

3.10 Aesthetic Resources

Introduction

A visual resource assessment was conducted to determine whether the Project is within the viewshed of any “designated” aesthetic resource and whether there are potential impacts that require measures to mitigate said impacts. This assessment has been conducted in accordance with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) policy and guidance memorandum¹ that specifies a methodology for assessing and mitigating visual impacts.

Viewshed is defined as the geographic area from which a “facility” or project may be seen. An aesthetic resource is a formally designated place visited by the public for the purpose of enjoying its beauty. For the purpose of this assessment, that resource may be designated by a local jurisdiction, a state agency, or a federal agency. Additionally, other scenic resources may be considered significant aesthetic resources for the purposes of the visual assessment based on their unique characteristics.

Scenic and aesthetic resources that would be considered potentially significant as per NYSDEC methodology include but are not limited to:

- any property on or eligible for inclusion on the National or State Register of Historic Places;
- Public parks;
- a State Forest Preserve;
- a site, area, lake, reservoir or highway designated or eligible for designation as scenic;
- designated trails;
- locally designated historic resources..

As per the NYSDEC guidance document, the mere visibility of a project does not alone create an adverse visual impact. Visual impact occurs when there is a demonstrated detrimental effect on the public enjoyment of an aesthetic resource. Variables associated with the actual visual experience include, but are not limited to context (is the project in stark contrast to its surrounding landscape), atmospheric perspective (diminishing clarity and contrast of view due to atmospheric interference), and size perspective (reduction of apparent size of objects as distance increases). Visual impact occurs when distance, perspective, or context, do not adequately reduce the visibility of a project from a designated aesthetic resource. Where this occurs, mitigation measures may be necessary.

The Town of Marlboro Hamlet Master Plan (2010) was consulted to determine whether any specific properties or businesses have been identified as a locally important resource. In addition, the document was consulted to identify any design standards that may apply to the subject property. This is discussed further below.

¹ NYSDEC, "Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts", Program Policy DEP-00-2, NYSDEC Division of Environmental Permits, July 2000.

3.10.1 Existing Conditions

Character of the Project Site and Its Surrounds

The project site is located along Dock Road. Presently, the site is vacant except for a two-family dwelling which exists on one of the project parcels. On the south side of the project site, the property is wooded and slopes moderately to steeply down to Lattintown Creek. On the north side of Dock Road, vegetation and topography obscure views into the project site. The project site itself is a combination of successional woodland species along the steeper slopes on the periphery of the site, and scrubby vegetation in those areas that were formerly mined. The area that would be developed is located on a plateau elevated above Dock Road by some 20 to 70 feet. The plateau is generally at an elevation of 90 to 100 feet above mean sea level, and then the remainder of the site rises approximately 80 feet upwards to the northerly property boundary. The Town's municipal wastewater treatment plant property has frontage on Dock Road, and that property is surrounded by the project site.

Within the project vicinity, the landscape and buildings consist of a diversity of building types with varying architecture and no particular consistent architectural period of construction. The Marlboro hamlet surrounds the project site and various buildings date back to the late 1800s and early 1900s. Older buildings in the hamlet, especially those in proximity to Dock Road's intersection with U.S. Route 9W, were former factory and commercial establishments that grew along Lattintown Creek, harnessing the water power provided by the falls. Some of the older buildings still maintain their original styles and ornamentation, while others have been altered and their facades modernized, e.g., vinyl siding. Buildings have wood clapboard siding, shingle siding, vinyl siding and/or brick. Buildings range from 1-story to 3 stories. The Raccoon Saloon building is one that still has many of its original elements and is Victorian style, with Second Empire influences, e.g., mansard roof, double bracket cornices, patterned roof, arches above dormers, etc. Other buildings, e.g., Key Bank, exhibit modern architecture. Several buildings are utilitarian and unadorned, e.g., automotive garages. Except within the immediate commercial core of the hamlet where there are several row style buildings, most buildings are situated on individual lots with small yards surrounding them.

Dock Road still maintains a rural character in places, with its narrow pavement width and stone walls visible at its intersection with U.S. Route 9W. U.S. Route 9W is primarily utilitarian and unadorned, i.e., there are no street lights, street trees, sidewalks or cohesive streetscape amenities in the project vicinity.

Designated Scenic Resources

A variety of published resources were reviewed to determine whether there are any publicly accessible local, county or state-designated aesthetic resources of importance in the project vicinity from which the project would potentially be visible. Based on a review of these resources, the following locations were identified and reviewed to determine whether the project site would be visible from, or within the viewshed, of these resources. The distance of the resource from the project site is noted below:

- Hudson River - 1000 feet
- Bowdoin Park, Poughkeepsie (1.1 miles)
- Christ Episcopal Church (08NR05879) - 426 Old Post Road, Marlboro (2,000 feet)
- Dubois Sarles Octagon House (02NR04926) - 16 South Street, Marlboro (2,500 feet)
- Chapel Hill Bible Church (03NR05096) - 49 Bingham Road, Marlboro (1.6 miles)
- Gomez Mill House (90NR02305) - Mill House Road, Newburgh (1.4 miles)

The site's visibility from these locations is discussed below.

Marlboro Hamlet Plan

The project site is situated within the Marlboro hamlet which was the subject of a master plan completed in 2010. The project site is located within a "hamlet expansion" area. The hamlet plan recommends that development within hamlet expansion areas conform to traditional neighborhood development, or "TND" concepts. Warwick Grove, located in the Town of Warwick, is cited as a residential development that has design qualities that illustrate TND concepts. These qualities include:

- *interconnected streets;*
- *buildings oriented to a main street;*
- *pedestrian scale architecture with front porches;*
- *small front and side yard setbacks;*
- *sidewalks;*
- *alleyways for garage access;*
- *open space with public amenities.*

The sample photos of the Warwick Grove project illustrate single-family residences that are illustrative of the qualities described above.

3.10.2 Potential Impacts

Project Site

The project site, consisting of a former mine site which is vacant and a two-family dwelling situated on it, is proposed to be redeveloped for a 137-unit townhouse development. The two-family dwelling will be demolished to construct an attractive landscaped boulevard entrance that will give access to it. The concept plan for the development is illustrated in Figure 2-3a of the DGEIS. As the applicant is pursuing a rezoning of the site only, details regarding the proposed architectural styles or elements of the buildings are undefined at this time. The buildings themselves will consist of 4 to 6 townhouse units with a one car garage facing to the internal road within the development. Building heights will be up to 35 feet, conforming to the bulk standards set forth for multiple dwellings in the "R" district. Buildings would be separated a minimum distance of 30 feet.

Construction of a residential development on this site requires that the sewer district's wastewater treatment plant be expanded or that a package treatment plant be constructed to serve the site. The concept for the site, including its layout and proposed housing type, is necessary to feasibly construct a residential development and cover the costs to expand the necessary infrastructure. The applicant is proposing a townhouse development and not a single-family neighborhood - to the extent possible with this type of housing development, TND principles will be applied. A sidewalk will be introduced into the development, which will connect to the U.S. Route 9W right-of-way. In addition, the project will incorporate a walking trail at the top of the slope near the site's boundary with the elementary school property. Thus, it will introduce an open space amenity to the site. Front porches can be incorporated into the design of the townhomes, and the garages could be recessed so that the front porch is the dominant element from the streetscape. Small front yard and side yard setbacks are proposed. The buildings are oriented to a system of internal roads in the development. The architecture of the buildings will incorporate design elements that reflect the vernacular architecture of the older residential dwellings in the hamlet area. The buildings will be designed with darker earthtone colors to help blend the buildings into the surrounding landscape.

Alleyways would introduce additional impervious surface area to the site, and would require larger stormwater basins to address the additional runoff - alleys are not proposed. In order to reclaim the overall site for a residential development, the site will be generously landscaped as shown in a concept landscape plan illustrated in Figure 2-4. This will provide visual interest within the landscape and screen views of the buildings from the river and more distant viewing locations as the vegetation matures. Because of the topographic elevation of the plateau on which the units will be constructed, the buildings' heights will not exceed the highest point of the site along its northerly property boundary.

The landscape plan will also aid in screening views of the municipal wastewater treatment plant from the Dockside development. Coniferous trees will be placed between the internal road and the WWTP property line to ensure this objective is met.

The project will require that some improvements be made to Dock Road near its intersection with U.S. Route 9W to improve the existing road grades. The improvements will not impact the existing stone walls located along the road's edge. Dock Road's existing visual character will be maintained.

Designated Scenic Resources

The following describes the various designated aesthetic resources in proximity to the site, and whether or not the project site will be visible from the resource. A field visit was conducted on April 14, 2011, during "off leaf" conditions and supplemented by field visits conducted in June 2011 to determine whether the site would be visible from the various vantage points.

Hudson River

The Hudson River is located approximately 1,000 feet east of the project site. The New York State Department of State Division of Coastal Resources was consulted to determine whether the project site is located in an area identified as a Scenic Area of Statewide Significance (SASS). As stated on the agency website, the Division of Coastal Resources has developed a scenic assessment program that identifies the scenic qualities of coastal landscapes, evaluates them against criteria for determining aesthetic significance, and recommends areas for designation by the Department as Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance (SASS). SASS

designation protects scenic landscapes through review of projects requiring State or federal actions, including direct actions, permits, or funding. The project site is not located in a designated SASS. Although the project site will be visible from the river, the site is located in a relatively small narrow valley through which Lattintown Creek discharges. The tops of the northerly and southerly banks along the Hudson River and vegetation located on these banks will limit views of the site from points farther north or south along the river. The site will be visible primarily from points due east of it (refer to Bowdoin Park discussion below).

While the project site will be visible from the river, the townhouse buildings will not introduce buildings or uses that are in stark contrast to the uses and buildings around it. Dockside will be an extension of the Marlboro hamlet, and the hamlet's buildings are visible around and above the project site.

Bowdoin County Park

Bowdoin Park is a Dutchess County-owned and maintained park located directly east and across the river from the project site. The project site is located approximately one (1) mile from the banks of the park. According to the Dutchess County website, Bowdoin Park is a 301-acre park in the Town of Poughkeepsie on Sheafe Road. Swimming, boating, picnicking, hiking, camping, miniature golf, pavilion, playgrounds, and ball fields are located there.

The project site will be partially visible during on-leaf conditions, and will be visible during off-leaf conditions. During on-leaf conditions, trees and vegetation along the slopes of the site that will remain undisturbed will screen views of the site. In addition, intervening vegetation on surrounding properties will also aid in screening views. However, during off leaf conditions, there will be limited coniferous vegetation to screen views of the site from Bowdoin Park.

The project site will be located one mile from Bowdoin Park - distance will mitigate visibility of the site as the buildings appear more a part of the landscape with distance. The narrow part of the site is oriented east-west, so the views of the site will not be as expansive compared to viewing the site along its full expanse. As mentioned previously, the dwellings will be situated on a plateau and below the topmost vegetated areas of the site. The buildings will not be silhouetted against the sky. Dockside is surrounded by existing developed areas within the Marlboro hamlet that are also visible from the park - the project will not be in stark contrast to its surrounds.

Christ Episcopal Church (08NR05879)

Christ Episcopal Church is located along the southerly boundary of the Marlboro hamlet at 426 Old Post Road. The Church is approximately 2,000 feet south and west of the project site and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. According to the nomination form, the church and its contributing structures date to the 1840s. The church was designed by Richard Upjohn & Co. and was constructed in 1858. It is one of the smaller, Gothic revival churches popularized by Upjohn in the United States. The stained glass windows were designed by Helen Maitland Armstrong. The church retains a high level of its original architectural integrity. The church was placed on the National Register in 2010.

A review of aerial photography indicates that the project site will not be visible from the historic site as a result of intervening vegetation.

Dubois Sarles Octagon House (02NR04926)

The Dubois Sarles Octagon House is located at 16 South Street in Marlboro. It is approximately 2,500 feet south and west of the project site. The house was built in 1850 and is an eight-sided two story dwelling. The home design is a rare intact example of this house type within the Hudson Valley area. The home was listed on the National Register in 2002.

The project site is not anticipated to be visible from this National Register site due to intervening vegetation and existing buildings located between the Octagon House and the project site. The project will not be situated within any viewshed that includes this property.

Chapel Hill Bible Church (03NR05096)

Chapel Hill Bible Church (the former Amity Baptist Church) is located at 49 Bingham Road in Marlborough. It was originally constructed in 1860 in New York City and was disassembled and brought to its site in 1905. Most of the exterior elements of the building are original to the 1860 building although modifications have been made to the original structure. The site is located approximately 1.6 miles south and west of the project site.

Based on a review of aerial photos and line of sight profiles, the project site will not be visible from this location.

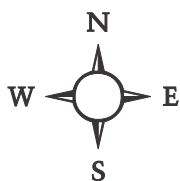
Gomez Mill House (90NR02305)

Mill House is located on Mill House Road in the Town of Newburgh just over the Town of Marlborough/Newburgh town line. The site is located approximately 1.4 miles south and slightly west of the project site. According to the Gomez Foundation for Mill House organization, Early American Jewish leader, Luis Moses Gomez, built a fieldstone blockhouse to conduct trade and maintain provisions on his 6,500 acre property in the Mid-Hudson region as an extension of his successful enterprises in colonial New York. From these roots and through nearly 300 years of American history, Gomez Mill House evolved as home to American Revolutionary patriot and Orange County leader, Wolfert Acker; 19th century gentleman farmer and conservationist, William Henry Armstrong; Arts and Crafts artisan and paper historian Dard Hunter; and 20th century social activist, Martha Gruening.

Based on a review of aerial photography and preparation of a line of sight profile, the project site will not be visible from this National Register site.

3.10.3 Mitigation Measures

The project will not have any impact on existing scenic resources. The proposed development would incorporate design measures described above to make the project compatible with the traditional vernacular buildings within the hamlet and to lessen its visibility from the river and other viewing points to the east of the site. Adhering to these design standards will eliminate any potential for adverse impacts to scenic resources.



LEGEND

- Project Site
- ★ Viewpoints

Figure 3.10-1: Visual Survey
Dockside at Marlborough

Town of Marlborough, Orange County, New York
Map: USGS 7.5-minute Topographic Map, Wappingers Falls Quad
Scale: 1" = 2,000'