

4.1 AESTHETICS

4.1.1 Setting

This section describes the existing visual character of the Project Site and vicinity and evaluates potential aesthetic effects of the proposed Project, both at the individual and cumulative levels.

a. Visual Character of the Project Vicinity. The Project vicinity is characterized primarily by rural development, agricultural activities, rangeland, open space, hillsides, and some manufacturing-industrial uses. The rural features are primarily intact visually as a natural or agricultural countryside. The grazing, open space and agricultural land affords views of landscapes that are representative of San Benito County as a whole. According to the San Benito County General Plan Background Report, agricultural land and rangeland account for approximately 75 percent of all land in San Benito County (County of San Benito, 2010). Because the majority of land within the County is agricultural in nature, many of the County's scenic resources consist of views of agricultural areas, such as row crops, pastures, orchards, vineyards, ranches, barns, and farms with cattle and various livestock. Most roadways within the County offer some views of rural agricultural landscapes. The natural landscape transitions into higher density urban development near the City of San Juan Bautista and in the vicinity of the City of Hollister. The Project vicinity also contains several urban features, including State Route (SR) 156, Union Road, the Teledyne Site (which houses multiple industrial uses), and agricultural processing uses. The San Justo Reservoir is located approximately 0.25 mile east of the Project Site's boundary.

The visual character of the area immediately adjacent to the Project Site includes oak woodlands, vineyards, and row crops. Agricultural land in the form of row crops is located directly north and west of the Project Site and areas of open land, some of which are used for grazing, irrigated pasture and dry-farming, are located to the south, east and west. In addition, heavy industrial uses, situated on the Teledyne Site, are located northeast of the Project Site. This off-site industrial area includes an explosives manufacturing and testing facility that also contains treatment and storage facilities for hazardous waste generated by the explosives uses.

b. Visual Character of the Project Site.

In General. Similar to the land uses and landscape described above in the Project vicinity, much of the Project Site currently contains grazing land and dryland farming on relatively flat to gently sloping terrain, with a portion of the site (in the northeast) used for irrigated agriculture, including an olive tree orchard and row crops. Figures 4.1-1a and 4.1-1b includes photographs of the Project Site. As shown in Figures 4.1-1a and 4.1-1b, natural features on the Project Site include vegetation and slopes associated with the Gabilan Range (at the southern and eastern portions of the site), which are prominent visual features that may be viewed from SR 156 (refer to Figures 4.1-3 and 4.1-4). Elevations on the Project Site range from a low of approximately 220 feet in the relatively flat pasturelands toward the westerly edge, to a high of approximately 1,120 feet in the hills to the south. In addition, the Project Site contains the existing approximately 261-acre San Juan Oaks Golf Club, which is a set of single story Spanish-style buildings with neutral and red tones, along with related facilities (collectively,





Photo 1: Agricultural Preserve Area



Photo 2: Golf Course and Wildlife Habitat Preserve



Photo 3: Golf Course and Wildlife Habitat Preserve



Photo 4: Golf Course View from Wildlife Habitat Preserve





Photo 5: Main Entrance Road



Photo 6: Neighborhood Commercial Area



Photo 7: Single Family Residential Development Area



Photo 8: View of Existing Golf Course Clubhouse

Photographs of Project Site









“Existing Golf Club”). Parking lots are sited south of the Existing Golf Club and the manicured golf course spreads southwest, south, and southeast for approximately 0.5 to 1 mile from the related Golf Club buildings.

As described in detail in Section 4.4, *Biological Resources*, the Project Site contains several habitat types, including mixed riparian, freshwater seep, Central Coast arroyo willow riparian, coast live oak woodlands, ruderal, and non-native grasslands. The portion of the Project Site proposed for development is only sparsely populated by trees; in contrast, those portions of the Project Site that contain substantial numbers of trees would not be developed.

With respect to light and glare, the Project Site currently has minimal lighting associated with the Existing Golf Club, limited primarily to bollard-style street lights along the entrance road, parking lot lighting, and interior clubhouse lighting.

Drivers along SR 156 are the persons who most commonly have public views of the Project Site. There are two prominent viewsheds, both of which are located north of the proposed Project Site along SR 156 (Figure 4.1-2). One is the view from SR 156 and Flint Road; the second is from SR 156 and Bixby Road. These viewsheds were selected for purposes of this analysis because SR 156 is the most heavily traveled public road with direct views of the Project Site. Figures 4.1-2, 4.1-3, and 4.1-4 show the locations of the two off-site viewpoints that were evaluated, as well as a visual simulation of the proposed Project at build-out. While this aesthetic evaluation does not provide visual simulations from Union Road, the Project Site can be viewed by drivers traveling along Union Road in the area near SR 156. Views of the Project Site from Union Road are similarly distant as the views from SR 156; therefore, the simulations of views from SR 156 are generally representative of views from Union Road at the intersection with SR 156. The Project Site is largely obscured by intervening topography along other portions of Union Road located south on the Union Road/San Juan Oaks Road intersection; for these reasons, visual simulations from these locations were not included in this analysis.

Scenic Highway. As noted above, SR 156 is not a designated Scenic Highway. However, it is eligible for designation as a Scenic Highway. The state designation process is discussed below in the Regulatory Setting section; the local criteria for selection of a scenic highway are set forth in the County’s current adopted General Plan, Scenic Roads and Highways Element, as further discussed below. In addition, while SR 156 is not a designated Scenic Highway, it is specifically listed in the County’s Hillside Development Regulations as set forth in the County Code’s Zoning Ordinance and as described more fully below.

Scenic Vistas within and across the Project Site. In general, most of the County’s scenic vistas and corridors are associated with the open space and agricultural resources throughout the County, which are generally considered as a valued local asset. Relevant scenic vistas and corridors consist of the following:

- Expansive agricultural lands, including rangeland and row crops;
- Rangeland and open space; and
- Hillsides in the background.



However, the County's current adopted General Plan does not identify any specifically protected scenic vistas within or across the Project Site itself. Instead, a portion of the Project Site's relatively flat topography and largely undeveloped state allow for primarily unimpeded views across the site and outward. Specifically, the Project Site now consists of the Existing Golf Club; with the remainder of the Project Site being used for agricultural activities, including approximately 1,502 acres. Approximately 1,131 acres are used for grazing land (75% of total agricultural land); approximately 315 acres (21%) are used for dryland farming; and approximately 56 acres (4%) are used for row crops, which is limited to the organic olive orchard near Union Road (approximately 13 acres) and row crops east of San Juan Oaks Drive (approximately 43 acres). Expansive views of agricultural land and distant mountains can be seen from various locations within and around the Project Site. However, these views are typical of the landscape in the County and along SR 156. Furthermore, the views in the vicinity of the Project Site are limited in certain locations by vegetation, buildings, and other aspects of the built environment. In addition, most viewers in the vicinity are traveling on a high-speed state highway (SR 156) or arterial roadway (Union Road), and thus their views are typically of limited duration and are not directed toward the Project Site.

c. Regulatory Setting. This section describes the existing laws, regulations and policies relevant to a review of aesthetic impacts in San Benito County. For the most part, the aesthetic quality of the Project would be subject to state and local laws, regulations and policies as there are no applicable federal laws or regulations governing the Project in this regard.

California Scenic Highway Program. State scenic highways are designated by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to promote the protection and enhancement of the natural scenic beauty of California's highways and adjacent corridors. California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963.¹ The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 *et seq.*

In order to acquire an "officially designated scenic highway" label, the state and Caltrans require local jurisdictions to adopt a scenic corridor protection program to protect and enhance the adjacent scenic resources. In the San Benito County area, San Benito County is the responsible local agency in this regard. Corridor protection programs are required to contain the following five elements:

- Regulations of land use and density of development
- Detailed land and site planning
- Control of outdoor advertising
- Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping
- The design and appearance of structures and equipment²

Caltrans monitors state-designated scenic routes in order to ensure each local jurisdiction's consistency with state guidelines.³ Specifically, the Caltrans District Scenic Highway

¹ *Scenic Highways Program website, Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenicfaq.htm>, accessed 2014.

² *Caltrans, Scenic Highway Guidelines*, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/guidelines/scenic_hwy_guidelines.pdf, accessed on March 6, 2015.

³ *Scenic Highways Program website, Frequently Asked Questions*, <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenicfaq.htm>, accessed on March 6, 2015.



Coordinator (DSHC) will review a scenic highway for compliance every five years, but can recommend the revocation of scenic designation at any time.⁴ In terms of enforcement, first, the DSHC will periodically contact the Local Governing Body (LGB), in this case, San Benito County. The LGB must either respond by submitting its current Corridor Protection Program or a letter of intent to request revocation of scenic designation. The DSHC reviews the submittal and takes corrective action to resolve any issues of non-compliance, certifies compliance, or recommends revocation of scenic designation.

San Benito County's Implementation of Scenic Highway Program. As noted above, San Benito County is responsible for enforcing the protection of State-designated scenic routes within its borders. There are no designated scenic routes that are traversed by, adjacent to, or otherwise viewable from the Project Site. SR 156 is included in the County's Hillside Development Regulations; however, the Project does not include any hillside development.

Local Laws, Regulations and Policies. The County of San Benito regulates the design of the built environment through its General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, and Development Lighting ("Dark Skies") Ordinance. The General Plan prescribes visual resource goals, policies and objectives. The Zoning Ordinance, in some cases, requires review of projects and imposes specific development standards and other requirements under specified circumstances. The Development Lighting Ordinance requires the use of outdoor lighting systems and practices designed to reduce light pollution and glare, and to protect the nighttime visual environment by regulating outdoor lighting which interferes with astronomical observations and enjoyment of the night sky.

Current Adopted San Benito County General Plan. The County's current General Plan (1995) includes a number of policies that are relevant to an evaluation of the visual quality of the Project Site, set forth in the Open Space and Conservation Element and the Scenic Roads and Highways Element. While an updated General Plan is currently being drafted by the County, it has not been adopted as of the writing of this SEIR; therefore, the existing General Plan remains in effect and provides guidance for this Project.

The Open Space and Conservation Element and the Scenic Roads and Highways Element of the General Plan contains policy statements that serve as a framework for evaluating proposed projects in regard to their potential to effect the "rural atmosphere" of the County, within the context of a county becoming more urbanized in certain areas. According to the San Benito County General Plan Background Report regarding the County's pending draft comprehensive 2035 General Plan Update, agricultural land and rangeland serve as scenic resources. Building plans for development on the Project Site would be reviewed for consistency with the following current General Plan policies:

Open Space and Conservation Element:

Goal 2 To encourage the orderly development of identified concentrations within the County, utilizing the infilling of existing developed areas and communities,

⁴ Caltrans, *Scenic Highway Guidelines*, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/guidelines/scenic_hwy_guidelines.pdf, accessed on March 6, 2015.



along with an orderly and efficient development plan for public and private services (water and sewer districts).

- Objective 2 The maintenance of the County's existing rural atmosphere.*
- Policy 12 Direct development to urban areas. It will be the County's policy to apply land use controls to ensure that only non-urban uses are located beyond Spheres of Influence and Urban Reserve Areas, except for specific areas designated Rural/Urban, Area of Special Study, Residential Commercial, or Industrial on the General Plan Land Use Map.*
- Policy 16 Open space around cities. It is the County's policy to preserve a rural atmosphere by directing population growth and public service extensions to infill development and avoiding leapfrog development.*
- Policy 17 Ridgeline Development. To preserve the rural character of the area, new development shall be directed away from the horizon through the use of building envelopes and integration of building architecture into the contour of the horizon.*
- Policy 18 Protect rural atmosphere and natural resources. General Plan Amendments, Specific Plans, Area Plans, and Area of Special Study that result in a net increase in general plan buildout (Table 1 of the Land Use Element), shall include methods to conserve open space for natural resources including agriculture, wildlife habitat, and water (e.g. development areas shall also include measures to protect resources on-site and contiguous to the project with the use of clustering, conservation easements, and other similar programs.*

Scenic Roads and Highways Element:

Criteria for Selection of a Scenic Highway. The following standards were used in the evaluation of those highways shown in the State's Scenic Highway Master Plan:

- 1. The scenic corridor through which the highway passes should have consistent scenic, historic or aesthetic value during all seasons.*
- 2. Consideration should be given those highways or routes which are:*
 - a. State of jurisdictional entry routes.*
 - b. Predominantly used for recreation or vacation travel.*
 - c. Utilized for one day sightseeing or study trips.*
 - d. A part of integrated or semi-integrated scenic route system that traverses varied scenic corridors for longer trips.*
 - e. Through areas of extraordinary scenic value.*
 - f. Typical or demonstrative of varied scenic factors available within the jurisdiction.*
- 3. If possible, all principal landscape and topographical type areas should be represented in the system.*
- 4. Routes of historic significance which connect places of interest should be considered even though the route is of marginal scenic significance.*



In light of the State criteria, more specific guidelines for the selection of County-wide scenic highways have been developed. In most cases, many County roads would meet at least one of the criteria mentioned in the following list. However, to give it a special significance, several of the criteria must be met in order to be truly classified "Scenic".

Criteria for selection of scenic roads and highways in San Benito County are:

- 1. That it be designated on State Scenic Highway Master Plan or,*
- 2. The scenic corridor through which the highway passes should have consistent and continuous scenic, cultural, or aesthetic value during all seasons.*
- 3. The scenic corridor may have a variety of features, natural or man-made.*
- 4. Where appropriate, the scenic corridor should preserve the natural integrity or the ecosystem, or present an undisturbed nature – both landscape and panorama.*
- 5. The highway is used predominantly for recreation travel or provides the visitor or resident a visual experience related to San Benito County's major attractions such as the agricultural areas, range lands or mountains.*

Policy 1 It is the policy of San Benito County to provide for the protection of certain transportation corridors which are recognized as having unusual or outstanding scenic qualities.

Policy 3 Recognizing that most architectural designs are compatible with scenic areas, but that some can have significant adverse impact on the scenic resource, which the County seeks to preserve, it will be the County's policy to review proposals to insure that the obstruction of viewsheds is minimized.

Draft 2035 General Plan Update. The proposed (but not yet adopted) Draft 2035 General Plan Update Land Use Element, Circulation Element, and Natural and Cultural Resources Element provide the following goals, policies and objectives pertaining to aesthetics. Because the Draft 2035 General Plan Update has not yet been adopted by the Board of Supervisors, these policies are included for informational purposes only.

Land Use Element:

Goal LU-1 To maintain San Benito County's rural character and natural beauty while providing areas for needed future growth.

LU-1.5 Infill Development. The County shall continue to encourage the clustering of residential uses and the use of creative site planning techniques to promote preservation of agricultural land and open space areas. The County shall encourage infill development on vacant and underutilized parcels to maximize the use of land within existing urban areas, minimize the conversion of productive agricultural land and open spaces, and minimize environmental impacts associated with new development as one way to accommodate growth.

Goal LU-4 To encourage variety in new unincorporated residential development while also providing incentives for clustered residential as a means to protect valuable agricultural and natural resources.



- LU-4.5 *Innovative Site Planning and Residential Design. The County shall encourage new residential developments to use innovative site planning techniques and to incorporate design features that increase design quality, and energy efficiency, and water conservation of structures and landscapes while protecting the surrounding environment.*
- LU-4.6 *Clustered Residential Program. The County shall continue to encourage the clustering of residential uses and the use of creative site planning techniques to promote preservation of agricultural land and open space areas.*
- LU-4.7 *Clustered Residential Site Layout. The County shall encourage clustered residential development be designed to respect existing natural features (e.g., rivers and streams, hills and ridge lines, and substantial tree stands) as appropriate to the density and character of the development, and if applicable to use such features to separate clustered parcels from farming areas.*
- Goal LU-7 *To preserve San Benito County's historic identity and rural community character.*
- LU-7.7 *Screening. The County shall require screening of storage, trash receptacles, loading docks, and other building or site features to reduce visual impacts from public areas.*
- LU-7.10 *New Development Design. The County shall encourage the design of new development to complement its surroundings, including nearby development, nearby open landscapes, and gateways into populated areas, as well as to show coherence within itself, including with regard to architectural style, human-scale development, and street layout.*

Circulation Element:

- C-1.3 *Roadway Improvement Aesthetics. The County shall require roadway improvements to be designed to conform to existing landforms and to include landscaping and/or other treatments to ensure that aesthetics are preserved, including the county's rural character.*
- C-1.15 *Street Networks that Enhance Neighborhood Character. The County shall encourage traditional interconnected street networks that provide alternate routes between neighborhoods and other measures that slow neighborhood traffic and enhance neighborhood character, such as those associated with Complete Streets.*
- C-1.16 *Roads on Hillsides. The County shall require that new public and private roads on hillsides minimize visual impact by blending with natural landforms and by following the natural contours of the land as much as possible and that driveway access in hillside areas be consolidated where possible and limited to areas where adequate sight distance is available for all approaches.*



C-1.17 *Grades on Hillsides. The County shall require that new roads on hillsides do not exceed a 15 percent grade. The County may allow grades on hillsides of up to 20 percent for distances of up to 400 feet. Grades over 15 percent must have all weather surfaces, such as asphalt or concrete.*

Natural and Cultural Resources Element:

Goal NCR-8 *To enhance and preserve the attractive visual qualities of scenic vistas and corridors in the county.*

NCR-8.1 *Protect Scenic Corridors. The County shall require new roads on hillsides and ridges that are visually prominent from County or State roadways to minimize scarring.*

NCR-8.2 *Sign Regulations within Scenic Corridors. The County shall require the elimination of signs within Scenic Corridors other than those identified in the permitted use section of the Zoning Ordinance.*

NCR-8.3 *Grading within Scenic Corridors. The County shall review all projects involving grading within Scenic Corridors to protect valuable soil resources, preserve the natural environment, and avoid significant adverse impacts within scenic areas.*

NCR-8.4 *Review Architectural Design. The County shall review development proposals to ensure that the obstruction of views is minimized through architectural building massing and location that is compatible with scenic areas.*

NCR-8.5 *Review Site Planning. The County shall review development proposals to ensure a reasonable and attractive appearance from the highway concurrent with a harmonious relationship with the existing landscape and shall require development that determined not to be in harmonious relationship with the existing landscape to be screened from view through planting or other forms of visual buffers.*

NCR-8.6 *Regulate Building Height and Setback. The County shall regulate building height and setbacks to protect the field of vision within an officially designated Scenic Corridor. The County shall not approve building heights that exceed, nor setback requirements that are less, than those of the basic zoning district unless such variance has had the appropriate review and public comment.*

NCR-8.7 *Native Landscaping in Scenic Corridors. The County shall encourage landscaping in Scenic Corridors to use indigenous plants and grasses compatible with local vegetation and ground forms and to reestablish the natural landscape. In addition to native vegetation, other acceptable vegetation in Scenic Corridors shall include: agricultural plants such as row crops, fruit trees and other agricultural species; and grasses and fairway trees of parks and golf courses.*

NCR-8.8 *Underground Utility Lines. The County shall require all new electric and communication distribution facilities proposed within the Scenic Corridor to be placed underground, whenever feasible. Where overhead utility lines are*



unavoidable, every effort should be made to reduce the visual impact through elements of design.

NCR-8.9 *Hillside Protection. The County shall use design review for development on hillsides and within Scenic Corridors to protect the hillsides and ridgelines that are a unique scenic resource in the county.*

NCR-8.10 *Sign Ordinance. The County shall maintain and implement the Sign Ordinance to control the locations and types of signs throughout the county in an effort to protect the county's scenic character.*

The Draft 2035 General Plan Update describes the "Union Study Area", in which the Project Site is included, as lacking the degree of significant natural resources seen in the San Juan Valley and other geographic areas of the County. The Draft 2035 General Plan Update also states that development of a New Community in the Union Study Area would avoid impacting significant recreational and open space resources in the County, including the nearby San Justo Reservoir and Hollister Hills, which are located to the south.

The consistency of the Project with all applicable County General Plan and Draft 2035 General Plan goals, policies and objectives related to aesthetics, including key policies listed above, is evaluated in Section 4.10, *Land Use*. As noted above, the consistency analysis included in this SEIR as it relates to the Draft 2035 General Plan is being provided for informational purposes only, since this draft General Plan has not been adopted as of the writing of this SEIR.

San Benito County Code. The County's Code contains several regulations and standards that are relevant to an evaluation of the visual quality of the Project Site and vicinity, as set forth below.

Building plans for development on the Project Site would be reviewed for consistency with the following provisions of the Zoning Ordinance, Development Lighting ("Dark Skies") Ordinance, and Management and Conservation of Woodlands Ordinance, as applicable:

Zoning Ordinance Chapter (San Benito County Code, Title 25) 25.29 (General Requirements), Article II (Hillside Development Regulations). This section encourages design excellence and high quality projects that will: maintain existing rural character, conserve landforms and natural landscape, preserve wildlife habitats, protect/preserve viewsheds, ensure that developments are designed to fit with the characteristics and constraints of the site, and to protect life and property from sites that are constrained by slope stability, landslide hazard, fire hazard, and fault zones. The County recognizes hillsides and ridgelines are a unique resource and intends to preserve and protect the ridgeline and hillside areas by regulating development that would degrade these areas, through a design review process set forth in Section 25.029.033. Section 25.29.031 applies to the design review requirements to all proposed new residential land uses, buildings, structures, or building additions which require a building permit which are:

- (1) Located on slopes greater than 15%; or
- (2) Located along the viewshed corridors of Highway 101, Highway 156 (SR 156), Highway 25 north of Panoche Road, and Fairview Road and
- (3) Located at an elevation of 200 feet or higher above the identified viewshed corridor; and



- (4) Located in a place that is visible from the nearest point along said viewshed corridor and one and one-half miles in either direction along the viewshed corridor.

Zoning Ordinance (San Benito County Code, Title 25) Chapter 25.14 (Combining Districts), Article IV (Scenic Highway (SH) District), Sections 25.14.060-068). Section 25.14.062 adopts the scenic corridor designation for the same state highways as are designated in the current adopted General Plan, Scenic Roads and Highways Element. Article IV includes development standards related to visual resources, several of which should be considered in regards to the proposed Project, because although SR 156 is not a designated Scenic Highway, it is “eligible” for the designation and provides scenic corridors throughout the County of San Benito in the region of the proposed Project.

San Benito County Zoning Code Section 25.14.065 for Grading; Screening:

- *Recognizing that grading can have significant adverse impacts within scenic areas the county shall carefully review all projects involving grading within scenic corridors. The proposed project shall be relocated, modified, redesigned or, if no alternative, screened to minimize visual impacts of grading operations seen from any scenic highway. County staff shall make final contour and landscaping recommendations to minimize visual impact of grading on the scenic corridor in accordance with the county’s grading ordinance.*
- *Vegetative Cover and other screening devices shall be provided to hide grading scars and to blend with the natural landscape and provide erosion control.*

San Benito County Zoning Code Section 25.14.066-.068 includes development standards regarding development design, landscaping, and utility lines, respectively, as follows:

- *Development Designs; Review. Recognizing that some architectural designs could have adverse impact on the scenic resource, county staff shall review development design proposals in the scenic corridor to insure that the obstruction of view is minimized. Building height and setbacks shall be regulated to protect the field of vision in the scenic corridor. Building heights shall not exceed and setback requirements shall not be less than those of the base zoning district.*
- *Landscaping. All landscaping in the scenic corridor shall be compatible with local vegetation and ground forms. Indigenous plants and grasses shall be used where appropriate and possible as a means of reestablishing the natural landscape.*
- *Utility Lines. The county staff shall review applications and provide mitigation measures to minimize visual impact of utility lines on the scenic corridor. All new electric and communication distribution facilities shall be placed underground whenever feasible.*

Development Lighting (“Dark Skies”) Ordinance (San Benito County Code, Title 19 (Land Use and Environmental Regulations), Chapter 19.31 (Development Lighting): Chapter 19.31 requires the use of outdoor lighting systems and practices designed to reduce light pollution and glare, and to protect the nighttime visual environment by regulating outdoor lighting which interferes with astronomical observations and enjoyment of the night sky. Section 19.31.002 states the provisions of Chapter 19.31 apply to all proposed new land uses, developments, buildings, structures or building additions, as well as street lights on county and private roadways.



Section 19.31.005 establishes three lighting zones, with Zone I imposing the strictest regulations and Zone III imposing the least restrictive. The Project Site is located in Zone II. General requirements are applicable to all zones, under Section 19.31.006 and the special requirements applicable to Zone II are set forth in Section 19.31.008.

Management and Conservation of Woodlands Ordinance (San Benito County Code, Title 19 (Land Use and Environmental Regulations), Chapter 19.33: Section 19.33.008 applies the regulations set forth in Chapter 19.33 to parcels covered by at least 10% woodland vegetation as determined by the baseline retention canopy survey which is on file with the County's Planning Division, and to parcels that currently support native trees or other woody vegetation but were farmed to agricultural crops at the time of the aforementioned baseline aerial photography. Section 19.33.006 prohibits clear cutting, grading in a manner that removes woodlands, vegetation removal and similar projects and Section 19.33.005 requires the issuance of a permit when the removal of individual or masses of trees within woodlands of between 90% and 100% as per the canopy retention standard, or any time removal is located on slopes greater than or equal to 30%. Permits may be issued along with conditions of approval, as set forth in Section 19.33.010. As described in Section 4.4, *Biological Resources*, the Project Site includes approximately 454 acres of oak woodland and approximately 53 acres of mixed riparian woodland. However, no new development is proposed within areas consisting of oak woodland or mixed riparian woodland in the Project Site and no oak woodland or mixed riparian woodland habitat would be directly affected by proposed development.

Specific Plan Design Guidelines and Development Standards. The Specific Plan's Design Guidelines and Development Standards describe and illustrate building designs, concepts, and features intended to promote cohesive design and community identity, and are intended to be used by in conjunction with the development standards listed above. In general, the Specific Plan's design guidelines and development standards address: overall building design, building articulation, building massing, indoor-outdoor relationships, building material colors, and finishes, base and top treatments, entry design, windows and doors, roofs, equipment screening and service areas, fences and walls, exterior lighting, and landscape design. Because the Specific Plan has been prepared to comprehensively plan the Project Site, incorporating features that are tailored to the topographic and other unique aspects of the site, in the event that there is a conflict between the County's development standards and the Specific Plan, the Specific Plan's development standards would control.

4.1.2 Previous Environmental Review

The 2003 *San Juan Oaks Golf Club General Plan Amendment/Zone Change/Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map EIR* (2003 EIR) examined the aesthetic setting of the project region and the potential impacts resulting from development under the San Juan Oaks Golf Club General Plan Amendment/Zone Change/Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map Project. The 2003 EIR concluded that impacts related to design elements, light and glare, changes to the area's character, grading activities, and landscaping were potentially significant. Mitigation measures included architectural and landscape guidelines, lighting and street lighting limitations, revegetation of graded areas, clearing of excess debris, and a landscape plan and landscape performance security. With applicable mitigation measures, aesthetic impacts were found to be less than significant. The 2003 San Juan Oaks Golf Club project included a General Plan



Amendment/Zone Change/Vesting Tentative Tract Map. This previously approved project allowed for the development of 156 market rate residential units, 30 affordable units, a resort hotel, a village commercial site, a park, a permanent wildlife habitat/open space, an additional 18-hole golf course, and an additional nine-hole golf course. None of the previously approved uses have been constructed.

Although the 2003 EIR addressed visual changes due to urbanization of portions of the site, substantial changes to the previously approved 2003 San Juan Oaks Golf Club project are proposed as part of Del Webb at San Juan Oaks Specific Plan Project.

The development footprint of the 2003 San Juan Oaks Golf Club Project and the current proposed Project are substantially similar, as shown in Figure 1-1 in Section 1.0, *Introduction*. However, substantial changes to the previously approved 2003 San Juan Oaks Golf Club project are proposed as part of Del Webb at San Juan Oaks Specific Plan Project. Specifically, the Del Webb at San Juan Oaks Specific Plan Project proposes to increase the previously approved overall impervious building area from approximately 193 acres to approximately 323 acres, increase the total number of residential dwellings from 186 single-family residential dwellings to 1,084 single-family residential dwellings, increase the neighborhood commercial area from approximately seven acres to approximately 14 acres, increase roadway areas from approximately 44 acres to approximately 88 acres, increase the permanent wildlife habitat/open space from approximately 1,163 acres to approximately 1,243 acres, and develop an approximately ten-acre amenity center. In addition, the Project provides for the permanent preservation of approximately 153 acres of off-site prime agricultural land for agricultural uses.

These proposed changes have the potential to substantially increase the severity of the previously identified aesthetic impacts. Therefore, the following impact analysis has been prepared pursuant to Public Resources Code Section 21166 and CEQA Guidelines Section 15162 (a).

4.1.3 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds. The assessment of aesthetic impacts involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective in nature. Different viewers may react to viewsheds and aesthetic conditions differently. Visual or aesthetic resources generally are defined as both the natural and built features of the landscape. Depending on the extent to which a project's presence would alter the perceived visual character and quality of the environment, a visual or aesthetic impact may occur, but the significance of the impact may vary with the nature of the area to be affected.

The evaluation in this SEIR measures the existing visual resources of the Project Site and vicinity with the changes that would occur as a result of developing the Project, and this evaluation occurs within the context of the below-referenced significance thresholds and the prior environmental review previously conducted in connection with the Project Site. The Project Site was observed and photographically documented in its surrounding context. The applicable provisions of the County's current adopted General Plan, Zoning Ordinance, Development Lighting ("Dark Skies") Ordinance, and Management and Conservation of Woodlands Ordinance as well as the Project's Specific Plan development standards and design



guidelines and other relevant provisions (as Project design features) were considered for purposes of this analysis. CEQA distinguishes between public and private views, and focuses on whether a project would affect the public environment (i.e., public views) rather than particular individuals (i.e., private views). Accordingly, potential impacts related to private views, such as from individual homes, have not been analyzed in this SEIR.

Views may be characterized in terms of foreground, middleground, and background views. Foreground views are those immediately presented to the viewer, and include objects at close range. Middleground views occupy the center of the viewshed, and tend to include objects that dominate the viewshed in normal circumstances. Background views include distant objects and other objects that make up the horizon. As described more fully above, existing views of the Project Site from viewsheds on SR 156 and Union Road include primarily agricultural and grazing land in the foreground, immediately adjacent to SR 156 to Union Road, as well as in the middleground, and sloping hillsides in the background. According to Appendix G of the *State CEQA Guidelines*, an aesthetic impact from the proposed Project would be significant if the Project would:

1. *Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;*
2. *Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;*
3. *Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; and/or*
4. *Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.*

b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

Impact AES-1 **Implementation of the proposed Project would alter the scenic vistas from public viewing locations because the proposed Project would create new development located south of two viewsheds on SR 156 and one viewshed southwest of Union Road. However, it would not alter scenic resources within a state scenic highway. The proposed buildings would be constructed approximately 1.5 miles from the viewsheds, behind agricultural land and in the foreground of sloping hillsides. Due to the distance from the viewsheds and relative building size compared to the hillsides, impacts would be Class III, less than significant. [Thresholds number 1 and 2]**

The Project would result in a significant environmental impact if it would substantially and negatively affect scenic vistas or other scenic resources in the area.

A scenic vista is generally described as a clear, expansive public view of significant regional features possessing visual and aesthetic qualities of value to the community. The Open Space and Conservation Element and the Scenic Roads and Highways Element of the current adopted General Plan contain policy statements that serve as a framework for evaluating proposed projects in regard to their potential to affect the “rural atmosphere” of the County. According to the San Benito County General Plan Background Report, agricultural land and rangeland, both



of which are found on the Project Site and can be seen from SR 156 and Union Road, serve as scenic resources. Hillside views are also of importance to the community, as evidenced by the Hillside Development Regulations.

The above-referenced scenic resources are viewed by the public primarily along SR 156 and Union Road, as motorists travel along the major transportation corridors at highway speed. In addition, while these public views involve local scenic resources such as foothills, mountains and agricultural and grazing lands, these resources are not unique to the Project Site but rather are characteristic of much of San Benito County, and exist throughout the region. Further, the scenic quality of these views is already compromised by a number of factors, including the highly limited duration that views are typically available to motorists due to the high speed of travel in the transportation corridors, fairly limited travel along the Project frontage, and the resulting limited impact that the Project would have on these public views, as discussed in detail below. As evidenced in Figures 4.1-3 and 4.1-4, there are no distinguishing visual features in the Project Site, aside from its open space nature that is framed by a visual backdrop of the hillsides.

As described in the following impact discussion, the proposed Project would not result in a significant impact on the public viewing corridor of the area.

SR 156 Viewsheds. As discussed above, there are no State-designated scenic routes located within the Project Site or in the vicinity. While SR 156 has not been officially designated as a scenic route by the State of California, because it is considered eligible for this designation and given the relevant current adopted General Plan policies and County Code provisions that focus on protecting this viewshed, for purposes of a conservative analysis, impacts to SR 156 are considered.

SR 156 is a state highway that extends south to merge with Highway 1 and north to merge with SR 152. However, near the Project Site, SR 156 travels in an east-west direction connecting the Cities of San Juan Bautista and Hollister. In this area, there is one travel lane in each direction and the speed limit is 55 mph. This roadway provides access to all local access streets near the Project Site (see Section 4.13, *Transportation and Circulation*).

As described above, the Project Site contains generally flat grasslands that allow for open and fairly expansive views of the relevant viewshed. To avoid view disruption, while the proposed Project would include a significant amount of urban development on the undeveloped portions of the Project Site, it would be situated approximately 1.5 miles from the viewsheds to minimize interference to the extent feasible. The Project development includes 1,017 one-story single-family residences, 67 two-story single family-residences, resort facilities, neighborhood commercial facilities, and associated park and recreational uses as well as non-urban components such as the proposed agricultural, open space and habitat uses described in the Section 2.0, *Project Description*.

Figure 4.1-3 shows the existing view from SR 156 and Flint Road (top) and a simulation of the view that would be seen after build-out of the Project from the same viewshed (bottom). The existing foreground view is dominated by open space, which is currently used for grazing and other agricultural uses; the same foreground is featured in the visual simulation showing the view after Project build-out. The existing and simulated middleground view is also dominated



by open space, as well as rural structures and agricultural uses. Finally, the background view from SR 156 and Flint Road is dominated by sloping hillsides and ridgelines in both the existing view and the simulated view. The background consists of houses in the visual simulation, but the proposed Project would not dominate the ridgeline which forms the horizon.

Figure 4.1-4 shows the existing view from SR 156 and Bixby Road (top) and a simulation of the view that would be seen after build-out of the proposed Project from the same viewshed (bottom). Similar to the SR 156 and Flint Road viewshed, the foreground and middleground views are comprised of open space for both the existing view and the simulated view and the background view in both is dominated by sloping hillsides and ridgelines, which would remain the dominant features of the horizon after Project build-out.

Furthermore, while the undeveloped nature of much of the Project Site would be altered as a result of the Project, a number of additional development standards, design guidelines and policies within the Specific Plan have been included to help ensure the public views from the transportation corridors would be of high quality. These Project design features include, among others, provisions such as: equipment screening and service areas, limited heights for fences and walls, and landscaping that is appropriate to the site, with a conservation focus on native plants and trees. The majority of the Project Site would continue to be open space and agricultural land.

In addition, the Specific Plan includes requirements that approved signage and landscaping plans be implemented as part of the development process for each phase within the Project in accordance with applicable standards and other requirements set forth in the Specific Plan. Furthermore, in addition to the signage development standards and design guidelines in the Specific Plan, the Project would be required to comply with all applicable Caltrans requirements (e.g., height, setback, and separation).

Due to the relatively flat topography, the heights of proposed structures (i.e., one-story neighborhood commercial buildings, primarily one-story housing units with 67 two-story housing units, and resort structures), and the distance from SR 156 to the Project Site, the Project would be only slightly visible in background views from SR 156. As such, the proposed Project would not obstruct ridgeline views or become the dominant landscape feature to drivers viewing the Project Site from SR 156. Therefore, the Project would result in less than significant impacts on views from this public viewing corridor.

Union Road Viewshed. Union Road is a two-lane, 24-foot wide roadway that runs in a general north-south direction east of the Project Site. Existing views of the Project Site, looking west from the Union Road viewpoint, include existing row crops in the foreground, rural residences and agricultural structures in the middle ground, and rolling hills in the background. Planned improvements would be only slightly visible in the middle ground and background views from the Union Road viewpoint. Views of the Project Site from Union Road are most direct at the intersection of Union Road and SR 156. Views are at a similar distance as those from SR 156; therefore, the visual simulations for SR 156 are generally representative of views from Union Road. In addition, due to the distance from the Union Road viewshed and the building profiles in the proposed Project, background views would not be substantially impacted. In addition, the development standards and design guidelines noted above would help ensure that the

public views of the Project are of high quality. Therefore, the Project would result in less than significant impacts on views from this public viewing corridor.

Overall Impact. The proposed Project would have a relatively minor impact on scenic vistas and other identified scenic resources due to the distance of the Project Site from public viewing areas relative to the height of the proposed buildings and for the other reasons set forth above.

Mitigation Measures. No mitigation is required.

Significance After Mitigation. Impacts would be less than significant without mitigation. As described above, there are no state-designated highways crossing the Project Site or in the vicinity. However, SR 156 is eligible for such designation and therefore is evaluated in this analysis, as noted above. In addition, the Union Road viewshed is considered in this analysis because of its proximity to the Project Site and because it offers views similar to those offered on SR 156. The views from these roadways to the Project Site are limited because of the large area of agricultural land between the roadways and the Project Site and due to the high speeds of travel; for these reasons, impacts in this regard would be limited. Nevertheless, new development proposed by the Project in the relevant viewsheds would have the potential to adversely affect a highway that is eligible for designation.

However, as noted above, given the distance of the Project Site from these viewsheds, the relatively low profile of the proposed buildings and for the other reasons set forth above, these changes would not constitute a significant impact. Furthermore, implementation of the development standards and design guidelines as well as other relevant policies and objectives in the Specific Plan would help ensure these new buildings are appropriately set back and screened with landscaping to reduce impacts on views.

There are no other scenic resources such as trees, rock outcroppings or historic buildings within a state scenic highway on the Project Site or in the vicinity, and thus there would be no significant impacts in this regard.

Impact AES-2 The proposed Project has the potential to substantially alter the aesthetic character of the site vicinity by changing the area's character from rural to a more urbanized developed setting. This is a Class I, significant and unavoidable impact to the aesthetic character of the area. [Threshold number 3]

Development of the Project would result in the construction of a significant amount of new urban structures, improvements and other infrastructure on a site that is mostly undeveloped, and which is currently agricultural and rural in nature. As described more fully in Section 2.0, *Project Description*, the Project would bring a substantial amount of urban development to the Project Site, changing the existing rural and agricultural character of the site and the vicinity to urban in nature. While the development would largely occur in a location that is visible primarily from background views only, it is currently a rural and agricultural landscape, which is considered to be of high quality to some viewers. The majority of the Project Site (approximately 1,300 acres or 70%) would remain as open space or in agricultural use;



nonetheless a substantial portion of the site (approximately 30%) would be developed with urban uses.

Construction of the Project is consistent with the broader vision in the County's current adopted General Plan by implementing various goals, policies and objectives, which focus on encouraging development of needed housing as well as commercial uses to certain areas, while protecting other lands that are more sensitive biologically and are the most productive from an agricultural perspective. In addition, the Project would be required to comply with all applicable County Code provisions and ordinances and General Plan goals, policies and objectives that are designed to help ensure the proposed development would be of high quality and aesthetically pleasing. These include, for example, Policy 17 (Ridgeline Development), which requires that new development be directed away from the horizon through the use of building envelopes and integration of building architecture into the contour of the horizon and the "Dark Skies" Ordinance, as discussed previously.

In addition, the Project's various design features would be in place to help further minimize negative aesthetic impacts, and help ensure development of a thoughtful, cohesive and well-designed community, and to minimize visibility of the Project from a distance to the extent feasible. For example, Specific Plan Chapter 2: Land Use and Development Standards, Specific Plan Chapter 3: Design Guidelines, and Chapter 6: Parks, Open Space, and Landscaping include numerous design standards, goals and guidelines to help ensure the design quality of future development. Specifically, the Specific Plan Design Guidelines describe and illustrate building designs, concepts, and features intended to promote cohesive design and community identity, and are intended to be used by in conjunction with the development standards described in Section 2.4.3, *Land Use Categories and Development Standards*. General design guidelines that apply to all future development within the Project Site are briefly discussed below and more detail is included in Section 2.4.5, *Project Design Guidelines*. For design guidelines that specifically apply to single family residential, amenity center, neighborhood commercial, and resort hotel uses, refer to Chapter 3 of the proposed Specific Plan (included as Appendix B).

Building Articulation. Facades must be articulated to improve the design quality; features that break up large buildings and create attractive entries and facades are encouraged; and tower elements are strongly encouraged at focal points.

Building Materials, Colors, and Finishes. High-quality, durable colors shall be provided; recycled and/or sustainable materials are strongly encouraged; building details such as flashing, pipes, and vents, may be used as an enhancement or painted so as to virtually disappear; and the natural colors of brick, stone and tile should be maintained.

Entry Design. Entrances should be designed as features of the front façade, should provide shelter from the sun when possible, and should create a "pedestrian scale".

Windows and Doors. Windows should be proportional to the façade, provide a balanced relationship with the surrounding roof and walls, provide natural ventilation when possible, and dark tinted or reflective glass should be avoided.



Roofs. A variety of roofing forms, pitches, slopes, details and materials should be used on buildings; roof heights shall be varied; and rooftop solar panels, solar films, and small-scale wind turbines may be used to generate energy.

Equipment Screening and Service Areas. Roof-mounted mechanical equipment (excluding solar panels, solar films, and small-scale wind turbines) on non-residential buildings shall be screened from views from streets, walkways, common areas, parking lots, parks, and open space areas; exterior on-site utilities shall be located underground; and service and storage areas shall be located behind or to the side of buildings and screened from public view.

Fences and Walls. Fences and walls along collector (divided or undivided) streets and project perimeters, as well as residential rear and side yard fences, shall not exceed six (6) feet in height and shall be constructed of attractive, durable materials.

Landscaping. In accordance with applicable provisions of the Specific Plan, landscaping would constitute a critical and defining component in the effort to create a new community that is compatible with the character, principles, and goals of this region of San Benito County. The proposed Project would include landscaping, which would be designed to be consistent with the existing natural visual character of the Project vicinity by using a native planting palette where appropriate. The Project would be required to adhere to applicable landscaping goals and policies of the Specific Plan, including:

- Community landscape, lighting, fencing and signage program that is consistent with the informal character and overall historical themes of the local and regional area;
- A planting and irrigation program that appropriately creates fire protection setback areas as a buffer to protect development;
- A landscape program of design and maintenance whose visual quality enhances the community image and attracts new residents and visitors;
- A landscape program that appropriately screens parking lots, trash enclosures, delivery areas, equipment buildings, and other similar elements from public views;
- A landscape plan for parks and recreation areas that provides appropriate activities and facilities consistent with the active adult population that will live in the community;
- A landscape plan that preserves and/or replaces existing significant trees in accordance with County standards and requirements;
- An environmental program that either avoids or re-vegetates any riparian and/or wetland areas that require buffering from development.

As discussed, the proposed Project would include approximately 1,243 acres of land designated as permanent wildlife preserve and approximately 41 acres of on-site permanent agricultural preservation (a portion of which is proposed for use as a passive park), which would help to permanently preserve the natural visual character of that portion of the Project Site and vicinity.

Grading Alterations. Implementation of the proposed Project would require grading and modifications to site topography. The grading of the Project Site would be conducted in phases and subsequent rough grading of tracts within the Project Site would be followed by construction of homes and other Project facilities and improvements. The Project Site is located in a transitional belt between hilly oak woodland and chaparral communities to the south and



flat valley floor grassland communities and agricultural uses to the north. The Project Site contains several habitat types, including mixed riparian, freshwater seep, Central Coast arroyo willow riparian, coast live oak woodlands, ruderal, and non-native grasslands. Minimal removal of trees would be required, as the area proposed for development is only sparsely populated by trees; in contrast, those portions of the Project Site that contain substantial numbers of trees would not be developed. See Section 4.4, *Biological Resources*, for a detailed discussion of these impacts. As explained more fully in the Specific Plan, grading and landscape/tree plans would be submitted to San Benito County for review and approval as part of the development process. Nevertheless, even with adherence to existing County of San Benito grading requirements, Project Site grading would contribute to significant alteration of the visual character of the Project Site.

Overall Impact. With implementation of the Project's development standards, design guidelines and other design-related goals, policies and objectives, and compliance with the applicable County Code provisions designed to protect the aesthetic character of the area as well as adherence to relevant County General Plan goals, policies and objectives, the impacts associated with new development in the Project Site would be reduced, particularly in light of the distance of the proposed development from the relevant public viewsheds and the anticipated landscaping palette that is intended to help shield the development from view by existing agricultural uses and open space. Project design features of siting development at a sufficient distance from the relevant public viewsheds, along with the design guidelines for buildings and landscaping discussed here and in Section 2.0, *Project Description*, and ensuring that approximately 1,243 acres of the Project Site would be maintained in perpetuity for wildlife conservation, would all help to buffer middle and distant views of development from public viewsheds and thus further reduce Project-specific impacts related to aesthetic impacts. Nevertheless, given the conversion of a substantial amount of acreage from rural to urban uses, impacts on the visual character or quality would be significant as a portion of the site's character would change from rural to urban. This change, because it alters an existing rural character considered highly valuable in the County, would be considered a substantial degradation in visual character. Visual character impacts would therefore be potentially significant.

Mitigation Measures. Proposed Project design features would reduce impacts to the extent feasible. However, no feasible mitigation measures are available that would reduce the Project's adverse changes to visual character to a less than significant level.

Significance After Mitigation. For the reasons set forth above, including, among others, the distance of the proposed development from public viewsheds as well as implementation of the development standards and design guidelines, the Project's aesthetic impacts would be reduced to the extent feasible through implementation of various Project design features and adherence to applicable laws. However, given the nature of the Project Site and the vicinity, and the scope of the Project which involves the conversion of a substantial amount of acreage from rural to urban uses, no feasible mitigation is available to reduce the Project's impacts that would occur as a result of the fundamental alteration of rural scenic character to a more urbanized one. The proposed Project would substantially change the landscape, which would be a significant and unavoidable aesthetic impact to the existing rural and agricultural character of the Project Site.



Impact AES-3 Given the distance of the Project Site from SR 156 and Union Road, light and glare generated by the proposed Project would be minimal to public viewers. Light and glare impacts would be Class III, less than significant. [Threshold number 4]

The Project Site's existing sources of light and glare include light from the Existing Golf Club and glare from vehicle windshields. However, implementation of the proposed Project would introduce new sources of light from streetlights, entry lights, and interior and exterior lights from the residential, resort, and commercial uses and amenity center, as well as from associated parking lots, streets, pedestrian and bicycle paths and recreational and open space facilities. In addition, the Project would create new sources of glare from windows and exterior building materials, surface paving materials and vehicles on new roads, driveways and surface parking lots. Any highly reflective facade materials would be of particular concern, as buildings would reflect the bright sunrays. Accordingly, the Project has the potential to adversely affect nearby public viewpoints from SR 156 and Union Road and to degrade the nighttime view of the foothill area.

Short-term construction activities could include nighttime security lighting, which would potentially introduce new sources of light and glare in and around the Project Site. However, since the surrounding properties are virtually uninhabited, it is anticipated that minimal visual disruption would occur with the implementation of identified design features and mitigation described herein. Also, during mass grading and the infrastructure construction phase, and throughout remaining construction phase(s) of the Project, short-term construction activities would provide a light and glare source or could introduce light into currently dark areas of the hillsides. Screening of construction areas where night lighting is used could reduce this impact, which would in any case be temporary and short-term and would cease at completion of the phase at issue.

Site illumination provides safety for vehicular and pedestrian movement, and increases security. It can also serve to interpret the plan arrangement by giving emphasis to focal points, gathering places, landscaping, and building entrances. Well-conceived lighting gives clarity and unity to the overall site and to each subarea within it. The introduction of new lighting into an unlit area would extend the light glow of an urban area further into rural areas, proportionally affecting the urban light glow in the nighttime sky.

However, the Specific Plan includes standards, guidelines and policies that require shielding of lighting to minimize uplighting and to prevent light splay, and also require that streetlights be subdued and focused to reduce light pollution and glare. Specifically, as detailed below, the Project would be required to adhere to various Specific Plan Design Guidelines to prevent significant light and glare impacts, including:

- Adequate lighting shall be provided throughout the site to create an inviting and non-threatening environment. Night lighting of public spaces shall be kept to the minimum necessary for safety and security purposes.
- The scale, materials, colors, and design detail of light posts and fixtures should reflect the desired character of the Project Site and the architectural style of the surrounding



buildings. Light posts shall be appropriately scaled to pedestrians near sidewalks and other areas of pedestrian circulation. Extremely tall light posts and fixtures shall be avoided. Bollard lighting is encouraged to illuminate walkways without providing spillover.

- Lighting fixtures shall be compatible with the architectural style and character of the building. The color, size, placement, and number of fixtures shall enhance the overall design and character of the building and site.
- Energy efficient, low voltage lighting is strongly encouraged. Decorative lighting shall be low intensity.
- Exterior lighting should be unobtrusive and not cause glare or spillover into neighboring properties, especially when within 100 feet of open space or wildlife habitat. Lighting fixtures should direct illumination downward to minimize light pollution impacts. Up-lighting, spot-lighting, and decorative color lighting may be appropriate for prominent buildings and features, but illumination shall not adversely impact neighboring properties with sensitive uses, such as residential or open space and wildlife habitat areas.
- If security lighting is required, security lighting fixtures shall be hooded, recessed, and/or located in such a manner to only illuminate the intended area.
- Addresses shall be visible from streets and illuminated at night.
- All exterior lighting shall be installed and maintained in accordance with the County's Development and Lighting ("Dark Skies") Ordinance (County Code, Title 19, Chapter 19.31).

Overall Impact. The proposed Project has the potential to alter the aesthetic character of the Project Site and vicinity by introducing new sources of light and glare that alter the aesthetic character from rural landscapes to a more urbanized development. However, given the distance of the Project Site from the relevant public viewsheds, light and glare generated by the proposed Project would be fairly minimal to public viewers. In addition, the development standards and design guidelines discussed herein and in Section 2.0, *Project Description* would help to ensure that impacts related to the introduction of new sources of light and glare would be less than significant and no mitigation would be required.

Mitigation Measures. No mitigation is required.

Significance After Mitigation. For the reasons set forth above, the light and glare impacts of the proposed project would be less than significant.

c. Cumulative Impacts. The geographic extent for this cumulative impact analysis includes the viewsheds along SR 156 and Union Road. This geographic extent is appropriate for the issue of aesthetics because the Project's aesthetic impacts are fairly localized and site-specific. As stated in Section 3.3, *Cumulative Projects Setting*, due to the long-term and multi-



phased characteristics of the proposed Project, this SEIR examines cumulative impacts to scenic vistas and other scenic resources based on a summary of projections in accordance with long-range General Plan buildout of San Benito County and the cities of Hollister and San Juan Bautista, which would result in an increase of a total of approximately 32,300 residents, 10,217 housing units, and approximately 4,320 employees. It is anticipated that much of this cumulative development would be located along viewsheds from which the Project Site cannot be seen in any foreground views due to the distance from the Project Site to the relevant corridor. As discussed more fully in Section 4.10, *Land Use*, the County's current adopted General Plan has envisioned this corridor for more urbanized development. Future development along the corridor may be located such that it would impact views from the corridor; however, the Project would not have a cumulatively considerable contribution to any such impact to scenic viewsheds. Cumulative aesthetic impacts in this regard are, therefore, considered less than significant (Class III).

Cumulative development within this cumulative extent would also serve to transition the aesthetic character from a rural, agricultural character to a more developed character. Cumulative impacts to visual character as a result of this transition to a more urbanized character would be significant. Given that the proposed Project would result in significant and unavoidable impacts to visual character within this geographic extent, the Project's contribution to this cumulative impact would be significant.

With respect to light and glare impacts, while the Project would create a new source of light and glare, various design features would help ensure that impacts in this regard would be less than significant. In addition, implementation of the County's applicable regulations relating to lighting standards (including, without limitation, requirements relating to its Dark Sky ordinance) would help further reduce such impacts. It is reasonable to conclude that similar measures would be imposed on other cumulative projects within the relevant viewshed corridors, and as such, any cumulative light and glare impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level and that the Project would not have any cumulatively considerable contribution to any such impact with respect to light and glare impacts.



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