighting and glare. With mitigation, this impact would be less than significant. | | | | |
| Direct | Potentially Significant | MM AV-1.1. Fencing Requirements | Less than significant with Mitigation | Less than significant with Mitigation |
| Indirect | Potentially Significant | MM AV-1.2. Visual Blending Plan for Cannabis Infrastructure MM LU-1.1.4. Master Planned Cannabis Facilities MM LU-1.1.5. Reduction of Excessive Grading | Less than significant with Mitigation | Less than significant with Mitigation |
| Impacts from Commercial Cannabis Manufacturing | | | | |
| Impact AV-2. Cannabis product manufacturing under the Program would have adverse effects on scenic vistas, existing visual character, and effects from nighttime lighting and glare. This impact would be less than significant with mitigation. | | | | |
| Direct | Less than Significant | None required. | Less than Significant | Less than Significant |
| Indirect | Potentially Significant | MM AV-1.2. Visual Blending Plan for Cannabis Infrastructure MM LU-1.1.4. Master Planned Cannabis Facilities MM LU-1.1.5. Reduction of Excessive Grading | Less than significant with Mitigation | Less than significant with Mitigation |

3.1.6.3 Secondary Impacts

Impact AV-3. Unlicensed cannabis activities could have adverse effects on scenic resources and vistas, existing visual character, and effects from nighttime lighting and glare, but the effects would be less than significant.

Program implementation could create secondary impacts to visual resources through additional or expanded unlicensed cannabis cultivation and manufacturing Countywide as many potential cannabis cultivators and manufacturers would be excluded from licensing by the proposed Program standards under either scenario. Such illegal cultivation would likely not comply with aesthetic design criteria and guidelines to protect scenic resources. However, unlicensed cultivation sites are usually screened from public view to avoid exposing illegal operations. These sites are not expected to have a significant effect on scenic resources or visual character because they would tend to be hidden from public view and not be easily detectable to avoid enforcement by the County and other agencies.

The Project and the More Permissive Project would have differing effects on secondary impacts. The proposed Project's restrictions on cannabis (e.g., more restrictive minimum parcel size and lower maximum canopy allowances) may cause cultivators to pursue additional or expanded future levels of cannabis activity without licenses or permits. Potential barriers to legal cultivation coupled with economic requirements (e.g., taxation rates; development of a residence on site, infrastructure improvements, road improvements, required mitigation measures, and related grading; restrictive minimum parcel sizes) may reduce participation in the Program and increase the rate of unlicensed cultivation in the future. The More Permissive Project would reduce eligible parcel size requirements and allow larger canopies, incrementally reducing unregulated cultivation which would incrementally reduce the potential for future impacts to visual resources from future additional or expanded unlicensed cannabis activities.

The location of future expanded or additional unlicensed cannabis activity sites cannot be predicted with any certainty; such cultivation could occur in any of the areas of the County and could expand into any hidden areas suitable for cultivation. Given its unregulated nature and the need to conceal operations, such activities are anticipated to occur in heavily forested areas and more remote rural areas. Vegetation clearing, grading, and building support facilities (e.g., water supply facilities, trails) may not substantially change the existing character of the surrounding landscape because of the need for concealment. These unregulated cannabis cultivation operations would be difficult to detect and therefore would not significantly degrade scenic resources in publicly visible areas. Therefore, secondary impacts related to unlicensed cannabis cultivation under the Program would be *less than significant*, for both the Project and the More Permissive Project.

3.1.6.4 Cumulative Impacts

As described in Section 3.0, *Introduction and Approach to Analysis*, the cumulative setting for the Program involves a variety of policies and initiatives in the County and vicinity. Impacts of the Program along with pending and current legislative planning projects form the cumulative impacts analysis. In addition to this Program, two ongoing comprehensive planning studies as identified in Chapter 3.0, have the potential to cumulatively contribute to aesthetic impacts in the County, including adverse effects on scenic vistas, existing visual character, or effects from nighttime lighting and glare.

Cumulative direct impacts associated with the Program would include potential changes to scenic resources and existing visual character associated with the combined canopy area of 44.3 acres up to 79.1 acres for the Program, with additional acreage for support development, combined with changes to other County plans and projects that would also potentially change local scenic resources or the existing character of the area. For example, the visual effects of the Program combined with the potential for new types of agri-tourism under the County proposed updated agricultural policies and regulations may generate a cumulative impact in agricultural areas of the County. Further, any proposed development could be sited in areas that are publicly visible or within proximity of a scenic road or highway. The Program requires that cannabis cultivation and manufacturing activities, as well as other development that occurs consistent with the General Plan/LCP and SCCC, comply with existing County policies and regulations where applicable. This includes General Plan/LCP policies regarding the protection of public vistas and visual resources, development siting criteria, and design standards that ensure visual compatibility. Therefore, the Program's contribution to cumulative change of scenic resources and existing character would be minor and cumulative direct impacts associated with the Program would be *less than significant*.

Cumulative indirect impacts associated with the Program would relate to construction of roads, site improvements, and supporting structures for cumulative projects that could potentially change scenic resources or existing character. Grading for building pads, roads and driveways, and development of infrastructure could change the existing character of the surrounding landscape or occur in scenic areas with important public vistas. Potential acreage of Program-related future development in combination with other County projects and plans is unknown. Future development enabled by these projects must be found consistent with adopted General Plan/LCP policies and SCCC standards relating to aesthetics and visual resources and design standards in order to be approved. The requirements for up to 120,000-gallon water storage tanks would necessitate development that would potentially conflict with these policies. However, with mitigation of Program impacts, as described above, the Program's indirect contribution at full build out to cumulative impacts resulting from changes to scenic resources and existing character would be *less than significant*.

