

APPENDIX E

Visual Analysis

HILLCREST COMMONS VISUAL ANALYSIS FOR SFEIS

DEIS Visual Analysis

The DEIS for Hillcrest Commons (June 1, 2005) provided a detailed visual analysis for the project, as then proposed, in Section 3.8 Visual Quality. The analysis included visual resource field surveys to identify locations in the vicinity of the project where the site may be visible from roads and properties with public access. Field surveys were done in July (leaves on) and in November (leaves off).

An initial survey using USGS maps and terrain viewing software established the *potential viewshed* of the proposed project site. The field survey refined this assessment based on factors limiting the actual visibility of the site, including topography, vegetation, and buildings. The field survey identified the *actual viewshed* of specific locations in the site vicinity where the site and the proposed project would be visible.

The field survey identified the hilltop on the site as a prominent land form and the visual character of the site and local area. Views of the site, and specifically of the existing water tower on the site, were investigated from area roads, adjacent residential developments, and public properties and lakes within one-half mile of the project site, per the adopted Scope.

The DEIS visual analysis concluded that proposed changes in views of the site would not result in a stark contrast in visual character as compared with the surrounding landscape, either in terms of type of use or in the makeup of the built versus natural landscape. The analysis found that the proposed buildings would remain largely obscured from view by the trees that would remain on the steeper perimeter portions of the site and, therefore, would not dominate the rural/suburban view from any publicly accessible location.

Visual Impact to Historic Resources

Subsequent to the initial SEQRA process, the Town of Kent raised concern regarding a potential visual impact related to historic resources. Specifically, the Town of Kent questioned the potential impact of the project on the historic appearance of the hamlet of Carmel. This supplemental report presents further visual analysis to address this concern. It should be noted that although the analysis was limited to views potentially impacting specific historic resources, the analysis also applies to the overall visual impacts of the project, upon the hamlet of Carmel.

The Town of Kent Planning Board identified four historic structures or views which may include these historic structures, for evaluation:

- 1) Mount Carmel Baptist Church
- 2) Putnam County Courthouse
- 3) Reed Memorial Library
- 4) View of the hamlet of Carmel from Route 6 across Lake Gleneida.

The Kent Planning Board requested that additional visual analysis be conducted to ensure that the project will not result in a significant visual impact to these resources.

Based upon the National Register of Historic Places database, the Putnam County Courthouse and the Reed Memorial Library are NY State listed historic structures, while the Mount Carmel Baptist Church is not listed. The hamlet of Carmel is not included on the State or National Register of Historic Places.

Criteria for Determining Impacts

According to the NYSDEC program policy *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts* (2000), aesthetic impact occurs "when there is a detrimental effect on the perceived beauty of a place or structure." According to the policy, "significant aesthetic impacts are those that may cause a diminishment of the public enjoyment and appreciation of an inventoried resource, or one that impairs the character or quality of such a place".

Therefore, if a project is visible from a particular location, this is not necessarily an indication of a significant impact. Instead, the introduction of buildings or the alteration of a view near a designated resource requires an evaluation of potential significance. If the change in the view is determined to be "significant", then mitigation measures can be implemented.

Context and Setting

The hamlet of Carmel includes several churches and public buildings on NYS Route 52, between the intersection of Route 6 and Route 52 (Stoneleigh Avenue) on the south and the vicinity of Vink Drive to the north. The local setting and a key to landmarks is provided in Figure 1: Key to View Locations. As noted above, this area is currently not designated as an Historic District by New York State or by the federal National Register of Historic Places. The Reed Memorial Library and the Putnam County Courthouse overlook Lake Gleneida and these two structures are listed on the New York State list of historic structures. The Mount Carmel Baptist Church is located north of Lake Gleneida and is not listed.

The top of the County Courthouse and Mount Carmel Baptist Church steeple are visible from certain locations on Route 6 in the view across Lake Gleneida. These vantage points are located approximately 6,000 feet (1.2 miles) south of the Hillcrest Commons southern property line and approximately 7,700 feet (1.5 miles) from the Town water tower. The Reed Memorial Library is located approximately 3,100 feet south of the Hillcrest Commons southern property line and approximately 4,900 feet from the Town water tower, which is located near the highest point on the Hillcrest Commons property. The Mount Carmel Baptist Church is located approximately 1,000 feet south of the Hillcrest Commons southern property line and approximately 2,800 feet south of the Town water tower.

Accompanying photos taken from the public road in the vicinity of these structures, Figures 2, 3 and 4, depict the views toward the project site in the context of the hamlet development, as experienced by the public. These vantage points do not afford views of the distant landscape due to intervening buildings and trees, and the visual experience of the viewer is dominated by the foreground streetscape, which includes a variety of building facades, signs, utility poles, traffic signals, as well as traffic on the street.

Figure 5 shows the view across Lake Gleneida to the hamlet and toward the site, as experienced predominantly by vehicle occupants traveling northbound. This view provides a high quality visual experience due to the expanse of open water in the foreground and the outlines of buildings along the far shore (including a traditional church steeple) against the

distant background of wooded hilltops at the horizon. Given the distance over open water, a number of buildings in the hamlet some 0.8 mile away can be seen in the view, their visibility amplified due to the light tree cover on the far shoreline and the predominance of white colored buildings. The horizon line beyond the hamlet, some 1.5 miles and farther, appears less distinct in detail due to the ameliorating effects of distance but provides the backdrop for the white buildings.

Visual Survey and Balloon Analysis

On October 5, 2009 a field investigation was conducted to ascertain the potential visibility of the project from the four identified vantage points. Weather balloons were used to establish the locations of future building corners of three proposed buildings and to determine the future height of the buildings in the context of the vegetation on the site. Red balloons three feet in diameter were raised at the corners of the three buildings on the western slope of the Hillcrest Commons hilltop. Given the topography, these are the buildings that would potentially be most visible from southern vantage points, including from NYS Route 52 and Route 6. The three buildings are designated F, G and H on Drawing SP-1 Overall Site Plan. In raising the balloons, the existing trees were determined to be between 55 and 60 feet in height.

Topography and proposed building height were used to determine the height of the balloons. The roof line of the typical 18 and 20 unit building is proposed to be at 55 feet from ground floor elevation or 43 feet from first floor elevation. When the balloons were raised to the elevation of the proposed roof line, the balloons were below the tops of surrounding trees for Buildings F and G and were above the existing tree line at Building H. Building H is lower on the hillside than Buildings F and G and has the lowest ground floor elevation at elevation 705. Balloons were then raised 40 feet above the roof line so that they would be visible above the tree line from the selected vantage points.

The selected view points were then visited to determine whether the balloons, or even the hilltop on the project site, were visible. Photos were taken looking toward the project site from the three historic structures indicated above and the immediate vicinity of these buildings, and from the Route 6 viewing location on the south side of Lake Gleneida. Observations were recorded when the balloons were raised to the proposed roof line elevation and when the balloons were raised 40 feet above the roof line elevation.

Visual Survey Results

The visual survey determined that the Hillcrest Commons site is not visible from the three historic structures identified above due to the intervening tree cover and buildings: 1) Mount Carmel Baptist Church, 2) Putnam County Courthouse or the 3) Reed Memorial Library. Photos taken in the vicinity of these structures (provided as Figures 2, 3 and 4) depict the views experienced by the general public. Each of the photos is facing north on NYS Route 52 and includes buildings, trees and structures that are part of the Route 52 streetscape. The Hillcrest Commons site is not visible from these vantage points, as illustrated in the photos. It should be noted that when the photos were taken, leaves were present on trees. The hilltop on the project site may be partially visible through the trees from Location 1 - across from the Mount Carmel Baptist Church in winter conditions, but its exposure would be largely obscured by intervening buildings, trees including evergreen trees, and signs and utilities in the streetscape (see Figure 2).

Photos of the Hillcrest Commons property were taken from Route 6 entering the hamlet of Carmel on the south side of Lake Gleneida. The location of the photo is shown in Figure 1 (View 4) and the photo from that vantage point is shown in Figure 5. As shown in the photo, the white steeple of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church is visible as well as the cupola of the Putnam County Courthouse. The Hillcrest Commons property is visible to the left of the Mount Carmel Baptist Church steeple.

From the Route 6 view location (View No. 4), the balloons were not visible with either the naked eye nor with binoculars when the balloons were raised to the proposed roof line elevation. The proposed roof line will occur at or below the height of existing trees that will remain on the hilltop. The existing Town water tank also was not visible from the Route 6 vantage point. For comparison, the top of the Town water tank has an approximate elevation of 766 feet while the highest proposed roof line would be at elevation 777 feet or approximately 11 feet higher than the tank.

When the weather balloons were raised approximately 40 feet above the proposed roof line, the balloons at Building F were visible from Route 6 with binoculars and appeared just above the tree line on the horizon. The locations of the balloons are highlighted and exaggerated for clarity) in Figure 5. This figure provides a reference to the location and approximate scale of the building in the view. Given the small area of potential impact in the context of the panoramic view of the landscape from the Route 6 vantage point, the addition of a portion of a building in the view or the less visible clearing of tree cover on the hillside would not create a significant change to the view.

With construction of the project, trees on the south and west sides of the hilltop on the project site would be removed. Existing trees with a height of 55 to 60 feet will be preserved within 50 to 100 feet down slope of each building (as shown in Figure 1 and Sheet SP 3.2 Grading and Utilities Plan). In addition, existing 55 to 60 foot high trees will be retained in the vicinity of the Town water tank and at the crest of the hill, thereby preserving the horizon line as viewed from the south. However, based on this analysis, it is possible that portions of the roof lines for Buildings F, G and possibly Building E, may be visible within the wooded hillside of Hillcrest Commons when viewed from Viewpoint 4. The roofs would be a muted earthen color. As previously described, the hilltop as seen from that vantage point appears beyond the hamlet, 1.5 miles distant, and any detail on the horizon line appears less distinct due to the ameliorating effects of distance. The tops of the proposed buildings will occur below the horizon line. Trees that are proposed to remain on the subject property will soften visibility of the project rooftops from a distance and obscure visibility of the bulk of the buildings from any off-site vantage point. For example, the elevation of the Building F roof will be at 773 feet and the elevation of the Building G roof at 777 feet. The crest of the Hillcrest Commons hill is at elevation 755 and the tops of trees at the crest of the hill will be at 810 to 815 feet. Trees will be visible 35 to 40 feet above the highest roof line.

Conclusion

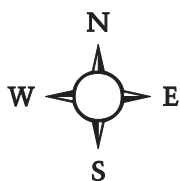
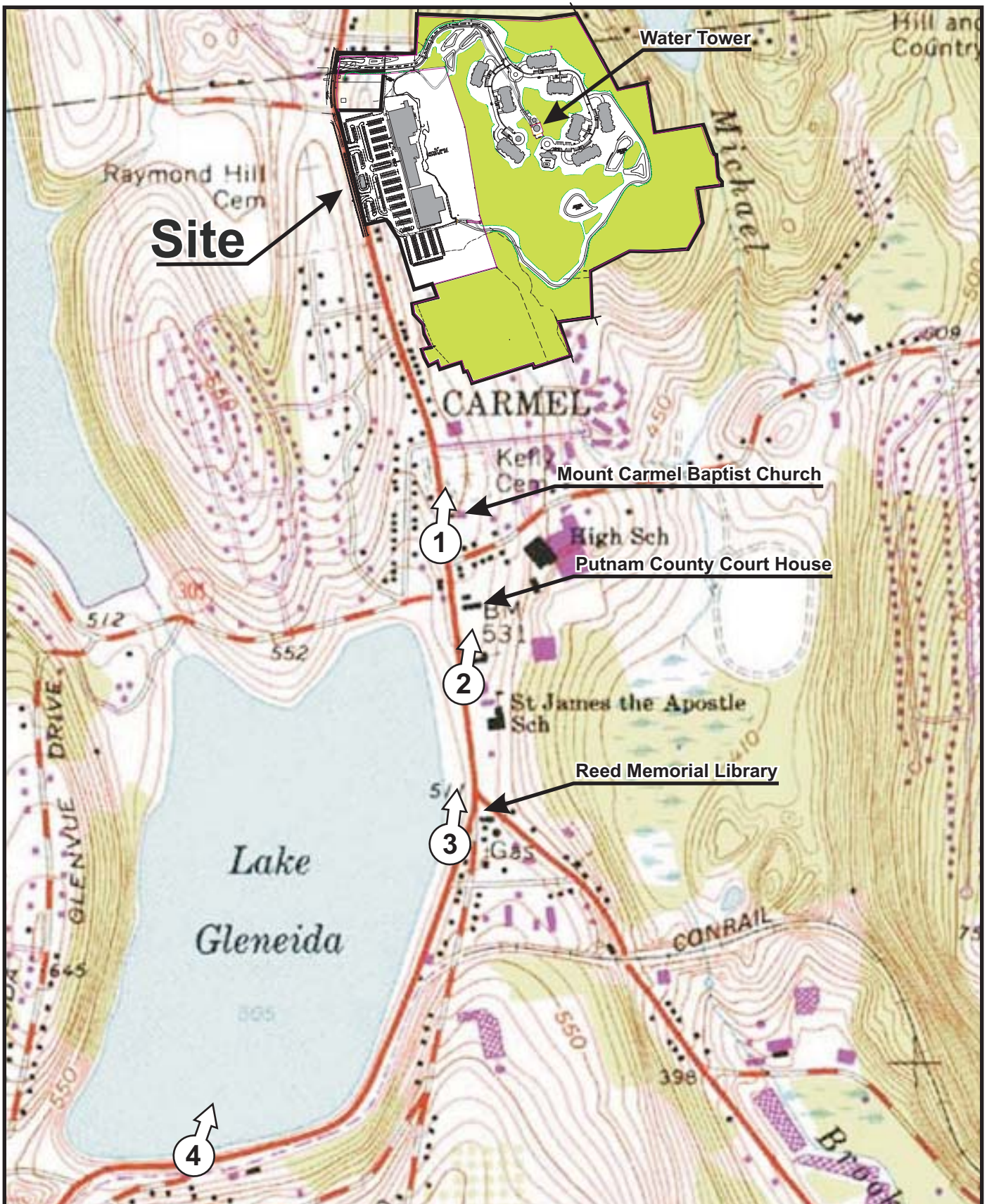
In summary, following the project construction, the roof tops of proposed buildings may be visible within the wooded hillside of the development, when viewed from Route 6 across Lake Gleneida. The roofs will be a muted earthen color and will not be in stark contrast to the wooded hillside. The building facades will be screened by the preservation of existing trees down slope of the development area. Existing mature trees with a height of 55 to 60 feet will be retained near the water tank and at the crest of the hill. In the winter months in a leaf-off

Visual Analysis

October 28, 2009

condition, the project buildings may be more visible than in summer from the Route 6 vantage point, as will the existing buildings in the hamlet, although preservation of existing tree cover on the south and west sides of the project site will significantly limit the extent of visual exposure.

Given the context of the existing views and the ameliorating effects of distance, the project will not result in a significant change of the current views across Lake Gleneida from Route 6, and in particular will have no adverse effect on historic resources in the hamlet of Carmel. Consistent with NYSDEC visual assessment policy, the project will not result in a "significant" aesthetic impact, and will not diminish the public enjoyment and appreciation of the existing visual resources nor impair the character or visual quality of the hamlet.



Key	
	Photo Location
	Existing Undisturbed Woods

Figure 1: Key to View Locations
 Hillcrest Commons
 Towns of Carmel & Kent
 Putnam County, New York

Source: USGS 7.5-minute Topo Map, Lake Carmel Quad
 Scale: 1" = 1,000'



NOTE: Balloons raised on site at time of photography - not visible in this photo.

Figure 2: View from Location #1 - Mt. Carmel Baptist Church
Hillcrest Commons
Towns of Carmel and Kent, Putnam County, NY
Source: TMA, 10/04/09



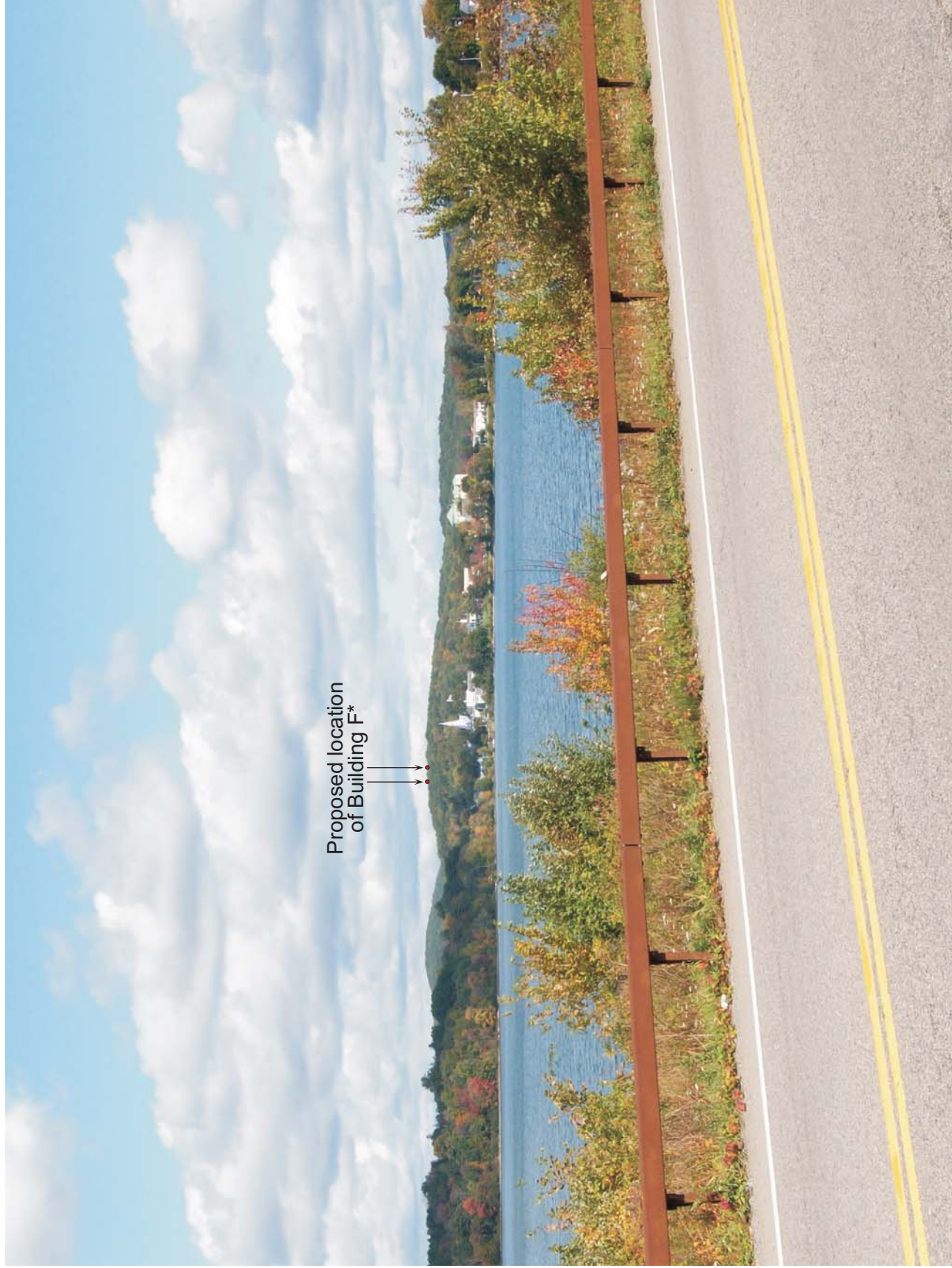
NOTE: Balloons raised on site at time of photography - not visible in this photo.

Figure 3: View from Location #2 - Putnam County Courthouse
Hillcrest Commons
Towns of Carmel and Kent, Putnam County, NY
Source: TMA, 10/04/09



NOTE: Balloons raised on site at time of photography - not visible in this photo.

**Figure 4: View from Location #3 - Reed Memorial Library
Hillcrest Commons
Towns of Carmel and Kent, Putnam County, NY
Source: TMA, 10/04/09**



Proposed location
of Building F*

***NOTE:** Balloons placed at Bldg F roofline
not visible from this location.

Figure 5: View from Location #4 (Balloons up)
Hillcrest Commons
Towns of Carmel and Kent, Putnam County, NY
Source: TMA, 10/04/09