

### 3.10 Visual Resources

#### **3.10.1 Existing Conditions**

The visual assessment that was presented in the DEIS was conducted in accordance with the NYSDEC<sup>1</sup> guidelines relating to the assessment and mitigation of visual impacts. It identified potential significant aesthetic resources in the site vicinity, existing visual character of the site and its setting, and analyzed the existing views of the site from area roadways. The following is a summary of the existing conditions as described in the DEIS.

#### Existing Visual Character

The project site is located in the Towns of Haverstraw and Ramapo at the intersection of Route 202 and Palisades Interstate Parkway (PIP). The project vicinity surrounding the PIP's interchange with Route 202 may be characterized as suburban, with conventional strip commercial uses as well as office and industrial uses, low to medium density single-family dwellings, mobile home parks, and multifamily dwellings (east side of PIP).

The Haverstraw portion of the site is vacant. In Ramapo, an existing modern structure houses an auto repair garage. The site was mined previously and there are no existing visually prominent features on the site. Minisceongo Creek traverses the westerly portion of the site.

Within the project vicinity, there is no specific style that defines the community's overall character. Buildings are a mix of commercial, light industrial, and residential land uses that have been constructed at various time periods, and there is no one unifying architectural style.

#### Potential Significant Aesthetic Resources

Views of the site from public locations such as roads and parks are limited due to intervening topography and woodland vegetation. The site is visible or potentially visible from the following locations:

- NYS Route 202
- Quaker Road
- The Palisades Interstate Parkway, listed on the National and State Registers of Historic Places.
- Long Path, a long-distance regional hiking path.
- Gurnee Park, a county park

#### *NYS Route 202*

Route 202 is designated as "scenic" by the Town of Ramapo Local Law No 7-2004. The subject property is included in the map of the Scenic Road District as one of the areas along Route 202 that lie within the 1,000 foot buffer from the center line of the road and thereby require plan review and approval according to Section 4 of the Law.

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<sup>1</sup> NYS DEC Program Policy, *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts*, 2000.

Due to the lack of vegetation on the portions of the site that would be developed, the site is fully visible from Route 202. The property is at the same level as the road and there are no steep slopes that would obscure views of it. Figures 3.10-1 and 3.10-2 show views of the site from Route 202. There are prominent views of large, new single-family residences that have been constructed on the southerly slope of Cheesecote Mountain. As the project site has little vegetation, from Route 202 there are also clear views of the buildings within the Barr Laboratories campus.

#### *Quaker Road*

Quaker Road abuts the northeast corner of the project site where it meets the southbound ramp of Palisades Interstate Parkway. As shown in Figure 3.10-3, existing views from Quaker Road are limited due to intervening vegetation. Farther north, views from Quaker Road are blocked by buildings at the Barr Laboratories complex, changes in topography, and intervening vegetation.

#### *Palisades Interstate Parkway*

The Palisades Interstate Parkway is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and considered an important aesthetic resource. The eastern boundary of the site abutting the southbound off-ramp is wooded and limits on-leaf views of the site. Figures 3.10-4 and 3.10-5 provide views of the site from the mainline of the Parkway and the access ramp. Due its higher elevation and the intervening vegetation, the Parkway does not afford a direct view of the site. The photos were taken along the shoulder of the overpass, thus the view was not blocked by the existing guardrail which does limit views of the site. At this location, southbound motorists would have to look back to the site to see it; the vantage point of the southbound motorist is not conducive to prolonged views of the site. A brief, limited glimpse of the site is possible at the overpass for northbound motorists. Off-leaf views of the site from the Long Path, on the east side of the PIP access ramp, are shown in Figure 3.10-6.

#### *Long Path*

Within the project vicinity, the Long Path follows the right-of-way of the Palisades Interstate Parkway, crossing over the southbound exit ramp at Exit 13. It then follows the off-ramp along the easterly side of the ramp's right-of-way. The Long Path follows the ramp alignment, crosses over Route 202 in front of the Mt Ivy Diner, travels along the south side of Route 202 in an easterly direction, along the park and ride facility, and then heads south along Route 45 to the entrance of Gurnee Park. The site is visible from the Long Path (see Figure 3.10-6).

#### *Gurnee Park*

The entrance to Gurnee Park is located on the west side of Route 45 near the access to the PIP northbound ramp. A gravel road provides access to the "amphitheatre" which is a bowl-shaped area formed by quarrying activities that took place on the property. A walking trail leads to the rock bluffs overlooking the amphitheatre, and the trail affords unobstructed views of the area below. As shown in Figure 3.10-6, the project site is visible from a vantage point along the trail at the upper elevation of the park. Here, views are primarily of the higher-density multifamily residential developments that have been constructed on the east side of Thiells-Mt Ivy Road.

### **3.10.2 Potential Impacts**

#### Changes in Visual Character

Construction of Minisceongo Park would convert the site from a primarily disturbed, vacant property to a mixed use residential and commercial development introducing integrated site design, architecture, and landscaping on a property currently lacking visual cohesiveness.

#### *Views from Route 202*

The main view of the site would be from NYS Route 202, with the large retail establishment set in the rear of the property, small retailers, banks and restaurants arrayed along the site frontage, and residential development located on the western portion of the site, adjacent to the wetland buffer. The central portion of the property would be devoted to a landscaped parking lot. Landscaped stormwater management areas would be located on the west side of the main parking lot at the entrance to the residential portion of the development.

The site frontage entry drive and parking areas would be landscaped with street trees, and the landscaping around the residences would include evergreen and shade trees, and shrubs.

Views of the westerly portion of the project would remain the same as the existing freshwater wetlands, 100-foot buffer and meadow would remain undisturbed.

#### *Views from Quaker Road*

Post development views from Quaker Road would continue to be limited by intervening vegetation and buildings at the Barr Laboratories complex, changes in topography with the exception of the where it meets the proposed emergency access road and the southbound ramp of the PIP. At this location, the commercial development would be visible 10 to 20 feet below the level of Quaker Road, and as a result, the visual impact of the building height would be diminished.

#### *Views from Palisades Interstate Parkway/Long Path*

The development would be visible from the ramps for Exit 13. The off ramp, which follows the easterly property line of the Minisceongo Park site would be separated from the proposed emergency access road by a minimum 50 foot buffer strip, landscaped street trees. The buffer would be beyond a guardrail set back 10 feet from the road. At this location the roadway would be elevated approximately between 10 and 20 feet above the proposed development allowing clear views of the commercial developments and project signage.

Views from the Long Path would be the similar to those from the southbound access ramp. since the path is approximately 100 feet from the easterly property line. The proposed project is not anticipated to have a significant impact on views visible from the Long Path in this suburbanized area, where it passes behind single-family homes and parallels highways, including the commercialized portions of Route 202 and Route 45.

### *Views from Gurnee Park*

Minisceongo Park would be fully visible from one viewpoint along the walking trail (the Long Path) within the park during off leaf conditions and partially obscured when the trees are in leaf. The development would be seen in the distance in a broad view of the landscape that would include commercial development in the foreground and an unobstructed view of the Ramapo Mountains at the horizon. It is anticipated that over time the landscaping around the buildings, within the parking islands, and within the roadway setbacks would soften the view of the development and integrate it into the broad view of the landscape at this location.

### Proposed Buildings and Landscaping

The proposed multifamily dwellings would not exceed 45 feet, which is the building height allowed in the MU-2 district in the Town of Ramapo. The proposed commercial buildings on the pads along NYS Route 202 would not exceed 2 stories in building height. The large retail buildings at the rear of the property would not exceed 35 feet.

The design of this project is expected to help to establish an architectural character for this segment of Route 202, which currently lacks a coherent blend of styles.

### *Architecture*

As shown in Figure 3.10-7 the proposed residential architecture would draw on traditional colonial styles in the overall lines of the structures and in their individual decorative features. Brick stone, and clapboard would be used, and the facades would be designed with a pattern of set back entrances, various roof line details, and window sizings and treatments to avoid a monolithic presentation and create the impression of a town streetscape.

The building elevations and architecture would be reviewed by the Town of Ramapo and Haverstraw as part of the SEQRA review of the SEIS, and the applicant would work with the Towns to come up with an appropriate, attractive architectural theme. In Haverstraw, Architectural Review Board review is required.

While the specific architecture of the commercial component has yet to be determined and would be tenant driven to some extent, the commercial buildings would be required to utilize similar materials and colors so that the development appears as an integrated whole.

### *Landscaping*

The conceptual landscaping plan includes street trees, ornamental trees, shrubs, and stormwater basin plantings, as shown in Figure 3.10-8. The street tree plantings would create a tree canopy to provide shade and create an attractive neighborhood setting.

Overall, views of the new development are not anticipated to have a significant impact on aesthetic resources, as this area is suburbanized and presently strip commercial in character. The proposed project would introduce an attractive residential and commercial development designed with generous landscaping, and would preserve open space.

**3.10.3 Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation measures are proposed.