

AESTHETIC RESOURCES

RIDGECREST GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

Aesthetic Resources

An aesthetic or visual resource is a broad term used to identify the particular scenic qualities that define a place or landscape. The City of Ridgecrest's aesthetic setting can generally be described as an urban area set within a rural backdrop. Consequently, the Planning Area is defined by several natural and human-made aesthetic resources, including a variety of natural features (i.e., desert areas, mountain views, etc.), scenic corridors, and urban landscapes (i.e., urban parks, low rise residential development). Each of these unique aesthetic resources is discussed below.



Natural Features. The City of Ridgecrest enjoys a prime scenic location within the upper Mojave Desert and is surrounded on all sides by four mountain ranges: Sierra Nevada Mountains to the west, the Cosos to the north, the Argus Range on the east, and the El Paso Mountains to the south. Scenic vistas of the mountains and the surrounding desert are found throughout the City. Desert landscapes are comprised of desert scrub habitats. Views of these desert habitat areas would include a variety of unique plant species including creosotebush, desert agave, barrel cactus, and Mohave yucca.



Scenic Corridors. Ridgecrest's Scenic Corridor Plan identifies several scenic corridors in the Planning Area. These corridors include West Inyokern Road, North and South China Lake Boulevard, East and West Ridgecrest Boulevard, West Bowman Road, College Heights Boulevard, West Drummond Avenue and Jack Ranch Road and have been identified so because of their scenic qualities and their existing or potential function as gateways into the City.

A typical corridor boundary is defined by existing topographic features along these roadways and by any significant landmarks or man-made features, up to 1,000 feet from the center of the roadway in areas of level terrain. Within more urban areas of the Planning Area, corridor limits have been defined as up to 200 feet from the center of the roadway.



Typical motorist views throughout the Planning Area, range from foreground (0 to ½ mile), to middle ground (½ mile to 2 miles), to background (greater than 2 miles). Owing to the flat topography, views within the urban areas from the roadway consist of open space (such as in parks), commercial uses, and residential areas with the desert and mountain ranges in the background. Roadways along the periphery of the City of Ridgecrest provide uninhibited views of the surrounding upper Mojave Desert and mountain ranges.

State Scenic Highways. The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) identifies several elements that define a State Scenic Highway. The scenic designation of the highway may depend on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. For an eligible scenic roadway to be officially designated as a State Scenic Highway the local agency must adopt a scenic corridor protection program and apply to Caltrans for scenic highway approval. Kern County does not contain any Caltrans designated scenic corridors. However, State Highway 14 and State Highway 58 are eligible for designation as State Scenic Highways and are located south, west, and east of the City.

Urban Landscapes. The City's urban landscape is also considered an important aesthetic resource. The City is characterized by low rise buildings (one or two stories), lower density residential, and commercial uses surrounded by vast open space. Higher intensity development (commercial, office, civic, and institutional uses) lies adjacent to primary thoroughfares such as Ridgecrest Boulevard, Highway 178, Bowman Road, and China Lake Boulevard. Less intensive uses, including rural residential and natural open space, are located on the urban fringe of the City. Urban parks that provide for a variety of uses, including organized sports, can be seen throughout the City.

