

County of Ventura

Ventura County Medical Center Expansion Replacement Clinic

Draft
**Supplemental
Environmental
Impact Report**



March 2016

Ventura County Medical Center Expansion Project Replacement Clinic

Draft

Supplemental Environmental Impact Report

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) analyzes the aesthetic effects of the Replacement Clinic (Clinic) building already constructed on the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) campus as part of the VCMC Expansion Project; specifically, the incremental height and profile-related impacts of the current 90-foot Clinic building compared to a 75-foot tall Clinic building at the same location are analyzed.

This evaluation compares the height and profile-related impacts of the as-built, five-story, 90-foot tall Clinic building at its current location with those of a five-story, 75-foot tall building at the same location, focusing on the impacts to views from surrounding areas along Foothill Road, Agnus Drive, and Estrella Street. Photographs of various views were taken from each of the streets, mostly when the Clinic was within the viewshed. Photosimulations of a 75-foot building were then created with the photographs from the surrounding viewsheds. Views resulting from photosimulations of the Clinic building with a 75-foot height were compared to views with the existing, 90-foot tall Clinic building to assess the incremental impact in each of the viewsheds caused by the additional 15 feet.

Aesthetic Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The incremental difference in building height does not result in a significant impact to views along Foothill Road, Hilltop Drive, or Estrella Street. However, the incremental increase in view blockage from the intersection of Agnus Drive and Fairmont Drive is significant due to the loss of ocean and island views beyond that which would occur with a 75-foot building. In addition to the applicable mitigation measure from the 1994 Environmental Impact Report (EIR) (installation of underground utility lines along the west side of Agnus Street), this SEIR provides two measures to mitigate for the adverse effects of the top 15 feet associated with the Clinic building. The first is to provide additional landscaping along Foothill Road, particularly in areas where there are currently patches of empty dirt and pavement along the south side of Foothill Road and within the VCMC parking lot. Vegetation height would be limited to 4 feet, consistent with the height of existing shrubbery near Foothill Road. The second is to alter the exterior color of the Clinic, which is currently a dark brown, to a more neutral color that reduces the contrast with the surrounding landscape and that is coordinated with the coloring of the new Hospital Replacement Wing building.

Significance after Mitigation

The proposed mitigation measures would enhance the visual character of the VCMC campus and improve the quality of views surrounding the campus. However, these measures would not address the obstruction of scenic resources from the public viewpoint located at the Agnus Drive/Fairmont Drive intersection. Therefore, the visual impact at this public viewpoint would remain significant after implementation of mitigation. The Clinic building's impact to aesthetics based on the difference in the height and scale between the Clinic building and the surrounding residential neighborhood, which was considered significant and unavoidable in the 1994 EIR and 2005 Addendum, is exacerbated by the additional 15 feet of Clinic building height and would likewise remain significant.



1.0 INTRODUCTION

This document is a Supplemental Environmental Impact Report (SEIR) analyzing the aesthetic effects of the Replacement Clinic (Clinic) building already constructed on the Ventura County Medical Center (VCMC) campus as part of the VCMC Expansion Project. In particular, this SEIR analyzes the incremental height and profile-related impacts of the current 90-foot Clinic building compared to a 75-foot tall Clinic building at the same location. This section describes: (1) the general background of the project; (2) the purpose and legal authority of the SEIR; (3) the scope and content of the SEIR; and (4) lead, responsible, and trustee agencies; and (5) areas of public controversy.

1.1 PROJECT BACKGROUND

The VCMC Expansion Project involved the redevelopment of portions of the VCMC campus to provide improved medical and medical examiner facilities, as well as increased parking capacity (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 1993a). The project entailed the demolition of 81,888 square feet of existing facilities and the construction of 144,003 square feet of new facilities, including the Clinic (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 1993b). In accordance with the State CEQA Guidelines, an Initial Study was prepared for the proposed project and a Notice of Preparation was distributed on May 27, 1993 (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 1993a). The Initial Study examined the 29 environmental issue areas on the Ventura County Initial Study Checklist and determined that the proposed project could result in significant impacts in five environmental issue areas: Land Use, Aesthetics, Transportation and Circulation, Air Quality, and Noise (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 1993a).

A number of residents along the west side of Agnus Drive, immediately east of the VCMC campus, expressed concern about the environmental consequences of constructing the proposed Clinic and parking structure at public meetings held on April 22 and 28 and July 8, 1993, as well as in responses to the Notice of Preparation. Concerns were focused primarily on the land use and aesthetic issues related to the alteration of views from Agnus Drive that would result from construction of these multi-level structures (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 1993b).

The County originally certified the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) in 1994. The EIR stated that the five-story Clinic would be “up to 75 feet in height” and concluded that the Clinic’s land use and aesthetic impacts due to intensification of scale as compared to adjacent residential uses and resulting alteration of views would be significant and unavoidable (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 1993b). In 2005, the County prepared an Addendum to the 1994 EIR to evaluate the potential impacts of relocating the Clinic building a few hundred feet northwest from the original location (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 2005a). The Addendum concluded that relocation of the Clinic building would not increase aesthetic impacts as compared to what was identified in the 1994 EIR, but found that the aforementioned land use and aesthetic impacts would continue to be significant and unavoidable. Project design features and aesthetic mitigation measures were found to reduce compatibility conflicts associated with the Clinic. However, no measure other than reducing the height of the building was identified to mitigate impacts to below a level of



significance. The County filed Notices of Determination (NOD) after approving both the original 1994 EIR and the 2005 Addendum (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 2005b).

In May of 2008, a community group called Ventura Foothill Neighbors (VFN) learned about the Clinic project when a citizen noticed equipment at the construction site and inquired what was being built. In July 2008, VFN filed a petition for writ of mandate in Ventura County Superior Court (Case No. 56-2008-00323043-CU-PT-OXN) alleging that the County violated CEQA by authorizing the construction of the 90-foot Clinic in a new location, which VFN alleged would have significant aesthetic impacts that were not examined or addressed pursuant to CEQA. In July 2008 VFN also sought a preliminary injunction to stop construction of the building. The Ventura County Superior Court denied the injunction request, and the County proceeded to complete the building in 2010. In December 2013, the Ventura County Superior Court heard the VFN lawsuit on the merits. The Ventura County Superior Court thereafter ruled that the County violated CEQA by approving, in 2005, an increase of the Clinic building's height from 75 feet to 90 feet. The Ventura County Superior Court ruled that this constituted a substantial project change and that the 1994 EIR required revisions to address the resulting potentially significant aesthetic impacts. The Ventura County Superior Court issued a peremptory writ of mandamus directing the County to:

“[D]raft and circulate for public review and comment a focused supplemental EIR that analyzes the height and profile-related impacts of the Ventura County Medical Clinic building (“Clinic”) in its current location and to thereafter comply with the California Environmental Quality Act, except that the County need not study, consider, approve or implement any mitigation measure that reduces the as-built size or height of the Clinic.”

The Ventura County Superior Court's decision was affirmed by the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District. (*Ventura Foothill Neighbors v. County of Ventura* (2014) 232 Cal.App.4th 429.)

1.2 PURPOSE AND LEGAL AUTHORITY

The Ventura County Superior Court directed the County to prepare and circulate a supplemental EIR. Supplemental EIR's are addressed in Section 15163 of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, which states that the Lead Agency shall prepare a supplement to an EIR rather than a subsequent EIR if any of the conditions described in Section 15162 would require the preparation of a subsequent EIR, and only minor additions or changes would be necessary to make the previous EIR adequately apply to the project in the changed situation. Section 15163 also states:

- *The supplement to the EIR need contain only the information necessary to make the previous EIR adequate for the project as revised;*
- *A supplement to an EIR shall be given the same kind of notice and public review as is given to a draft EIR under Section 15087;*
- *A supplement to an EIR may be circulated by itself without the recirculating the previous draft or final EIR;*
- *When the agency decides whether to approve the project, the decision-making body shall consider the previous EIR as revised by the supplemental EIR. A finding under Section 15091 shall be made for each significant effect shown in the previous EIR as revised.*



This SEIR has been prepared in accordance with relevant provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970 (as amended) and the *State CEQA Guidelines*.

1.3 SCOPE AND CONTENT

Section 15163(b) of the *State CEQA Guidelines* states that, “the supplemental EIR need contain only the information necessary to make the previous EIR adequate for the project as revised.” The Ventura County Superior Court ruled that the increase in the height of the Clinic building from 75 to 90 feet was a substantial project change that would result in potentially significant aesthetic impacts not previously addressed in the 1994 EIR. This SEIR focuses on those issues.

In particular, this SEIR analyzes the height and profile-related aesthetic effects, including site-specific and cumulative effects, of the five-story, 90-foot tall Clinic building in its as-built location, as compared to a five-story, 75-foot Clinic building in the same location. In addition, the SEIR recommends feasible mitigation measures, where possible, that would reduce or eliminate adverse environmental effects.

In preparing the SEIR, use was made of pertinent County policies and guidelines, existing EIRs and background documents prepared by the County. A full reference list is contained in Section 7.0 *References and Preparers*, of this SEIR.

The level of detail contained throughout this SEIR is consistent with the requirements of CEQA and applicable court decisions. The *State CEQA Guidelines* provide the standard of adequacy on which this document is based. The Guidelines state:

“An EIR should be prepared with a sufficient degree of analysis to provide decision-makers with information which enables them to make a decision which intelligently takes account of environmental consequences. An evaluation of the environmental effects of the proposed project need not be exhaustive, but the sufficiency of an EIR is to be reviewed in light of what is reasonably feasible. Disagreement among experts does not make an EIR inadequate, but the EIR should summarize the main points of disagreement among the experts. The courts have looked not for perfection, but for adequacy, completeness, and a good faith effort at full disclosure.” (Section 15151)

1.4 LEAD, RESPONSIBLE AND TRUSTEE AGENCIES

The *State CEQA Guidelines* define lead, responsible, and trustee agencies. The County of Ventura is the lead agency for the project because it holds principal responsibility for approving the project.

A responsible agency refers to a public agency other than the lead agency that has discretionary approval over the project. A trustee agency refers to a state agency having jurisdiction by law over natural resources affected by a project. There are no responsible or trustee agencies with authority or jurisdiction over the aesthetic issues addressed in this SEIR.



1.5 AREAS OF PUBLIC CONTROVERSY

As discussed in Section 1.1, *Project Background*, the primary area of public controversy for the project relates to the alteration of views from the neighborhoods surrounding VCMC in the areas along Foothill Road, Agnus Drive, and Estrella Street.



2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This SEIR analyzes the height and profile-related aesthetic impacts of the as-built, five-story, 90-foot tall Clinic building in its current location, as compared to a five-story, 75-foot Clinic building in the same location, with emphasis on incremental impacts to views from surrounding areas along Foothill Road, Agnus Drive, and Estrella Street. The background of the project is described in Section 1.0, *Introduction*. The specific characteristics of the project, including the project applicant, are described below.

2.1 PROJECT PROPONENT

County of Ventura
800 S. Victoria Avenue
Ventura, CA 93009

2.2 PROJECT SITE LOCATION

The VCMC is located in the City of Ventura, which is located on the coast between Malibu and Santa Barbara. The Ventura County Medical Center occupies approximately 40 acres in the north-central area of the City. The uses surrounding the project site are mostly residential, commercial and public health facilities. Residential buildings exist along the eastern perimeter of the Ventura County Medical Center and across the street along the northern boundary of the center. The Ventura County Medical Center campus is bounded on the north by Foothill Road; on the south by Loma Vista Road; on the west by Hillmont Ave; and on the east by residential buildings.

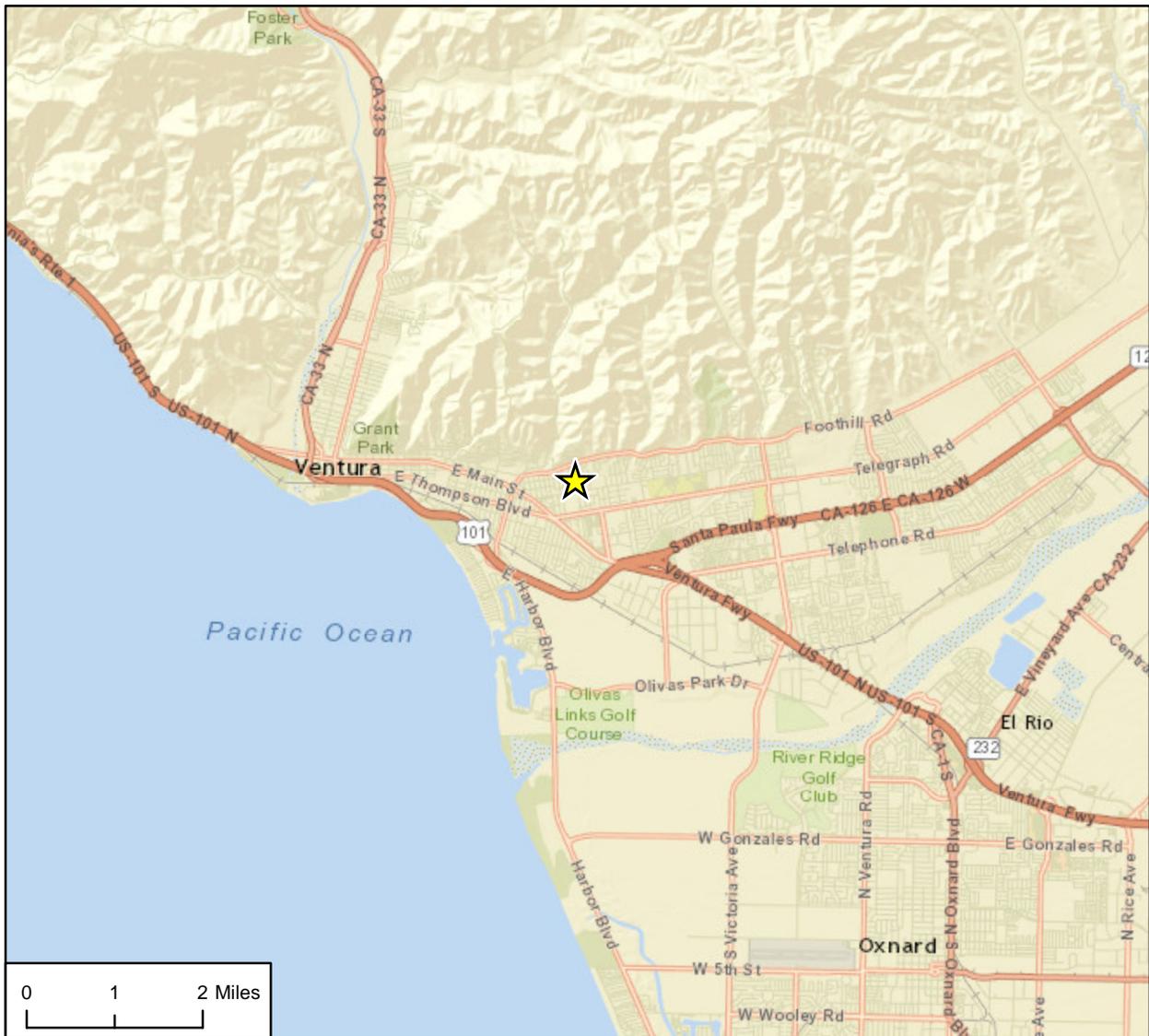
The site of the Clinic is located at 340 Hillmont Avenue, south of Hospital Road, in the approximate center of the VCMC property. See Figure 1 for the location of the project site within the region, Figure 2 for the location of the site within the surrounding neighborhood and for the project location within the VCMC.

2.3 CURRENT SITE CHARACTERISTICS

The Ventura County Medical Center is a general acute care facility with over 200 beds. The Center provides Comprehensive Neonatal, Emergency and Outpatient Medical Care Programs. Its teaching program is affiliated with the UCLA School of Medicine. Buildings on the VCMC campus include the VCMC Hospital, Clinic, Mental Health In-Patient Unit, Medical Examiner facility and the Hospital Replacement Wing that is currently in construction (Ventura County Medical Center Websites, vchca.org).

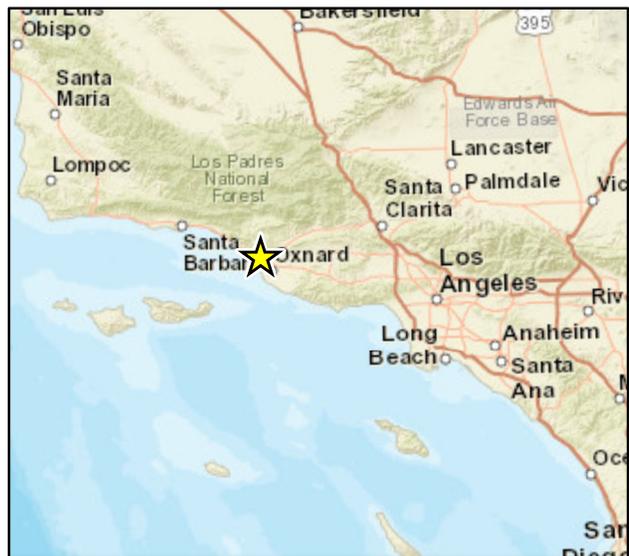
The five-story, approximately 73,000 square foot Clinic building is located in the center of the VCMC campus. The building is 75 feet tall with an additional 15 foot “utility penthouse” on the roof. The utility penthouse includes the building’s utilities and an elevator required to access the utilities. Facilities within the Clinic include a family residency administration, family care center, women’s health center, pediatric diagnostic center, surgery center and medicine specialties center (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 1993c, 2005b).





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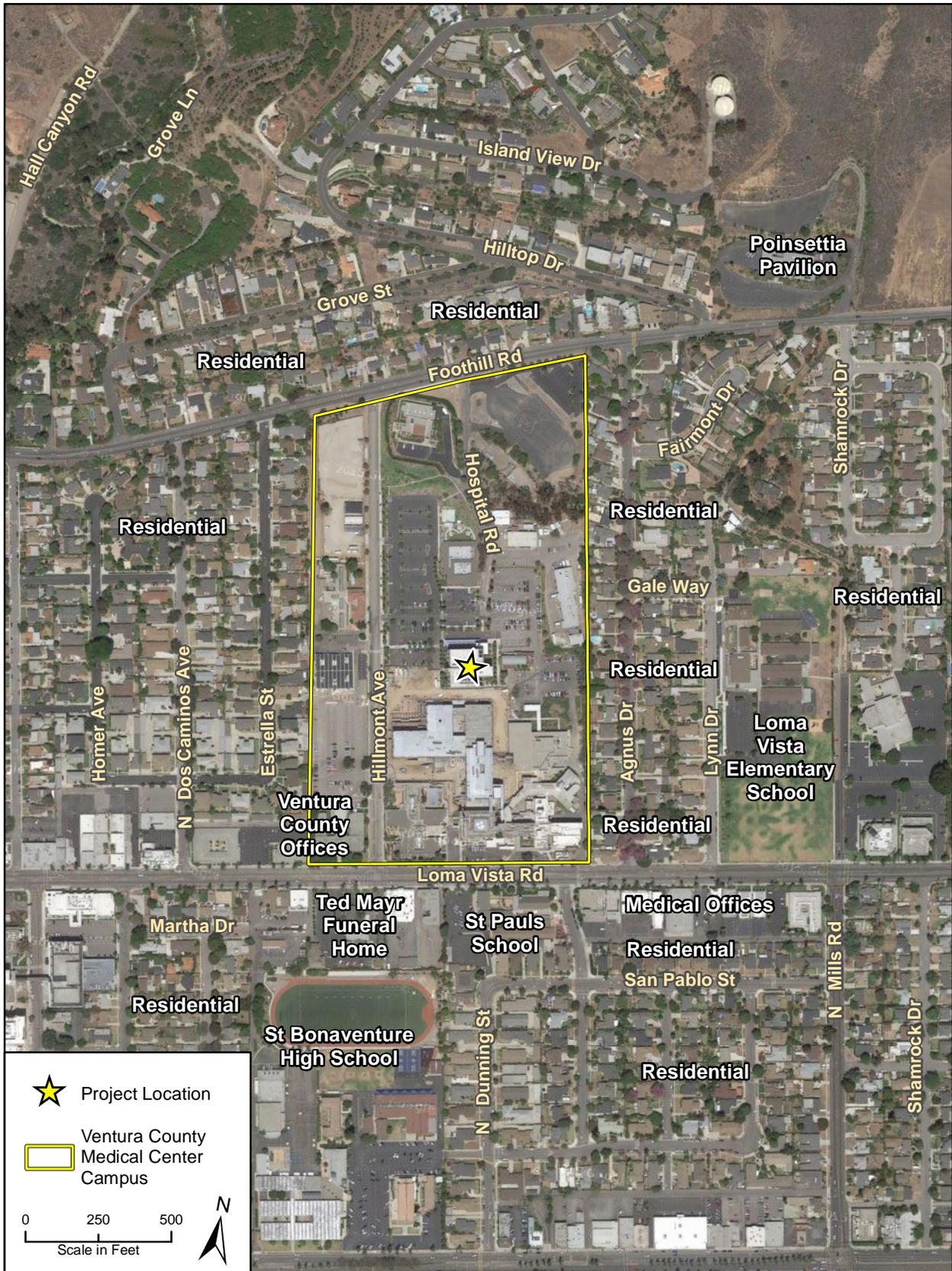
★ Project Location



Regional Location

Figure 1





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Project Location and Vicinity

Figure 2

A helicopter landing pad is located on the roof of the VCMC Hospital building. The heliport is operated in accordance with a Heliport Permit issued to the County by the California Department of Transportation, Division of Aeronautics, pursuant to California Public Utility Code sections 21661 et seq. The Heliport Permit requires helicopters to approach and depart the landing pad from directly north and south of the Hospital building, magnetic bearings 155° and 335°. No changes to the Helipad Permit, the heliport itself, or to the specified flight path were made as a result of the construction of the Clinic building.

2.4 PROJECT OBJECTIVES

As directed by the Ventura County Superior Court, this SEIR analyzes the height and profile-related aesthetic impacts of the as-built, five-story, 90-foot tall Clinic building in its current location, as compared to a five-story, 75-foot Clinic building in the same location, with emphasis on the incremental impacts to views from surrounding areas along Foothill Road, Agnus Drive, and Estrella Street.

The purpose for the expansion of the VCMC facility, including the construction of the Clinic building, was to:

- 1. Relieve current overcrowded conditions in the Mental Health In-Patient Unit, Medical Examiners Office and other facilities on the campus that were housed in buildings that, in many cases, were designed for other purposes*
- 2. Provide medical and medical examiner services from coordinated and centralized locations*
- 3. Provide additional parking to better accommodate the previous demand for parking and to compensate for the loss of onsite parking that resulted from new building construction.*

The objective of the Clinic was to consolidate the separate Clinics and buildings dispersed throughout the VCMC Campus, into one facility that could provide a variety of service to patients. The dispersed buildings and trailers were old, difficult to maintain, inefficient in layout, separated one another and the hospital, seismically unsafe, and inefficient in utilities consumption. The consolidation of Clinics was also aimed to enhance staff utilization and fund operations. The Clinic was also constructed to provide specialized out-patient care at a central location in the County while concurrently, the Health Care Agency began to expand the County's provision of primary care by the establishment of satellite Clinics throughout the County. Clinic's location, immediately adjacent to the hospital, was also intended to provide rapid access to the hospital's medical laboratory, dietary services, cafeteria, and special treatment services (DEIR, 1993). The construction of the Clinic involved the demolition or removal of 12 onsite facilities totaling 43,475 square feet and construction of the five-story, approximately 73,000 square foot Clinic.



3.0 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section provides a general overview of the environmental setting for the project. More detailed descriptions of the environmental setting for each environmental issue area can be found in Section 4.0, *Environmental Impact Analysis*.

3.1 REGIONAL SETTING

The project site is located in the City of Ventura, in southern Ventura County (see Figure 1). Ventura is located along the Pacific Coast between the cities of Malibu and Santa Barbara. Ventura is bounded to the south and east by the Santa Clara River, to the west by the Pacific Ocean and to the north by the Ventura Hills. The Mediterranean climate of the region and coastal influence produce moderate temperatures year round, with rainfall concentrated in the winter months. The region is subject to various natural hazards, including earthquakes, landslides, and wildfires.

3.2 PROJECT SITE SETTING

The VCMC campus constitutes one parcel located at 3100 Foothill Road in Ventura. The parcel encompasses approximately 40 acres located on the north side of Loma Vista Road and the south side of Foothill Road between Hillmont Avenue and Angus Drive. The VCMC campus houses a variety of medical facilities, including a full-service acute care hospital and a 24-hour emergency center, in addition to ground-level parking and a helicopter landing pad located on the top of the VCMC Hospital.

The VCMC campus is located in the urban area designated by the Ventura County General Plan and within the Public and Institutional Zone of the City of Ventura. Land uses to the west, north and east of the VCMC campus include low- and medium-density residential uses. Medical offices and religious facilities are present south of the site along the south side of Loma Vista Drive.

3.3 CUMULATIVE PROJECT SETTING

CEQA defines “cumulative impacts” as two or more individual events that, when considered together, are considerable or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed project and other nearby projects. For example, aesthetics impacts of two nearby projects may be insignificant when analyzed separately, but could have a significant impact when analyzed together. Cumulative impact analysis allows the SEIR to provide a reasonable forecast of future environmental conditions and can more accurately gauge the effects of a series of projects.

Two projects could, in combination with construction of the Clinic building, potentially contribute to cumulative view impacts to areas surrounding the VCMC. One project is the Community Memorial Hospital (CMH) located on Loma Vista Road, approximately 0.25 miles southwest of the VCMC. CMH is currently constructing a new six-story, 325,000 square foot hospital adjacent to the current hospital building (Community Memorial Hospital website, cmhshealth.org).



The other project is the County's construction of a new, 3-story Hospital Replacement Wing located on the southwestern portion of the VCMC campus. The groundbreaking for the Hospital Replacement Wing took place in 2013. The approximately 220,000 square-foot acute care facility is the largest building project in Ventura County's history and will be a seismically compliant, LEED Silver hospital with 120 private patient rooms. The Hospital Replacement Wing will include a healing garden, rooftop pediatric playground, state-of-the-art hybrid operating rooms, as well as a plaza courtyard complete with an outdoor dining area and promenade. The project is expected to be completed in 2017. See Figure 3 for location of the CMH and VCMC Hospital Replacement Wing (VCMC Hospital Replacement Wing Project Site, vcmchrw.org).



4.0 AESTHETIC IMPACT ANALYSIS

This section evaluates the height and profile-related aesthetic impacts of the as-built, five-story, 90-foot tall Clinic building in its current location, as compared to a five-story, 75-foot Clinic building in the same location, with emphasis on the incremental impacts to views from surrounding areas along Foothill Road, Agnus Drive, and Estrella Street.

4.1 SETTING

The VCMC campus encompasses about 40 acres of land in the Midtown area of Ventura. The campus is bounded by Loma Vista Road on the south, Hillmont Avenue on the west, Foothill Road and is bounded by a single-family homes on the east (see Figure 2). The campus is regionally accessible by U.S. 101 and locally accessible by Loma Vista Road, Foothill Road, Mills Road, and Main Street. Existing land uses in the larger project area include institutional, religious, commercial, medical uses and residential uses. The institutional uses include the facilities within the VCMC campus and additional medical offices exist across Loma Vista Road. Residential uses in the area include single-family residential neighborhoods to the west, north, and east of the VCMC campus. Additionally, the VCMC campus contains surface parking facilities at the northern end of the site, accessible by Hillmont Avenue and Foothill Road.

Buildings within the VCMC campus and within the project area primarily range from one to four stories tall and range from about 12-50 feet in height; however, the existing Clinic is five stories tall and has a maximum height of 75 feet to the roof and an additional 15 feet to the utility penthouse. The Pacific Ocean is visible along Foothill Road and streets farther north and uphill.

Public views of the Pacific Ocean are available from Agnus Drive and Foothill Road; however, these are intermittent due to the density of houses and landscaping along the street. See Figure 4 for views along Foothill Road, Agnus Drive, and Estrella Street.

The visual character of the VCMC campus remains similar to that described in the 1994 EIR for the Ventura County Medical Center Expansion. The project site is occupied by medical facilities, internal roads, surface parking and sidewalks. Landscaping is located around most onsite structures, most notably surrounding the facilities fronting Hillmont Avenue. The northern portion of the VCMC mostly consists of parking for the various facilities.



VCMC Campus and Community Memorial Hospital



Photo 1: View from Foothill Street looking south.



Photo 2: View from Agnus Street looking southwest.



Photo 3: View from the southwest corner of Foothill Road and Hillmont Avenue looking southeast.



Photo 4: View from Estrella Street looking east.

Surrounding Views

Structures on the VCMC campus range from one to five stories in height, the Clinic being the tallest building and the VCMC Hospital the second tallest building. Parts of the Hospital, which fronts Loma Vista Road rise to four stories at maximum height of approximately 60 feet above the finished floor elevation. The Mental Health Complex and Public Health building are two stories while most of the remaining buildings are one. The architectural style of most of the structures varies according to the time they were built; therefore, the buildings are generally not coordinated in style. Most of the campus' buildings represent variations of the post-World War II international style, characterized by simple rectilinear lines, large areas of glazing, little or no architectural decoration, and a "function over form" aesthetic philosophy (Ventura County Public Works Agency, 1993). All of the structures feature rectangular or square windows. The typical surface material used for onsite structures is poured concrete or stucco. Exterior paint colors are generally shades of beige and brown.

4.2 IMPACT ANALYSIS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

4.2.1 Methodology and Significance Thresholds

This evaluation compares the height and profile-related impacts of the as-built, five-story, 90-foot tall Clinic building at its current location with those of a five-story, 75-foot tall building at the same location, focusing on the impacts to views from surrounding areas along Foothill Road, Agnus Drive, and Estrella Street. Photographs of various views were taken from each of the streets, mostly when the Clinic was within the viewshed. Photographs were taken on two occasions, during cloudy conditions and clear, high visibility conditions. The photographs that represent the best view of the Clinic were then selected and used to simulate a 75-foot building. Views resulting from photosimulations of the Clinic building with a 75-foot height were compared to views with the existing, 90-foot tall Clinic building to assess the incremental impact in each of the viewsheds caused by the additional 15 feet.

Appendix G of the *State CEQA Guidelines* suggests that significant impacts could occur if a project:

1. *Has a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;*
2. *Substantially damages scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;*
3. *Substantially degrades the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or*
4. *Creates a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime view in the area.*

By these standards, the 1994 EIR found potentially significant impacts in all four of these categories. The impacts based on the project's removal of trees, and on the project's light and glare, were considered less than significant with mitigation incorporated. The impact to aesthetics based on the difference in the height and scale between the Clinic building and the surrounding residential neighborhood was considered significant and unavoidable.

The present analysis focuses on the first threshold stated above – substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista – which is most closely related to the height and profile-related impacts the Ventura



County Superior Court directed the County to evaluate in this SEIR. This analysis also identifies potential mitigation measures to address overall views from the affected neighborhoods.

4.2.2 Project Impacts

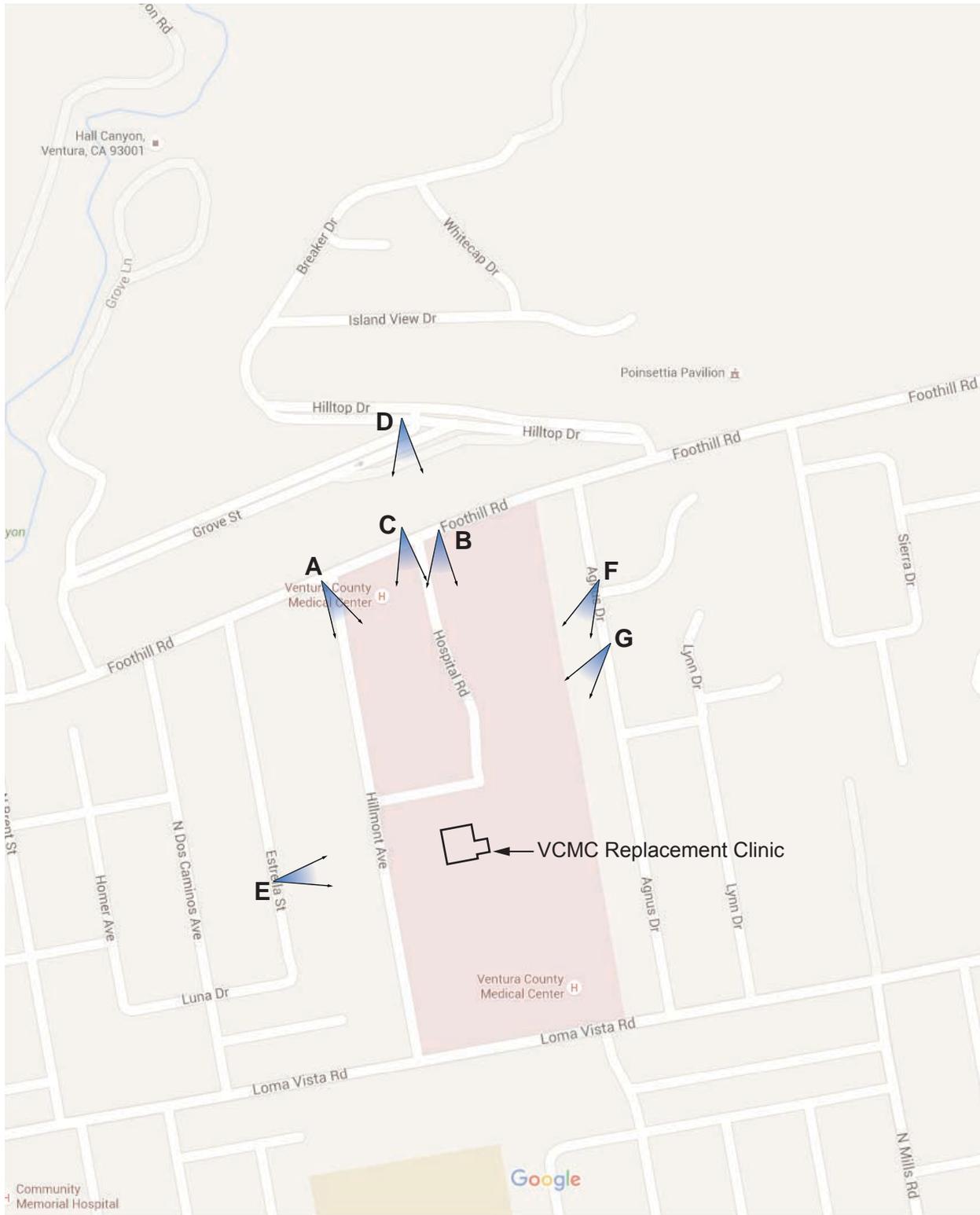
To estimate the difference in aesthetic impacts between a 75-foot Clinic building and the existing 90-foot Clinic building at its current location, photographs were taken of the current Clinic building from viewpoints along Foothill Road, Agnus Drive, Estrella Street, and Hilltop Avenue. Photosimulations of a 75-foot building were then created with the photographs from the surrounding viewsheds. Below is an evaluation of the potential impacts in each viewshed caused by the additional 15 feet of height. Figure 5 provides a Photosimulation Key that illustrates locations where photos were taken. Figures 6a through 6h compare existing conditions from the various vantage points to views without the utility penthouse.

Impact Assessment of Views from Foothill Road

Figures 6a, 6b, and 6c compare views from Foothill Road with the existing 90-foot Clinic building to views that would be available with a 75-foot building. No significant parts of the viewshed such as views of the ocean, islands, or the City are obstructed by the top 15 feet of the building along Foothill Road. The Clinic building can be seen along Foothill Road (a scenic route) between the Hillmont Avenue intersection and before the Agnus Drive intersection. Most of this portion of Foothill Road contains views of the City, and when weather conditions are clear, there are views of the ocean and the Channel Islands. The elevation along Foothill Road increases from west to east. Along the western portion of the VCMC campus frontage near Estrella Street, the current 90-foot Clinic building does not interfere with any views of the City, ocean or islands. The view of the Clinic from Foothill Road, near Agnus Drive, is mostly blocked by vegetation and trees within the VCMC campus band; therefore, the existing 90-foot Clinic does not interfere with any views of the City, ocean or islands. Consequently, the incremental difference in building height does not result in a significant impact to this view location.

Impact Assessment of Views from Hilltop Drive

Figure 6d compares the view from Hilltop Drive with the existing 90-foot Clinic building to the view that would be available with a 75-foot building. The Clinic is within the viewshed from Hilltop Drive, north of the VCMC Campus. Since Hilltop Drive is located at a higher elevation, the viewshed looks down upon the City and the Clinic. The viewshed in which the Clinic is incorporated does not include any views of visual resources such as the ocean or islands. The top 15 feet of the Clinic obstruct a minor view of city landscape that occurs south of the Clinic, but do not block views of any identified scenic resources. Consequently, the incremental difference in building height does not result in a significant impact to this view location.



Basemap Source: Google, Inc., 2015

Photosimulation Key

Figure 5



Existing view from the intersection of Foothill Road and Hillmont Ave



Simulated view from the intersection of Foothill Road and Hillmont Ave





Existing view from just east of the intersection of Foothill Road and Hospital Road



Simulated view from just east of the intersection of Foothill Road and Hospital Road





Existing view from just west of the intersection of Foothill Road and Hospital Road



Simulated view from just west of the intersection of Foothill Road and Hospital Road





Existing view from Hilltop Drive



Simulated view from Hilltop Drive



Impact assessment of Views from Estrella Street

Figure 6e compares the view from Estrella Street with the existing 90-foot Clinic building to the view that would be available with a 75-foot building. The Clinic is within the majority of the viewshed from Estrella Street, except towards the southern end of the street, where two-story multi-family residential units block views toward the VCMC campus. However, the top 15 feet of the Clinic building block only sky and thus does not obstruct the view of any visual resources. Due to the topography and landscaping of the street, no prominent views of the City, ocean, or islands are available from Estrella Street and the top 15 feet of the Clinic building only obstructs a minor portion of sky from the viewshed. Thus, the incremental difference in building height does not result in a significant impact to this view location.

Impact Assessment of Views from Agnus Drive

Figures 6f and 6g compare views from Agnus Drive with the existing 90-foot Clinic building to the view that would be available with a 75-foot building. The majority of the views from the public area (street and sidewalk) along Agnus Drive are not substantially altered by the top 15 feet of the building because such views are largely blocked by existing houses and trees. However, the Clinic can be seen from the east side of Agnus Drive, where it intersects with Fairmont Drive. Whereas shown on Figure 6f, the top 15 feet of the Clinic blocks views of the ocean and Anacapa Island that would be available with a 75-foot building. As illustrated on Figure 6g, view blockage from a point farther south along Agnus Drive due to the existing 90-foot Clinic building is incrementally greater than with a 75-foot building. However, the view blocked is mainly of the sky and views of the ocean and islands would be only minimally affected. The incremental difference in building height with the top 15 feet does not result in a significant impact to views from the locations illustrated on Figure 6g beyond that associated with a 75-foot building. However, the incremental increase in view blockage from the location illustrated on Figure 6f (intersection of Agnus Drive and Fairmont Drive) is significant due to the loss of ocean and island views beyond that which would occur with a 75-foot building.



Existing view from Estrella Street



Simulated view from Estrella Street





Existing view from the intersection of Agnus Drive and Fairmont Drive



Simulated view from the intersection of Agnus Drive and Fairmont Drive





Existing view from Agnus/Fairmont



Simulated view from Agnus/Fairmont



4.2.3 Mitigation Measures

The 1994 EIR included a number of design features to mitigate for impacts related to aesthetics, including viewshed alteration for Agnus Drive residents. One of these mitigation measures included the installation of underground utility lines along the west side of Agnus Street. The existing Southern California Edison (SCE) utility lines that are strung along the border of the VCMC Campus and adjacent residential properties along the west side of Agnus Drive were to be reinstalled underground and the utility poles were to be removed. This project is included in the County's Capital Improvement Plan; however, there are serious issues that need to be resolved before the County can move forward.

SCE design standards mandate that new underground systems be installed in the front parkway area of residential neighborhoods. Therefore, all transformers and handholes are required at the front property line. Installation of utility equipment at the rear property line on the hospital property is not allowed. Moreover, installation of these required improvements necessitates acquisition of property rights from property owners along the west side of Agnus Drive.

In addition to the applicable mitigation measure from the 1994 EIR, the following measures provide a range of alternatives to mitigate for the adverse effects of the top 15 feet associated with the Clinic building. These measures do not directly address the impacts to views and visual conditions resulting from the incremental difference between a 75-foot Clinic building and the 90-foot as-built Clinic building. No mitigation that would alleviate this view impact is available. The suggested measures would, however, enhance the overall visual character of the VCMC campus and views from neighboring corridors and viewsheds.

Mitigation Measure 1 - Additional Landscaping along Foothill Road

In order to enhance the viewshed from Foothill Road and neighboring viewsheds, provide additional landscaping along Foothill Road, particularly in areas where there are currently patches of empty dirt and pavement along the south side of Foothill Road and within the VCMC parking lot. In order to avoid blocking views further, vegetation height would be limited to 4 feet, consistent with the height of existing shrubbery near Foothill Road. See Photo 1 on Figure 4 for current landscape conditions along Foothill Road. Due to the barren state of this area, the provision of additional landscaping would improve views from Foothill Road and neighboring viewsheds.

Mitigation Measure 2 - Modify Color of the Clinic

Alter the exterior color of the Clinic, which is currently a dark brown, to a more neutral color that reduces the contrast with the surrounding landscape and that is coordinated with the coloring of the new Hospital Replacement Wing building. This measure would enhance the quality of views and visual continuity across the VCMC campus.

Significance after Mitigation

The proposed mitigation measures would enhance the visual character of the VCMC campus and improve the quality of views surrounding the campus. However, these measures would not address the obstruction of scenic resources, specifically the view of the ocean and Channel Islands



from the public viewpoint located at the Agnus Drive/Fairmont Drive intersection. The visual impact at this public viewpoint would remain significant after implementation of mitigation.

In addition, the Clinic building's impact to aesthetics based on the difference in the height and scale between the Clinic building and the surrounding residential neighborhood, which was considered significant and unavoidable in the 1994 EIR and 2005 Addendum, is exacerbated by the additional 15 feet of Clinic building height. This impact would likewise remain significant after implementation of mitigation.

4.2.4 Cumulative Impacts

As discussed in Section 3.0, *Environmental Setting*, the two projects that could potentially have a cumulative aesthetic impact to surrounding viewsheds include the Community Memorial Hospital and the new, 3-story Hospital Replacement Wing on the VCMC campus.

The 3-story Hospital Replacement Wing currently in construction on the VCMC campus is located on the southwest portion of the VCMC campus and is therefore southwest of the Clinic. The nearest residential area to the Hospital Replacement Wing is along Estrella Street, however, the building cannot be seen from this public viewshed. The Hospital Replacement Wing can be seen from the various points along Foothill Drive and streets farther north, such as Hilltop Drive. See Figure 4, Photo 3 and Figure 6d. However, the 3-story building only obstructs views of other medical buildings on the VCMC campus. The Hospital Replacement Wing cannot be seen from Agnus Drive. Due to the building's elevation and location on the VCMC campus, the Hospital Replacement Wing does not obstruct the view of any existing identified visual resource in the area. The additional 15 feet of the Clinic building does not contribute to a significant cumulative impact and therefore no cumulative mitigation measures are required.

The Community Memorial Hospital (CMH), including the new hospital building and parking structure currently under construction, is within the same viewshed as the Clinic from Agnus Drive, Foothill Road and streets farther north and therefore at a higher elevation than Foothill Road. From a particular location on Agnus Road, near the intersection with Fairmont Drive, CMH can be seen to the right of the Clinic, below the 75-foot horizon of the Clinic (see Figure 7, Photo 1). CMH partially obstructs views of the ocean and a portion of the Channel Islands when viewed from Agnus Drive. However, since CMH would be below the horizon of a 75-foot tall Clinic building, its aesthetic impact would not be affected by the top 15 feet of the Clinic building and therefore does not contribute to any significant cumulative aesthetic impact.

CMH can also be seen from Foothill Road, west of the Agnus Drive intersection (see Figure 7, Photo 2). From this location, CMH is seen to the west; however, the view of the Clinic is obstructed by eucalyptus trees and other landscaping on the VCMC campus. When weather conditions are clear, in that there are no clouds to reduce visibility, CMH partially obstructs the ocean view, below the horizon. However, since this obstruction does not occur simultaneously with any obstruction associated with the Clinic, there is no significant cumulative aesthetic impact.



Photo 1: Looking southwest from Agnus Street at the Community Memorial Hospital (white building in background) behind the ACC building.



Photo 2: Looking south from Foothill Road (just west of Agnus Drive) at the Community Memorial Hospital to the west (white building in right portion of the photo). View of the ACC is obstructed by vegetation.

5.0 REFERENCES

Ventura County Public Works Agency. May 1993a. Initial Study for the Ventura County Medical Center Expansion. SCH # 93041042.

Ventura County Public Works Agency. December 1993b. Final Environmental Impact Report for the Ventura County Medical Center Expansion.

Ventura County Public Works Agency. September 1993c. Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Ventura County Medical Center Expansion. SCH # 93041042.

Ventura County Public Works Agency. 2005a. Addendum to the Final Environmental Impact Report for the Ventura County Medical Center Expansion.

Ventura County Public Works Agency. May 2005b. Notice of Determination. Project Title: Ventura County Medical Center Consolidation Project; Approval of Project Changes (Clinic, Parking Structure, Surface Parking, and Demolition).

Order Granting Peremptory Writ of Mandate, dated January 3, 2014, issued in *Ventura Foothill Neighbors v. County of Ventura*, Ventura County Superior Court Case No. 56-2008-00323043-CU-PT-OXN

Peremptory Writ of Mandamus, dated February 7, 2014, issued in *Ventura Foothill Neighbors v. County of Ventura*, Ventura County Superior Court Case No. 56-2008-00323043-CU-PT-OXN

Ventura Foothill Neighbors v. County of Ventura (2014) 232 Cal.App.4th 429.

