

5.11 AESTHETICS

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The City of Moreno Valley lies on a relatively flat valley floor surrounded by rugged hills and mountains. The topography of the planning area is defined by the Box Springs Mountains and Reche Canyon area to the north, the “Badlands” to the east, and the Mount Russell area to the south. These features provide the City with outstanding scenic vistas. **Figure 5.11-1** depicts the major scenic resources within the planning area.

The major scenic resources within the planning area are visible from State Route 60, the major transportation route in the area. Upon entering the Moreno Valley from the west, the dominant view is of the Box Springs Mountains to the immediate north and the Mount Russell foothills to the south. Both mountain ranges display numerous rock outcroppings and boulders that add visual character to these landforms.

Moreno Peak is part of a prominent landform located south of State Route 60 along Moreno Beach Drive. This landform only rises a few hundred feet above the valley floor but has a unique location near the center of the valley. Moreno Beach Drive, the main route to Lake Perris from State Route 60, offers views of Moreno Peak and panoramic view of Moreno Valley. Panoramic views of the valley can also be seen from elevated segments of some local roads and from hillside residences. The views are particularly attractive on clear days and at night when the glow of city lights can be seen.

As State Route 60 traverses east through the City, it passes through the Badlands area. Characterized by steep and eroded hillsides, the Badlands form the eastern boundary of the planning area and provide a sweeping range of hills that act as a visual backdrop to the valley. Vast expanses of open land can be found in the eastern portion of the City. These tracts of land allow for uninterrupted scenic vistas from State Route 60, Gilman Springs Road, and other roadways and provide views of the San Jacinto Valley and the ephemeral Mystic Lake. Views of the San Bernardino and San Gabriel Mountains are evident at times from the valley floor. Winter snows on the mountains often offer a striking view.

Much of the existing development within the planning area is limited to the flat valley floor, preserving the views of the largely undeveloped surrounding hillsides. Existing urbanized development consists of residential, business park, commercial, office, and public uses, with single-family residential uses comprising the great majority of urbanized land. Non-residential urban uses are concentrated along major transportation corridors and around the joint civilian and military use March Air Reserve Base. The March Air Reserve Base, with its runways, museum, and military structures, forms a major identifiable land use within the City and is visibly prominent from Interstate 215.

The man-made environment is equally important in terms of scenic values. Buildings, landscaping and signs often dominate the view. Agricultural uses such as citrus groves are less common, but visually pleasing features.

Existing development in the planning area includes many light sources, including, but not limited to, streetlights, traffic signals, illuminated signs, ball field lighting, security lighting and storefront lighting. The headlights of vehicles traveling on existing roadways also contribute to the ambient level of light and glare.

Moreno Valley General Plan

General Plan Objectives 2.10 and 7.7 and associated policies foster development that is visually attractive. Policy 7.7.1 discourages development along prominent ridgelines. Policies 7.7.2 and 7.7.6 minimize the visual impact of overhead utility lines and wireless communication facilities. Policy 7.7.3 calls for reasonable controls to reduce the impact of signs on visual quality. Policies 7.7.4 and 7.7.5 require development along designated scenic roadways to be visually attractive and to allow for views of the surrounding mountains and Mystic Lake. Objective 2.10 and the associated policies ensure that new developments, including new buildings, walls and landscaping, are visually attractive. Policy 2.10.2 calls for objectionable views to be screened from view and Policy 2.10.7 discourages lighting that causes excessive light and glare on adjacent properties.

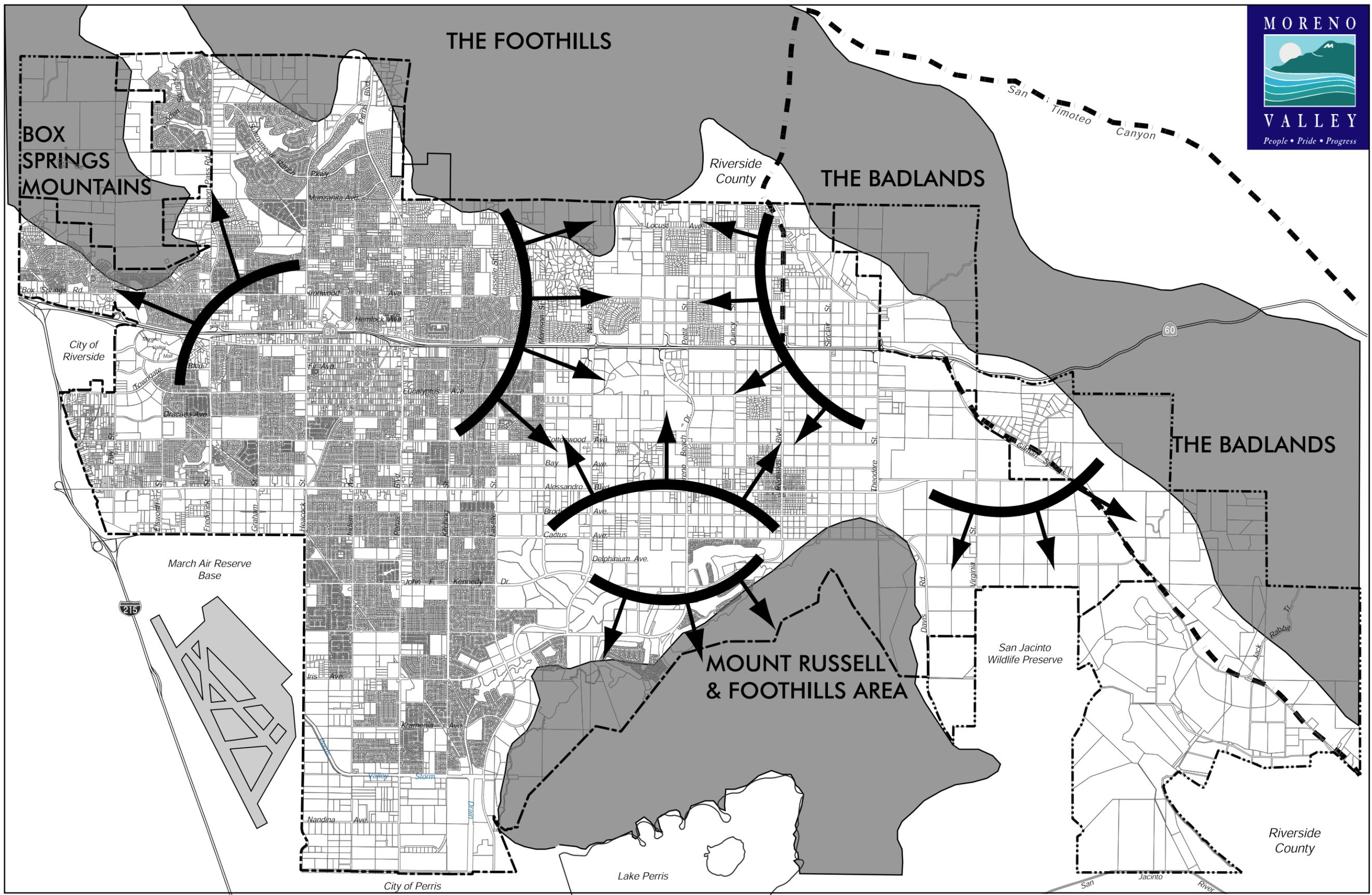
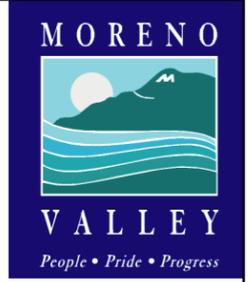
Existing Regulations

The Municipal Code contains design guidelines that regulate the aesthetic quality of new development with respect to structures, signs, walls, landscaping and other improvements. Existing regulations also require night lighting for non-residential developments to be shielded where appropriate to reduce the intensity of light that spills on neighboring properties.

THRESHOLD FOR DETERMINING SIGNIFICANCE

For the purposes of this EIR, a significant impact would occur if implementation of General Plan Alternatives 1, 2, or 3 would:

- *Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;*
- *Substantially damage scenic resources;*
- *Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the City and its surroundings; or,*
- *Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.*



Sources: County of Riverside GIS, City of Moreno Valley, USGS

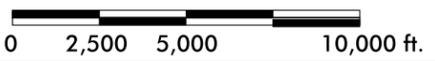


Figure 5.11-1
Major Scenic Resources

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

General Plan Land Use Alternatives 1, 2, and 3

Implementation of the Moreno Valley General Plan Land Use Alternatives 1, 2, or 3 will result in the further development in the planning area. All three of the Land Use Alternatives propose similar land uses along the hillside areas and will result in similar aesthetic impacts when implemented. The majority of the hillside areas, excluding the hillsides reserved for open space uses, will be developed with low density residential uses. The valley floor will also be developed into a mixture of residential and non-residential uses. Alternative 3 would allow more residential development along SR 60 east of Nason Street than Alternative 3. This would affect the character of the views along that stretch. Such views might be more or less aesthetically appealing depending on the nature of the resulting structures, walls, and how those properties are maintained. Given that noise barriers would be necessary between future residences and State Route 60, scenic views of the surrounding hills could be obscured to some degree. This is considered a significant impact. Implementation of Mitigation Measures A1 through A6 will reduce this impact to a level less than significant.

All of the three General Plan Land Use Alternatives propose similar goals and policies to address the aesthetic impacts associated with future development of the City according to the General Plan. These goals and policies serve to create a community that strives to preserve its existing visual resources, such as significant views and vistas, as well as encourage an environment that is characterized by attractive landscaping and pleasing building design.

The City also enforces its Municipal Code that helps to preserve scenic resources by regulating the allowable uses within each zoning district. The Code also regulates the allowable amount of light and glare and regulates the type and location of signage.

Together, the existing regulations and Mitigation Measures A1 through A6 reduce the aesthetic impacts of new development to a level less than significant.

MITIGATION MEASURES

- A1.** Enforce the Municipal Code requirements and use Specific Plans to ensure that all development within the City of Moreno Valley is of high quality, yields a pleasant living and working environment for existing and future residents and attracts business as the result of consistent exemplary design (**Objective 2-10**).
- A2.** Require new electrical and communication lines to be placed underground (**Policy 7.7.1**).

- A3.** Implement reasonable controls on the size, number and design of signs to minimize degradation of visual quality (**Policy 7.7.2**).
- A4.** Gilman Springs Road, Moreno Beach Drive, and State Route 60 shall be designated as local scenic roads (**Policy 7.7.3**).
- A5.** Require development along scenic roadways to be visually attractive and to allow for scenic views of the surrounding mountains and Mystic Lake (**Policy 7.7.4**).
- A6.** Minimize the visibility of wireless communication facilities by the public. Encourage “stealth” designs and encourage new antennas to be located on existing poles, buildings and other structures (**Policy 7.7.5**).

IMPACT AFTER MITIGATION

Less than significant.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

None.