



9.0 Landscape Character & Visual Resources

The Seaway Trail offers a wide variety of visual experiences. These include sweeping panoramas of Lake Erie, geometrically aligned vineyards and appealing older homes and residential areas to more urban character including historic Erie's central business district, waterfront and urban retail development. The following section defines the terms employed in the visual resource inventory and summarizes the inventories.

9.1 Landscape Character Definitions

The character of the landscape is divided into the area of homogenous landscape character, that is, areas that have similar visual characteristics. There are eight distinct visual units on the Pennsylvania Seaway Trail. They are summarized below.

The landscape character of the trail is evaluated for the following reasons:

- To determine the character of the Seaway Trail and how the visual character changes from area to area;
- To evaluate the character of the landscape;
- To identify ways that the landscape can contribute to efforts to promote tourism and economic development along the Seaway Trail.

The categories of landscape character units are:

Agriculture – This category includes land dedicated to food production including, but not limited to actively farmed areas of cereal crops, orchards and vineyards, as well as meadows and pastures.



Landscape character - Institutional



Landscape character - Natural



Landscape character - Open Space

Commercial – Land dedicated to commercial ventures, including but not limited to office, plaza, restaurant and retail uses.

Industrial – Land dedicated to high intensity uses such as distribution centers, junkyards, manufacturing, utilities and warehouses.

Institutional – Institutional uses include, but are not limited to, educational campus, churches, government centers, hospitals and schools.

Natural – These landscape character units are described as dense brush, forested areas, old fields and wetlands.

Open Space – Open space character units are active and passive parks, conservation areas and restoration of native landscapes.

Residential – Residential uses include estates, low, medium and high density residential and mobile homes.

Each landscape character unit is described as having a quality on a scale of one to five with five as the highest and 1 as the lowest quality. Preservation would be indicated for the highest quality landscapes. For medium quality, landscapes with evaluations of 3 and 4, enhancement would be recommended, and for the lowest-rated landscapes, remediation would be indicated. The following table shows a summary of the landscape character units along the Seaway Trail. A detailed table by municipality is found in the appendices.

The landscape character units are depicted on the map below. Among the 132 landscape character units inventoried, two were assessed as having the lowest quality rating. They are an industrial area on the shore in the City of Erie and the vacant Harborcreek Mall. Just 13 of the landscape character units are rated the highest rating of five. They include residential, natural and waterfront areas, including Elk Creek and downtown Erie waterfront and institutional areas. Most of the landscape character units were rated 3 and 4, indicating they are of generally high quality, but that they have potential for enhancement.



Landscape character - Residential



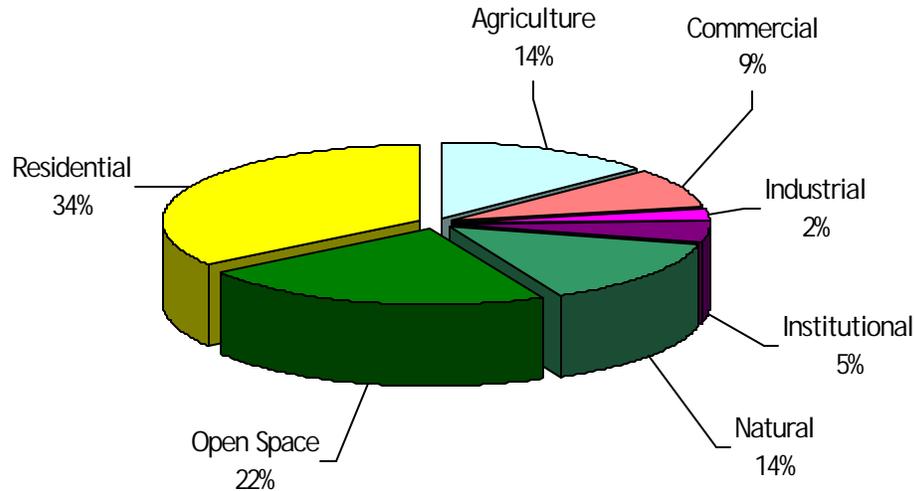
Elk Creek - landscape quality = 5.



Abandoned mall - landscape quality = 1.



Cherry Street Marina - scenic quality = 3.

Table 9-1 - Landscape Character

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc.

9.2 Scenic Resource Definitions

The Scenic Resources along the Seaway Trail were inventoried in five categories: distant views, enclosed views, overlooks, panoramas and tunnel effects. They are briefly described below:

Distant Views – Those views whose character is far off and can include a number of elements composing the entire picture. An example is a long view of a roadway, with an interesting element unrelated to the road, in this case historic schoolhouse No. 3 in Fairview Township and a large tree.



Distant view example.

Enclosed Views – Enclosed views are somewhat opposite of distant views. In the enclosed view, the viewer's eye is stopped within the frame of the view. In the example, the trees overhanging Twentymile Creek in North East Township stop the eye, providing a pleasing and refreshing vista.



Enclosed view example.

Overlooks – As the name implies, overlooks are generally from the perspective of height. Unlike panoramas (below) the main element in an overlook is not the horizon itself but an element of the horizon. Additionally, an element of the foreground may also be visually interesting. In the case of the Harborcreek example, the visually appealing vineyard in the foreground enhances the overlook feature, the lake.



Overlook example.



Panorama example.



Tunnel effect example.

Panorama – Panoramic views are continuous scenes that are cohesive in character and representative of one set or group of elements, in the case of the example from Girard, the lush vegetation of the vines with the trees in the background. The panorama experience is likened to that of having the landscape unroll in front of the viewer, as it would seem if the viewer were driving by.

Tunnel Effect – As the name suggests the tunnel effect is formed when an element being viewed forms a natural tunnel. As in the example from Presque Isle State Park, the eye is drawn into the scene as the trees draw together in perspective to form a tunnel of leaves.

The inventory of scenic resources also included an assessment of the *scenic quality* of each resource. Scenic quality measures the visual appeal of the scenic resources vis-à-vis their relationship with the Seaway Trail scenic byway.

Resources that add to the visual appeal of the byway will earn a higher score; those that detract, a lower score. As a result, for example, an overlook at the Cherry Street Marina in the City of Erie shows a scenic quality rating of three on a scale of one to five where five is the strongest and one the weakest measure of quality. The three rating is earned because the scene requires remediation – removal or screening of waste containers, removal of fencing, etc. – to provide visual access to the water and to restore an atmosphere more consistent with that of the scenic byway.

Among the 111 scenic resources inventoried, none were assessed as having the lowest scenic value and eight or 7% were assessed as two on the five-point scale. Distant views were half of those and 8% of total distant views. Among the 35 scenic resources earning a three rating, 24 or 69% were distant views. More than 60% of views were rated a four or five on the scale, indicating generally high quality; 24% of overall views earned the five rating.

The map below shows the landscape character units along the Seaway Trail.



**Table 9-2 - Seaway Trail Scenic Resource Categories
By Municipality**

	Distant View	Enclosed	Overlook	Panorama	Tunnel Effect	Grand Total
Springfield Twp				2		2
Girard Twp	10	2		1	1	14
Lake City Boro					1	1
Fairview Twp	4			1	2	7
Millcreek Twp					1	1
Presque Isle	11	4		7	8	30
City Of Erie	7	5	4	1	5	22
Harborcreek Twp	1	5	1		3	10
North East Twp	17	4	2			23
Grand Total	50	20	7	12	21	110

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc

**Table 9-3 - Seaway Trail Scenic Resource
Condition
By Type**

Category	Enhance	Preserve	Remediate	Grand Total
Distant View	10	39	1	50
Enclosed	8	12		20
Overlook	1	3	3	7
Panorama	2	10		12
Tunnel Effect	3	17	1	21
Grand Total	24	81	5	110

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc

9.2.1 Springfield Township



Scenic vista in Springfield

The Township of Springfield is located west of the Township of Girard and adjacent to the Ohio border. The Seaway Trail is not adjacent to the Lake Erie shoreline. It is approximately two miles from the shoreline and runs for a distance of 8.5 miles.

9.2.1.1 Landscape Character

The predominant landscape character is agricultural including nurseries and cereal crops. Natural and wooded areas dominate the west end and mixed residential and commercial are located proximate to the Ohio gateway.

9.2.1.2 Scenic Resources

The scenic quality is reduced due to the minimal contact with the water.

CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Panorama	Preserve	SE	3		
Panorama	Preserve	N	4	Older Church	

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc.

9.2.2 Girard Township /Lake City Borough

The Township of Girard is bounded on the east by Fairview Township and on the west by the Township of Springfield. The Seaway Trail is located adjacent to Lake Erie within approximately 3000 feet of the shoreline for a distance of 5.5 miles.

9.2.2.1 Landscape Character

There are two dominant landscape characters. The first is agricultural primarily cereal crops with sporadic vineyards. There is an expansive nursery operation on the border of Girard and Springfield that offers panoramic views of the countryside. The second dominant landscape character is low density residential with numerous historic homes. The Township also has many natural areas including a large natural area near Elk Creek.

9.2.2.2 Scenic Resources

The topography is generally flat and gently rolling toward the creeks. There are numerous high quality agricultural views, lake views and tunnel effect views. The Seaway Trail has a strong visual contact with Lake Erie in this area.



Nursery offers panoramic views of the countryside in Girard



Figure 9-1 - Seaway Trail Character Areas Corridor Inventory





Figure 9-2 - Seaway Trail Scenic Resources





Table 9-5 - Girard Township / Lake City Borough Scenic Resources

Name, Category, Description

CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Distant View	Preserve	SW	3	Ag Land	
Distant View	Preserve	S	3	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	S	3	Open Farmland	
Distant View	Preserve	NW	3	Campground	
Distant View	Preserve	S	3	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	SSE	3	Open Ag Land	
Distant View	Preserve	E	3	Plant Nursery	
Distant View	Preserve	S	3	Shrub Nursery - From Bridge	
Distant View	Enhance	NNW	4	Lake View - Limited	
Distant View	Preserve	SE	4		
Enclosed	Preserve	WSW	3	Roadway - Partial Tunnel	
Enclosed	Preserve	NNW	4	Lake View - Limited	
Panorama	Enhance	NNW	5	Lakeview Over Vineyard, Potential Easement Overlook	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	E	4	Elk Creek Area - Leaf Tunnel	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	SW	4	Roadway	

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc.

9.2.3 Fairview Township

Fairview Township is located west of Millcreek Township and east of Girard. The Seaway Trail is located adjacent to Lake Erie within approximately 6000 feet of the shoreline for a distance of 5.2 miles.

9.2.3.1 Landscape Character

Housing is medium density, upper scale, suburban residential. Setbacks along the Seaway Trail are adequate and most subdivisions are buffered. In the west end there are lower density and historic homes.

9.2.3.2 Scenic Resources

The topography is relatively flat and dominated by agricultural views.



Trees form a pleasing roadway scene in Fairview

Table 9-6 - Fairview Township Scenic Resources					
Name, Category, Description					
CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Distant View	Preserve	SSW	3	Hay Field	
Distant View	Preserve	NNW	3	Cornfield	
Distant View	Preserve	W	3	Golf Course	
Distant View	Preserve	N	4	View Of School	
Panorama	Preserve	E	4	Golf Course	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	WSW	2	Roadway	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	SW	4	Down Roadway	

Source peter j. smith & company, inc.

9.2.4 Millcreek Township



Millcreek is the gateway to Presque Isle State Park

The Township of Millcreek is a first ring suburb of the City of Erie. Millcreek Township is bounded on the east, by the City of Erie and on the west by the Township of Fairview Township. The peninsula of Presque Isle State Park lies directly north. The Seaway Trail is located adjacent to Lake Erie within approximately 4000 feet of the shoreline for a distance of 4.6 miles.

9.2.4.1 Landscape Character

The west end of the Seaway Trail is visually contiguous to the west end of the City of Erie and is dominated by mixed use and strip commercial development primarily service and tourist related businesses.

9.2.4.2 Scenic Resources

The topography of the area is relatively flat with minimal views to Lake Erie. The route is primarily commercial with minimal medium density residential development.

Table 9-7 - Millcreek Township Scenic Resources					
Name, Category, Description					
CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Tunnel Effect	Enhance	NW	4	Entrance Presque Isle - Enhance Gateway	

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc.

9.2.5 Presque Isle State Park

The Seaway Trail loops from Millcreek Township through the Presque Isle Peninsula to the north. Through Presque Isle State Park the Seaway Trail is constantly adjacent to the Lake within approximately fifty feet for a distance of 14.5 miles.



9.2.5.1 Landscape Character

The landscape characters are predominantly open space however some tourist commercial is located at the gateway to the park including a theme park.

9.2.5.2 Scenic Resources

The Park setting is predominantly natural offering wetlands, marshes, visitor’s facilities and overlooks. The east side of the peninsula offers a variety of panoramic views over the Bay and the City of Erie waterfront. The west side of the Peninsula offers views over Lake Erie and over a long contiguous beach. The park road offers a series of tunnel effect views from the mature trees that line its perimeter.

The topography is generally flat and low in elevation enhancing the water experience and the vistas to the harbor and over the beaches. There are numerous selected viewing points on both sides of the peninsula.



Scenic views of the water (above), leaf tunnels and overlooks predominate the Presque Isle scenic resources

Table 9-8 - Presque Isle State Park Scenic Resources
Name, Category, Description

CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Distant View	Enhance	S	4		
Distant View	Preserve	ENE	5	Over Bay At Pullover	
Distant View	Preserve	ENE	5	Over Bay - Pullover #2	
Distant View	Preserve	ENE	5	Over Bay - Pullover	
Distant View	Preserve	E	5	At Launch	
Distant View	Preserve	E	5		
Distant View	Preserve	S	5	Over Bay At Dead End Near Marina	
Distant View	Preserve	SSE	5		
Distant View	Preserve	SSE	5	Along Shore	
Distant View	Preserve	ESE	5	From Ferry	
Distant View	Preserve	ENE	5		
Enclosed	Enhance	E	4	Overlook - Enhance Opening	
Enclosed	Preserve	NNW	4	Over Pond	
Enclosed	Preserve	E	5		
Enclosed	Preserve	ESE	5		
Panorama	Preserve	ENE	4	Boat Launch	
Panorama	Preserve	NNW	4		
Panorama	Preserve	ESE	4	Rotary Pavillion	
Panorama	Preserve	SSE	5		
Panorama	Preserve	NNE	5	Bay	

Table 9-8 - Presque Isle State Park Scenic Resources
Name, Category, Description

CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Panorama	Preserve	NE	5		
Panorama	Preserve	NW	5		
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	NNE	4	Park Entrance	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	S	4		
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	NNE	5	Park At 1 st Pullover	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	NNE	5	Presque Isle Road	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	NNE	5	Down Road	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	E	5		
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	W	5		
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	SW	5		
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	SW	5		

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc.

9.2.6 City of Erie

Erie City’s limits extend eastward to Lawrence Park Township and westward to Millcreek Township. The City of Erie is the most dominant area of built form along the entire Seaway Trail corridor and offers a wide range of landscape characters and visual impacts on the Seaway Trail. The Seaway Trail is located on two routes as it passes through the city. The Seaway Trail is adjacent to Presque Isle Bay on the Bayfront Parkway and within approximately 3000 feet of the harbor front on the historic main street of the City of Erie for a distance of 5.6 miles.

9.2.6.1 Landscape Character

The east end of the corridor is generally low quality strip commercial development. A large tract of lake front land is presently vacant and forms a large redevelopment site at the former International Paper Company.

The Seaway Trail bisects at the Bayfront Parkway. One route follows the Bayfront Parkway along the waterfront. The second route enters the center city through the historic central business district.



The Bayfront Parkway is a direct route to Presque Isle Bay and the historic commercial harbor. On the east end the Parkway is a heavily landscaped and screened arterial. The east end of the waterfront is dominated by relatively new, active industrial lands and landscaped industrial park. Landscape characters in the waterfront zone include old industrial, recreational, waterfront commercial and marina.



The waterworks at the Bayfront (above) and the historic courthouse in the downtown (below) are two of Erie's scenic offerings

The Seaway Trail also follows West 6th Street, the historic main street. The east entrance is predominantly urban single family residential on small lots with two and a half story buildings and adequate setbacks. The center city is comprised of high-density, historic, commercial office and retail. The west approach to the city is lined with grand, historic, estate homes and mature street trees. The west end of the Seaway Trail is dominated by mixed use and strip commercial development especially service and tourist related businesses.



9.2.6.2 Scenic Resources

Andrew Ellicott and William Irvine designed the city. They worked with Pierre L'Enfant, designer of cities including Washington, DC, and Buffalo, New York. The center city is designed around a series of rectangular commons and tree lined streets. The resulting views over the parks, greatly enhances the Seaway Trail experience.

Views over the water and Presque Isle State Park are predominant because of the grade change and the descent into the bay area. To the south of the parkway, the former lake bluffs are heavily vegetated separating the city from the waterfront. The area has high quality views sweeping over the waterfront panorama resulting in a strong waterfront flavor. Vegetated bluffs and quality waterfront residential development dominate the west end.

Table 9-9 - City of Erie Scenic Resources

Name, Category, Description

CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Distant View	Enhance	NNW	2	Lake View	Industrial Area
Distant View	Remediate	WSW	2	Along Road	
Distant View	Enhance	NNW	3	Past Intermodal Center	
Distant View	Enhance	NNW	3	Toward Waterfront	
Distant View	Enhance	NNW	3	Toward Waterfront	
Distant View	Enhance	NE	4	View From Bridge	
Distant View	Preserve	WNW	4	To Marina Area - Lake Beyond	
Enclosed	Enhance	SSW	3	Park	
Enclosed	Preserve	ENE	4		
Enclosed	Preserve	NNW	4	Marina Area	

CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Enclosed	Preserve	ENE	4	Over Park	
Enclosed	Preserve	ENE	4	Park	
Overlook	Remediate	NNW	2	Toward Lake At Waterworks	Parking, Fence In Foreground
Overlook	Remediate	NW	3	Toward Lake Along Marina	
Overlook	Remediate	NNW	3	Cherry St Marina	Security Fencing
Overlook	Preserve	NNW	5	Marina Area	
Panorama	Enhance	NE	4	View Along Route	
Tunnel Effect	Remediate	SW	2	Down Roadway	Enhance Plantings
Tunnel Effect	Enhance	ENE	3		
Tunnel Effect	Enhance	SW	3	West Sixth	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	NE	4	City Border	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	ENE	4	W 6" St	

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc.

9.2.7 Lawrence Park Township

Lawrence Park Township is a small community located between the City of Erie city limits and the Township of Harborcreek. The Seaway Trail is located adjacent to Lake Erie. It is approximately 3000 feet from the shoreline and runs for a distance of 1.4 miles.

9.2.7.1 Landscape Character

Lawrence Park Township is a mixed-use planned community created for the employees of General Electric in the early 1900's. It is semi-urban in character with well-maintained residential areas. The Seaway Trail has a twenty-foot wide tree lined median through most of the community. There is minimal visual contact with the Lake Erie shoreline due to the extensive vegetation.

9.2.7.2 Scenic Resources

The topography is generally flat. The park-like General Electric industrial site dominates this section of Seaway Trail. The area is heavily landscaped and screened.

9.2.8 Harborcreek Township

Harborcreek Township is a rural community located between the North East Township and the Lawrence Park Township. The Seaway Trail is located adjacent to Lake Erie within approximately 2000 feet from the shoreline and runs for a distance of 6.8 miles.

9.2.8.1 Landscape Character

The landscape is similar to that of North East Township, generally flat with rolling terrain proximate to the stream courses that run



Waterfall at Sixmile Creek in Harborcreek



perpendicular to the Seaway Trail. In the northeast quadrant expanses of vineyards and orchards form the agricultural landscape. There is predominantly residential development along most of the Seaway Trail including a mix of historic homes, vacation homes and suburban style single-family homes with significant setbacks. Low quality commercial strip development dominates the west end.

9.2.8.2 Scenic Resources

Views to the lake are diminished by residential development however the sense of a waterside driving route remains. There are numerous tunnel effect views along the road.

Table 9-10 - Millcreek Township Scenic Resources
Name, Category, Description

CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Distant View	Enhance	S	2	Institutional Grounds	
Enclosed	Enhance	NNE	2	Down Creek - Limited	
Enclosed	Enhance	N	3	Down Side Road	Clear Stream View
Enclosed	Enhance	NW	3	Down Creek	Utility Corridor
Enclosed	Preserve	NNW	4	Lake View - Motel	
Enclosed	Preserve	SSW	4	Waterfall	
Overlook	Preserve	NNW	4	Creek View, Potential Overlook	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	WSW	4	Down Road	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	WSW	4	Down Road	
Tunnel Effect	Preserve	SW	4	Down Roadway	

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc.

9.2.9 North East Township

The North East Township is located at the northeast corner of the corridor in Erie County PA, bordering on the Town of Ripley, New York. The Seaway Trail is located adjacent to Lake Erie. It is approximately 2000 feet from the shoreline and runs for a distance of 8.4 miles. The Township is primarily agricultural. The route is lined with vineyards of concord grapes and other tender fruits including wine grapes, peaches and apples. There is some market gardening and roadside retailing of agricultural products.

9.2.9.1 Landscape Character

The topography is lightly rolling to relatively flat with long vistas opening to both the north and south. The area is dotted with historic homes, vacation homes and newer, low density, suburban style residences with significant setbacks from the road. The area maintains a strong physical relationship to the waterfront offering sweeping views over Lake Erie and the agricultural landscape. The views are accented by the elevated prospect of the road. The Seaway Trail winds along the lake bluffs offering expansive vistas.



Vineyards are a large component of the scenic quality of North East

9.2.9.2 Scenic Resources

The views are dominant in both directions. To the north are vineyards and sporadic residential development terminating in views of Lake Erie. To the south, the face of the Appalachian Ridge defines the viewshed, approximately three to four miles away.

Table 9-11 - North East Township Scenic Resources
Name, Category, Description

CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Distant View	Enhance	WSW	2	Down Roadway	Road Too Wide
Distant View	Enhance	NW	3	Park Area - Open View	
Distant View	Preserve	NW	3	Lake View	
Distant View	Preserve	SE	3	Vineyard View	
Distant View	Preserve	SSW	3	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	WSW	3	Down Roadway	
Distant View	Preserve	SSW	3	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	SSW	3	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	NW	3	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	S	3	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	S	3	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	NW	4	Lake View Past Residence	
Distant View	Preserve	NW	4	Over Field To Water	
Distant View	Preserve	S	4	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	S	4	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	SSW	4	Vineyards	
Distant View	Preserve	W	4	Lake Over Vineyards	
Enclosed	Enhance	WNW	3	Limited View Of Lake	
Enclosed	Enhance	NNW	3	Lake Over Vineyards	
Enclosed	Enhance	NW	4	Water Past Houses	Spruce Planted As A Screen
Enclosed	Preserve	SE	5	View Of Creek, Both Directions	



Table 9-11 - North East Township Scenic Resources
Name, Category, Description

CATEGORY	CONDITION	DIRECTION	QUALITY	NOTES	CONFLICT
Overlook	Enhance	N	4	View Over Marina	
Overlook	Preserve	WNW	5	Lake Over Vineyards - Very Open	

Source: peter j. smith & company, inc.

