

3.13 VISUAL QUALITY

3.13.1 Regulatory Setting

3.13.1.1 State and Regional

California Environmental Quality Act

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) applies to any project that would result in a physical change of the Study Area, including alteration of land use, air quality, noise or views. With regard to views and visual quality, CEQA specifically provides for the “...enjoyment of aesthetic, natural, scenic, and historic environmental qualities...” (Section 21001[b]).

California Scenic Highway Program (Senate Bill 1467, Streets and Highways Code Sections 260 to 263)

The California Scenic Highway Program protects and enhances the scenic beauty of the State’s highway system. The program helps to identify portions of the State highway system that require special conservation treatments. Preservation includes adjacent scenic corridors and associated visible natural features. Therefore, any project that may affect the scenic value of an identified scenic corridor is required to consider the provisions of the Program. Preservation includes highways that are designated as scenic and listed as eligible to become State scenic highways.

3.13.1.2 Local

The Study Area includes portions of six local jurisdictions: the cities of Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne, Pomona, Claremont, and Montclair, and a small island portion of unincorporated Los Angeles County. There are no unincorporated lands within or adjacent to the alignment in San Bernardino County. Of these, Los Angeles County and the cities of Glendora, San Dimas, La Verne, and Claremont have policies related to visual resources that are directly applicable to the project. The City of Montclair identifies local mountain ridgelines as the community’s key visual resources but has not outlined any governing policies. Table 3.13-1 outlines these policies.

Los Angeles County

A small unincorporated county “island” abuts the north side of the railroad alignment for a distance of approximately 1,500 feet between Citrus and Barranca Avenues. Bordered on three sides by the City of Glendora, it carries an H5 (single-family residential) classification in the Los Angeles County *East Azusa/Glendora Islands Land Use Policy Draft* (February 2011).

The primary policy document governing aesthetics in the County’s unincorporated areas is the *Los Angeles County General Plan* (dating from 1980 and before). In addition, the *County of Los Angeles Bicycle Master Plan* (March 2012), a component of the Los Angeles County Transportation Element, identifies existing and proposed bike routes that traverse or could traverse the project area in the future.

Table 3.13-1. Local Planning Goals and Policies

Municipality	Planning Document	Applicable Policies
Los Angeles County	<i>Los Angeles County General Plan</i>	<p>Scenic Highways Element overarching goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a scenic highway system that is publically-accessible through a variety of transportation modes. • Preserve and enhance aesthetic resources within scenic corridors. • Key objective: improve intergovernmental coordination and implementation. <p>Conservation and Open Space Element Policies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy 16: Protect visual quality of scenic areas, from public roads, trails and key vantage points. • Policy 30: Develop a system of bikeways, scenic highways, riding and hiking trails. • Policy 34: Encourage the installation and maintenance of pollution-resistant and drought-tolerant plants in urban areas and integrate landscaping and open space into new developments. • Policy 35: Institute tree planting programs while preserving heritage trees. <p>Land Use Element overarching objectives;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage high-quality design that is compatible with and sensitive to the natural and manmade environment. • Encourage a more efficient use of land appropriate to natural, ecological, scenic, cultural and open space resources. • Related policy: Reuse/recycle sites in need of revitalization.
	<i>County of Los Angeles Bicycle Master Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figure 3-10 lists existing bike routes that traverse the Metro Gold Line railroad alignment: Foothill Boulevard, Vermont Avenue, Vista Bonita/Glendora Avenue, and Lone Hill Avenue, Bonita Avenue, Arrow Highway, San Dimas Avenue, Indian Hill Boulevard, Sixth Street and Claremont Boulevard.

Table 3.13-1. Local Planning Goals and Policies (continued)

Municipality	Planning Document	Applicable Policies
City of Glendora	<i>Glendora Community Plan 2025</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals LU-18, LU-20, and LU-21 seek to preserve design compatibility between exiting and new development. • OSR-7 calls for enhancement of the City's trail system and bike trails. • CON-10 requires the preservation of the City's hillside trees and street trees.
City of San Dimas	<i>1990 San Dimas General Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals OS-3 and OS-4 express the City's commitment to providing, developing, and maintaining recreational space including bike, hiking, and equestrian trails, throughout the City. • Goals L-1, L-4, and L-6 support the preservation of the small town atmosphere of San Dimas and the establishment of a train station to support revitalization of downtown San Dimas, in part by promoting more nighttime activity.
City of La Verne	<i>City of La Verne General Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goal 3 of the Resource Management Element identifies bike routes and requires the protection of scenic vistas, native trees, and heritage landscape features. • Goals 1, 2, and 3 of the Community Design Element emphasize the protection of La Verne's design character and ambiance through the protection of the urban forest (e.g., preservation of and/or replacement of deodar cedar trees).
	<i>Draft Old Town La Verne Specific Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development standards including maximum height, lot size, setbacks, and parking requirements.
City of Pomona	<i>City of Pomona General Plan Public Review Draft (March 2011)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not designate official scenic corridors or scenic vistas, but Open Space Network Element recommends establishing greenbelts outside the project area, along White Avenue and South Garey Avenue.
City of Claremont	<i>City of Claremont General Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Goals 2-1, 2-3, 2-5, 2-11, and 2-12 express concerns for the preservation of the City's distinctive small town, pedestrian-oriented design character. • Goals 5-1, 5-8, and 5-11 require protection of its urban forest and views of the local mountains, which are considered prime visual resources.
	<i>Claremont Village Design Plan and Village Expansion Specific Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasizes the need for pedestrian-oriented development and references the Citrus Regional Bikeway.
City of Montclair	<i>City of Montclair General Plan (1999)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifies local mountain ridgelines as the community's key visual resources. However, no scenic vistas, view corridors, or scenic highways are identified.

Source: ICF International. July 2011 and June 2012.

The Los Angeles County General Plan includes *1965 Regional Recreation Areas Plan*, which contains a list of potential scenic corridors that have not yet been fully studied for adoption as scenic highways, and the Scenic Highways (October 1974), Conservation and Open Space (November 1980), and Land Use (November 1980) Elements that contain policies governing aesthetics.

The Scenic Highways Element's three overarching goals are: 1) the creation of a scenic highway system that can be accessed by the public through a variety of transportation modes, 2) establishment of better scenic corridor linkages with recreational sites, and 3) the "preservation and enhancement of aesthetic resources within scenic corridors." The key objectives include improving scenic highway-related coordination and implementation "at all levels of government" and encouraging local governments to incorporate scenic routes into their local scenic highway programs.

Only one officially designated scenic highway is listed in the Scenic Highways Element—Angeles Crest Highway (State Route [SR] 2), located in the Angeles National Forest. Four other potential scenic routes are identified for evaluation and possible future designation: SR-210/SR-57 between SR-60 and the Foothill Freeway (in Glendora); Glendora Mountain Road (Glendora and the Angeles National Forest); and Mills Avenue/Mt. Baldy Road (in Claremont, between the Foothill Freeway and Glendora Ridge Road). Of these, only SR-210 traverses the project alignment. The other routes range in distance from one to three miles north of the alignment. A prime objective of the Conservation and Open Space Element is preservation and protection of "sites of historical, archaeological, scenic and scientific value." Four policies are germane to the project: 1) protecting the "visual quality of scenic areas, including ridgelines and scenic views from public roads, trails, and key vantage points" (Policy 16); 2) developing "a system of bikeways, scenic highways, and riding and hiking trails" while linking recreation sites, where possible (Policy 30); 3) encouraging the installation and maintenance of "pollution-resistant and drought-tolerant plants in urban areas" while integrating landscaping and open space into new developments (Policy 34); and 3) supporting both the preservation of heritage trees and tree planting programs (Policy 35).

In the Land Use Element, two objectives address aesthetic concerns. These include encouraging high-quality design that is "compatible and sensitive to" both the natural and manmade environment and encouraging a more efficient use of land "sensitive to natural, ecological, scenic, cultural, and open space resources." Related policies include "promoting the more intensive reuse/recycling of sites in need of revitalization" and promoting "compatible land use arrangements that reduce reliance on the private automobile in order to minimize related social, economic and environmental costs." The Land Use Element also addresses scenic highway design criteria, including a policy requiring the placement or screening of all unsightly features to eliminate or reduce visibility from scenic highways.

The *County of Los Angeles Bicycle Master Plan* offers a "vision for a diverse bicycle system of interconnected bicycle corridors, support facilities, and programs to make bicycling more practical and desirable." It lists a number of existing and potential bike routes that traverse the Metro Gold Line railroad alignment, including: Foothill Boulevard, Vermont Avenue, Vista Bonita/Glendora Avenue, Lone Hill Avenue in Glendora, Bonita Avenue, Arrow Highway, San Dimas Avenue in San Dimas, Indian Hill Boulevard, Sixth Street, and Claremont Boulevard in Claremont (*County of Los Angeles Bicycle Master Plan*. Figure 3-10: "Existing Bicycle Network").

City of Glendora

The *Glendora Community Plan 2025* (general plan) is the primary policy document governing aesthetics in the City of Glendora. Additional policy direction regarding community design and aesthetics is provided in a series of specific plans, including the *Route 66 Corridor Specific Plan*, *Village on the Green*

Specific Plan, and *Glendora Commercial Plan*, which provide development performance standards that amplify the policies presented in the community plan.

Four of the Elements in the *Glendora Community Plan 2025* touch upon aesthetics and scenic quality. However, few of the plan goals and policies are directly germane to the Metro Gold Line Extension project. The Circulation Element does classify Glendora Avenue, extending south from Glendora Avenue past the Glendora station and parking structure location to Arrow Highway, as a local Class III bike route. Because it traverses downtown Glendora, it would provide direct access to the proposed Glendora station and eventually link with the regional bikeway network; potential users would include commuting and recreational bicyclists—potentially highly sensitive viewer groups.

Although no scenic highways or scenic routes are included in the Circulation Element, certain Circulation Element policies are directly related to the Metro Gold Line Extension project, including the City’s stated preference for a grade-separated crossing at the diagonal Grand Avenue/Foothill Boulevard intersection to reduce congestion and enhance safety (*Glendora Community Plan 2025*: Circulation Element).

Goals in the Land Use Element reference scenic trails. However, all scenic trails are located in parks at the base of Angeles National Forest foothills; at distances of approximately three miles from the project corridor and four miles from the proposed Glendora station location.

The goal of preserving neighborhood character by achieving better design compatibility between existing and new development receives repeated mention (Land Use Element Goals LU-18 and LU-20 through LU-21 and related policies). The Open Space Element includes the goal of enhancing development of the City’s trail system throughout the community, including creating bike trails, such as a trail along Glendora Avenue. Preserving the City’s hillside trees and street trees is highlighted in the Conservation Element.

City of San Dimas

The *1990 San Dimas General Plan* and the *San Dimas Design Guidelines Town Core* (n.d.) are the primary policy documents governing aesthetics in San Dimas. *San Dimas Design Guidelines Town Core* focuses on architectural design specifics for infill commercial and residential construction in the city’s center; its recommendations are not directly germane to the proposed rail project.

Scenic views and corridors are referenced in the Open Space Element of the General Plan. The goals emphasize that views of the foothills and nearby canyons are fundamental community visual resources. Foothill Boulevard, San Dimas Avenue, and Walnut Avenue are designated as local scenic highways. Both Walnut and San Dimas Avenues border the proposed San Dimas station and parking structure; these streets are directly related to the Metro Gold Line Extension project because of their location. Open Space Element Goals OS-3 and OS-4 and related objectives express the City’s commitment to providing, developing, and maintaining recreational space, including bike, hiking, and equestrian trails throughout San Dimas.

The Circulation Element includes three goals that are germane to the proposed Metro Gold Line Extension project, including working with adjoining municipalities and LACMTA to establish a public transportation system that includes rail commuter facilities and provides safe alternatives to travel by automobile, such as “a system of bike routes to meet the needs of local and commuter cyclists” (Goals C-2 through C-3 and related Objectives). Goals in the Land Use Element underscore the commitment to preserving the small town atmosphere of San Dimas. They also link the establishment of a train station to

the revitalization of San Dimas' downtown as additional train service is considered a strategy for promoting more nighttime activity there (Goals L-1, L-4 and L-6 and related Objectives).

City of La Verne

The *City of La Verne General Plan* (1998) is the primary policy document governing aesthetics in the City. The project right-of-way also falls within the Arrow Corridor Specific Plan area and the Central City Redevelopment Project area. The General Plan's Transportation Element sets the goal of achieving a comprehensive transportation system that "encourages Metrolink commuter rail system expansion" as one of its primary goals. In addition, it designates Arrow Highway as a bike route and sets "improving the appearance of railroad track corridors" within the City as a priority.

The identification of bike routes and the protection of scenic vistas, native trees, and heritage landscape features are the essential aesthetics-related goals presented in the Resource Management Element. Several goals directly related to the Metro Gold Line project also are included in the Noise Element, including a commitment to protecting the community from train noise through the potential use of landscaped sound walls, double-glazed windows, rail operations procedures, other design mitigation measures.

The majority of the policies related to aesthetics are contained in the Community Design Element, which emphasizes the protection of La Verne's design character and ambiance as a fundamental goal. The protection of the City's distinctive urban forest is also highlighted in several of the goals, including the preservation of and/or replacement of deodar cedar trees (*Cedrus deodara*) – the primary tree species occurring along the Arrow Highway Metro Gold Line/Burlington Northern Santa Fe (BNSF) right-of-way between San Dimas Canyon Road and D Street. Table CD-4, "Native and Protected Species," lists the deodar cedar as one of the City's 15 native and protected species.

City of Pomona

The *City of Pomona Draft General Plan Public Review* (March 2011) contains goals and policies focused on economic revitalization and improved mobility; rail transportation is viewed as one of the fundamental means of achieving the City's larger revitalization goal. The Economic Development Element, for example, highlights the North Pomona Metrolink/Metro Gold Line station area as a potential location for incubating new green and bio-tech industries and a transit-oriented (TOD) district that would include housing as part of a mixed-use development. The Implementation Element's Goals and Policies of the General Plan provides more TOD-related policy on the North Pomona station location. In addition, this section sets design policy related to train noise through "noise mitigation measures, including, but not limited to, the use of double-paned soundproof windows near Metrolink stations to allow [TOD] to include office and residential uses."

Although the General Plan does not propose official scenic corridors or scenic vista designations, the Open Space Network Element recommends the establishment of greenbelts along White Avenue (from Fairplex south to I-10) and along South Garey Avenue. The Future Open Space Network section of the General Plan shows the area abutting the North Pomona Metrolink/Metro Gold Line station on the south as a potential site for the development of pocket parks. In the Mobility and Access Element, the Citrus Regional Bikeway is referenced as part of a regional bikeway system that would parallel the Metrolink/BNSF railroad right-of-way. The bike route would provide direct access to the proposed Pomona Metro Gold Line station and link it to the regional bikeway system. Potential users would include commuting bicyclists as well as recreational bicyclists—potential highly sensitive viewer groups.

City of Claremont

The *City of Claremont General Plan* (2009) is the primary policy document governing aesthetics in Claremont. Additional policy direction regarding community design and aesthetics is provided in a series of neighborhood plans, including the *Claremont Village Design Plan* (1987) and the *Village Expansion Specific Plan* (2001). A fundamental concern expressed throughout the *Claremont General Plan* is preserving the City’s distinctive small-town, pedestrian-oriented design character (Land Use Element Goals 2-1, 2-3, 2-5, 2-11, and 2-12 and related policies). In addition, its extensive urban forest and views to the local mountains are considered prime visual resources. Protection of these resources is established through a number of the General Plan’s goals and policies. Claremont Village, which borders the Claremont Metrolink/Metro Gold Line station immediately to the north, is designated as an activity node in the General Plan, and pedestrian linkages to and from the Claremont station are proposed.

The Community Mobility Element contains several goals and policies relevant to the Metro Gold Line. Claremont Depot, and the Metrolink, Foothill Transit, and Metro Gold Line transit modes housed on the station site, are referenced as “important legacy elements” that connect the past, present, and future viability of the community. Also referenced is the Citrus Regional Bikeway, which utilizes Bonita Avenue and 1st Street, adjoining the Claremont station as its primary route through Claremont to Claremont Boulevard. As contemplated, the bike route would provide direct access to the proposed Claremont Metro Gold Line station and link it with the regional bikeway network. Hence, its potential users would include commuting bicyclists as well as recreational bicyclists—potential highly sensitive viewer groups. Other mobility goals include supporting the regional transportation network, including the Metro Gold Line extension to Claremont, and working to coordinate the different modes of travel and facilitate easy multi-modal transfers (Community Mobility Goal 4-1 and related policies; Goal 4-4 and related policies). The presence of the Claremont station is conceived as an opportunity for nearby TOD projects (Community Mobility Goal 4-4, Policy 4-4-5).

The *Claremont Village Expansion Specific Plan* and the *Village Design Plan* both emphasize the need for encouraging pedestrian-oriented development, accommodating the Citrus Regional Bikeway, and capitalizing on proximity to the station.

City of Montclair

The *Montclair General Plan* (1999) designates the areas bordering the Montclair station for Planned Development. Montclair’s Circulation Element promotes the provision of public transit to link strategic locations, such as the Montclair Plaza Shopping Center and the Montclair Transcenter, with the (then-proposed) Metrolink station.

The General Plan identifies local mountain ridgelines as the community’s key visual resources. However, no scenic vistas, view corridors, or scenic highways are identified within the City’s corporate boundaries. The protection of views to Foothill Boulevard, part of historic Route 66 (located in Upland and unincorporated Los Angeles County, 1.5 miles north of the Montclair station location) and Mt. Baldy Road (in the mountains within the Angeles National Forest, approximately 5.5 miles north of the Montclair station location), is proposed.

Germane to the area bordering the Montclair station on the south and north, the North Montclair Downtown Specific Plan amplifies the policies of the General Plan. The plans call for the development of a number of large residential communities to capitalize on the proximity of the station and Montclair Plaza. These include “The Paseos” project as well as the Arrow Station Development.

3.13.2 Existing Conditions

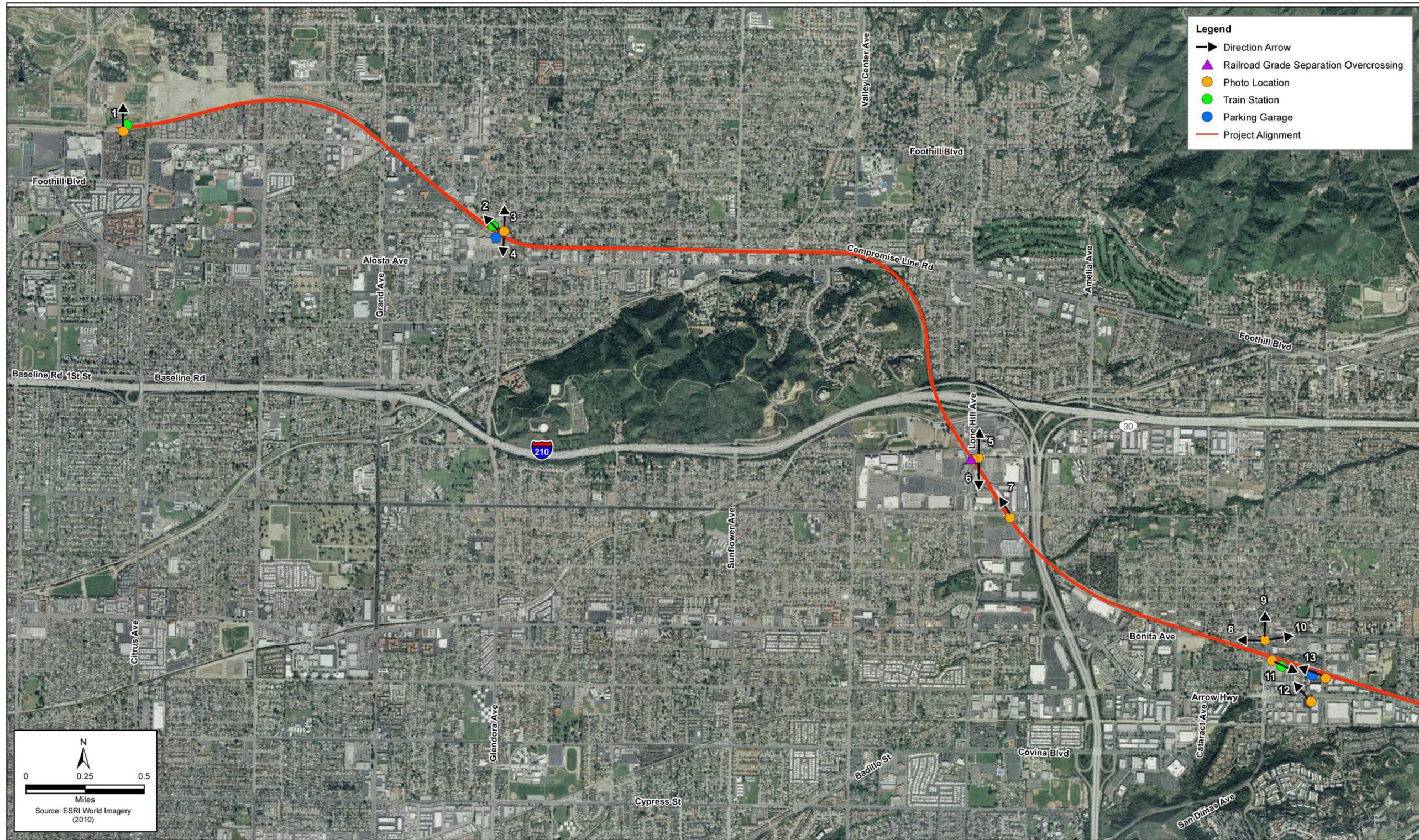
3.13.2.1 Regional Setting

As is typical of many urban areas in Southern California, industrial and commercial uses predominate areas adjacent to the railroad corridor. Historically, these uses were dependent on railroad proximity in order to move manufactured goods to markets on freight lines. This pattern is present in La Verne, Pomona, Montclair, and the eastern portion of San Dimas. Along smaller portions of the corridor—Glendora, Claremont, and the western portion of the San Dimas—a mix of commercial and residential uses are predominant adjacent to the railroad corridor. North-facing views of the San Gabriel Mountains are the key scenic resource along the project corridor and are located approximately 1.5 to 5.5 miles from the alignment at various points.

A few locally designated scenic corridors in the region include San Dimas Avenue, Glendora Avenue, and historic U.S. Route 66. Most of the project corridor lies on flat or gently sloped land. Areas of enhanced landscaping, including dense clusters of native and ornamental trees, offer visual variety and interest along segments of the project corridor. These include the deodar cedar trees that screen the railroad right-of-way in La Verne and the dense stands of trees in the western portion of San Dimas and Claremont.

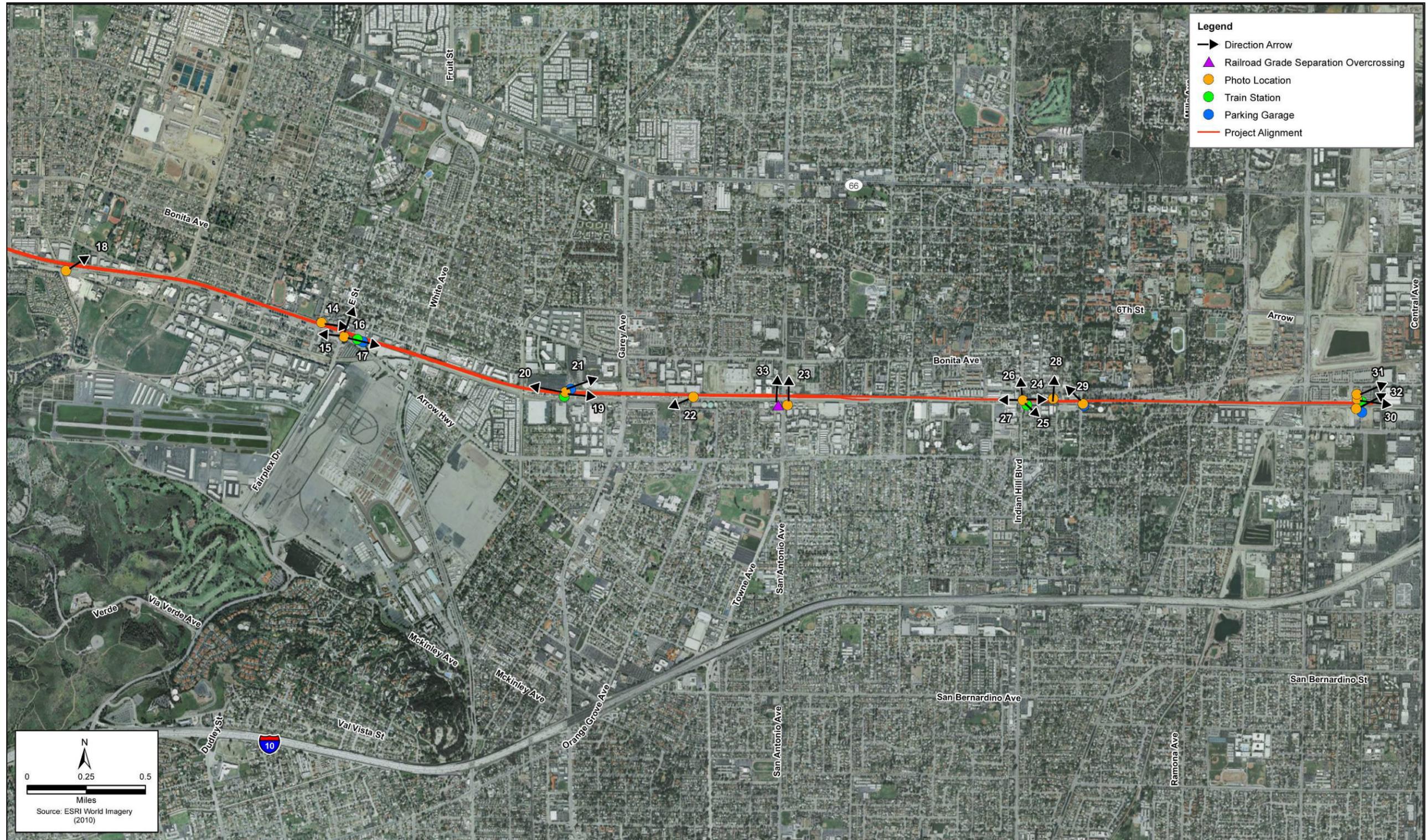
3.13.2.2 Local Setting

This section discusses the visual character and quality along the project corridor and provides photographic documentation of views at representative project alignment locations (Figure 3.13-1 through Figure 3.13-33). The locations of the vantage points in the photographs are also shown in Figure 3.13-1 and Figure 3.13-2.



Source: ICF, 2012

Figure 3.13-1. Key Observation Viewing Points and Visual Assessment Units (1 of 2)



Source: ICF, 2012

Figure 3.13-2. Key Observation Viewing Points and Visual Assessment Units (2 of 2)

City of Glendora

In the western portion of Glendora, the alignment would traverse a residential area and a former nursery site (east of Citrus Avenue). Commercial and residential uses predominate near Grand Avenue. Between Glendora Avenue and Vermont Avenue, the right-of-way and abutting vacant land create a broad, open expanse that extends several hundred feet west and southwest from Glendora Avenue to Vermont Avenue. Several evergreen trees along the western side of Glendora Avenue, as well as scattered clusters of shrubbery, serve to partially screen the right-of-way from some of the west-facing vantages east of Glendora Avenue (Figure 3.13-3). Development surrounding the proposed light rail station at Glendora Avenue includes community-scale retail and commercial to the south, and a post office to the north, dating from 1980 (Figure 3.13-4). Northeast of Glendora Avenue are residential neighborhoods (Figure 3.13-5). Based on a review of the *Glendora Community Plan 2025*, no designated or proposed scenic vistas or other scenic resources are located in this setting.

East of Glendora Avenue, the railroad alignment travels in a nearly due-east direction. It is bordered on the north by single-family residences that front Lemon Avenue and on the south by chiefly commercial development along historic U.S. Route 66 (Alosta Avenue), established in 1926. Today it is a surviving portion of the old U.S. highway system that linked Chicago with Los Angeles across eight states. A diverse array of auto service-related businesses, motels, and small family-owned highway-oriented businesses on small parcels characterize the development along this highway. At historic U.S. Route 66, the Build Alternative crosses over an existing railroad bridge before heading south towards I-210. Land uses within the *Route 66 Corridor Specific Plan* area about the project right-of-way – they are largely commercial and of disparate design quality. The buildings are primarily oriented away from the right-of-way, with views of the right-of-way from historic Route 66 generally limited. The existing railroad bridge is a visual landmark and acts as an entry portal to the *Route 66 Corridor Specific Plan*; the bridge's sign with the City's name in large, black letters.

In the eastern portion of the city, adjoining the location of the proposed flyover structure at Lone Hill Avenue north of Gladstone Street, the Build Alternative project right-of-way traverses an urbanized setting, which is overwhelmingly characterized by regional-scale retail (including Home Depot and Costco stores), an automobile showroom district, and light industrial development (Figure 3.13-6, Figure 3.13-7, and Figure 3.13-8). A small number of single- and small multi-family residences are located along the north side of Gladstone Street approximately 200 feet east of Lone Hill Avenue, and along the south side, east across the project alignment from the Costco store. The north-facing views of the mountains from the residences along Gladstone Street are moderately vivid and only partly obscured by the intervening commercial and industrial development.

City of San Dimas

In eastern San Dimas between the State Route 57 freeway and North Eucla Avenue, single-family residences adjoin the north side of the corridor. The Foothill Village Shopping Center abuts the southern side. No designated scenic vistas exist in this setting. At Amelia Avenue, the hilly terrain provides topographic relief, and the presence of numerous trees is the primary visual resource in close- and mid-range views across this portion of the alignment. The old San Dimas business and residential district is located along Bonita Avenue, between Cataract and San Dimas Avenues.



Source: ICF International. April 2011.

Figure 3.13-3. Glendora—Station Site (Glendora Avenue at Vista Bonita)
(view looking northwest)



Source: ICF International. April 2011.

Figure 3.13-4. Glendora—Glendora Avenue north of the Station Site
(view looking northwest)



Source: ICF International. April 2011.

Figure 3.13-5. Glendora—Glendora Avenue and Railroad Crossing
(view looking south)



Source: ICF International. April 2011.

Figure 3.13-6. Glendora—Lone Hill Avenue
(view looking north)



Source: ICF International. May 2012.

Figure 3.13-7. Glendora—Lone Hill Avenue
(view looking south)



Source: ICF International. May 2012.

Figure 3.13-8. Railroad Right-of-Way at Gladstone Avenue
(looking northward to Lone Hill)