

IV  
VISUAL RESOURCES  
AND  
SCENIC HIGHWAY ELEMENT



#### IV. VISUAL RESOURCES AND SCENIC HIGHWAY ELEMENT

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#### IV - VISUAL RESOURCES AND SCENIC HIGHWAY ELEMENT

##### A. AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE

The City of Morro Bay is located in a physical setting with spectacular visual qualities. The visual resources of the community serve as valuable assets to both City residents and visitors, and the protection and enhancement of the resources is one of the foremost policies of the Coastal Act of 1976. (LCP 214)

Scenic views of unique and varied coastal scenes are important to people both in terms of aesthetics and functional qualities. Viewing an attractive scene can be, for many, a rewarding experience. For other people, scenic views give identity, character and value to their community. Visually attractive areas are good locations for recreational activities and facilities, and moreover, are good sites for ports, commercial activities and residential developments, all of economic importance. (LCP Modified 214)

The Visual Resources and Scenic Highway Element Section of the General Plan and Local Coastal Plan establish criteria for the protection, preservation and enhancement of the scenic resources. It also identifies the scenic qualities along major roadways in Morro Bay. (New)

One of the principal purposes of this element is to provide a means for Morro Bay to recognize and protect eligible portions of the State Scenic Highway System within its jurisdiction. An adopted Scenic Highways Element is a prerequisite for official designation of a scenic highway by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). A Scenic Highways Element also provides an opportunity for the community to recognize local routes which have unusual scenic quality and to plan for their protection and enhancement. The Scenic Highways Element addresses all of these issues. (SH Modified 6)

The State Scenic Highway System includes the short segment of California Highway One which lies in Morro Bay among the routes eligible for designation as an official scenic highway. This Element examines Highway One's qualifications for official scenic status. A number of local roads were also evaluated for their scenic amenities. From the analysis of Highway One and local scenic roads, policies were developed to help protect and enhance the scenic values of those routes. (SH pg. 26 Co. SH Map 11)

This chapter also addresses the visual quality concerns of the following areas in the community:

- (1) Morro Rock
- (2) Morro Bay State Park
- (3) Morro Rock City Beach/Atascadero State Beach
- (4) Morro Creek and the adjacent flatlands
- (5) State Highway One
- (6) Embarcadero area
- (7) Central Morro Bay
- (8) PG & E Power Plant
- (9) Coleman Park
- (10) Residential Neighborhoods
- (11) Undeveloped Land within the City

Additionally, visual concerns relating to the following issues are addressed:

- (1) Signs and sign regulations
- (2) Landscaping
- (3) Utility Lines
- (4) Property Maintenance (LCP Modified)

#### Assessment Of Scenic Values

In order to implement the policies of the Coastal Act regarding visual resources, the City identified areas providing significant public views such as Morro Bay, Morro Rock, and the Pacific Ocean.

A scenic view shall be defined as something that is looked at which has significant man-made or natural qualities and which contributes to the identity of a community or area. (LCP Modified 215)

These scenic views can then be further evaluated based upon the following criteria:

- (a) the abundance and variety of forms and textures;
- (b) the richness and range of color;
- (c) the distance and extent of views;
- (d) uniqueness of scenic qualities;
- (e) the availability of street furniture and public facilities;
- (f) the ease of access on foot or by motor vehicle;
- (g) the extent of public information.

Because man-made visual quality and natural visual quality are aesthetically pleasing and desirable in different ways, urban views are evaluated under different criteria than natural views. (LCP 215-16)

Scenic lands are generally more easily described than defined. Nonetheless, the following definitions are useful for the discussion which follows.

Scenic Views: Something looked at which has significantly appealing visual qualities, whether man-made or natural and which contributes to the identity of a community or area. (SH1 Modified)

Scenic Corridors: The visible land area adjacent to the highway (or roadway) right-of-way and generally described as "the view from the road". (SH8)

Scenic Backdrop: The element of a view which provides background, e.g. hillside, bluffs, or ridges. (SH1)

Scenic Vistas: Sweeping views of large visually attractive areas. (SH1)

Official State Scenic Highway and Official County Scenic Highway: Scenic highways officially designated by the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) after application from local jurisdictions and only if listed with eligible highways in the California Streets and Highways Code. (SH8 Modified)

The criteria used for assessing views of the urban environment include such things as:

- (a) the enhancement of the City's character through the use of building materials and scale of the structures;
- (b) the compatibility with surrounding structures;
- (c) the compatibility with the natural features of the area (i.e. topography);
- (d) the preservation of public views;
- (e) the enhancement and definition of the City's image;
- (f) the uniqueness of the City's image. (LCP 216)

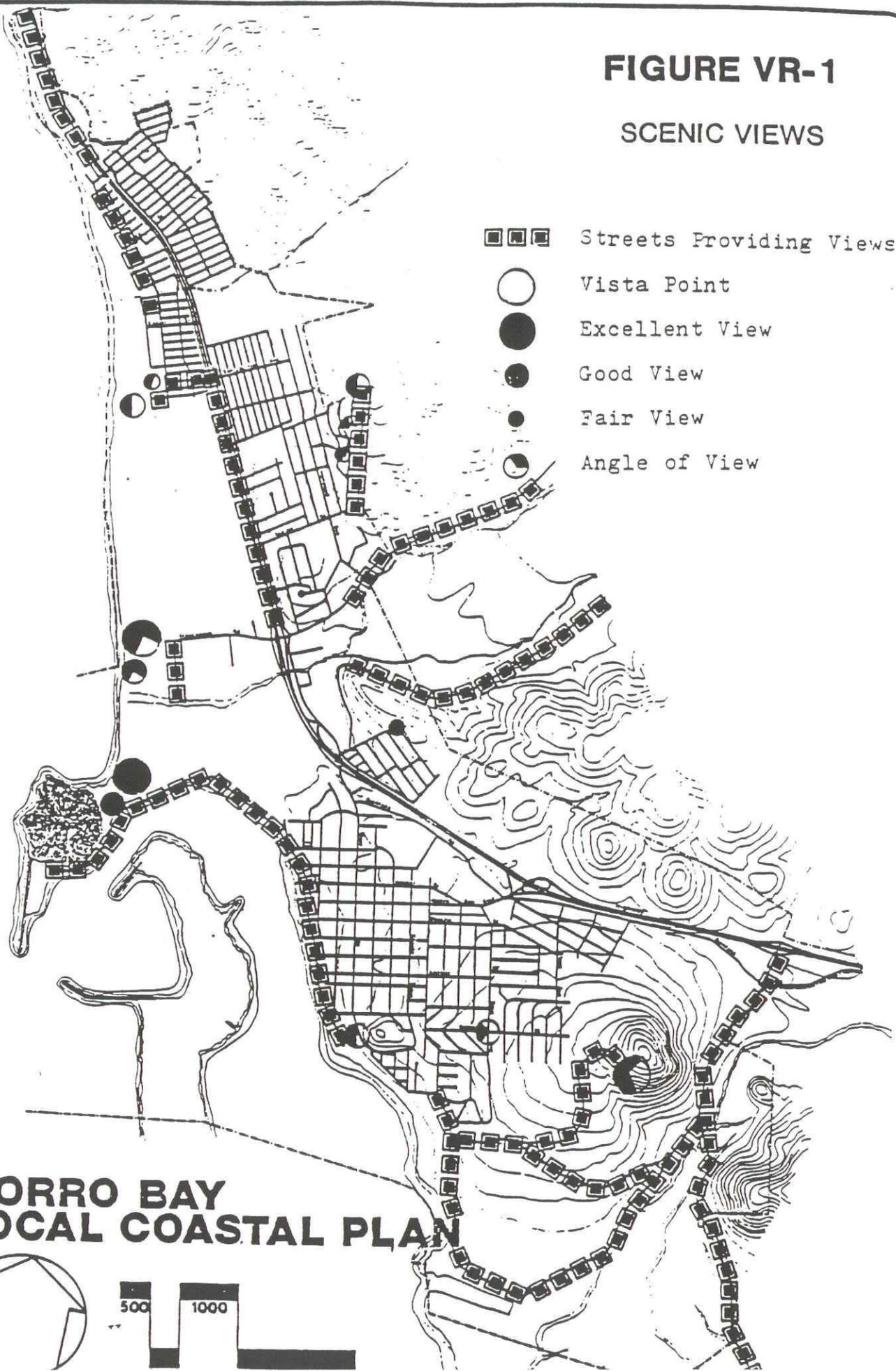
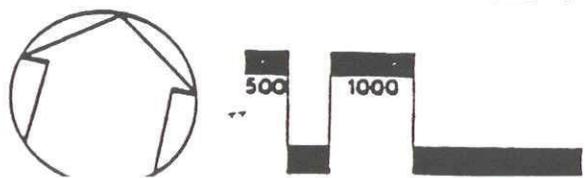
Based upon these criteria, natural open space areas, residential neighborhoods, and commercial zones with significant scenic resources or community character were identified and evaluated. Figures VR-1 and VR-2 show the location of scenic views and identify these areas of visual significance. (These areas are further defined in Volume 2, the Local Coastal Plan.) (LCP Modified)

# FIGURE VR-1

## SCENIC VIEWS

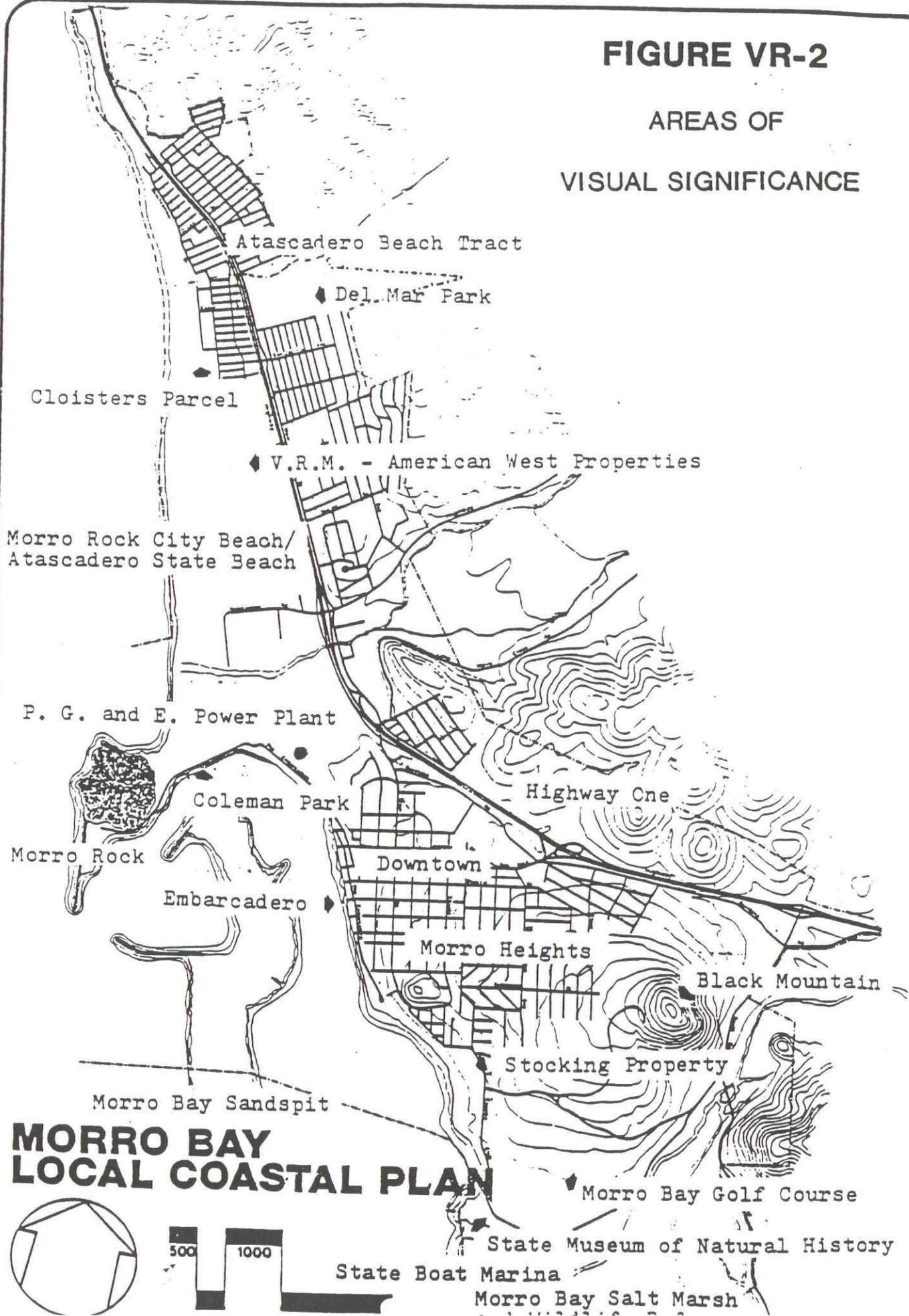
- ▣▣▣ Streets Providing Views
- Vista Point
- Excellent View
- Good View
- Fair View
- ◐ Angle of View

### MORRO BAY LOCAL COASTAL PLAN



# FIGURE VR-2

## AREAS OF VISUAL SIGNIFICANCE



### MORRO BAY LOCAL COASTAL PLAN

## B. EXISTING CONDITIONS AND ISSUES

### 1. EXISTING CONDITIONS

a. Unique Features: The landmark of the community, Morro Rock, is probably the most significant visual feature of the area and can be seen from almost any location in Morro Bay. (LCP 218)

The massive PG&E Power Plant is the dominant man-made form in Morro Bay. While its prominent waterfront location at the heart of the community, and other aspects of the installation have significantly detracted from the visual quality of Morro Bay, the facility's three 450 feet high exhaust stacks, visible from miles away, are considered by some to be a familiar, albeit misplaced, local landmark and part of the community's visual character. (LCP 218)

Forming the outer shore of the Bay is the sand spit, a pristine, windblown peninsula visible from the Embarcadero, Coleman Drive, the State Park roads and from bluff and hillside residential areas. (LCP 221)

b. Waterfront: More than half of Morro Bay's physical edge is coastline, and it is this land-sea interface which creates the City's water-oriented character, both natural and urban, both visual and functional. The Pacific Ocean, the "working" harbor and the great saltmarsh at the southern end of the City dominate the landscape, and provide the sweeping vistas of ocean, beach, dune, bluff, and marsh, as well as the quaint harbor-side scenes for which Morro Bay is noted. (SH)

c. Urban, Commercial and Residential: Commercial development in Morro Bay is concentrated in three areas: the Embarcadero, with its mixture of visitor serving and harbor uses; in the central business district, composed of small businesses with Morro Bay Boulevard as the main artery; and a strip of mostly commercial uses to serve both visitors and residents along Main Street and Quintana Road, parallel with Highway 1.

While some enjoy the jumble of activities at the waterfront and appreciate the resulting visual variety, others lament an "unkempt" appearance which detracts from the area's natural beauty. The downtown area and other commercial corridors are notable for their lack of architectural coordination and sparsity of landscaping.

The character of residential neighborhoods in Morro Bay is largely a reflection of their natural setting. The well-established and well-tended charm of Morro Heights and older bluff-top residences is visible from the Embarcadero and Coleman Drive areas. The low-lying Atascadero Beach Tract can be said to harmonize with and capitalize on its prime ocean-front location.

The residences perched on the City's eastern hillsides are considered attractive by some, and certainly well located for the sweeping views they themselves afford. However, pervasive utility lines and poor property maintenance in some areas detract from the character of some of the City's residential neighborhoods. (SH)

d. Rural: The hills and ridgelines climbing up from the coastal bench and the agricultural flatlands of the Morro and Chorro Valleys provide a scenic backdrop for the community. Their color, texture and shape contrast sharply with the urban areas and coastline, giving a visual definition to the urban form of the City, and reinforcing Morro Bay's image and character as a small-scale town within a rural setting.

The community's country-like character is further established and enhanced by the combination of natural and man-made features in Morro Bay State Park, such as Black Hill, the golf course and campground, which comprise a large portion of the southern part of the City. (SH)

e. Scenic Highways: The State Scenic Highways System (or Master Plan) consists of a list of those segments of State highways which are eligible, should they meet certain standards, for official Scenic Highway designation.

Before one of these eligible routes can be officially designated as a State Scenic Highway, however, the local government whose jurisdiction abuts the highway must act to recognize and protect the scenic quality of the highway's scenic corridor. The city or county must pursue the following steps before the highway is officially designated as scenic:

1. The local legislative body having jurisdiction over lands adjacent to a segment of an eligible scenic highway must adopt a Scenic Highways Element in its General Plan and request the Director of Transportation to make a corridor survey and highway facility study.

2. The local jurisdiction must prepare, adopt and submit to CalTrans for review, a program to protect and enhance the scenic appearance of the corridor. The program shall address, but not be limited to: (1) regulation of land use and intensity (density) of development; (2) detailed land and site planning; (3) control of outdoor advertising; (4) careful attention to and control of earth moving and landscaping; and (5) the design and appearance of structures and equipment.

3. When CalTrans determines that the corridor protection program for a segment of any state highway in the Scenic Highway System has been implemented by the local

jurisdiction and a plan and program has been developed by CalTrans for bringing the highway up to the standards for official Scenic Highways, the familiar "California Poppy" signs are placed along the highway to indicate its official status.

Two state highways lying partially in Morro Bay are eligible for official scenic highway status: Highway One and Highway 41. All but a very small section of Highway 41, however, is outside the City in unincorporated county land. Thus, it is not discussed in this Element, and remains the concern of San Luis Obispo County. Highway One, on the other hand, travels the entire length of the City and issues related to designating the City's portion of the highway as scenic are analyzed in this Element.

County roads may also be designated as Scenic Highways by the same procedure described above. There are presently no roads in Morro Bay, however, which are eligible or designated County Scenic Highways.

While the Scenic Highways Element is principally a city's planning tool for evaluating eligible State scenic highway segments within its boundaries and for meeting the requirements for official State designation, it can also be a mechanism for cities to identify and protect local routes with scenic significance. This Element analyzes some local roads popular with residents and visitors for their scenic significance, and recommends policies for protection and enhancement of their scenic qualities. (SH) Figure VR-3 indicates the locally significant scenic roads as well as State Highway 1.

In addition to Highway One, three routes within Morro Bay have been found to possess especially significant scenic features as well as meet the other criteria for appropriateness as a designated scenic road and have therefore been included in this Element as deserving recognition and protective measures. These routes are the Embarcadero, Coleman Drive, and the Morro Bay State Park road system. The original text of the Scenic Highway Element contained in Volume II provides a description of the scenic qualities, including specific vistas and viewpoints and viewpoints and related facilities. (SH Modified)

# LEGEND



Local Scenic Roads



State Highway 1



Scenic Views

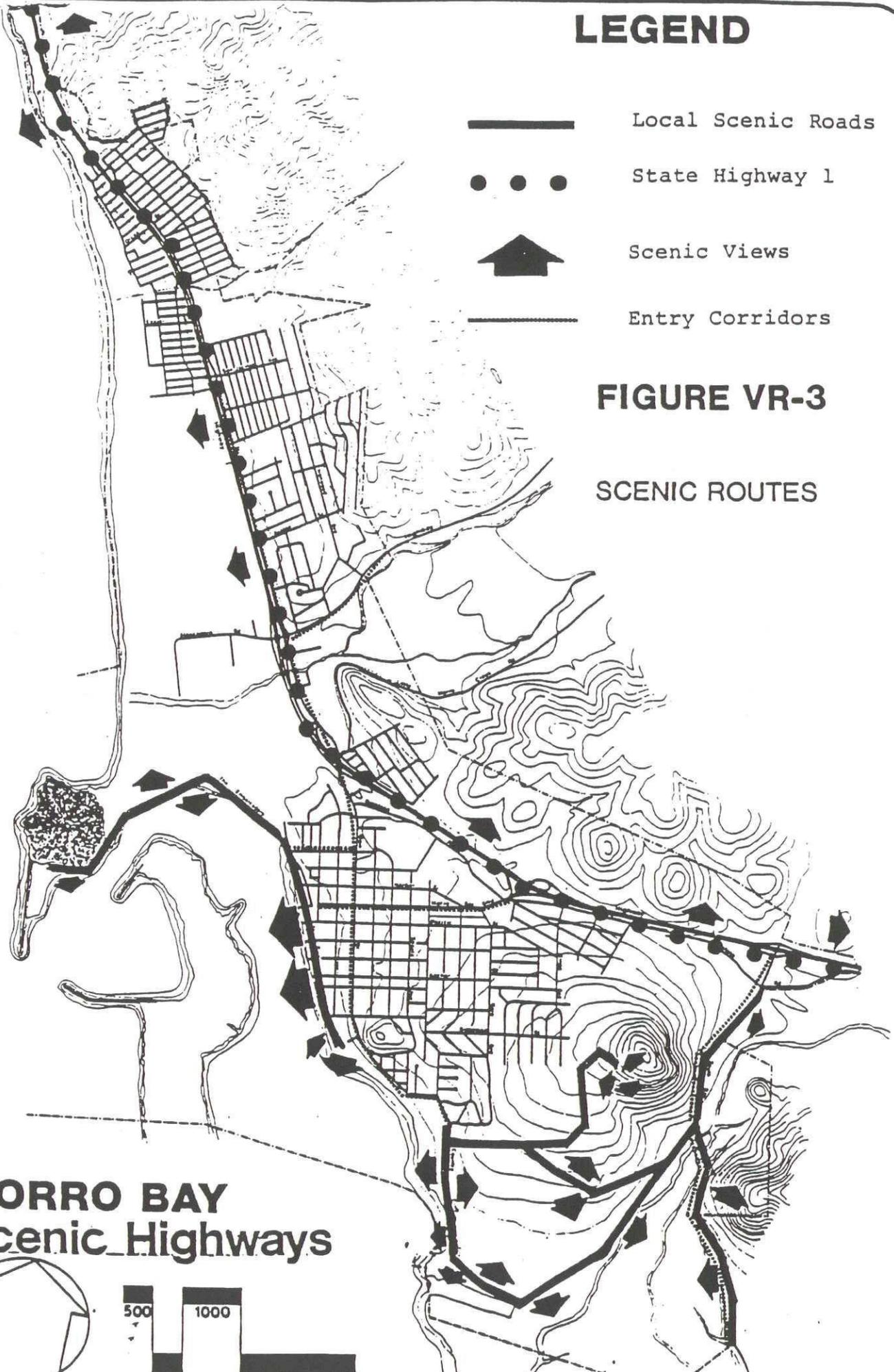
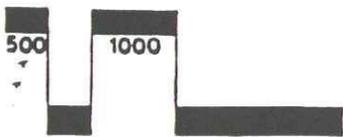


Entry Corridors

## FIGURE VR-3

### SCENIC ROUTES

# MORRO BAY Scenic Highways



## 2. ISSUES

While Morro Bay has been blessed with a physical setting of unique and spectacular visual quality, the community can improve, take better advantage of, and prevent abuses to its visual character.

It is desirable to enhance Morro Bay's views. It is equally desirable that the City consciously seek to take better advantage of its visual qualities while attempting to restore and repair the damage that has been done to those qualities. (LCP 221)

### a. General Visual Resource Issues

Property Maintenance: One issue that has detracted from the visual character of Morro Bay is poor property maintenance. An inordinate number of abandoned buildings and cars, buildings with peeling paint, accumulated debris and junk, substandard housing, unscreened trash containers, and conflicting nonconforming uses have served to tarnish Morro Bay's natural beauty. It has become such a problem that the City has developed a property maintenance code to designate poor property maintenance as a nuisance and violation of the code subject to formal citation and abatement. The problems of poor property maintenance are particularly acute in the neighborhoods of northern Morro Bay and in the Downtown, Quintana, North Main, and Embarcadero Commercial Areas. The problem areas could be corrected in order that Morro Bay can restore and enhance its visual character. (LCP Modified 221)

Signs and Sign Regulations: Signs in Morro Bay have come to be a problem, detracting from the visual quality of the community and in some cases interfering with important views. Among some of the problems associated with signs are:

- (1) Failure to remove old, non-functional or nonconforming signs.
- (2) The allowable height and size of signs are excessive under the existing ordinance.
- (3) The lack of a realistic and enforceable timetable for the amortization of nonconforming signs.
- (4) The proliferation of lighted signs that have excessive glare or are offensive to nighttime vision in the Community.
- (5) The lack of appropriate design standards that would better guide the size, type, color, location, lighting, and materials of construction of signs.

- (6) Failure to consider views when reviewing applications to erect and light signs. (LCP)

Overhead Utility Lines: Throughout Morro Bay's residential neighborhoods and most of its commercial areas, there seems to be a maze of overhead utility lines darting in every direction. While this problem is not unique to Morro Bay, it seems particularly acute in this community, particularly in the northern sections of the City. This web of lines serves to both:

- (1) create a jumbled, blighted appearance for those areas in which it is most predominant;
- (2) interfere with, obstruct, and in some cases render unsightly views that would otherwise be spectacular.

Existing utility lines will continue to plague what is visually pleasant about Morro Bay and detract from property values unless a concerted effort is taken to eliminate this eyesore. (LCP 222)

Landscaping: With the notable exceptions of the Morro Heights area, isolated tree groves in selected areas of the community, and those few locations where a street tree program has been implemented, Morro Bay requires additional landscaping.

Among some of the problems associated with landscaping and the need to provide more landscaping to enhance and/or restore Morro Bay's visual qualities are the following:

- (1) The lack of landscaping along Highway One exposes numerous views that detract from Morro Bay's visual qualities.
- (2) There are no regulations to prevent the removal of existing trees and vegetation that have helped establish a rural character for some of Morro Bay's neighborhoods.
- (3) The City's street tree program has not been progressing and some of the specimens called for by the Master Tree List are inappropriate.
- (4) The lack of water will continue to inhibit any attempts to make significant landscaping improvements in Morro Bay.
- (5) While there are zoning districts that call for special landscaping and architectural treatment in new developments, there are areas critical to the community's visual quality - - i.e. the downtown -- that are not included in these districts.

(6) The lack of clear regulations and standards for landscaping of buildings and parking lots is inhibiting opportunities to take better advantage of Morro Bay's visual qualities.

(7) Landgrading operations have created unattractive scars and cut faces in hillside areas, and there are no regulations governing the protection of cut slopes with attractive, erosion preventive plant materials. (This can be solved with enforcement of grading ordinance; see Chapter X, Hazards).

Hillside Development and Grading Practices: Some hillside areas within the community have not been developed with regard for the natural topography. Existing subdivisions reflect design criteria more suitable for flat land areas. Some past grading practices also did not take into account the natural topography of the terrain, leading to erosion and scarring of the hillsides.

Some of the problems associated with these subdivisions have been:

(1) Existing development has not followed the natural contours of the hillsides, detracting from the visual qualities this scenic backdrop can provide;

(2) Streets in these portions of the community traverse directly up the hillside, often at ninety degrees to the natural contour.

(3) Ridgelines that help define the eastern edge of the community are not protected from development that would lessen the visual quality of the hillside areas.

(4) Grading practices are not required to reflect as much as possible the natural contours resulting in substantial and unnecessary alteration of the landscape.

For further discussion of hillside concerns see Chapter X, Hazards. (LCP 224)

Protection of Neighborhood Character: One of the priorities of the Coastal Act is the protection of the character of the community and its neighborhoods. Morro Bay recognizes the need to preserve the unique character of its varied neighborhoods and to create a higher quality visual environment within them. Among some of the issues that predicate the establishment of policy to preserve neighborhood character are the following:

(1) New residences and new residential additions are often out of scale and character with other residences in the vicinity.

(2) The current allowable height and bulk for residential development is not appropriate for some portions of the community. Such buildings would in many cases block important views and conflict with the character of individual neighborhoods.

(3) Standards or guidelines are needed to create buffers between conflicting land uses;

(4) There is a need for a balancing formula governing the allowable height and bulk of residential and commercial buildings.

b. Area Specific Visual Resource Issues

There are three neighborhoods which require consideration for neighborhood character protection. These are the Embarcadero, the Downtown and Atascadero Beach Tract (Planning Area I). It should be noted that protection of community character does not mean protection of or continuation of dilapidated buildings, no community improvements or no progress. It means that the enjoyable qualities of the area should be preserved as much as possible. (LCP 224)

Embarcadero: Development of waterfront areas along the Embarcadero, as well as along the bluff above the waterfront is an integral part of the views of the bay and Morro Rock and the views from this area should be enhanced.

The Embarcadero is a random mix of tourist and harbor-related uses that creates certain circulation problems, both vehicular and pedestrian. This random mix does, however, give the area a charm and honesty not found in pre-planned areas. This honesty and individualistic appearance should be encouraged, mindful of a desire for harmony (rather than homogeneity) and its waterfront/bay orientation. Visual problems present on the Embarcadero include:

(1) A lack of landscaping to soften and screen the less pleasing visual impacts of the existing development;

(2) An additional need for public improvements, specifically the paving of parking lots, upgrading restroom facilities and park improvements;

(3) A need to establish standards for signs;

(4) A need to screen rubbish and storage areas;

(5) A need for underground utility lines on the Embarcadero and along the Bluff;

(6) A need for an effective clean-up and maintenance program.

Circulation problems on the Embarcadero include:

(1) A need to widen sidewalks;

(2) A need to locate long-term parking for sports fishing activities where such use will not create parking congestion. (LCP 225)

Downtown: The downtown business center presents an uninteresting visual appearance to the public. A poor mixture of architectural styles have served to visually fragment this district and sever its connection with the Embarcadero. Other visual concerns facing the downtown are:

(1) A lack of continuity in colors and building materials which lessens visual quality and denies the area character; it also does not emphasize unification and common business goals of the downtown area;

(2) Landscaping is lacking, especially when needed to screen parking areas that lessen scenic qualities;

(3) Overhead utility lines are an eyesore and should be undergrounded;

(4) A lack of design continuity in signs also lessens visual qualities and character. (LCP 225)

Atascadero Beach Tract: This ocean-front neighborhood is visually well defined, consisting mostly of single story residences. Problems facing the protection of this neighborhood's visual qualities are:

(1) Existing zoning would allow new residences with height not in keeping with neighborhood characteristics;

(2) Existing Eucalyptus groves add a visual quality to the neighborhood but can be a problem species;

(3) Development on adjacent vacant property may impact the visual characteristics of the Atascadero Beach Tract. (LCP 226)

Highway 1: The portion of State Highway One in San Luis Obispo County, north of Highway 101 in San Luis Obispo, has been

recognized as possessing outstanding scenic quality by the State legislature and accordingly, has been declared eligible for official "scenic highway" status. Of the approximately 53 miles of "scenic" Highway One winding through San Luis Obispo County, less than six miles, or about ten percent, lies in Morro Bay. Most of the potential scenic highway is in unincorporated county territory. Consequently, establishment of the highway as "scenic" is properly a greater-than-local project which must be pursued with the cooperation of the County on an area-wide or regional basis. (SH Modified)

Before the highway can be officially designated as "scenic", the local government with land-use jurisdiction for the highway corridor must establish development controls and standards sufficient to ensure that significant scenic resources visible from the road have been protected. In large measure, this has already been done within Morro Bay through the preparation and adoption of the Local Coastal Program. (SH Modified)

Thus, in terms of acquiring official scenic highway status for Highway One, the initial step should be to approach the County to put together a county-wide or regional application to the state. Each jurisdiction should develop appropriate land use controls and standards for its portion of the highway. Once this was accomplished, the jurisdictions could apply together to have the entire eligible length, or a substantial portion of Highway One within the county, designated as "scenic". Therefore, if Morro Bay wishes to pursue scenic highway status for Highway One, it should contact the County to initiate discussion of a joint application. (SH)

In addition to the general issues described for enhancement and protection of visual resources along Highway 1, a specific landscape program is necessary. Implementation of such a program would be desirable for Highway One in Morro Bay, where the present design of the highway right-of-way itself clearly lacks consideration of visual, aesthetic values. (SH Modified)

From near the Main Street exit in the northern City limits, neither the median nor the shoulder areas of this highway are landscaped in any manner. The median should be planted with low-scale shrubs and ground cover. Landscaping should generally not exceed eye-level, to retain views of the sea from northbound lanes. One concept is to place soil in a low-lying median barrier which is planted with low-growing, draping, flowering vegetation, such as bougainvillea. This treatment would dramatically improve the appearance of Highway One in Morro Bay. Trees or taller shrubs should be permitted in the median only if clustered to allow significant view opportunities to the west and where safety could be maintained. (SH Modified)

The portion of the right-of-way outward from the emergency land/shoulder should also be treated, especially in the areas

from Atascadero Road to Yerba Buena Street and south of the Morro Bay Boulevard. On the west side, care should be taken where appropriate so that views to the sea are not blocked. This is generally not a problem because the area between Atascadero Road and San Jacinto Street, which currently provides the best views to the sea, is at a significantly lower level than the highway, and roadside landscaping treatment should not affect those views. (SH Modified)

On the east side, low roadside landscaping would help make the chainlink fence separating the highway from Main Street more aesthetically acceptable. No views of especially important scenic quality would be blocked by this treatment. The pastoral foothills are steep and project above the road, and would, therefore, remain visible. Further study of the best treatment seems to be in order before recommending a preferred solution. It is clear that landscaping improvements to this part of Highway One are needed, and the City should petition CalTrans to instigate such improvements. (SH Modified)

City "Entryways": In addition to the scenic routes, the City's "entryways" are also important with regard to preserving and enhancing visual amenities. If the axiom that first impressions are most important is applied to Morro Bay, then entry corridors should receive considerable attention particularly when one considers that tourism is one of the principal economic bases for the City. The entryways to the City are indicated on Figure VR-3. (SH Modified)

Morro Bay's southernmost entrance is from South Bay Boulevard, leading through Morro Bay State Park; this entryway, along with all the State Park roads, has been recognized as a local scenic route. (SH)

The major entryways from the freeway to the Embarcadero, the Harbor and Morro Rock are from Morro Bay Boulevard, through downtown, and along North Main Street to the waterfront via Beach Street. In both cases, significant improvements to the visual quality of the road corridors should be made. (SH)

The other principal entryway to the City is at the intersection of Routes One and 41. Again, the visual quality of this area is seriously impaired by the lack of landscaping, excessive signs, vacant and unkept properties and overhead utilities. (SH)

The City should exercise strict design control over new development along these corridors to improve architectural coordination and quality. Special sign controls and landscaping requirements should be applied in these areas. Further, establishment of future utility undergrounding districts by the City should focus on these entryways. (SH)

In addition, better informational signs should be placed along these routes to direct travelers to the numerous visitor services and attractions. These signs should also be designed to improve the aesthetic quality of the routes, and to help establish a sense-of-place, so that people will better recognize and appreciate Morro Bay as a desirable place to visit. (SH)

C. OBJECTIVES, POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

OBJECTIVE: To enhance, protect and preserve the existing and potential visual resources of Morro Bay and its surroundings.

POLICY VR-1: The City will establish a system of scenic roadways and a set of mechanisms to protect their scenic values. (New)

Program VR-1.1: The City shall request the County of San Luis Obispo to join with Morro Bay in making application to CalTrans to pursue official scenic highway designation for Highway One. (SH26)

Program VR-1.2: Morro Bay will request that the County and State consider designating State Highway 41 east of the City, State Highway One, South Bay Boulevard, and Main Street in the Morro Bay State Park area as scenic highways when completing the County and City Scenic Highway Elements. (LCP 231)

Program VR-1.3: The City shall recognize and so designate the local roadways identified in Section A of this Element, and shown on Figure VR-3, as "local scenic routes", and take the necessary measures, as provided in this Element, to protect and enhance their scenic qualities. (SH 26)

Program VR-1.4: Morro Bay shall request the Division of Highways to develop a plan and program for landscaping the entire length of State Highway One as it traverses through the community that would:

- a. Frame and protect important views;
- b. Screen unattractive views;
- c. Accentuate entrances to the City. (LCP)

POLICY VR-2: 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 and 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 on Figure VR-1, shall be subordinate to the character of its setting. (LCP 226)

Program VR-2.1: Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along the coast and designated scenic areas and shall be visually compatible with the surrounding areas. Specific design criteria shall be established for the following areas:

- a. The Embarcadero (as defined in Policy \_\_\_\_\_ )
- b. Downtown commercial area

The criteria shall include the following specific requirements and shall be applied to proposed projects on a case-by-case basis during architectural review:

- a. Building height/bulk relationship compatible with existing surrounding uses;
- b. Landscaping to restore and enhance visually degraded areas using native and drought resistant plant and tree species;
- c. Preservation and enhancement of views of the ocean, bay, sand spit and Morro Rock;
- d. Any other requirements applicable from Coastal Commission conceptual approval of the Urban Waterfront Restoration Plan. (LCP 226-27)

Program VR-2.2: New development in areas designated on Figure VR-2 as having visual significance shall include as appropriate the following:

- a. Height/bulk relationships compatible with the character of surrounding areas or compatible with neighborhoods or special communities which, because of their unique characteristics, are popular visitor destination points for recreation uses.
- b. Designation of land for parks and open space in new developments which because of their location are popular visitor destination points for recreation uses.
- c. View easements or corridors designed to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic and coastal areas. (LCP 230)

POLICY VR-3: The City shall implement the Coastal Land Use Plan/Coastal Element map and policies, through the adoption of

appropriate ordinances, to protect and enhance the visual resources associated with the corridors of the City's scenic highways and local designated routes. (SH 27)

Program VR-3.1: The City shall enforce current sign regulations which require amortization of non-conforming signs and investigate institution of a new amortization schedule to accompany new sign regulations adopted as part of the Local Coastal Program implementation phase. The length of the amortization period should be such that economic hardships are not placed on present sign owners. (SH 27)

Program VR-3.2: The City shall, as part of the implementation phase of the LCP, adopt new provisions to:

- a. Require monument and surface mounted signs and discourage roof mounted and pole signs;
- b. Require that view protection and the nighttime characteristics of the sign be mandatory considerations of any sign installations;
- c. Prohibit billboards;
- d. Reduce allowable height and size where they interfere with views to and along State Highway One.
- e. Develop and adopt sign criteria for signs appropriate for Morro Bay's commercial districts. (LCP 230)

Program VR-3.3: The City shall develop special design criteria for the development of the Coleman Drive planning area to include the following:

(1) Development of the landward portion of the area shall be limited to only low profile structures necessary to support development of commercial fishing facilities. Structures shall be sited to protect existing views available to Morro Rock and to and along the ocean and structures shall be subordinate to the character of the setting.

(2) New development shall not encroach within the setback areas of the sensitive habitat located on Morro Rock. (LCP 227)

Program VR-3.4: Industrial development shall be sited and designed in areas specifically designated in the Land Use Plan to protect views to and along the ocean and scenic

coastal areas, to minimize land alteration, to be visually compatible with the character of the surrounding areas, and where feasible, shall include measures to restore and enhance visually degraded areas. In addition, industrial development shall be subordinate to the character of its setting. (LCP 231)

Program VR-3.5: Development between State Highway One and the ocean in Planning Areas 1, 2 and 5 shall provide view corridors as defined in Policy 12.02B and by Figure 32 so as not to significantly degrade views to and along the coast from Highway One. New development shall be subordinate to the character of its setting and shall be visually compatible with the surrounding areas. (LCP 229)

Program VR-3.6: The City shall require a detailed development plan for Mixed Use Area G consistent with Policy 12.02.B. Any development shall be subordinate to the unique and sensitive visual character of the area. Design methodology shall include areas of clustered development, varying building heights, roof lines and setbacks, visible common open space areas and landscaping controls which ensure that full grown tree species are selected for heights which do not obscure views. The development plan shall preserve to the maximum extent feasible traditional public visual access from Highway One of the dunes, Morro Rock, and the open ocean and coastal headlands to the north. The plan shall at a minimum include the following visual resource design standards:

1. The public view corridor from Highway One is established as defined in Figure 32. As a condition of future development approval a long term scenic conservation easement agreement shall be entered between the property owners and the City covering the area within the designated public view corridor. Within the view corridor the following development limitations shall apply and these shall be reflected in the scenic conservation easement:
  - a. no structure shall exceed four (4) feet in height above grade pursuant to Morro Bay Municipal Code Section 17. 12.310 (B) and as hereafter amended except for small public restrooms,
  - b. landscape screening shall not exceed eight (8) feet in height, or block more than 10% of the viewshed from Highway One,
  - c. only open space, lateral access, parking areas, golf, passive recreational uses and mariculture activities shall be allowed in the public view corridor. (LCP 227)

- d. Any development shall be subordinate to the unique and sensitive visual character of the area and shall contain visual corridors and standards as defined in Policy 12.02B in the LUP. In addition, development on the parcel outside of defined visual corridors shall be limited to a height of 25 feet, as measured from the lowest possible first finished floor elevation. Design methodology shall include areas of clustered development, varying building heights, roof lines and setbacks, visible common open space areas and landscaping controls which ensure that tree species are selected for maximum heights which do not obscure views. The development plan shall preserve to the maximum extent feasible visual access benefits seen from Highway One through the dunes to Morro rock and vicinity through careful design and siting of structures and site improvements. (LCP Program 1.13b)

Program VR-3.7: Consistent with Policy\_\_\_\_, a specific development plan shall be required if and when supplemental uses are found to be consistent with the agricultural policies contained in the LUP and the Coastal Act. Visual resources for the specific plan shall include:

(1) Development shall be sited in clusters on the most level portions of the site adjacent to Highway One. Development shall be compactly clustered onto the portions of the site that have stable slopes of 5 to 15% and shall not cover more than 2% of the gross acreage of the property both within and outside the City.

(2) Prior to the siting of new structures, a detailed geotechnical report shall be prepared in accordance with Policy \_\_\_\_\_. The report shall define which portions of the site are less suitable for new development due to geologic constraints.

(3) Portions of the site outside of the approved development area shall be retained in open space or agricultural use to preserve the visual and rural character of the area.

(4) Structure heights shall not exceed 18 feet above average finished grade of each site pad except that structures designed and approved for visitor-serving lodging may be two stories, not to exceed 25 feet in height, above existing grade.

(5) The visual impact of any development on views from Highway One shall be minimized to the maximum extent feasible through the utilization of native plant species indigenous to the area. (LCP 229)

POLICY\_VR-4: Morro Bay will modify its ordinances so as to:

a. Develop clearer requirements, standards, and criteria for installation of landscaping and retention of existing specimen trees as part of new developments, parking lots, etc.;

b. Prohibit land grading that will create large cut faces, and where minor alteration is necessary, require plantings and appropriate maintenance to conceal and prevent erosion of cut faces. (LCP 231)

Program\_VR-4.1: The City shall review its zoning districts and revise them as necessary to require appropriate landscaping and the screening of dumpsters, parking lots and other visually obstructive elements as a condition for new development, or redevelopment, especially in all commercial districts. (SH)

Program\_VR-4.2: The City shall investigate the feasibility of special landscaping requirements for new development or redevelopment along scenic routes and entryways. (SH 28)

Program\_VR-4.3: The City shall review its existing street tree program to ensure it is adequate. Particular attention shall be given to the following concerns:

- the types of species permitted, especially with regard to their water needs and maintenance costs.

- analysis of the costs for installation and maintenance of street trees and an investigation of funding sources to help offset these costs, such as special appropriations from the general fund, assessment districts or urban forestry grants. Priority for installation of new trees shall be given to the Embarcadero and the entryways designated on Figure 1.

- an analysis of street tree management plans which could involve non-profit groups. (SH 29)

Program\_VR-4.4: The City shall develop guidelines regarding the form, height and placement of trees which protect and frame views, and which create canopies where appropriate. (SH 29)

Program VR-4.5: The City shall initiate methods for screening and landscaping existing parking lots and trash-receptacles along the Embarcadero; such methods may involve both public and private sector participation. (SH 29)

Program VR-4.6: The City shall request CalTrans to install landscaping along Highway One; such landscaping shall not block significant views of the sea, sand dunes or Morro Rock. (SH 29)

Program VR-4.7: The City shall adopt, as appropriate, special design and landscaping requirements for new development or redevelopment along the entryways depicted in Figure . (SH 30)

POLICY VR-5: The City will encourage the continual maintenance of properties. (LCP Modified 230)

Program VR-5.1: The City shall enforce its Property Maintenance Code; problems with property maintenance in the Embarcadero and along the entryways designated on Figure 1 shall be given highest priority for ameliorative action. (SH 29)

Program VR-5.2: The City shall identify and work towards the removal or require the mitigation of the effects of those nonconforming uses that cause visual blight or otherwise demean the character of residential neighborhoods and commercial districts. (LCP Modified 230)

POLICY VR-6: Pursuant to Policy 1207 regarding undergrounding of utilities, the City will work toward the undergrounding of utilities where feasible. (New) (230)

Program VR-6.1: In cooperation with PG & E, the City shall continue implementation of its utility undergrounding district program. (SH 27)

Program VR-6.2: The City shall establish a policy for undergrounding of utilities in connection with new development or major redevelopments. In the event that funding becomes available for the undergrounding of existing utility lines not in connection with new development or major redevelopment, priority shall be given to the undergrounding of lines in the Embarcadero and Downtown areas and entrances to the City. (LCP 231)

POLICY VR-7: The City should investigate means to install roadside amenities, including informational signs, rest stops, parking areas, scenic pull-outs, bicycle and pedestrian trails and related facilities. (New)

Program VR-7.1: The City shall investigate the development of an improved informational sign program along its entryways to help direct visitors to commercial districts and points of interest; such signs should be designed to enhance the viewscape of these entryways. (SH 30)

Program VR-7.2: The City should develop a sign program for the Embarcadero to direct visitors to points of interest, e.g. Morro Rock, the T-Piers, the State Park, etc. City parks should also be identified and signs indicating beach access at the end of Coleman Drive near Morro Rock should be in place. (SH 30)

Program VR-7.3: The City shall investigate funding sources for public informational signs. (SH 30)

Program VR-7.4: The City shall require as a condition for approving improvements to Morro Bay State Park (1) that scenic pull-outs are adequately identified from the park roads both as a convenience to the traveler and to increase safety on these roads, which are winding and narrow, by alerting to stopping and entering traffic; and (2) that a bicycle/pedestrian path adjacent to the park entrance road from Main Street to South Bay Boulevard be provided. (SH 30)

Program VR-7.5: The City shall investigate funding for bike trails and related facilities to be constructed on Coleman Drive and along the State Park roadways. (SH 31)

Program VR-7.6: The City shall implement the LUP/Coastal Element policy regarding provision of a bike path on the parcel West of Highway One between Atascadero Road and San Jacinto Street, as a condition on development there. (SH 31)