

# VISUAL IMPACT STUDY (VIS)

for the

# WILDER LAKE ESTATE RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Prepared for H. Bye Construction Limited  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction .....	1
General Site Observations.....	2
Visual Assessment .....	3
Conclusions.....	11
Appendices	
Figure 1: Wilder Lake Estate Residential Development Location Map	
Figure 2: Proposed Wilder Lake Estate Residential Development	
Figure 3: Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority Hazard Lands	
Figure 4: Photograph Locations	
Figure 5: Visibility of Development Site From Across Wilder Lake	

# INTRODUCTION

Aboud & Associates Inc. was retained by H. Bye Construction Limited to conduct a Visual Impact Study (VIS) in support of a proposed residential development on Wilder Lake. The proposed development is located within the Township of Southgate in Grey County, southeast of Durham, Ontario, see **Figure 1**. The property occupies the east half of an existing golf course and is approximately 20 hectares in size. The development is comprised of twenty-nine lots, with 10 having frontage on Lake Wilder (1 & 5 through 12). Homes must be offset a minimum 30m from the edge of Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority designated Hazard Lands. See **Figure 2** for preliminary development site plan.

Schedule A in the Grey County Official Plan designates this property as ‘Inland Lakes and Shorelines’, ‘Rural’ and ‘Hazard Lands’. Schedule B of the County Plan also identifies ‘Aggregate Resource Area’ designation within the limits of the proposed development. In addition, Appendix B of the County Plan identifies an existing watercourse on the property, as well as ‘Significant Woodlands’ and an ‘Area of Natural and Scientific Interest’. The property is zoned Recreational Commercial (C5-45), Environmental Protection (EP) and Development (D) according to the Township zoning By-laws.

The Township of Southgate also specifically identifies the requirement for a VIS when more than two new lots are proposed fronting an inland lake. The policy reads as follows:

## “5.0 Rural Area Designations

### 5.4 Inland Lakes

#### 5.4.2 Development Policies

.4 Where the creation of more than two new lots is proposed on any lands abutting Wilder Lake, an Environmental Impact Study shall be completed demonstrating that no negative impacts on the lake would result from the development. In addition to an Environmental Impact Study, as defined in Section 6.5.8, the following shall be incorporated: the delineation of hazard lands; refuse disposal; health and safety issues, including emergency services; accessibility, including parking and docking; and measures to mitigate impacts on visual attributes as assessed by a Visual Impact Study, prepared by a qualified professional.

For the purposes of this Policy, a Visual Impact Study (VIS) is a study prepared by a qualified professional to assess the visual impacts of a development proposal and to propose measures to mitigate any adverse impacts associated with the development on the surrounding visual environment. Components of the VIS generally include, but are not limited to:

- (i) a description of the development setting and view shed (s);
- (ii) identification of key views for visual assessment; and
- (iii) proposed methods to mitigate adverse visual impacts.”<sup>1</sup>

1 Township of Southgate Official Plan, Adopted by Council February 15, 2006; Amended June 10, 2008.

<https://southgate.civicweb.net/document/444/Consolidated%20Southgate%20OP%20Text.pdf?handle=5D6B6BED0E5A476183FEDC0EB26C31D7>

# GENERAL SITE OBSERVATIONS

Our field work was conducted on August 2, 2018. The weather conditions were sunny, warm with excellent visibility for photographs. Photographs were taken at numerous locations on the property toward Wilder Lake, as well as from across the lake towards the subject property where permission to access private property was granted by residents. These photographs are used to confirm and analyze visual impact of the proposed development. Locations and directions of photographs are noted on [Figure 4](#).

The site, Homestead Resort, is currently operated as an 18-hole golf course with club house and restaurant, as well as lake side cottage rentals. Access to the site is from Homestead Road, an unpaved road connected to Southgate Township Road 26. Surrounding uses include agriculture, Wilder Lake and woodland. The site is comprised of rolling topography with a large grade difference between the shoreline of Wilder Lake and the entry road and existing clubhouse to remain. There is an access road connecting Homestead Road to the clubhouse, and from the clubhouse to the lake where there is an existing dock. From the dock there is a small laneway running parallel to the lake edge providing access to a eight rental cottages along the shoreline. These cottages will be removed as homes are developed on the site as part of the condition of sale.

The visual character of the site as viewed from receptors across the lake can be characterized as primarily natural, forested, with some recreation features along the shoreline. The forested edge is fairly uniform in terms of heights and composition from north to south along the boundary of the site. The character within the site is typical of golf course design in Ontario, with large expanses of open turf, fairways and greens and vegetation mainly comprised of small, scattered patches amongst the various holes.

## Vegetation Community<sup>2</sup>

This shoreline woodland is dominated by the FOM Ecological Land Classification (ELC) – White Cedar, Basswood, White Ash, Black Cherry, Balsam Poplar, Scots Pine and Hawthorn – with understorey vegetation including Chokecherry, Opposite-leaved Dogwood, various Viburnum species and Wild Grape. Further study of the flora and fauna of the property is on-going as part of the overall Environmental Impact Study. While heights of the trees were not assessed, typical mature heights for this type of ELC would be between 20 and 30 metres, with the most dense vegetation and screening located between ground level and approximately 10 metres, or the height of the White Cedars.

To the north of the golf course is a larger woodland feature with scattered ponds throughout and is dominated by conifers with some specimen Spruce and Poplar patches north of the ponds. The ponds and woodlot currently support Significant Wildlife Habitat for a number of Rare Species and Species of Concern including some amphibians, turtles, bats and insects. The golf course extends into this feature, and there is one residence located within the woodlot.

Hazard lands have been identified by the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA) which typically follow the shoreline of Wilder Lake, as well as including the woodland buffering the existing watercourse running through the property. These hazard lands include a screening buffer of approximately thirty metres from the limits of the Hazard Lands, see [Figure 3](#).

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2 Ecological land classification and species data provided by SAAR Environmental Ltd. field staff via email correspondence on August 15, 2018 and October 2, 2018 as part of the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) for the subject site; EIS work is on-going and draft report is not yet available.

# VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Photograph #1 - Looking southwest towards the shoreline vegetation and Homestead Resort Clubhouse and Restaurant

This photo demonstrates the grade difference between the Lake Wilder shoreline and the eastern edge of the development adjacent the clubhouse. The elevation changes would likely result in homes being built at a higher elevation than the shoreline; however, based on an assessment of the existing Ecological Land Classification (ELC) species, the height of the existing vegetation could be reasonably expected to reach and sustain a height of 20-30 metres, with the most dense vegetative screening occurring between 0-15 metres above ground level. Provided development can follow some mitigation measures where feasible, visibility of the homes will likely remain low to negligible.

# VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Photograph #2 - Looking south down the cottage access road

A laneway currently runs through the middle of the screening buffer between the site and Wilder Lake. Vegetation is present on either side and extends to the edge of the lake. The lake side vegetation east of the laneway is generally lacking a significant understorey leading to more open visibility between 0 and 3 metres above grade. The west side contains far more understorey shrub species and generally larger, more mature trees. Eight cottages are also present along the length of the laneway; however, these are to be removed during site development, providing space for significant infill planting to assist in screening views of the development, both in leaf-on and leaf-off conditions. A mix of coniferous and deciduous trees and shrubs similar to existing species composition would be most beneficial in screening views.

# VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Photograph #3 - Looking east towards gaps in shoreline vegetation

There are a few locations along the shoreline within the Hazard Lands screening buffer where vegetation is sparser and gaps in the existing woodland are evident. Despite these gaps, visibility through to the site remains minimal due to angle of views and distance of receptors across the lake. Restoration plantings within these gaps, including fast growing deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs would help to decrease visibility from receptors across the lake.

# VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Photograph #4 - Looking west towards the dock, existing cottages and shoreline vegetation

Wilder Lake shoreline vegetation along the frontage of the property extends to the lake edge creating a dense vegetation buffer from ground level upwards as viewed from on and across the lake. The existing dock on site is to remain; however existing cottages visible from on the lake are to be removed, leaving empty space along the waterfront. These locations would be prime candidates for infill planting using species which tolerate the given conditions and will grow rapidly creating additional visual screening. A combination of coniferous and deciduous trees and shrubs could be used to eventually create a dense canopy and understorey providing maximum visual screening.

# VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Photograph #5 - Looking east towards shoreline vegetation

The south end of the property does not have any cottages located along the lake edge, so vegetation is much denser and mature (taller) in this location, with increased understorey species. The heights of trees here appear to reach over 30m in height with the visual screening concentrated between ground level and 15m. Visibility through this screening buffer will remain minimal; however, where space allows some infill conifer planting could be used to assist in screening views during leaf-off conditions.

# VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Photograph #6 - Looking southeast towards gaps in shoreline vegetation

The north end of the property is generally lower than the south and contains more wet areas both inland and along the edge of the lake, preventing large-growing understorey species from establishing. Where gaps exist in the screening vegetation, infill planting with appropriate species, adapted to the given conditions could be used to increase the density of the screening as much as possible. Strategic placement of homes around these gaps in vegetation could also play an important role in reducing visibility from across the lake.

# VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Photograph #7 - Looking west towards shoreline vegetation and dock from across Wilder Lake

Distance from receptor (Lake Rd dead end) to the site (dock) is approximately 300m in this photograph. Views from across the lake demonstrate the extent of vegetation along the shoreline of the subject property. There is generally consistent vegetation along the entire shoreline with a mix of deciduous and coniferous vegetation. Several gaps can be seen at the dock and approximately 100m north of the dock where a lack of understorey vegetation allows views into the subject property approximately 5-10 m above ground level. In these locations the planting of coniferous trees and shrubs, where feasible, would help in reducing visibility. From the dock southward, the angle of the shoreline as viewed from select receptors across the lake compounds the effectiveness of the screening buffer. Currently, a number of the cottages along the lake are visible from this location. The club house, the tallest feature on the subject property is not visible from this location.

# VISUAL ASSESSMENT



Photograph #8 - Looking towards the shoreline vegetation, dock and cottages from across Wilder Lake

Distance from receptor (118 Lake Rd) to the site (dock) is approximately 200m in this photograph. Views from this receptor across the lake demonstrate the extent of vegetation along the shoreline of the subject property. Similar to Photograph #7, there is fairly consistent screening along the entire shoreline. Cottages south of the dock are distinctly visible from this location, as well as gaps at the dock and at the southern end of the property approximately 5-10m above ground level. Once cottages are removed these features will no longer be visible creating a more natural shoreline. Where gaps exist, the planting of coniferous trees and shrubs, where feasible, would assist in reducing the porosity of the vegetation in these locations.

# CONCLUSIONS

Based on a site assessment of existing conditions conducted on August 2, 2018, combined with EIS field work completed by SAAR Environmental Limited (see reference on page 2) assessing the species composition of the existing shoreline vegetation, we conclude that overall it is likely that there will be no net increase in the negative views of the subject site based on the following:

## *Existing Vegetation*

The shoreline edge consists of a vegetated buffer ranging in height from 20 to 30 metres, and consisting of coniferous and deciduous species. The heights of the vegetation would generally prevent the roof lines of homes from being seen above the tree line from across the lake. The width of the vegetation buffer, in addition to the increased density up to 10m above grade would likely block or disrupt visibility of homes within the development in both leaf-on and leaf-off conditions.

In addition, the majority of the receptors across the lake are located to the north of the subject site which means views of the site would be through not only the shoreline buffer, but also the northern woodlot, increasing the density of the screening vegetation and further limiting visibility of the development from these locations.

## *Receptor Distance*

The closest receptors to the site across the lake are approximately 200m east. These receptors would have the most direct line of site towards the development; however, based on the effectiveness of the existing vegetation described above visibility of any homes within the development would likely be minimal, even before the implementation of mitigation measures.

There may be limited lines-of-sight into the development from select receptors due to existing gaps in the screening buffer, and homes may be noticeable as a result of these gaps depending on final home locations, sizes and material finishes, especially during leaf-off conditions; however, any negative visual impacts for receptors could be minimized by implementing appropriate mitigation measures. There are very few locations along the shoreline of the subject property where, in the opinion of the consultant, observers will have views of the development through the existing SVCA designated 30m screening buffer vegetation, provided this vegetation is not impacted as a result of site development.

## Mitigation Measures

### *Cottages*

- Remove cottage structures
- Restoration of demolished cottage sites with plantings consistent with, or complimentary to existing species within the shoreline ELC;
- White Cedar, Poplar tree species and shrubs such as Viburnum and Chokecherry should be used where feasible.

### *Gaps in Vegetation*

- Where gaps in vegetation are present within the screening buffer, infill with a mix of fast growing, complimentary deciduous and coniferous trees and shrubs;
- White Cedar, Poplar tree species and shrubs such as Viburnum and Chokecherry should be used where feasible.

# CONCLUSIONS

## ***Dock Area***

- The dock will remain in its existing location; however, views from the lake through to the site via the dock access road could be mitigated further by restoring demolished cottage sites and planting vegetation on either side of the laneway where feasible to close any visual gaps in the shoreline vegetation.

## ***Homes and Development***

- Strategically locating and orienting homes within the development, including designing homes such that the rear facade is reduced in length or is irregularly shaped reducing monolithic walls which may be more visible during leaf-off conditions.
- Where possible, avoid the use of large swaths of lurid colours on rear walls and roofs to provide a subtle backdrop that is not as visible through screening vegetation during leaf-off conditions.
- Avoid the use of reflective materials which may be seen through the vegetation from on or across the lake.
- When considering lighting for homes and streets, consider fixtures which are shielded, dark sky friendly minimizing glare and reducing light trespass which may be visible from areas outside of the development.

## ***Hazard Lands and Shoreline Development***

Hazard Lands and Screening Buffer lands are regulated by the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority (SVCA) and any developments proposed by home owners within these lands or along the shoreline edge of Wilder Lake may be subject to SVCA approval. While permanent docks and structures will require SVCA review and approval, some works exempt from SVCA approval include<sup>3</sup>:

- *Residential decks*
- *Accessory buildings – less than 10m<sup>2</sup> and not within a wetland*
- *Seasonal or temporary docks or swimming platforms*
- *Fencing*
- *Grading – less than 23 cu.m and work is completed within one calendar year and not located along a shoreline*
- *Pathways – not exceeding a width of 1.2m*

While many of the above exempt works are minimal in size and scope, if each property owner with lake access were to implement one or more of these features the cumulative effect could severely disrupt the “naturalness” of the shoreline edge and increase negative visual impacts for residents across the lake.

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3 Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority - Environmental Planning and Regulations Policies Manual, May 16, 2017;

[http://saugeenconservation.com/downloads/Final\\_Approved\\_SVCA\\_Policy\\_Manual\\_1.pdf](http://saugeenconservation.com/downloads/Final_Approved_SVCA_Policy_Manual_1.pdf)

# CONCLUSIONS

In order to minimize disturbance of the screening buffer which may lead to increased visibility of the development from receptors on or across the lake, the following actions could be taken when implementing any of the works exempt from SVCA approval:

- Limit vegetation removal as much as possible for any structures, pathways or grading.
- When implementing a pathway, use a curvilinear alignment to reduce direct views from Wilder Lake to the development.
- Avoid the use of brightly coloured fencing, decks or other structures.
- Where possible, provide a storage space for seasonal or temporary docks or swimming platforms outside the 30m screening buffer, reducing visibility of the feature when not in use.

# APPENDICES

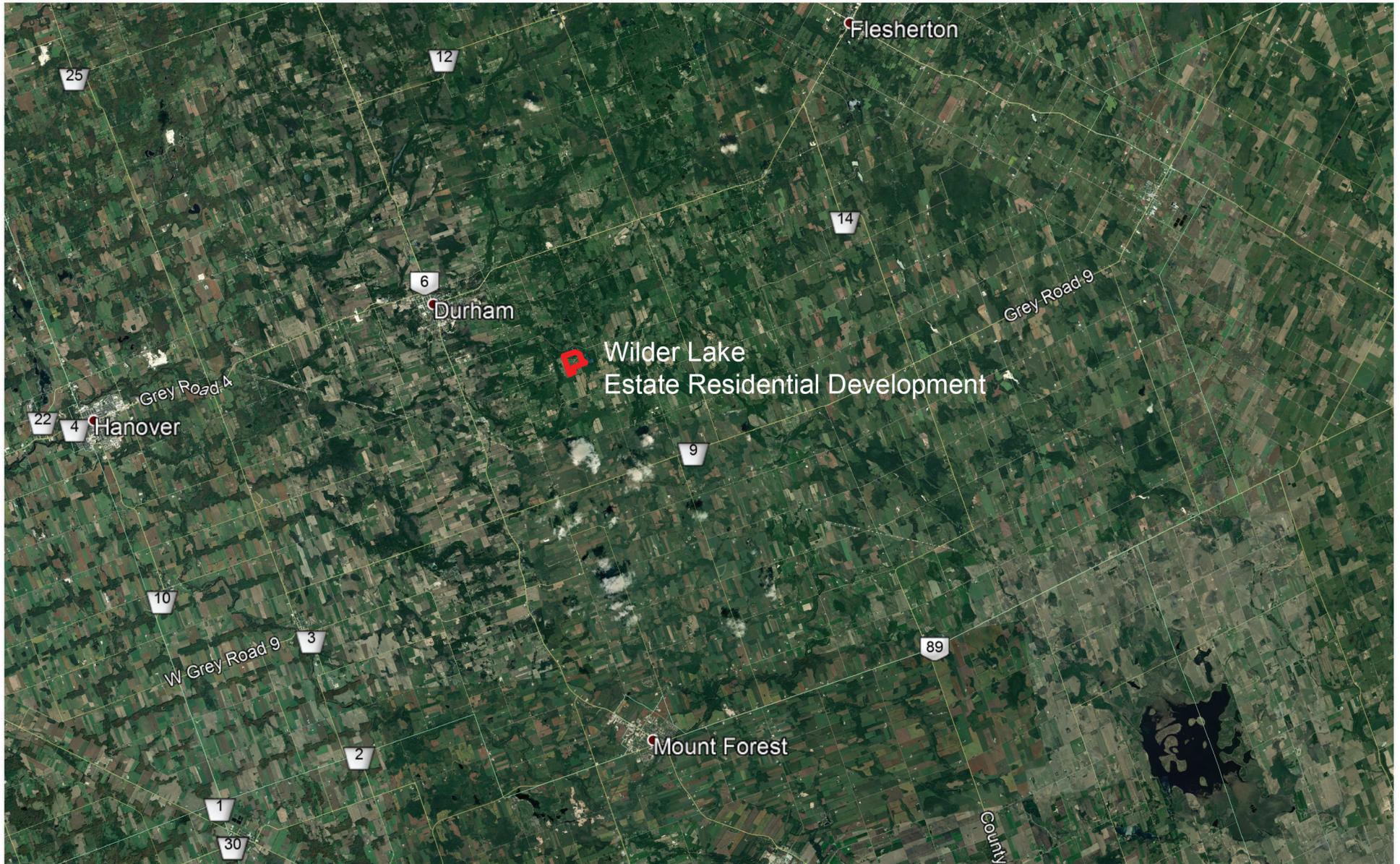
**FIGURE 1: Wilder Lake Estate Residential Development Location Map**

**Figure 2: Proposed Wilder Lake Estate Residential Development**

**Figure 3: Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority Hazard Lands**

**Figure 4: Photograph Locations**

**Figure 5: Visibility of Development Site From Across Wilder Lake**



**Figure 1:**  
Wilder Lake Estate Residential Development Location Map

FIGURE INFORMATION:  
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY SUPPLIED BY GOOGLE EARTH  
ACQUIRED SEPTEMBER 27, 2018

FIGURE CREATED BY: JL  
FIGURE CHECKED BY: MGN

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

DATE: OCTOBER 2018





**Figure 2:**  
**Proposed Wilder Lake Estate Residential Development**

FIGURE INFORMATION:  
 REVISED SITE PLAN SUPPLIED BY CUESTA PLANNING  
 CONSULTANTS INC. DATED DECEMBER 10, 2019

FIGURE CREATED BY: JL  
 FIGURE CHECKED BY: MGN

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

DATE: (REVISED) DECEMBER 2019





**Figure 3:**  
Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority Hazard Lands

- SCVA Hazard Lands
- 30m Screening Buffer

FIGURE INFORMATION:  
MAPPING SUPPLIED BY SAUGEEN VALLEY CONSERVATION  
AUTHORITY  
ACQUIRED AUGUST 2, 2018

FIGURE CREATED BY: JL  
FIGURE CHECKED BY: MGN

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE  
DATE: OCTOBER 2018

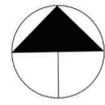




Figure 4:  
Photograph Locations

FIGURE INFORMATION:  
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHY SUPPLIED BY CUESTA  
PLANNING CONSULTANTS INC  
ACQUIRED SEPTEMBER 27, 2018

FIGURE CREATED BY: JL  
FIGURE CHECKED BY: MGN

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE  
DATE: OCTOBER 2018





Photograph Location #7



Photograph Location #8

## Figure 5: Visibility of Development Site from Across Wilder Lake

- Visibility Through Existing Vegetation in Leaf-on Conditions
- General Area of Visibility

FIGURE INFORMATION:  
PHOTOGRAPHS CAPTURED BY ABOUD & ASSOCIATES INC  
ACQUIRED AUGUST 2, 2018

FIGURE CREATED BY: JL  
FIGURE CHECKED BY: MGN

SCALE: NOT TO SCALE

DATE: OCTOBER 2018