

4.1

AESTHETICS

4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Aesthetics chapter of the EIR describes the existing visual resources of the proposed project site and vicinity. In addition, an evaluation is provided of the potential impacts of the project with respect to urbanization of the area. The CEQA Guidelines describe the concept of aesthetic resources in terms of scenic vistas, scenic resources (such as trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings), State scenic highways, visual character or quality of the project site, and light and glare impacts. The following impact analysis is based on visual simulations prepared by *First Carbon Solutions, Inc.*, as well as information drawn from the *City of Antioch General Plan*¹ and associated EIR.²

4.1.2 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The following setting information provides an overview of the existing conditions of the project site and surrounding area in relation to visual resources.

Regional Setting

The City of Antioch is located in eastern Contra Costa County and is bordered to the north by the San Joaquin River Delta; to the east by the City of Brentwood and the City of Oakley; to the west by the City of Pittsburg and unincorporated portions of the County; and to the south by unincorporated portions of the County. The project site is in the southern portion of the City of Antioch, and bordered by Deer Valley Road to the east, Empire Mine Road to the west, and residential development to the north. Although Deer Valley Road is currently used for vehicle traffic in the area, Empire Mine Road is closed to vehicular traffic. The project site is within the northernmost portion of the Sand Creek Focus Area of the General Plan. The Sand Creek Focus Area contains lands designated by the General Plan for open space and residential, commercial, and mixed-use development.

According to the City of Antioch General Plan, the Sand Creek Focus Area is within the voter-approved Urban Limit Line (ULL) and is bounded by existing residential neighborhoods to the north, Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve to the west, the City limits to the south, and the City of Brentwood to the east. Sand Creek and the natural hillside and canyons within the Sand Creek Focus Area contain habitats for sensitive plant and animal species. In addition, although not present on the project site, oak woodlands within the Sand Creek Focus Area are considered sensitive resources due to high wildlife value. Overall, the western portion of the Sand Creek Focus Area is more environmentally sensitive than the eastern portion in terms of steep topography,

¹ City of Antioch. *City of Antioch General Plan*. Updated November 24, 2003.

² City of Antioch. *Draft General Plan Update Environmental Impact Report*. July 2003.

biological habitats and linkages, the existence of abandoned coal mines, and proximity to public open space at Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve. Land has been preserved in regional parks and permanent open space, primarily in extensive grassland to the immediate west and northwest, as well as south of the Sand Creek Focus Area. The preserves represent a significant investment of public resources and are a valued public asset.

The Sand Creek Focus Area has been planned for future urbanization since the 1988 Antioch General Plan. The Sand Creek Focus Area is currently planned for buildout as a large-scale planned community including both housing and employment opportunities. The General Plan presently anticipates buildout of the Sand Creek Focus Area with a range of housing types, including upper-income estate housing, golf course-oriented, age-restricted housing for seniors, suburban single-family detached homes, multi-family development with a maximum buildout of 4,000 dwelling units, and retail and employment-generating uses.

Both the Multi-Generational and Traditional Plans include a General Plan Amendment to the Land Use Map to change the land use designations of the site to Low Density Residential, Medium Low Density Residential, Mixed Use, Public/Quasi Public, and Open Space. In addition, the Multi-Generational Plan would designate a portion of the site as Senior Housing. However, the type and intensity of development proposed would be similar to what has been previously considered in the City's General Plan and analyzed in the General Plan EIR.

Project Site Setting

The following section describes the surrounding uses in the vicinity of the proposed project site, views of the site from public areas, State scenic highways, and the existing visual character and quality of the site.

Surrounding Uses

The proposed project site is within the voter-approved ULL and is bounded by a single-family residential subdivision to the north, undeveloped land to the south (planned for future residential), Deer Valley Road and Kaiser Permanente Antioch Medical Center to the east, and undeveloped land (designated for future residential) to the west.

Public Views

The proposed project site is currently visible to motorists travelling along Deer Valley Road to the east of the site, as well as motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians travelling along public roadways within the residential subdivisions to the north of the site, including the terminus of East Creek Way, Dallas Ranch Road, Stanley Court, Vallejo Court, and Zinfandel Court. Because a number of individual motorists would travel along the area roadways on a daily basis, views from such public areas would be affected by any changes to the aesthetic character of the project site occurring as a result of the proposed project. In addition, residents of the subdivisions to the north have views of the site. Due to the nearby residents' familiarity with the existing landscape and views, and the residents' ability to detect changes in views, such residents would also be affected by any changes to the aesthetic character of the project site. The site is also visible from the Kaiser

Permanente Antioch Medical Center to the east. Distant views of the site are afforded to visitors at the Black Diamond Regional Preserve to the west of the site. Views from the other aforementioned public areas would, similarly, be affected by any changes to the aesthetic character of the project site. Because areas to the west and south of the site are primarily undeveloped and do not contain major roadways, views of the site from such areas would not be considered to be affected by changes on the project site.

Scenic Highways

According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the only officially-designated Scenic Highways within Contra Costa County are portions of Highway 24 and Interstate 680.³ The aforementioned highways are not located within the vicinity of the project site. State Route (SR) 4, located approximately 1.8 miles to the east of the site's western boundary, is listed as an Eligible State Scenic Highway. However, SR 4 has not been officially designated. In addition, the project site is not visible from SR 4.

Existing Visual Character

Daytime photos were taken of the project site to capture existing daytime views of the site. Figure 4.1-1 provides an overview of the locations from which the photographs were taken. Existing views of the project site and the surrounding areas are depicted in Figures 4.1-2 through 4.1-9. Such existing views are discussed in further detail below. The figures represent the visual setting of the site.

The 551.5-acre project site is primarily undeveloped land, located between Deer Valley Road and Empire Mine Road, just south of a residential development (see Figure 4.1-7). Currently, the site includes a cattle-grazing operation, a single-family residence, wooden fencing for corrals, and various barns and outbuildings, all of which are located on the eastern portion of the site at the existing terminus of a one-lane rural driveway (Snodgrass Lane) (see Figure 4.1-5 and Figure 4.1-6). The southwestern portion of the project site includes a windmill in the vicinity of a former mining town, Judsonville (see Figure 4.1-4). In addition, various jurisdictional and isolated wetlands exist on the site, located within the northwestern portion of the site near the existing terminus of Dallas Ranch Road, within the hilly area at the southwestern portion of the site, and along the site's eastern border.

Existing development to the east of the project site across Deer Valley Road includes the Kaiser Permanente Antioch Medical Center (see Figure 4.1-9). Wellness Way extends eastward from Deer Valley Road to the north of the Kaiser Permanente Antioch Medical Center (see Figure 4.1-8).

³ California Department of Transportation. *California Scenic Highway Program*. Available at: www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/schwy.html. Accessed April 9, 2017.

Figure 4.1-1
Photo Locations and View Directions



Figure 4.1-2
Existing View from Location 1 – Looking South from
Empire Mine Road



Figure 4.1-3
Existing View from Location 2 – Looking West at a Section
of Sand Creek

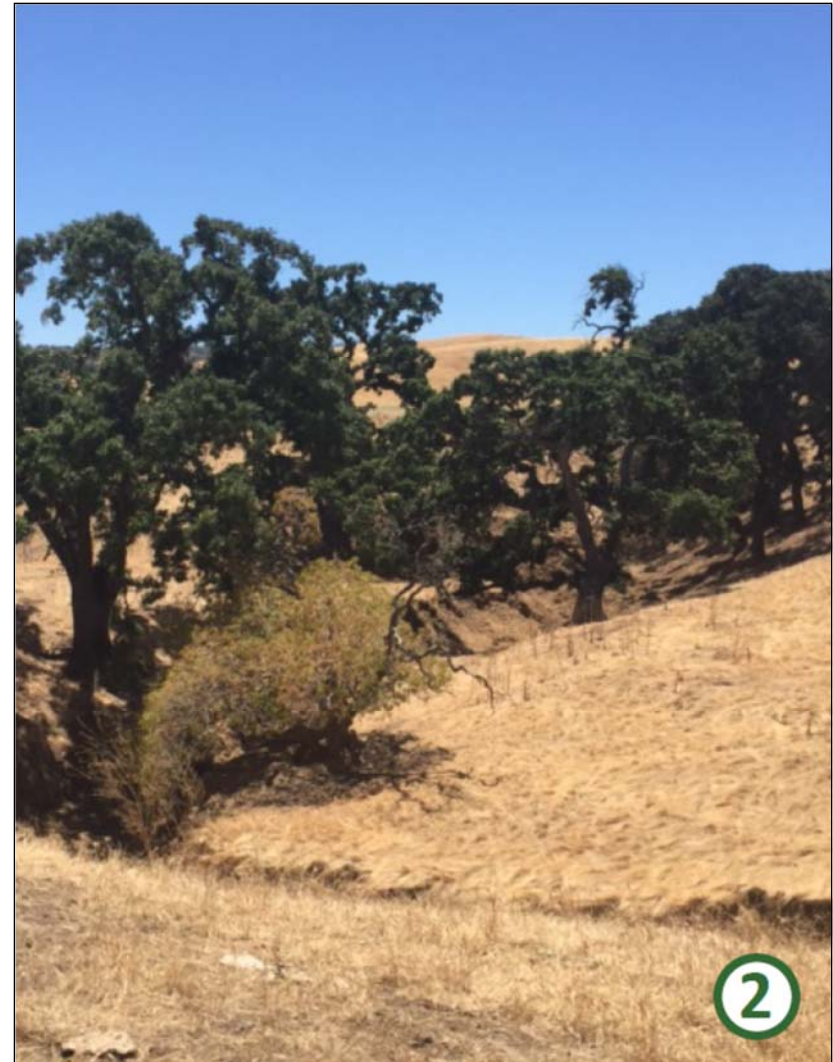


Figure 4.1-4
Existing View from Location 3 – Looking East at an Existing Windmill near the Former Judsonville Site



Figure 4.1-5
Existing View from Location 4 – Looking Southwest at the Project Site from Deer Valley Road

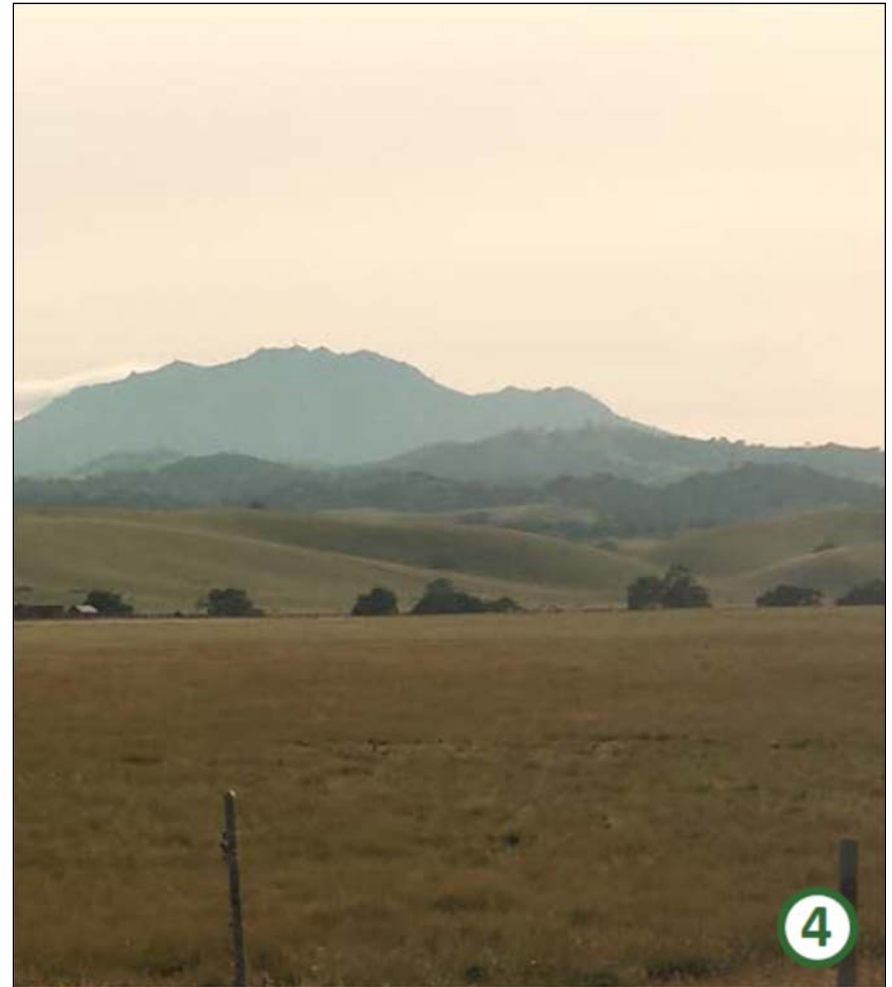


Figure 4.1-6
Existing View from Location 5 – Looking Southwest at the Existing On-Site Barn Structure



Figure 4.1-7
Existing View from Location 6 – Looking Northwest at the Residential Development Along the Northern Border



Figure 4.1-8
Existing View from Location 7 – Looking South at the Three-Way Intersection on Deer Valley Road



Figure 4.1-9
Existing View from Location 8 – Looking East at Kaiser Permanente Antioch Medical Center from the Project Site



Sand Creek, a tributary of Marsh Creek, flows west to east through the proposed project site (see Figure 4.1-3). The topography of the site is varied, ranging from relatively level areas in the eastern and central portions of the site to gently-sloping hills immediately north and south of Sand Creek. The most substantial on-site slopes are located within the northwest and southwest portions of the project site. Trees are located throughout the site along Sand Creek, as well as along a portion of the western border of the project site. In addition, a large stockpile of soil and large boulders is situated on the northern portion of the proposed project site, near the terminus of Dallas Ranch Road. The stockpile is likely the result of construction activities associated with Dallas Ranch Road and the existing single-family residential subdivision located to the north.

4.1.3 REGULATORY CONTEXT

Applicable federal laws or regulations pertaining to the visual quality of the project area do not exist. However, the existing State and local laws and regulations are listed below, as applicable.

State Regulations

The following are the State environmental laws and policies relevant to aesthetics.

California Scenic Highway Program

The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been so designated. Such highways are identified in Section 263 et seq. of the Streets and Highways Code. As noted previously, according to Caltrans, the only officially designated Scenic Highways within Contra Costa County are portions of Highway 24 and Interstate 680.⁴ The aforementioned highways are not located within the vicinity of the project site. SR 4, located approximately 1.8 miles to the east of the site's western boundary, is listed as an Eligible State Scenic Highway. However, SR 4 has not been officially designated, and the project site is not visible from SR 4.

Local Regulations

The following are the local environmental goals and policies relevant to aesthetics.

City of Antioch General Plan

The following policies from the City's General Plan are applicable to the proposed project.

Policy 4.4.6.7b (k) A maximum of 4,000 dwelling units may be constructed within the Sand Creek Focus Area. Appropriate density bonuses may be granted for development of age-restricted housing for seniors; however, such density bonuses may not exceed the total maximum of 4,000 dwelling units for the Sand Creek Focus Area.

⁴ California Department of Transportation. *California Scenic Highway Program*. Available at: www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/schwyt.html. April 9, 2017.

- Policy 4.4.6.7b (l) It is recognized that although the ultimate development yield for the Focus Area may be no higher than the 4,000 dwelling unit maximum, the actual development yield is not guaranteed by the General Plan, and could be substantially lower. The actual residential development yield of the Sand Creek Focus Area will depend on the nature and severity of biological, geologic, and other environmental constraints present within the Focus Area, including, but not limited to constraints posed by slopes and abandoned mines present within portions of the Focus Area; on appropriate design responses to such constraints, and on General Plan policies. Such policies include, and but are not limited to, identification of appropriate residential development types, public services and facilities performance standards, environmental policies aimed at protection of natural topography and environmental resources, policies intended to protect public health and safety, and implementation of the Resource Management Plan called for in Policy “u,” below.
- Policy 4.4.6.7b (r) Sand Creek, ridgelines, hilltops, stands of oak trees, and significant landforms shall be preserved in their natural condition. Overall, a minimum of 25 percent of the Sand Creek Focus Area shall be preserved in open space, exclusive of lands developed for golf course use.
- Policy 4.4.6.7b (s) Adequate buffer areas adjacent to the top of banks along Sand Creek to protect sensitive plant and amphibian habitats and water quality shall be provided. Adequate buffer areas shall also be provided along the edge of existing areas of permanently preserved open space adjacent to the Sand Creek Focus Area, including but not limited to the Black Diamond Mines Regional Park. Buffers established adjacent to existing open space areas shall be of an adequate width to minimize light/glare, noise, fire safety, public safety, habitat, public access impacts within the existing open space areas, consistent with the provisions of Section 10.5, Open Space Transitions and Buffers Policies of the General Plan.
- Policy 5.4.2.a Base the City’s review of public and private projects on the following general design principles:
- Innovative design, regardless of its style, is more important to the achievement of “quality” than the use of predetermined themes.
 - “High quality” comes from the explicit consideration of all aspects of development design. It is in design details that “quality” is ultimately manifested.
 - Designers need to respect community goals and needs, as well as address their client’s economic objectives.
 - Individual buildings and developments are not isolated entities, but are part of a larger district and community into which they must fit. While innovation and individual expression are sought, compatibility of design elements is also important.

- Standardized design solutions, “corporate architecture,” and “off the shelf models” can not always be depended on. What worked before or was accepted elsewhere may not work or be acceptable in the proposed application in Antioch.
- Architectural styles, landscaping, and project amenities should complement surrounding development, and convey a sense of purpose, not expediency.
- All building elevations visible to the public should be given equal attention and detail.
- The same design solution, no matter how well done, when repeated too often or over too large an area, can become boring, lose its effectiveness, and no longer communicate “quality.”

Policy 5.4.2.b

Incorporate Antioch’s “Gateway to the Delta” theme and reminders of its community heritage into the design of new residential, commercial, employment-generating, and recreational development, as well as into public facilities.

- Incorporate nautical/waterway, gateway/entry, industrial or ranching themes into the design details of new developments and community facilities, such as building architecture, signage, lighting standards, site paving and landscaping, street furniture (e.g., benches, trash enclosures and receptacles), fencing, and placement of murals and sculptures in public locations.
- Maintain a consistent design theme throughout each development project. Each individual development project and area within the project should portray an identifiable design theme.
- Select tree species that are appropriate to their specific applications (e.g., providing shade, framing long-distance views of the San Joaquin River or Mt. Diablo, or framing short-distance views of new development).

Policy 5.4.2.c

Maintain view corridors from public spaces to natural ridgelines and landmarks, such as Mt. Diablo and distant hills, local ridgelines, the San Joaquin River, and other water bodies.

- Recognize that new development will inevitably result in some loss of existing views, as part of the City’s review of development and commercial and industrial landscape plans, minimize the loss of views from public spaces.
- Important view corridors to be protected include Somersville Road, Lone Tree Way, Hillcrest Avenue, SR 4, SR 160, James Donlon Boulevard, Deer Valley Road, and Empire Mine Road.

- Policy 5.4.2.d Strengthen and emphasize community focal points, visual landmarks, and features contributing to Antioch’s identity using design concepts and standards implemented through the zoning ordinance, design guidelines and design review process, and specific plan and planned community documents.
- Policy 5.4.2.e Create a framework of public spaces at the neighborhood, community, and regional scale.
- Provide for new open space opportunities throughout the City, especially in neighborhoods having minimal access to open space. This includes exploring the potential for creek corridors, bicycle and pedestrian paths, and new small open space and conservation areas.
 - Provide an open space network linked by pedestrian and bicycle paths, which preserves and enhances Antioch’s significant visual and natural resources.
 - Provide sitting areas within parks and along pedestrian and bicycle paths.
 - Utilize existing creeks, such as Sand Creek, as linear parks, providing pedestrian and bicycle paths.
 - Views along utility corridors should be retained and enhanced through the use of planting materials to frame and focus views and to provide a sense of orientation.
- Policy 5.4.2.f Provide for consistent use of street trees to identify City streets, residential neighborhoods, commercial and employment districts, and entry points to the City.
- Select species that enhance the pedestrian character of, and convey a distinctive and high quality visual image for the City’s streets; are drought-tolerant, fire- and pest-resistant; and complement existing street trees.
 - Use changes in tree species, scale, color and spacing to differentiate the roadway types identified in the Circulation Element.
 - Use a consistent palette of street trees to distinguish Antioch from other communities, and to distinguish individual areas within the community (e.g., Rivertown, East Lone Tree, “A” Street Corridor) from each other.
 - Street trees should relate to the scale, function, and visual importance of the area in which they are located, establishing a hierarchy of street trees for entry locations, intersections, and activity centers.

- Major accent trees are to be located at City and community entry locations, key intersections, and major activity centers (e.g., County East Mall, Prewett Family Park).
- Street trees should be selected as a common tree for street frontages. A single species may be selected for all residential neighborhoods or different species to distinguish different neighborhoods from each other. Within residential neighborhoods, street trees should be full, providing shade and color. In commercial districts, the trees should provide shade but be more transparent at the motorist and pedestrian levels to promote views of store fronts and visual interaction of pedestrians. Within employment districts street trees should provide shade and screening, and be used to frame views of buildings and building entries.

Policy 5.4.2.g Maintain common community design elements throughout the City.

- Provide a system of well-designed directional signage, facilitating way-finding to community features such as shopping areas, marinas, parks, and civic buildings.
- Incorporate common design elements in community features such as roadway landscaping, streetlights, street signs, traffic lights, and community directional signage.
- Use design variations in landscaping, street light standards, and street signs as a means of defining special design districts (e.g., Rivertown, Somersville Road and “A” Street corridors).

Policy 5.4.2.o Design on-site lighting to improve the visual identification of adjacent structures.

- In all projects, lighting fixtures should be attractively designed and of a low profile to complement the overall design theme of the project within which they are located.
- On-site lighting shall create a safe environment, adhering to established crime prevention standards, but shall not result in nuisance levels of light or glare on adjacent properties. Limit sources of lighting to the minimum required to ensure safe circulation and visibility.

Policy 5.4.2.p Lighting should accommodate night use of streets and promote security while complying with the provision of a dark night sky. Streetscape areas that are used by pedestrians at night should be well lit. Within rural and open space areas, limit street lighting to intersections and other locations that are needed to maintain safe access (e.g., sharp curves).

- Policy 5.4.12.b Ensure that the design of new development proposed along a boundary between residential and non-residential uses provides sufficient protection and buffering for the residential use, while maintaining the development feasibility of the nonresidential use. The burden to provide buffers and transitions to achieve compatibility should generally be on the second use to be developed. Where there is bare ground to start from, both uses should participate in providing buffers along the boundary between them.
- Policy 5.4.14.a Design hillside development to be sensitive to existing terrain, views, and significant natural landforms and features.
- Policy 5.4.14.b Projects within hillside areas shall be designed to protect important natural features and to minimize the amount of grading. To this end, grading plans shall conform to the following guidelines.
- Slopes less than 25%:* Redistribution of earth over large areas may be permitted.
- Slopes between 25% and 35%:* Some grading may occur, but landforms need to retain their natural character. Split-level designs and clustering are encouraged as a means of avoiding the need for large padded building areas.
- Slopes between 35% and 50%:* Development and limited grading can occur only if it can be clearly demonstrated that safety hazards, environmental degradation, and aesthetic impacts will be avoided. Structures shall blend with the natural environment through their shape, materials and colors. Impact of traffic and roadways is to be minimized by following natural contours or using grade separations. Encouraged is the use of larger lots, variable setbacks and variable building structural techniques such as stepped or post and beam foundations are required.
- Slopes greater than 50%:* Except in small, isolated locations, development in areas with slopes greater than 50% should be avoided.
- Policy 5.4.14.c Manufactured slopes in excess of five vertical feet (5') shall be landform graded. "Landform grading" is a contour grading method which creates artificial slopes with curves and varying slope ratios in the horizontal and vertical planes designed to simulate the appearance of surrounding natural terrain. Grading plans shall identify which slopes are to be landform graded and which are to be conventionally graded.
- Policy 5.4.14.d The overall project design/layout of hillside development shall adapt to the natural hillside topography and maximize view opportunities to, as well as from the development.

- Policy 5.4.14.e Grading of ridgelines is to be avoided wherever feasible, siting structures sufficiently below ridgelines so as to preserve unobstructed views of a natural skyline. In cases where application of this performance standard would prevent construction of any structures on a lot of record, obstruction of views of a natural skyline shall be minimized through construction techniques and design, and landscaping shall be provided to soften the impact of the new structure.
- Policy 5.4.14.f Hillside site design should maintain an informal character with the prime determinant being the natural terrain. This can be accomplished by:
- Utilizing variable setbacks and structure heights, innovative building techniques, and retaining walls to blend structures into the terrain, and
 - Allowing for different lot shapes and sizes.
- Policy 5.4.14.g Buildings should be located to preserve existing views and to allow new dwellings access to views similar to those enjoyed from existing dwellings.
- Policy 5.4.14.h Streets should follow the natural contours of the hillside to minimize cut and fill, permitting streets to be split into two oneway streets in steeper areas to minimize grading and blend with the terrain. Gulde- sacs or loop roads are encouraged where necessary to fit the terrain. Onstreet parking and sidewalks may be eliminated, subject to City approval, to reduce required grading.
- Policy 5.4.14.i Clustered development is encouraged as a means of preserving the natural appearance of the hillside and maximizing the amount of open space. Under this concept, dwelling units are grouped in the more level portions of the site, while steeper areas are preserved in a natural state.
- Policy 5.4.14.j Project design should maximize public access to canyons, overlooks, and open space areas by:
- Providing open space easements between lots or near the end of streets or cul-de-sacs; and
 - Designating public pathways to scenic vistas.
- Policy 5.4.14.k Permit the use of small retaining structures when such structures can reduce grading, provided that these structures are located and limited in height so as not to be a dominant visual feature of the parcel.
- Where retaining walls face public streets, they should be faced with materials that help blend the wall into the natural character of the terrain.

- Large retaining walls in a uniform plane should be avoided. Break retaining walls into elements and terraces, and use landscaping to screen them from view.

Policy 5.4.14.1 Lot lines shall be placed at the top of slopes to facilitate maintenance by the down slope owner, who has the greater "stake" in ensuring the continued integrity of the slope.

Policy 10.5.1.c In designing buffer areas, the following criteria shall be considered and provided for (when applicable) within the buffer areas to avoid or mitigate significant impacts.

- Aesthetics: How will development affect views from adjacent open space areas? What are the sensitive land uses and resources within open space areas and how might they be affected by changes in the visual environment?
- Light and Glare: Will a proposed development result in increased light or glare in open space areas that would impact open space uses or wildlife habitats within that open space?

Design Review

Future small lot map and use permit submittals within the project site would be subject to the City's Design Review process established by Chapter 5, Article 26 of the City's Municipal Code. Per Section 9-5.2701 of the Municipal Code, the purpose of the design review is to "...promote the orderly and harmonious development of the city, the stability of land values and investments, and the general welfare and to encourage and promote the highest quality of design and site planning to delight the user and others who come in contact with uses and structures in the city." As part of the Design Review Process, the City's Planning Commission reviews the design of proposed projects to ensure consistency with the City's Design Guidelines.

4.1.4 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The section below describes the standards of significance and methodology used to analyze and determine the proposed project's potential impacts related to aesthetics. In addition, a discussion of the project's impacts, as well as mitigation measures where necessary, is also presented.

Standards of Significance

Consistent with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the City's General Plan, and professional judgment, a significant impact would occur if the proposed project would result in the following:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway;

- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Method of Analysis

The analysis of impacts gives full consideration to the development of the project site and acknowledges the physical changes to the existing setting. Impacts to the existing environment of the project site are to be determined by the contrast between the site's visual setting before and after the proposed development. Although few standards exist to singularly define the various individual perceptions of aesthetic value from person to person, the degree of visual change could be measured and described in a reasonably objective manner in terms of visibility and visual contrast, dominance, and magnitude.

Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

As discussed in Chapter 3 of this EIR, Project Description, two development scenarios for the proposed project are currently being considered: a Multi-Generational Plan and a Traditional Plan. The following discussion of impacts is based on implementation of either of the development scenarios. Where impacts would be similar under both of the development scenarios, the discussion of impacts presented below is applicable for both scenarios. However, where impacts would differ between the two development scenarios, the impacts are discussed separately for each scenario. It should be noted that while potential impacts related to both development scenarios are analyzed, ultimately only one development scenario would be constructed.

4.1-1 Substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Based on the analysis below, the impact is less than significant.

Multi-Generational and Traditional Plans

Examples of typical scenic vistas would include mountain ranges, ridgelines, or bodies of water as viewed from a highway, public space, or other area designated for the express purpose of viewing and sightseeing. In general, a project's impact to a scenic vista would occur if development of the project would substantially change or remove a scenic vista. The City's General Plan does not specifically identify any scenic vistas. However, Policy 5.4.14.j in the City's Hillside Design policies specifies that projects should provide public pathways to scenic vistas in order to maximize public access to canyons, overlooks, and open space areas.

The proposed project would preserve the various hills and ridgeline areas in the northwestern and southwestern portions of the project site, as well as the Sand Creek corridor, as open space. The total open space and trail areas would comprise approximately 35.3 percent of the total project site under the Multi-Generational Plan, and 36.2 percent under the Traditional Plan. Within the open space areas, the project would provide a comprehensive public trail system that would connect the proposed neighborhood areas to

each other and to nearby parks, ridgeline areas, trailhead staging areas, and the proposed Village Center area. Vista points would be provided within the hills at the northwest and southwest portions of the site. Improvements within the proposed open space areas along the Sand Creek corridor would be limited to a pair of two-lane automobile bridges, a pedestrian bridge, and various bike and pedestrian trails. As such, the proposed project would provide public pathways to scenic vistas consistent with Policy 5.4.14.j.

Given that City's General Plan does not identify any scenic vistas within the project area, the proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Thus, a *less-than-significant* impact would occur.

Mitigation Measure(s)

None required.

- 4.1-2 Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway. Based on the analysis below, the project would have *no impact*.**

Multi-Generational and Traditional Plans

The proposed project is not located within the vicinity of a State Scenic Highway. While the segment of SR 4 to the east of the project site is listed as an Eligible State Scenic Highway, the segment has not been officially designated. Further, the project site is not visible from SR 4. Therefore, the proposed project would result in *no impact* related to substantially damaging scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway.

Mitigation Measure(s)

None required.

- 4.1-3 Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the project site and/or the site's surroundings. Based on the analysis below and the lack of feasible mitigation, the impact is *significant and unavoidable*.**

Multi-Generational and Traditional Plans

As discussed above, motorists travelling along Deer Valley Road to the east of the site, as well as motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians travelling along public roadways within the residential subdivisions to the north of the site, including the terminus of East Creek Way, Dallas Ranch Road, Stanley Court, Vallejo Court, and Zinfandel Court would be affected by any changes to aesthetic character on the project site. In addition, residents of the subdivisions to the north have views of the site, and the site is visible from the Kaiser Permanente Antioch Medical Center to the east. Distant views of the site are afforded to visitors at the Black Diamond Regional Preserve to the west of the site. It should be noted that General Plan Policy 5.4.2.c states that view corridors from public spaces to natural ridgelines and landmarks, such as Mt. Diablo and distant hills, local ridgelines, the San Joaquin River, and other water bodies (such as Sand Creek), should be preserved. Specific

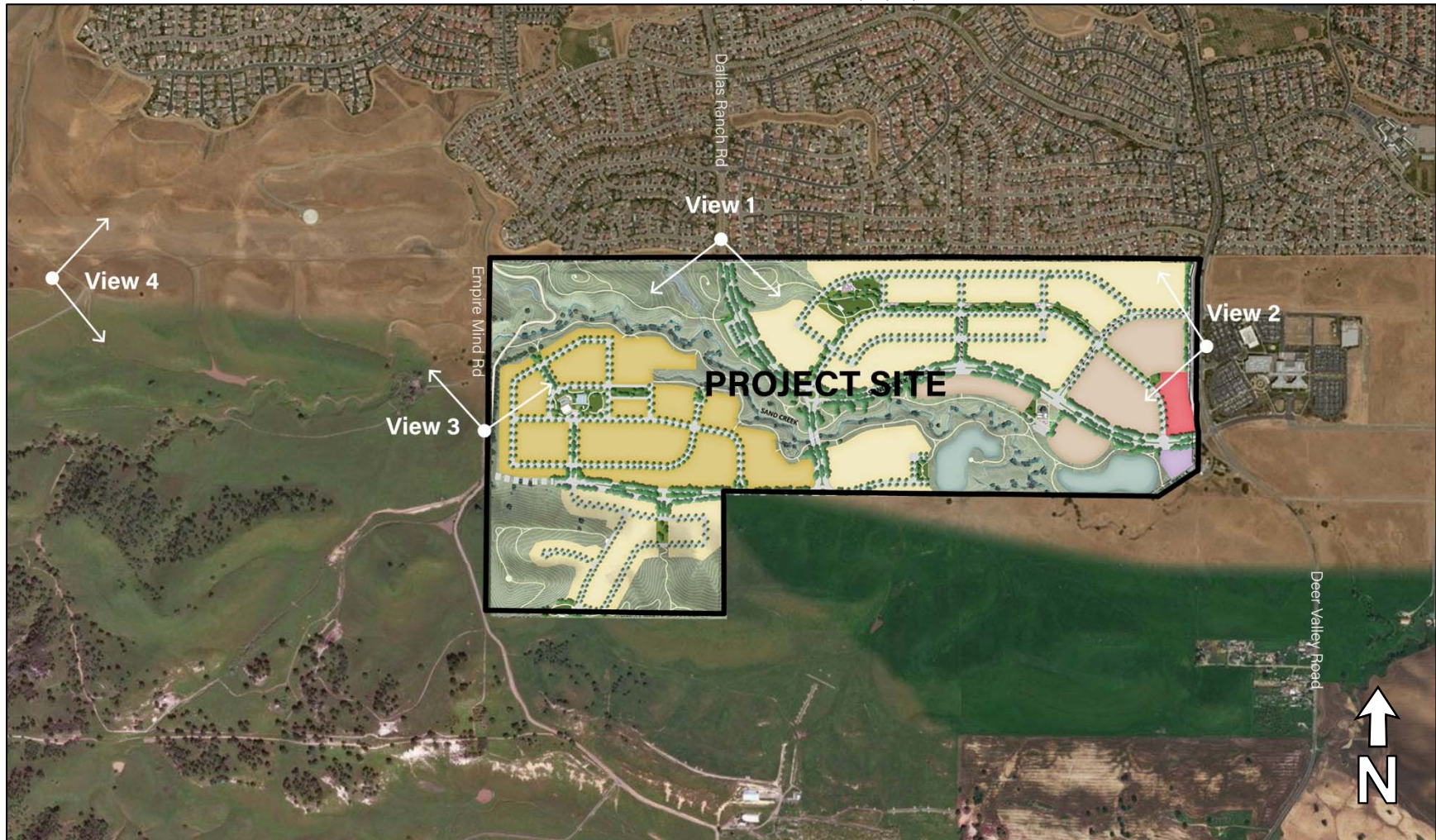
view corridors identified in Policy 5.4.2.c include Somersville Road, Lone Tree Way, Hillcrest Avenue, SR 4, SR 160, James Donlon Boulevard, Deer Valley Road, and Empire Mine Road. However, Policy 5.4.2.c also recognizes that new development will inevitably result in some loss of existing views.

The potential for future development within the City to result in the substantial degradation of the visual character or quality of the City and the surrounding area was analyzed in the City's General Plan EIR. The City's General Plan EIR concluded that General Plan policies related to the protection of visual resources and future development design would ensure that buildout of the City would result in less than significant impacts related to the degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the City. Development of the project site under the land use designations of Golf Course Community/Senior Housing/Open Space, Hillside and Estate Residential, and Public/Quasi Public was anticipated by the City's General Plan, and development consistent with such designations was analyzed in the General Plan EIR. However, the proposed project includes a request for a General Plan Amendment and rezoning of the site to allow for commercial and residential development within the project site, without the inclusion of a golf course. Development of the project site without the inclusion of a golf course would alter the anticipated post-project aesthetic character of the project site from what was analyzed in the City's General Plan EIR. Thus, considering the request for a General Plan Amendment and rezone included in the proposed project, the conclusions presented in the City's General Plan EIR related to the degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the City do not directly apply to the proposed project and further analysis is provided below.

The proposed project would include construction of multiple single-family residential neighborhoods, various public facilities and amenities, and circulation and access improvements, as well as associated infrastructure improvements to serve the proposed planned community. The two proposed scenarios would provide a mix of different single-family residential neighborhood types organized into two distinct development areas to the north and south of the Sand Creek corridor. Both the Multi-Generational Plan and the Traditional Plan would include identical layouts for the north development area; however, the plans would differ subtly in the layouts for the south development area. It should be noted that the project would require off-site infrastructure improvements. However, the majority of the improvements would be underground and would occur primarily along existing roadway rights-of-way (ROWs). Thus, the improvements would not be visible upon implementation of the project.

Changes to the visual character and quality of the site as viewed from Dallas Ranch Road, Deer Valley Road, Empire Mine Road, and an unpaved trail at the Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve are discussed below. Figure 4.1-10 provides an overview of the of the various viewpoints in the project vicinity. Anticipated changes to views of the site are based on full buildout of the Multi-Generational development scenario consistent with the proposed development standards and design guidelines. Given that the differences between the Multi-Generational and Traditional Plans are relatively subtle, the analysis provided is assumed to be representative of both development scenarios.

Figure 4.1-10
Location and Orientation of Views 1, 2, 3, and 4



View of Project Site from Dallas Ranch Road (View 1)

Figure 4.1-11 provides a view of the project site looking south from the existing terminus of Dallas Ranch Road, which is representative of similar public viewpoints at other neighborhood roadways to the north of the project site and existing residences to the north. General Plan Policy 5.4.2.c identifies Dallas Ranch Road as a designated view corridor.

As shown in Figure 4.1-11, views of the proposed project would consist primarily of landscaping along the project entry. While portions of the hillsides to the south of the project site would be partially obscured by on-site vegetation, views of the ridgeline would not be substantially affected. Views of the proposed residential buildings would be entirely screened by landscaping elements. Such landscaping elements would blend with existing vegetation in the area. As such, the proposed project would not substantially degrade the visual character or quality of the site for viewers to the north of the site.

View of Project Site from Deer Valley Road (View 2)

Figure 4.1-12 provides a view of the project site looking west from Deer Valley Road, near the Kaiser Permanente Antioch Medical Center to the east. As noted above, General Plan Policy 5.4.2.c identifies Deer Valley Road as a designated view corridor.

Existing views include the undeveloped grasslands located on-site, as well as various hillsides and ridgelines located in the background, including Mt. Diablo. Upon development of the proposed project, views of the site from the east would change from a rural, undeveloped landscape to a developed residential and commercial environment. Views of the distant topographical features would be obscured by buildings and landscaping features of the proposed project.

North of the proposed Village Center area along Deer Valley Road, approximately 42 feet of landscaping would be provided along the eastern project site boundary. An additional approximately 27 feet of ROW, improvements would be provided, including a six-foot sidewalk, eight feet of landscaping, two feet of curb and gutter, a five-foot bicycle lane, and a new 12-foot southbound traffic lane. At the Village Center frontage on Deer Valley Road, the proposed buildings would include a 10-foot setback from the Deer Valley Road ROW. The landscaping elements along the site boundary would partially screen views of the on-site buildings and would enhance the aesthetic quality of the pedestrian sidewalk along the site boundary.

Nonetheless, based on implementation of the above-described buildings and landscaping, the project would obscure views of distant topographical features, including Mt. Diablo and the surrounding ridgelines. Thus, the proposed project could substantially degrade the visual character or quality of the site for viewers to the east of the site.

Figure 4.1-11
Existing View of Project Site from Dallas Ranch Road (View 1)



Proposed View of Project Site from Dallas Ranch Road (View 1)

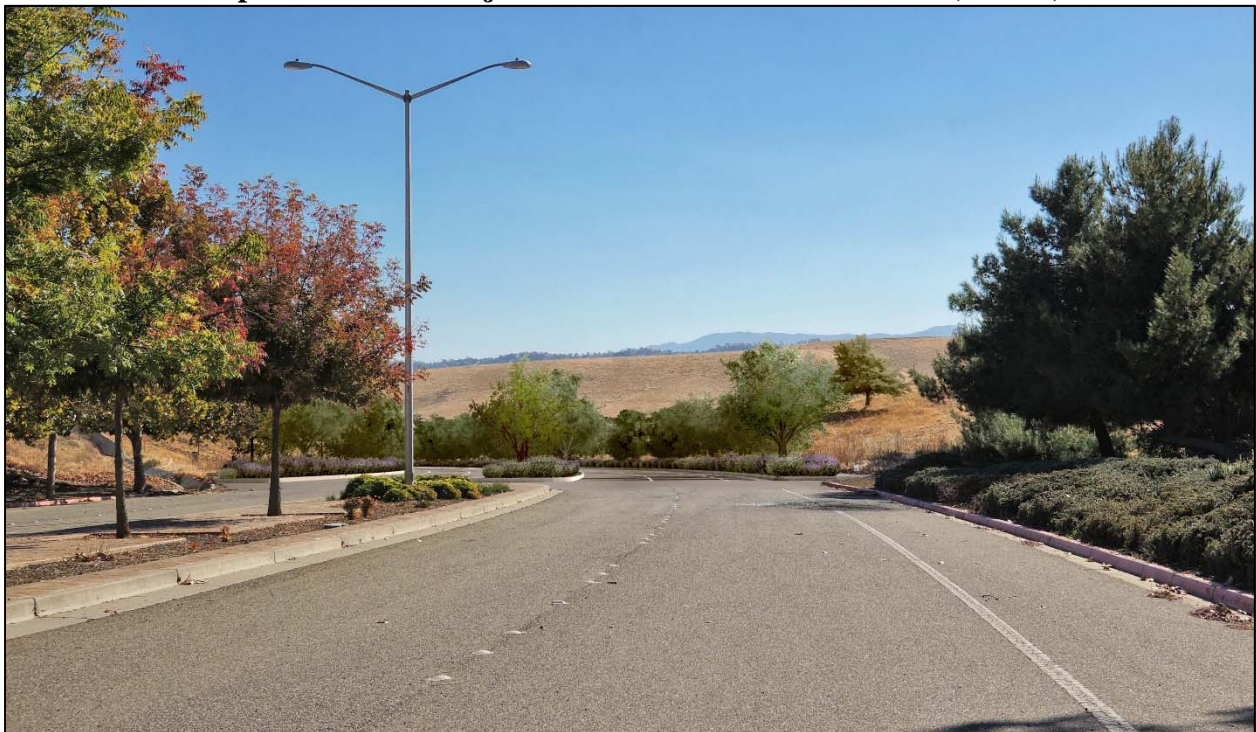
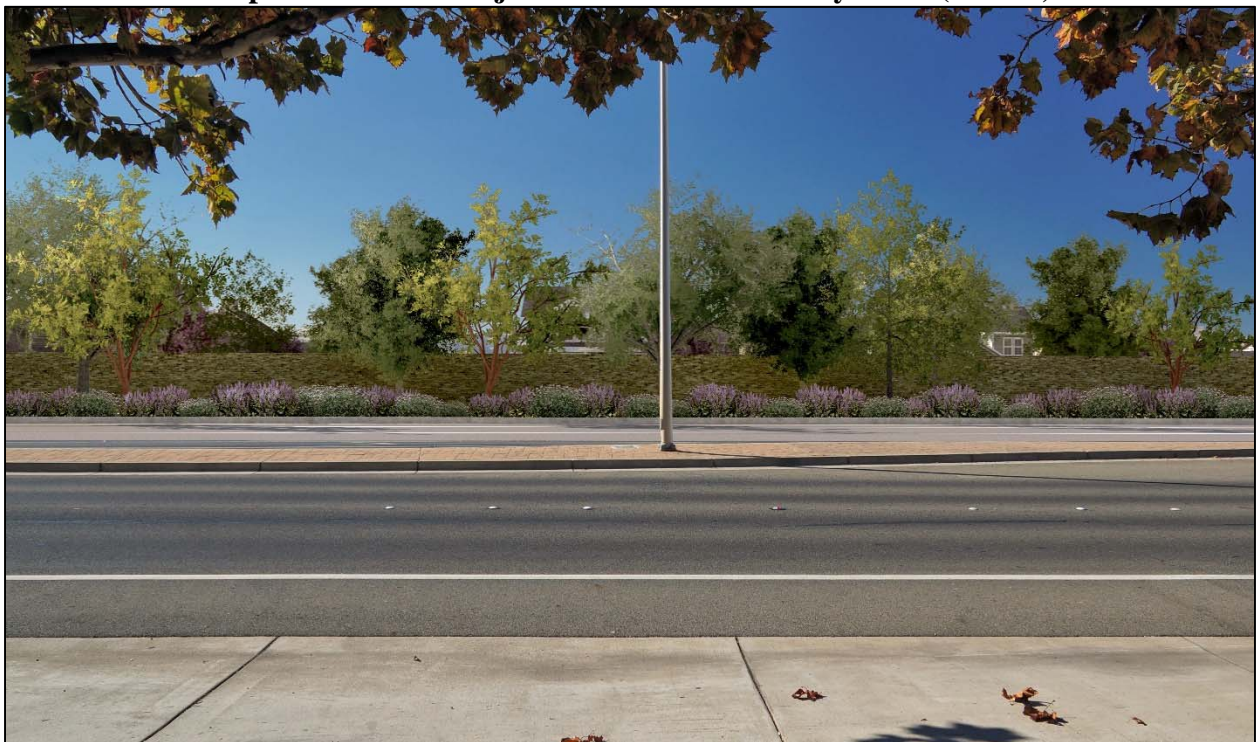


Figure 4.1-12
Existing View of Project Site from Deer Valley Road (View 2)



Proposed View of Project Site from Deer Valley Road (View 2)



View Looking North Along Empire Mine Road (View 3)

Figure 4.1-13 provides a view looking north along Empire Mine Road, with the project site to the east. Empire Mine Road is a low-traffic, rural, two-lane road along the site's western boundary. Currently, views consist of non-native eucalyptus trees along the eastern shoulder of the roadway. Upon development of the proposed project, the existing trees would be retained and would help to screen the proposed single-family residences from view. As shown in the figure, the proposed residences would be set back a considerable distance from the roadway and would not dominate the viewshed. Therefore, while the project would change a portion of the viewshed from an undeveloped rural landscape to a residential development, the proposed project would not substantially degrade the visual character or quality of the site for viewers travelling on Empire Mine Road.

View Looking East Toward Project Site from Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve (View 4)

Figure 4.1-14 provides a view looking east towards the project site from an unpaved trail at the Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, which is located approximately 0.9-mile west of the site. Views currently consist of undeveloped grassland and rolling hills, as well as scattered trees. The project site, as well as the City of Antioch, is visible in the distant background. Development of the proposed project would convert portions of the project site from a rural, undeveloped environment to a residential community (with limited commercial development). As shown in the figure, the proposed development would serve as an extension of the existing residential development to the north.

The steep hillsides within the northwest and southwest portions of the project site would be predominantly protected from development, with the exception of unpaved pedestrian and bicycle paths. The limited residential development within the southwest portion of the site would use landform grading methodology, avoiding the top 25 percent of the hilltops and matching the existing contouring of the hillsides to the maximum extent feasible. Existing trees on the hillsides in the project area would help to partially screen the proposed development areas.

Based on the above, the proposed project would preserve scenic resources protected by General Plan Policy 5.4.2.c. Overall, development of the proposed project would represent a relatively minor component of the overall viewshed from the Black Diamond Mines Regional Preserve, and the project would not substantially degrade the visual character or quality of the site for visitors at the Preserve or other nearby public spaces.

Figure 4.1-13
Existing View Looking North Along Empire Mine Road (View 3)



Proposed View Looking North Along Empire Mine Road (View 3)



**Figure 4.1-14
Existing View Looking East Toward Project Site from Black Diamond Mines Regional
Preserve (View 4)**



**Proposed View Looking East Toward Project Site from Black Diamond Mines Regional
Preserve (View 4)**



Conclusion

As discussed above, development of the proposed project would represent a change in the visual character of the project site as viewed from surrounding areas. Within the portions of the site to be developed, the project would change the landscape from a rural, primarily undeveloped environment, to a built “urbanized” landscape with residential and commercial development. As discussed above, the proposed project would not substantially degrade the visual character or quality of the site for Views 1, 3, or 4. However, the proposed project would obscure views of distant topographical features, including Mt. Diablo and the surrounding ridgelines, for viewers to the east of the site.

The City’s General Plan has previously anticipated buildout of the Sand Creek Focus Area, including the proposed project site, with a variety of residential and commercial uses. As discussed in Chapter 4.9 of this EIR, Land Use and Planning/Population and Housing, the proposed project would be generally consistent with existing residential development trends already occurring within the Sand Creek Focus Area. In addition, the proposed project would preserve the existing Sand Creek corridor, as well as various hills and ridgeline areas in the northwestern and southwestern portions of the project site, as open space. The total open space and open space trail areas would comprise approximately 35.3 percent of the total project site under the Multi-Generational Plan, and 36.2 percent under the Traditional Plan. Furthermore, the project would be consistent with the 4,000-unit cap for the Sand Creek Focus Area specified by General Plan Policy 4.4.6.7b (k). Thus, the proposed project would be generally consistent with the type and intensity of development previously considered for the site and analyzed in the General Plan EIR. The General Plan EIR concluded that with implementation of applicable General Plan policies, buildout of the City’s planning area per the General Plan, including the proposed project site, would have a less-than-significant impact related to substantially degrading the visual character or quality of the planning area.

The proposed project would include development standards for each of the proposed land use designations within the project site. The development standards would establish minimum design parameters for residential development, including standards related to parking, recreational vehicle storage, driveway slopes, grading, minimum lot dimensions, setbacks, and maximum building heights. The project development standards would supersede Chapter 5, Article 6, Table 9-5.601 in the Antioch Municipal Code.

In addition to the development standards, the project would include design guidelines that would provide guidance for neighborhood and landscape design associated with implementation of project development. The proposed design guidelines would include guiding principles to address neighborhood identity, consistency with future surrounding development, and architectural design. Neighborhood-specific guidelines would be provided for each of the proposed residential neighborhoods, as well as the proposed Village Center area and fire station site. Specific landscape guidelines (included in the proposed design guidelines) would address the design of open space, parks, trail staging areas, and streetscapes within the proposed project site. As discussed in Chapter 4.9 of this EIR, Land Use and Planning/Population and Housing, the proposed project would be

generally consistent with the City's Hillside Design Guidelines and other applicable provisions of the General Plan related to the preservation of aesthetic resources. In order to ensure that future development within the project site is consistent with the proposed development standards and design guidelines, as well as existing applicable City standards, future small lot map and use permit submittals within the project site would be subject to the City's Design Review process established by Chapter 5, Article 26 of the City's Municipal Code.

Based on the above, implementation of the proposed development standards and design guidelines would help to maximize the aesthetic quality of future development within the project site. However, even with implementation of the development standards and design guidelines, the project could substantially degrade the existing visual character and quality of the site and/or the site's surroundings, particularly related to views from the east of the site. Thus, a *significant* impact could occur.

Mitigation Measure(s)

Feasible mitigation is not available to reduce the above impact to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, the impact would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

4.1-4 Creation of new sources of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. Based on the analysis below and with implementation of mitigation, the impact would be *less than significant*.

Multi-Generational and Traditional Plans

Currently, the proposed project site is primarily undeveloped. As such, development of the proposed project would introduce new sources of light and glare where few sources currently exist. Sources of lighting would include, but would not be limited to, headlights from cars travelling on internal roadways, streetlights, light associated with the proposed Village Center area, exterior lighting on the proposed residential buildings, and interior light spilling through windows.

The City's Municipal Code has requirements for lighting and glare to reduce the impacts of glare and light trespass. Specifically, Section 9-5.1715 of the Code states that outdoor parking area lighting fixture heights must be determined based on the relationship of the fixtures to surrounding uses, and lighting must not shine directly onto an adjacent street or property. In addition, General Plan Policy 5.4.2.o states that lighting must not result in nuisance levels of light or glare on adjacent properties.

The project's proposed design guidelines include specific standards related to lighting. For example, light fixtures must be appropriately placed and scaled to avoid spillover or glare into surrounding areas. Future small lot map and use permit submittals within the project site would be subject to the City's Design Review process in order to ensure consistency with the proposed design guidelines.

The City's General Plan EIR determined that the impact of new sources of light and glare could be minimized by incorporating design features and operating requirements into new developments that limit light and glare, and, thus, associated impacts would be less-than-significant. However, because the initial land use approvals for the proposed project do not include tentative maps, subdivision maps, or use permit submittals for development within the project site, and the final design of such development is unknown at this time, the proposed project has the potential to create substantial light and glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. Therefore, a *significant* impact could occur.

Mitigation Measure(s)

Implementation of the following mitigation measure consistent with the General Plan EIR would reduce the above impact to a *less-than-significant* level.

Multi-Generational and Traditional Plans

4.1-4 *Prior to approval of Improvement Plans that include street lights, the City of Antioch's Engineering Division shall review and approve the lighting specifications to ensure that street lighting fixtures comply with the Zoning Code's requirements for minimum and maximum ground-level illumination. In addition, prior to approval of building permits for new structures that include exterior lighting, the City of Antioch's Planning Division shall review and approve the exterior lighting specifications to ensure exterior lighting is of a low profile and intensity.*

Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures

As defined in Section 15355 of the CEQA Guidelines, "cumulative impacts" refers to two or more individual effects which, when considered together, are considerable, compound, or increase other environmental impacts. The individual effects may be changes resulting from a single project or a number of separate projects. The cumulative impact from several projects is the change in the environment that results from the incremental impact of the project when added to other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects.

Some types of impacts to aesthetic resources are localized and not cumulative in nature. For example, the creation of glare or shadows at one location is not worsened by glare or shadows created at another location. Rather, such effects are independent, and the determination as to whether they are adverse is specific to the project and location where they are created. Projects that block a view or affect the visual quality of a site also have localized aesthetic impacts. The impact occurs specific to a site or area and remains independent from another project elsewhere that may block a view or degrade the visual environment of a specific site.

The following discussion of cumulative impacts is based on the implementation of one of the proposed scenarios in combination with other proposed and pending projects in the region. Other proposed and pending projects in the region under the cumulative context would include buildout of the City's General Plan, including the Sand Creek Focus Area, as well as development of the most recently approved land uses within the vicinity of the project area.

4.1-5 Long-term changes in visual character of the region associated with cumulative development of the proposed project in combination with future buildout in the City of Antioch. Based on the analysis below and the lack of feasible mitigation, the impact is significant and unavoidable.

The Antioch General Plan EIR determined that, as the City of Antioch continues to expand, future development could alter landforms, scenic vantage points, and the overall character of the City. The proposed project would contribute to the cumulative change in visual character within the City of Antioch. Residential subdivisions are located to the north of the project site, and new residential subdivisions are approved to the east of the project site. In addition, agricultural land designated for development is located to the west. The Antioch General Plan has designated the areas south, west, and east of the project site for urban development. Therefore, in terms of the change to the visual character of the project area, development on the project site is what is anticipated to occur in the project area under the General Plan. Development in the City, in addition to development on the project site, would contribute to a change in the visual character of the region.

As discussed previously, General Plan Policy 5.4.2.c states that view corridors from public spaces to natural ridgelines and landmarks, such as Mt. Diablo and distant hills, local ridgelines, the San Joaquin River, and other water bodies (such as Sand Creek), should be preserved. Specific view corridors identified in Policy 5.4.2.c include Somersville Road, Lone Tree Way, Hillcrest Avenue, SR 4, SR 160, James Donlon Boulevard, Deer Valley Road, and Empire Mine Road. However, Policy 5.4.2.c also recognizes that new development will inevitably result in some loss of existing views.

The proposed project would include development standards and design guidelines that would guide future development within the project site. Per a conceptual grading plan included in the proposed design guidelines, the southwestern portion of the project site (within the proposed LD-1 neighborhood area) would be graded with a landform grading methodology, avoiding the top 25 percent of the hilltops and matching the existing contouring of the hillsides to the maximum extent feasible. The steepest slopes to the east and west of the proposed LD-1 neighborhood would be retained as open space and left in a primarily undeveloped state. Thus, the proposed project would be consistent with Policy 5.4.14.a through 5.4.14.f in the City's Hillside Design policies. Additional discussion of the project's consistency with the City's Hillside Design policies, as well as other applicable General Plan policies, is provided in Chapter 4.9 of this EIR, Land Use and Planning/Population and Housing.

Given that the proposed project site is located at a slightly lower elevation than the developed areas to the north of the site, the proposed development would not obscure views of Mt. Diablo or local ridgelines from Dallas Ranch Road and residences to the north. In addition, given that Empire Mine Road is located along the site's western boundary and Mt. Diablo is located to the southwest of the site, views of Mt. Diablo from the roadway would not be substantially affected. However, views of Mt. Diablo and other natural features from Deer Valley Road, which is designated as a scenic corridor per the General Plan, would be partially blocked by the proposed project (see Figure 4.1-12).

The General Plan EIR addressed planned buildout of the planned Sand Creek Focus Area, which included the project site, and concluded that, with implementation of policies included in the General Plan, converting vacant land to urban use would result in a less-than-significant impact with regard to scenic vistas and scenic resources. The proposed project includes a General Plan Amendment that would remove the golf course use anticipated for the project area. Thus, although development on the project site would be typical of urban development anticipated to occur in the project area, the proposed project would involve a change to the visual character and quality of the site and surroundings from what has been anticipated specifically for the site by the City. In addition, while implementation of the proposed development standards and design guidelines would help maximize the aesthetic quality of future development within the project site, the project would still create a partial obstruction to scenic views offered from the east of the site, which would substantially degrade the existing visual character and quality of the site and surrounding area, particularly related to views from the east of the site. Therefore, implementation of the proposed project, in addition to cumulative development in the area, would be considered *cumulatively significant*.

Mitigation Measure(s)

Feasible mitigation is not available to reduce the above impact to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, the impact would remain *significant and unavoidable*.