

# CHAPTER 6—SCENIC AND VISUAL RESOURCES

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## A. Introduction

Solana Beach is an area of great natural beauty situated between two coastal lagoons (San Elijo Lagoon and San Dieguito Lagoon), the Pacific Ocean to the west and San Dieguito County Park to the east. Land within the City generally slopes toward one of the two lagoons or the Pacific Ocean, and many properties have scenic views of one or more of these striking natural features. Other natural features, such as hillsides and canyons, also have important scenic value to residents and visitors alike. The scenic resources of the City are highly valued and contribute substantially to providing a pleasurable living environment, promoting a high quality of life, as well as, attracting visitors to the area.

Public viewing areas are maintained along the shoreline at public coastal access points such as Tide Park, Fletcher Cove Community Center and Park, Seascape Surf, Del Mar Shores, Las Brisas and Surfsong viewpoints above Fletcher Cove, and the newest public viewing area along Pacific Avenue at the western terminus of Ocean Street. Exhibit 6-1 identifies the primary public view corridors in the City that provide visual access to the key scenic resources in the City, or visible from within the City which include the Pacific Ocean, the San Elijo Lagoon, the San Dieguito Lagoon, and the undeveloped vegetated hills east of the City.

### 1. Coastal Act Provisions

One of the primary objectives of the Coastal Act is the protection of scenic and visual resources, particularly as viewed from public places. Section 30251 requires that development be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and other scenic coastal areas. New development must minimize the alteration of natural landforms. This policy also requires that development is sited and designed to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas. Where feasible, development shall include measures to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas.

### 2. Land Use Plan Provisions

The LUP provides for the protection of scenic and visual resources from public viewpoints, including views of the beach, ocean, lagoons, views of distant mountains and canyons, and views of native habitat surrounding the San Elijo and San Dieguito Lagoons. The LUP identifies scenic roads, which are those roads within the City that traverse, or provide views of, areas with outstanding scenic quality that contain striking views of natural vegetation, geology, and other unique natural features including the beach and ocean. Due to the topographic variation and slope orientation in the City, there are intermittent beach or ocean views from many public roads throughout the City. Exhibit 6-1 identifies all scenic roads and major public view corridors that provide visual access to the major scenic resources in the City or visible from within the City.

The LUP policies require that new development not adversely affect public views from scenic roads or other important scenic resources. Where this is not feasible, new development must minimize impacts through siting and design measures including

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reduction in bulk and scale of any proposed development. Protection is provided for prominent ridgelines by requiring structures to be set below the ridgeline and to avoid intrusions into the skyline.

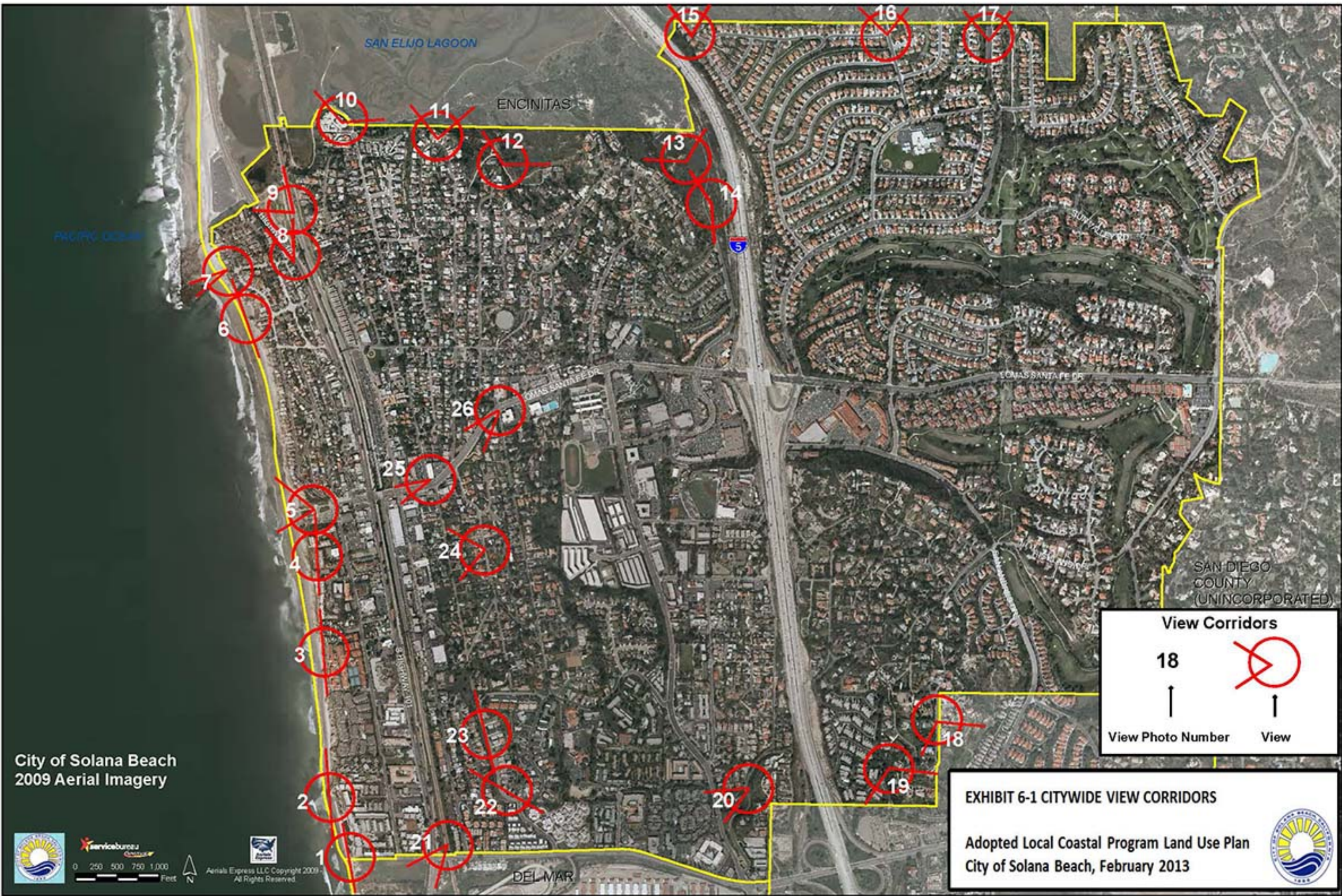
The policies give parameters for the siting and design of all new development to ensure that the alteration of natural landforms is minimized. These measures include siting development on flatter areas of the site, conforming development to the natural topography, clustering development, and preventing flat building pads on slopes. Graded slopes must blend with the existing terrain of the site and the height and length of slopes must be minimized. Finally, the length of roads or driveways shall be minimized and slopes designed to follow the natural topography in order to minimize landform alteration.

The policies require that new structures are sited and designed to minimize impacts to visual resources, by incorporating design measures to limit the appearance of bulk, ensuring visual compatibility with the character of surrounding areas, and by using colors and materials that are similar to and blend in with natural materials on the site. The height of retaining walls must be minimized and fences, walls and, landscaping must not block views from public viewing areas. Development is required to preserve blue water ocean views by limiting the overall height and siting of structures where feasible to maintain ocean views over the structures. Where it is not feasible to maintain views over the structure through siting and design alternatives, view corridors must be provided in order to maintain an ocean view through the project site.

The LUP policies set forth restrictions regarding land divisions, including lot line adjustments, to ensure that building sites are clustered, the length of roads and driveways are minimized, shared driveways are provided, grading is minimized, and all graded slopes are revegetated. Land divisions that do not avoid or minimize impacts to visual resources will not be permitted.

Development in the City is required to minimize the removal of natural vegetation both for the actual development area, as well as, for fuel modification purposes. Graded slopes and other areas disturbed by construction must be landscaped or revegetated with primarily native, non-invasive, drought tolerant, salt-tolerant, and fire resistant plants to provide coverage of the disturbed areas and monitored to ensure the success of revegetation efforts.

Views toward the City's unique scenic resources have led to a development pattern creating vista points and views of the Pacific Ocean from several areas. Several of these viewpoints are maintained as popular visitor destinations including public coastal accessways located at Tide Park, Fletcher Cove Park, Seascape Sur, Del Mar Shores Terrace, Las Brisas Viewpoint, and a small bluff top area open to the public located immediately south of Fletcher Cove.




City of Solana Beach  
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**View Corridors**


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View Photo Number View

**EXHIBIT 6-1 CITYWIDE VIEW CORRIDORS**

Adopted Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan  
City of Solana Beach, February 2013









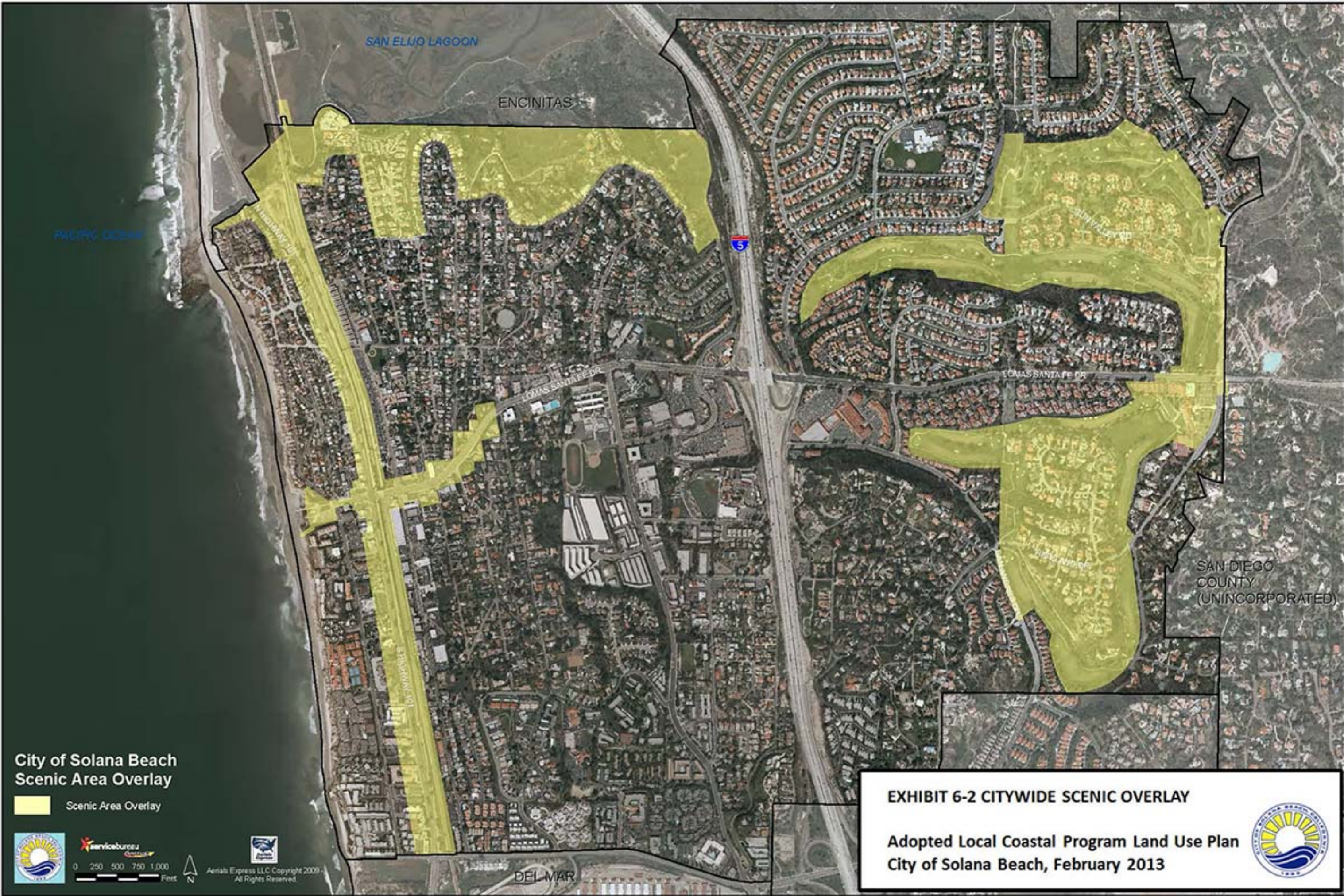












SAN ELIJO LAGOON

ENCINITAS

PACIFIC OCEAN



LOMAS SANTA FE DR

LOMAS SANTA FE DR

SAN DIEGO COUNTY  
(UNINCORPORATED)

DEL MAR

**City of Solana Beach  
Scenic Area Overlay**

 Scenic Area Overlay



0 250 500 750 1,000 Feet



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**EXHIBIT 6-2 CITYWIDE SCENIC OVERLAY**

**Adopted Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan  
City of Solana Beach, February 2013**



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Other major viewpoints of the ocean and lagoons include: (a) the Highway 101 and railway corridor at the northern and southern boundaries of the City; (b) from Via de la Valle at its intersection with Highway 101; (c) Plaza Street; (d) the area along Solana Circle (southerly part of City between I-5 and Highway 101); (e) the vicinity of Avocado Place and Jeffrey Road (southerly part of City, east of I-5); and (f) heading west on Lomas Santa Fe Drive, west of Nardo, (between I-5 and Highway 101).

Another popular destination point in Solana Beach is the Highway 101 Corridor and the Cedros Design District. Visitors come to visit this lively commercial corridor for its unique mixture of specialty retail and entertainment activities located within an eclectic collection of old and new buildings.

In order to regulate development in areas of high scenic value to preserve and enhance the scenic resources present within and adjacent to such areas and to assure the exclusion of incompatible uses and structures, the City has designated some areas in the City as being within a Scenic Area Overlay. These designated areas in the City are shown in Exhibit 6-2.

The City recognizes that the preservation and enhancement of scenic resources within the City of Solana Beach provides important social, recreation, and economic benefits for both residents, and visitors. Scenic Overlay policies apply to areas including Scenic Roadways designated by the Solana Beach General Plan which include the entire length of both Highway 101/Pacific Coast Highway and Plaza Street, sections of Lomas Santa Fe including the western end of Lomas Santa Fe from the intersection of Highway 101 to Nardo Avenue, and the eastern end of Lomas Santa Fe from the intersection of Las Banderas Drive to Via Mil Cumbres, I-5 and Lomas Santa Fe Drive, and areas within 100 feet of significant recreational, historic or scenic resources, including designated City, county or state parks, the California Coastal Trail and the California Coastal Rail Trail.

### **B. Coastal Act Policies**

#### **Section 30251:**

The scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic coastal areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and where feasible, to restore, and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas such as those designated in the California Coastline Preservation and Recreation Plan prepared by the Department of Parks and Recreation and by local government shall be subordinate to the character of its setting.

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### C. Land Use Plan Policies

#### 1. Scenic and Visual Resource Identification

**Policy 6.1:** The City of Solana Beach contains scenic resources of local, regional and national importance. The scenic and visual qualities of these areas shall be protected and where feasible enhanced.

**Policy 6.2:** Protect the scenic and visual qualities of Solana Beach, including the unique character of the Highway 101 Railway Corridor, the Cedros Design District, and the shoreline.

**Policy 6.3:** Public views to the beach, lagoons, and along the shoreline as well as to other scenic resources from major public viewpoints, as identified in Exhibit 6-1 shall be protected. Development that may affect an existing or potential public view shall be designed and sited in a manner so as to preserve or enhance designated view opportunities. Street trees and vegetation shall be chosen and sited so as not to block views upon maturity.

**Policy 6.4:** Locations along public roads, railways, trails, parklands, and beaches that offer views of scenic resources are considered public viewing areas. Existing public roads where there are major views of the ocean and other scenic resources are considered Scenic Roads and include:

- Highway 101/Pacific Coast Highway and Railway Corridor
- I-5
- Lomas Santa Fe Drive

Public views to scenic resources from Scenic Roads shall also be protected.

#### 2. New Development

**Policy 6.5:** Regulate development in areas with high scenic value to preserve and enhance the scenic resources within and adjacent to such areas to the extent feasible, as well as, to assure exclusion of incompatible uses and structures.

**Policy 6.6:** New development on properties visible from public trails in and around San Elijo Lagoon and the San Dieguito River Valley shall be sited and designed to protect public views of the ridgelines and natural features of the area through measures including, but not limited to, providing setbacks from the slope edge, restricting the building maximum size, reducing maximum height limits, incorporating landscape elements and screening, incorporating earthen colors and exterior materials that are compatible with the surrounding natural landscape (avoiding bright whites and other colors except as minor accents). The use of highly reflective materials shall be prohibited.

**Policy 6.7:** Fences, walls, and landscaping shall not block major public views of scenic resources or views of other public viewing areas.

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**Policy 6.8:** Proposed development that unreasonably interferes with or degrades natural or man-made visual features of sites, or adjacent sites, which contribute to the City's scenic attractiveness, as viewed from either a scenic road, or scenic resources, including the San Elijo Lagoon Ecological Reserve and its watershed, shall be prohibited.

**Policy 6.9:** The impacts of proposed development on existing public views of scenic resources shall be assessed by the City prior to approval of proposed development or redevelopment to preserve the existing character of established neighborhoods. Existing public views of the ocean and scenic resources shall be protected.

**Policy 6.10:** New development shall be sited and designed to minimize adverse impacts on scenic resources visible from scenic roads or major public viewing areas. If there is no feasible building site location on the proposed project site where development would not be visible then the development shall be sited and designed to minimize impacts on scenic areas visible from Scenic Roads or major public viewing areas, through measures including, but not limited to, siting development in the least visible portion of the site, breaking up the mass of new structures, designing structures to blend into the natural hillside setting, restricting the building maximum size, reducing maximum height standards, clustering development, minimizing grading, incorporating landscape elements, and where appropriate berming.

**Policy 6.11:** Avoidance of impacts to scenic resources through site selection and design alternatives is the preferred method over landscape screening. Landscape screening, as mitigation of visual impacts shall not substitute for project alternatives including resiting, or reducing the height, or bulk of structures.

**Policy 6.12:** All new development shall be sited and designed to minimize alteration of natural landforms by:

- Conforming to the natural topography.
- Preventing substantial grading or reconfiguration of the project site.
- Eliminating flat building pads on slopes and utilizing split level or stepped-pad designs.
- Requiring that man-made contours mimic the natural contours to and blend with the existing terrain of the site and surrounding area.
- Minimize grading outside of the building footprint.
- Clustering structures to minimize site disturbance and to minimize development area.
- Minimizing height and length of cut and fill slopes.
- Minimizing the height and length of retaining walls.
- Cut and fill operations may be balanced on-site, where the grading does not substantially alter the existing topography and blends with the surrounding area.

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- Export of cut material may be required to preserve the natural topography.

**Policy 6.13:** New development, including a building pad, if provided, shall be sited on the flattest area of the project site, except where there is an alternative location that would be more protective of scenic resources or ESHA.

**Policy 6.14:** All new structures shall be sited and designed to minimize impacts to scenic resources by:

- Ensuring visual compatibility with the character of surrounding areas.
- Avoiding large cantilevers or under stories.
- Setting back higher elements of the structure toward the center or uphill portion of the building.

### 3. Development Review Criteria for Scenic Overlay Area

**Policy 6.15:** The general criterion of development review is that the proposed development shall not, to the maximum extent feasible, interfere with or degrade those visual features, natural or manmade, of the site or adjacent sites which contribute to its scenic attractiveness, as viewed from either the scenic highway or the adjacent scenic, historic, or recreational resource. In applying this general criterion, the following policies 6.16 through 6.23 shall be evaluated when they are applicable as listed below:

**Policy 6.16:** All development shall be compatible with the topography, vegetation, and colors of the natural environment, and with the scenic, historic, and recreation resources of the designated areas.

**Policy 6.17:** The placement of buildings and structures shall not detract from the visual setting or obstruct significant views and shall be compatible with the topography of the site and adjacent areas.

**Policy 6.18:** New buildings and structures should not be placed along inland and coastal bluff-top silhouette lines or on the adjacent slopes within view from a lagoon area, but should be clustered along the bases of the inland bluffs and on the bluff tops set back from the bluff edge. Buildings and structures should be sited to provide unobstructed view corridors from the nearest scenic highway or view corridor road. These criteria may be modified when necessary to mitigate other overriding environmental considerations such as protection of habitat or wildlife corridors.

**Policy 6.19:** The removal of native vegetation shall be minimized and the replacement vegetation and landscaping shall be compatible with the vegetation of the designated area. Landscaping and plantings shall be used to the maximum extent practicable to screen roads and utilities. Landscaping and plantings shall be designed so that they do not obstruct significant views, either when installed, or when they reach mature growth.

**Policy 6.20:** Any development involving more than one building or structure shall provide common access roads and pedestrian walkways. Parking and outside storage areas shall

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be screened from view, to the maximum extent feasible, from either the scenic highway or the adjacent scenic, historic, or recreational resource. Acceptable screening methods shall include, but are not limited to, the use of existing topography, the strategic placement of buildings and structures, or landscaping and plantings, which harmonize with the natural landscape of the designated area.

**Policy 6.21:** Utilities shall be constructed and routed underground except in those situations where natural features prevent undergrounding or where safety considerations necessitate above ground construction and routing. Aboveground utilities shall be constructed and routed to minimize detrimental effects on the visual setting of the designated area. Where it is practical, utilities that are above ground shall be screened from view from either the scenic highway or the adjacent scenic, historic, or recreational resource by existing topography, by the placement of buildings and structures, or by landscaping and plantings which harmonize with the natural landscape of the designated area.

**Policy 6.22:** The alteration of the natural topography of the site shall be minimized and shall avoid adverse effects to the visual setting of the designated area and the existing natural drainage system. Alterations of the natural topography shall be screened from view from either the scenic highway or the adjacent scenic, historic, or recreational resource by landscaping, and plantings which harmonize with the natural landscape of the designated area, except when such alterations add variety to or otherwise enhance the visual setting of the designated area. However, design emphasis shall be placed on preserving the existing quality of scenic resources rather than concealment of disturbances or replacement in kind. In portions of the Scenic Area Overlay, containing sensitive lands grading may be severely restricted or prohibited.

**Policy 6.23:** The interior and exterior lighting of the buildings and structures and the lighting of signs, roads, and parking areas shall be compatible with the lighting permitted in the designated area.

### 4. Land Divisions

**Policy 6.24:** A CDP may only be approved for new development on legally created lots. All applications for new development on a vacant parcel shall provide evidence of the date and method by which the subject parcel was created. If no such evidence can be found, a CDP shall be sought to establish the legality of the parcel.

**Policy 6.25:** Land divisions, including lot line adjustments, shall be designed to minimize impacts to visual resources by:

- Clustering the building sites to minimize site disturbance and maximize open space.
- Prohibiting building sites on ridgelines.
- Minimizing the length of access roads and driveways.



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- Reducing the maximum allowable density in steeply sloping and visually sensitive areas.
- Minimizing grading and alteration of natural landforms.
- Landscaping or revegetating all cut and fill slopes, and other disturbed areas at the completion of grading.
- Incorporating interim seeding of graded building pad areas, if any, with native plants unless construction of approved structures commences within 30 days of the completion of grading.

**Policy 6.26:** Subsequent development on a parcel created through a land division shall conform to all provisions of the approved coastal development permit that authorized the land division or any amendments thereto.

### 5. Signs

**Policy 6.27:** Off-site signs shall be prohibited in areas subject to the Scenic Area Overlay except signs that are a part of the City's way finding signage program and temporary real estate signs. The number, size, location, and design of all other signs shall not detract from the visual setting of the designated area or obstruct significant views.

**Policy 6.28:** Signs shall be designed and located to minimize impacts to visual resources. Signs approved as part of commercial development shall be incorporated into the design of the project and shall be subject to height and width limitations that ensure that signs are visually compatible with surrounding areas and protect scenic views. Permitted monument signs shall not exceed eight feet in height. Free-standing pole or roof signs are prohibited. Advertising signs and banners shall be prohibited in public beaches and beach parks.

**Policy 6.29:** Placement of signs other than traffic or public safety signs, which obstruct views to the ocean or beaches from public viewing areas, and scenic roads shall be prohibited.

### 6. Pacific Coast Highway/Highway 101

**Policy 6.30:** The Pacific Coast/Highway 101 and Railway Corridor shall be protected as a Scenic Road and major public viewshed.

**Policy 6.31:** Landscape improvements, including median plantings, may be permitted along Pacific Coast Highway/Highway 101. Any proposed landscaping shall be comprised primarily of native non-invasive, drought tolerant, salt-tolerant, and fire resistant plant species. Landscaping shall be designed and maintained to complement to the character of the area, and designed not to block ocean, or lagoon views at maturity.

**Policy 6.32:** In addition to complying with all requirements of Chapter 5 policies regarding communication facilities, any telecommunications facilities approved along Pacific Coast Highway shall place support facilities underground, where feasible. New transmission lines shall be sited and designed to be located underground, except where

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it would present or contribute to geologic hazards. Existing transmission lines should be relocated underground where feasible when they are replaced or when funding for undergrounding is available.