

**8.0**  
**VISUAL RESOURCES**

## 8.0 VISUAL RESOURCES

This section describes the existing visual features and characteristics of the proposed Northstar Mountain Master Plan (NMMP) components and surrounding area, including the existing visual character and visual relationship of the project with adjacent land uses and topographic conditions. This section also discusses the potential environmental impacts associated with implementing the proposed NMMP. Visual impacts were evaluated using a combination of site reconnaissance, aerial photos, visual simulations of the proposed project, and geographic information systems (GIS).

### 8.1 EXISTING CONDITIONS

#### 8.1.1 REGIONAL LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

The project site is located in the Placer County portion of the Martis Valley. The visual character of the Martis Valley can be categorized into three primary landform types: (1) mountains (mountainsides, slopes, ridges, and peaks); (2) forests (gently sloping forestlands); and (3) valley (open meadow on the valley floor). Both the mountain and valley classifications are visually sensitive areas with regard to development potential.

The Martis Valley Community Plan (MVCP) (Placer County 2003b) describes the Martis Valley as having large, expansive vistas that surround the forest edge with scenic mountain peaks beyond. The majority of the forested areas are undisturbed. These areas are recognized and admired by those who travel on State Route (SR) 267 through the Community Plan area.

Placer County identifies SR 267 and Interstate 80 (I-80) as scenic highways. SR 267, Schaffer Mill Road, and Northstar Drive are designated as scenic routes by MVCP Policy 4.C.1.

There are no state-designated scenic highways in the vicinity of the project area (Caltrans 2012). The nearest eligible routes are SR 28 (approximately 4 miles southeast of the project site) and I-80 (approximately 5 miles northwest of the project site).

The Yuba Donner National Scenic Byway is the only scenic byway in the vicinity. This byway includes portions of I-80 and SR 89 located outside of the Placer County portion of the Martis Valley in Truckee. A field review found that only a small portion of the eastern Martis Valley was visible from I-80 and SR 89. The study also verified that the Northstar resort was not visible from the Yuba Donner National Scenic Byway because the resort is shielded from view by the mountains on the western border of the Martis Valley and slopes that are located outside of the Martis Valley to the north.

In general, the dominant scenic/visual features in the Martis Valley are the open valley floor and the surrounding ridges and peaks. Views of these resources are most available from roads located low in the valley where there are no trees or where forest growth is more open. In the open valley, small streams and perennial creeks are among the most significant visual features. Mt. Pluto and Lookout Mountain, within Northstar, and the peaks above Donner Lake are among the most striking mountain features viewed from the valley.

#### 8.1.2 NORTHSTAR

The Northstar resort community is predominantly forestland with a mix of recreational uses (ski operations, golf, and hiking trails), in addition to residential and commercial uses. Because of the

topography and the dense trees, only portions of the resort are visible from the Martis Valley (e.g., SR 267), including the ski mountain, portions of the golf course, and the single-family residential units that are located adjacent to the golf course on the valley floor. As shown in **Photo 8-1**, forested hills near the open valley floor in the Northstar-at-Tahoe resort block views from SR 267 near the Northstar golf course of the existing gondola building, Big Springs Day Lodge, Northstar Cross-Country Facility, Mountain Maintenance Facility, ski school, and water tanks at or near the mid-mountain portion of the ski resort. Only the uppermost portions of the ski runs along the ridge of Mt. Pluto are visible from this vantage point.

The existing uses within Northstar have been integrated into the natural landscape. Native materials have been used for building exteriors, trees have been preserved, setbacks have been created between different land uses, and development envelopes have been incorporated into the forested areas and natural topography. Northstar was approved in 1971, before the adoption of the 1997 County Rural Design Guidelines. However, the existing buildings in the Village reflect the rural character of the Sierra Nevada and the Lake Tahoe area. The buildings, hardscape, and decorative features use native building materials and other materials that blend into the native landscape, such as wood, stone, and shingles.

The forested portions of Northstar have significant potential to hide development areas from view. The ability to hide development in forested areas is affected by the proximity of viewing locations (areas where the public will have views such as overlooks, recreation areas, and roadways) and the density of the trees in the forest. The density of the forest tends to increase with distance from the valley floor and is generally greatest in the southern portion of the Martis Valley, in the vicinity of Northstar.

### 8.1.3 PUBLIC VIEWSHEDS OF PROPOSED NMMP COMPONENTS

#### Viewsheds Outside of Northstar

**Figures 8-1** through **8-4** show the visibility of existing Northstar ski trail features from public views along I-80 (near Donner Pass [**Figure 8-1**] and east of the I-80/SR 267 interchange [**Figure 8-3**]), SR 89 (**Figure 8-4**), and SR 267 (**Figure 8-2**). As shown in the figures, the existing ski terrain features (ski terrain associated with Mt. Pluto, the Backside, and Lookout Mountain) are visually prominent as compared to the adjacent forested mountain conditions. These ski terrain features are most prominent from views along SR 267 (within and adjacent to the Martis Creek Lake Recreation area), I-80 (east of the SR 267/I-80 interchange), and SR 89 (north of the Gray's Crossing Specific Plan). In addition to these public views, ski terrain features are visible from hiking trails maintained by the US Army Corps of Engineers associated with the Martis Creek Lake Recreation Area and regional trails such as the Pacific Crest Trail.

While the upper portions of the Northstar ski terrain are visible, views of the complete ski trails are obstructed by the intervening topography of Porcupine Hill and Lookout Mountain as well as by forest screening. Views of ski terrain areas are completely blocked along SR 267 south of the Northstar Golf Course as a result of topography and screening by the forest (**Photo 8-2**). These natural features obstruct or limit public views from SR 267 and I-80 of the following proposed NMMP component sites (**Figures 8-1** through **8-4**):



Photo +Z: Existing View From Sr 267 Near The Northstar Golf Course

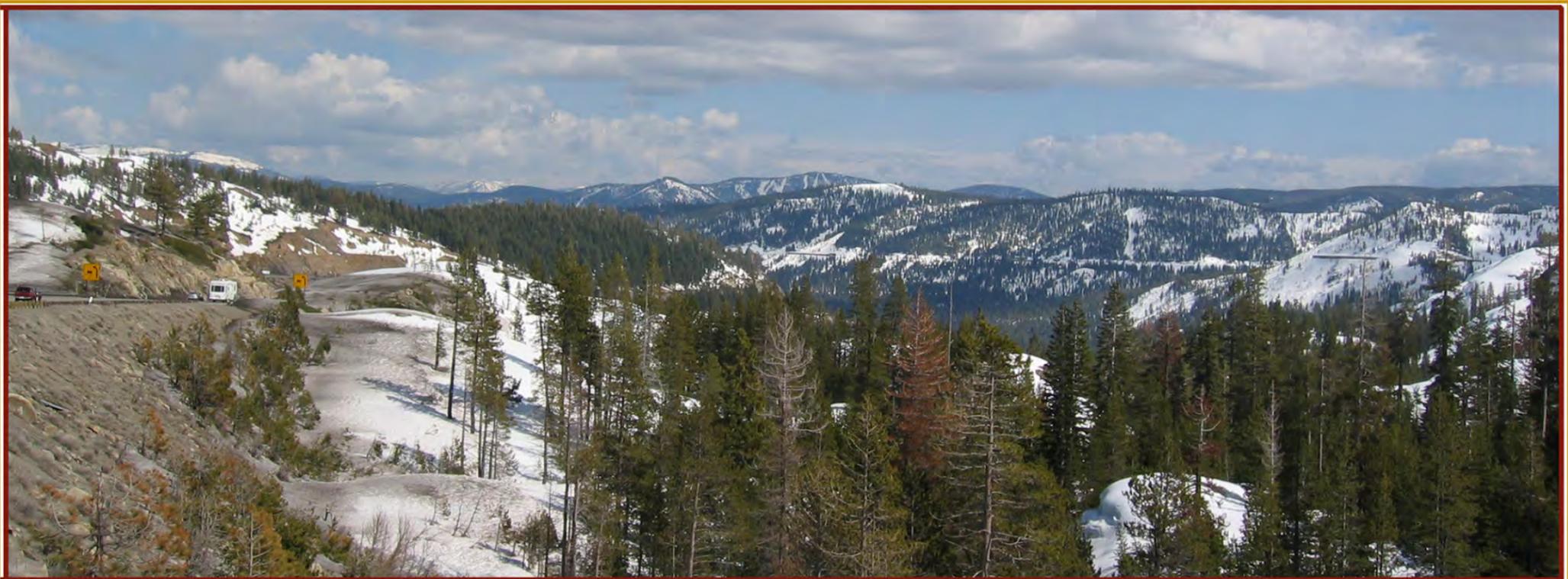


**Photo 8-2: View Along Sr 267 North Of The Employee Parking Lot And Water Tank**



**NMMP  
VISUAL SIMULATION  
PHOTO TAKEN ON I-80  
WEST OF TRUCKEE**

**PHOTO OF EXISTING CONDITIONS**



**VISUAL SIMULATION**

**January, 2013**

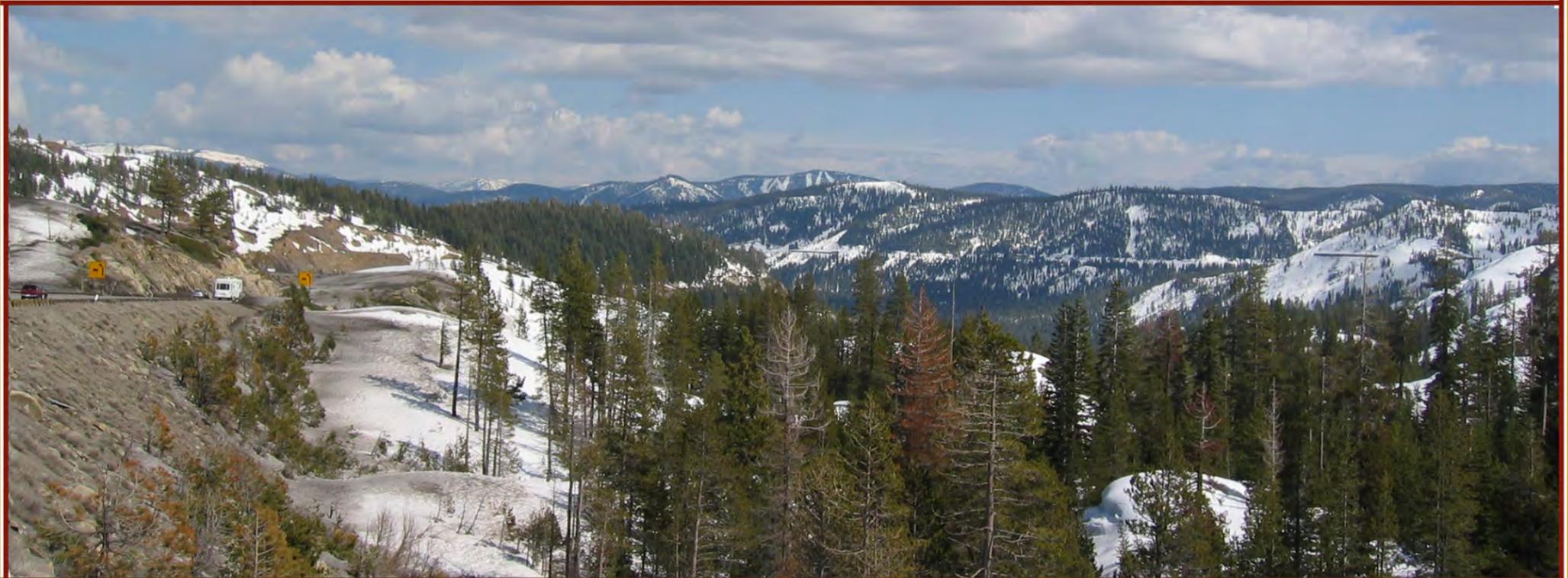


Figure 8-1  
View from Interstate 80 East Near Donner Summit Looking East



**NMMP  
VISUAL SIMULATION**  
PHOTO TAKEN ON SR 267

**PHOTO OF EXISTING CONDITIONS**



**VISUAL SIMULATION**

**February, 2013**

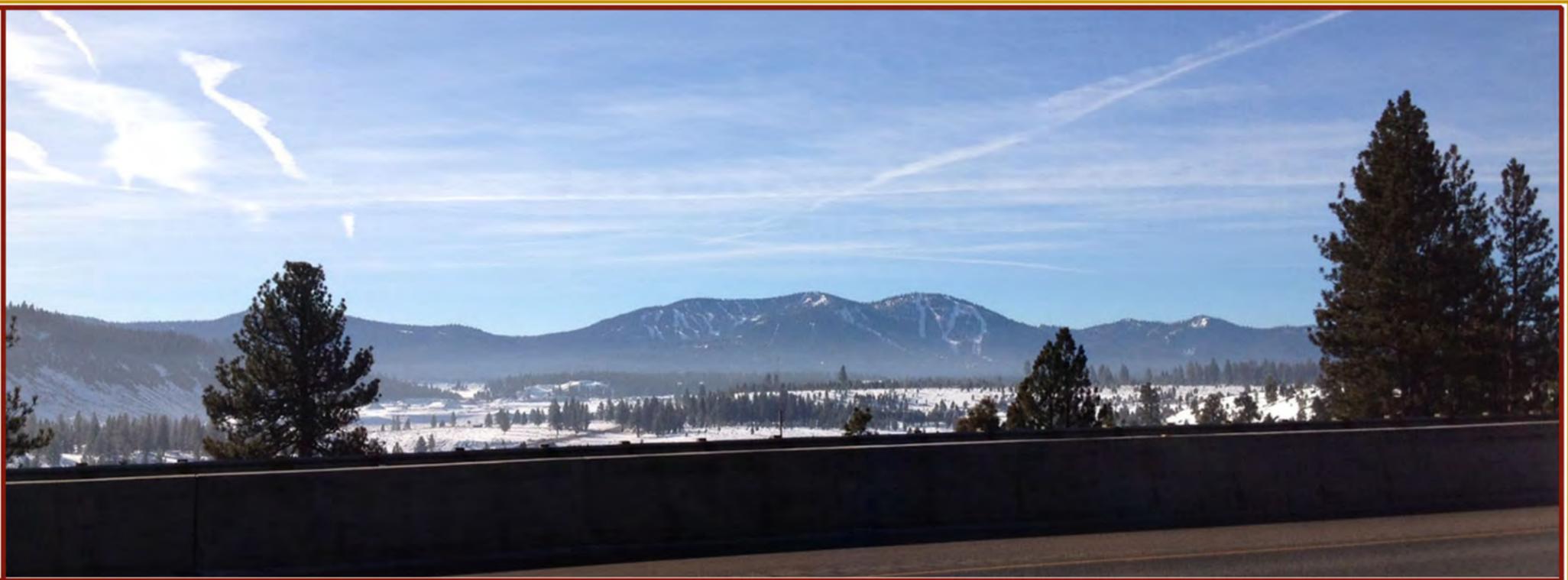


Figure 8-2  
View from State Route 267 Looking South  
**PMC**



**NMMP  
VISUAL SIMULATION  
PHOTO TAKEN ON I-80**

**PHOTO OF EXISTING CONDITIONS**



**VISUAL SIMULATION**

**February, 2013**

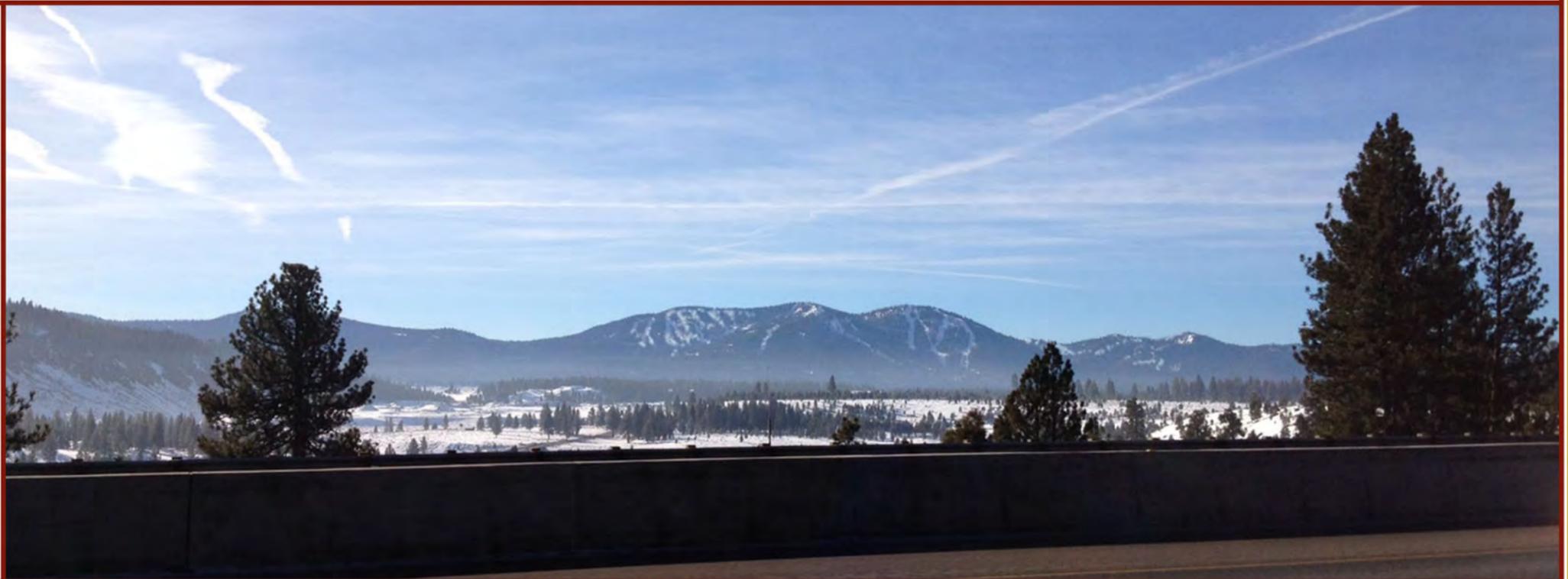


Figure 8-3  
View from Interstate 80 East of the I-80/State Route 267 Interchange Looking South



**NMMP  
VISUAL SIMULATION  
PHOTO TAKEN ON HWY 89**

**PHOTO OF EXISTING CONDITIONS**



**VISUAL SIMULATION**

**January, 2013**



Figure 8-4  
View From State Route 89 In Northern Part of the Town of Truckee Looking South

### Project-Level Components

- C lift and associated trail improvements at the base of the lift
- Seasonal road spur improvements to C lift
- Trail improvements along Vista Express, Rendezvous, Comstock Express
- Trail improvements and skier bridge along Big Springs Gondola Express
- J lift and associated trail improvements
- Improvements to the existing Summit Deck and Grille facility
- Trail improvements near the Backside Express lift base
- Warming hut and skier services at Backside Express lift base
- V lift and associated trail improvements at the base of the lift
- W lift and associated trail improvements at the base of the lift
- Season road spur improvements in the vicinity of V and W lifts
- Four skier bridges associated with V and W lifts and the Backside Express

### Program-Level Components

- Campsite, cross-country center relocation, and skier services near C lift
- Backside campsite

Based on field review and topographic mapping, Northstar ski terrain features are not visible from the Lake Tahoe Basin, including from Mount Watson.

### **Viewsheds Within Northstar**

There are existing views of the following proposed NMMP project-level component sites from public roads and development in Northstar Highlands (at mid-mountain), the Big Springs subdivision, and existing development in and adjacent to Northstar Village:

- Trail improvements along Vista Express, Rendezvous, Comstock Express
- Trail improvements and skier bridge along Big Springs Gondola Express
- J lift and associated trail improvements

In addition to the public views, these sites are visible from mountain bike and hiking trails maintained by the Northstar ski resort and the Northstar Community Services District (Tompkins Memorial Trail).

The proposed Castle Peak Parking Lot Transport Gondola alignment (program-level component) is visible from Northstar Drive, Northstar Recreation Center, Tompkins Memorial Trail, and the development areas associated with Beaver Pond, Aspen Grove Condominiums, and Northstar Village.

**8.2 REGULATORY SETTING**

**8.2.1 LOCAL**

**Placer County General Plan**

The Placer County General Plan Policy Document was adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors in 1994. **Table 8-1** lists the General Plan policies that relate to visual resources and the proposed project and provides an analysis of the project’s consistency with these policies. While this Draft EIR analyzes the project’s consistency with the Placer County General Plan pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the determination of the project’s consistency with this General Plan rests with the Placer County Board of Supervisors. Any environmental impacts associated with any inconsistency with General Plan policies are addressed under the impact discussions of this EIR.

**TABLE 8-1  
PLACER COUNTY GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS –  
VISUAL RESOURCES**

Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
<p><b>Policy 1.K.1:</b> The County shall require that new development in scenic areas (e.g., river canyons, lake watersheds, scenic highway corridors, ridgelines and steep slopes) is planned and designed in a manner which employs design, construction, and maintenance techniques that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Avoids locating structures along ridgelines and steep slopes;</li> <li>b. Incorporates design and screening measures to minimize the visibility of structures and graded areas;</li> <li>c. Maintains the character and visual quality of the area.</li> </ul>	Consistent	<p>The proposed NMMP project components would include the retention of tree islands in ski trail improvements and would incorporate project- and program-level components within and adjacent to existing resort facilities to minimize the change in the visual character of Northstar. The Northstar Habitat Management Plan includes design features (e.g., tree islands, feathering of ski trails, and incorporation of open areas of the forest into ski trail alignments) and practices to minimize the extent of land disturbance and soften its appearance (Section 3.0, Project Description, and <b>Appendix 3.3</b>).</p>
<p><b>Policy 1.K.2:</b> The County shall require that new development in scenic areas be designed to utilize natural landforms and vegetation for screening structures, access roads, building foundations, and cut and fill slopes.</p>	Consistent	<p>The proposed NMMP project components would include the retention of tree islands in ski trail improvements and would incorporate project- and program-level components within and adjacent to existing resort facilities to minimize the change in the visual character of Northstar.</p>
<p><b>Policy 1.K.3:</b> The County shall require that new development in rural areas incorporates landscaping that provides a transition between the vegetation in developed areas and adjacent open space or undeveloped areas.</p>	Consistent	<p>The proposed NMMP project components would complement and be placed adjacent to existing resort facilities that would retain large areas of forestlands and open space.</p>
<p><b>Policy 1.K.4:</b> The County shall require that new development incorporates sound soil</p>	Consistent	<p>The proposed NMMP project components would include the retention of tree islands in ski trail</p>

Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
<p>conservation practices and minimizes land alterations. Land alterations should comply with the following guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Limit cuts and fills;</li> <li>b. Limit grading to the smallest practical area of land;</li> <li>c. Limit land exposure to the shortest practical amount of time;</li> <li>d. Replant graded areas to ensure establishment of plant cover before the next rainy season; and</li> <li>e. Create grading contours that blend with the natural contours on site or with contours on property immediately adjacent to the area of development.</li> </ul>		<p>improvements and would incorporate project- and program-level components within and adjacent to existing resort facilities to minimize the change in the visual character of Northstar. The Northstar Habitat Management Plan includes design features (e.g., tree islands, feathering of ski trails, and incorporation of open areas of the forest into ski trail alignments) and practices to minimize the extent of land disturbance and soften its appearance (Section 3.0, Project Description, and <b>Appendix 3.3</b>).</p>
<p><b>Policy 1.K.5:</b> The County shall require that new roads, parking, and utilities be designed to minimize visual impacts. Unless limited by geological or engineering constraints, utilities should be installed underground and roadways and parking areas should be designed to fit the natural terrain.</p>	<p>Consistent with Mitigation</p>	<p>Proposed facilities associated with fuel tanks and standby engines for lifts, skier services, the relocated cross-country ski center, and campsites would be located in remote portions of Northstar. Mitigation measures provided in this section would ensure that final design of these facilities complement the mountain/resort visual character of Northstar.</p>
<p><b>Policy 1.L.3:</b> The County shall protect and enhance scenic corridors through such means as design review, sign control, undergrounding utilities, scenic setbacks, density limitations, planned unit developments, grading and tree removal standards, open space easements, and land conservation contracts.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>The proposed NMMP project components would include the retention of tree islands in ski trail improvements and would incorporate project- and program-level components within and adjacent to existing resort facilities to minimize the change in the visual character of Northstar. The Northstar Habitat Management Plan includes habitat and grading control practices to minimize the extent of land disturbance and soften its appearance (Section 3.0, Project Description, and <b>Appendix 3.3</b>).</p>
<p><b>Policy 1.O.3:</b> The County shall require that all new development be designed to be compatible with the scale and character of the area. Structures, especially those outside of village, urban, and commercial centers, should be designed and located so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. They do not silhouette against the sky above ridgelines or hilltops;</li> <li>b. Roof lines and vertical architectural features blend with and do not detract from the natural background or ridge outline;</li> <li>c. They fit the natural terrain; and</li> <li>d. They utilize building materials, colors, and textures that blend with the natural landscape (e.g., avoid high contrasts).</li> </ul>	<p>Consistent with Mitigation</p>	<p>Proposed facilities associated with fuel tanks and standby engines for lifts, skier services, the relocated cross-country ski center, and campsites would be located in remote portions of Northstar. Mitigation measures provided in this section would ensure that final design of these facilities complement the mountain/resort visual character of Northstar.</p>
<p><b>Policy 1.O.9:</b> The County shall discourage the use of outdoor lighting that shines unnecessarily onto adjacent properties or into the night sky.</p>	<p>Consistent with Mitigation</p>	<p>The proposed NMMP project- and program-level components are not anticipated to include substantial outdoor lighting fixtures, and the Northstar HMP includes design measures to shield and reduce the impact of lighting. Mitigation measures provided in this section would ensure that</p>

Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
		final design of these facilities shields any nighttime lighting.

**Martis Valley Community Plan**

**Table 8-2** lists the Martis Valley Community Plan policies that relate to visual resources and the proposed project and provides an analysis of the project’s consistency with these policies. While this Draft EIR analyzes the project’s consistency with the Martis Valley Community Plan pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the determination of the project’s consistency with the Community Plan rests with the Placer County Board of Supervisors. Any environmental impacts associated with inconsistency with Community Plan policies are addressed under the impact discussions of this DEIR.

**TABLE 8-2  
MARTIS VALLEY COMMUNITY PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS –  
VISUAL RESOURCES**

Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
<p><b>Policy 4.A.4:</b> The County shall require that all new development be designed to be compatible with the scale and character of the area. Structures, especially those outside of village, urban, and commercial centers, should be designed and located so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. They do not silhouette against the sky above ridgelines or hilltops;</li> <li>b. Roof lines and vertical architectural features blend with and do not detract from the natural background or ridge outline;</li> <li>c. They fit the natural terrain; and</li> <li>d. They utilize building materials, colors, and textures that blend with the natural landscape (e.g., avoid high contrasts).</li> </ul>	Consistent with Mitigation	Proposed facilities associated with fuel tanks and standby engines for lifts, skier services, the relocated cross-country ski center, and campsites would be located in remote portions of Northstar. Mitigation measures provided in this section would ensure that final design of these facilities complement the mountain/resort visual character of Northstar.
<p><b>Policy 4.A.9:</b> The County shall prohibit the use of outdoor lighting that shines unnecessarily onto adjacent properties or into the night sky.</p>	Consistent with Mitigation	The proposed NMMP project- and program-level components are not anticipated to include substantial outdoor lighting fixtures, and the Northstar HMP includes design measures to shield and reduce the impact of lighting. Mitigation measures provided in this section would ensure that final design of these facilities shields any nighttime lighting.
<p><b>Policy 4.B.1:</b> The County shall require that new development in scenic areas (e.g., riparian corridors, lake watersheds, scenic highway corridors, ridge lines and steep slopes) is planned and designed in a manner which employs design, construction, and maintenance techniques that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Incorporate design and screening measures to minimize the visibility of structures and graded areas;</li> <li>b. Maintain the character and visual quality of the</li> </ul>	Consistent	The proposed NMMP project components would include the retention of tree islands in ski trail improvements and would incorporate project- and program-level components within and adjacent to existing resort facilities to minimize the change in the visual character of Northstar. The Northstar Habitat Management Plan includes design features (e.g., tree islands, feathering of ski trails, and incorporation of open areas of the forest into ski trail alignments) and practices to minimize the extent of land

Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
area.		disturbance and soften its appearance (Section 3.0, Project Description, and <b>Appendix 3.3</b> ).
<p><b>Policy 4.B.4:</b> The County shall require that new development incorporates sound soil conservation practices and minimizes land alterations. Land alterations should comply with the following guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Limit cuts and fills;</li> <li>b. Limit grading to the smallest practical area required by the development;</li> <li>c. Limit land exposure to the shortest practical amount of time;</li> <li>d. Replant graded areas to ensure establishment of plant cover before the next rainy season; and</li> <li>e. Create grading contours that blend with the natural contours on site or with contours on property immediately adjacent to the area of development.</li> </ul>	Consistent	The proposed NMMP project components would include the retention of tree islands in ski trail improvements and would incorporate project- and program-level components within and adjacent to existing resort facilities to minimize the change in the visual character of Northstar. The Northstar Habitat Management Plan includes habitat and grading control practices to minimize the extent of land disturbance and soften its appearance (Section 3.0, Project Description, and <b>Appendix 3.3</b> ).
<p><b>Policy 4.C.7:</b> Along scenic routes designated in the Plan area, ski runs and lifts will be visible. The visual impact of the tree removal required for such uses shall be minimized through the use of an approved re-vegetated cover and other available mitigation measures.</p>	Consistent	The proposed NMMP project components would include the retention of tree islands in ski trail improvements and would incorporate project- and program-level components within and adjacent to existing resort facilities to minimize the change in the visual character of Northstar. The Northstar Habitat Management Plan includes habitat and grading control practices to minimize the extent of land disturbance and soften its appearance (Section 3.0, Project Description, and <b>Appendix 3.3</b> ).

### Martis Valley Community Plan Design Guidelines

Section IV (Community Design) of the MVCP contains design guidelines that apply to Northstar, the West Valley communities, and airport commercial uses. The Community Design section of the MVCP also includes policies and implementation programs that preserve the unique features and characteristics of the Martis Valley and guide the design of new development so that it will complement the natural environment. The design guidelines for Northstar-at-Tahoe address residential uses, base/village development, recreational uses, employee housing, mid-mountain and on-mountain commercial uses, environmentally sensitive lands, open space, etc.

### Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Plan Area Statement 15 – North Star

The existing Summit Deck and Grille, existing ski trail, and proposed snowmaking facilities at Mt. Pluto are located in the Lake Tahoe Basin, which is under the jurisdiction of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) (**Figure 3-8**). This area is within Plan Area Statement 15 (North Star), which identifies that screening of views originating from the Lake Tahoe Basin should be provided for ski accessory uses (Special Policy 3).

## Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Code of Ordinances

The existing Summit Deck and Grille, existing ski trail, and proposed snowmaking facilities at Mt. Pluto located in the Lake Tahoe Basin are subject to TRPA Code of Ordinances Chapters 36 (Design Standards) and 37 (Height) that set forth standards for design of facilities.

### 8.3 IMPACTS

#### 8.3.1 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, visual resource impacts are considered significant if they would result in any of the following:

- 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.
- 4) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

#### 8.3.2 METHODOLOGY

The following analysis is based on field observations, aerial photography, and review of the topographic conditions from GIS maps for the project site and surrounding area as well as the visual simulations prepared for the proposed project. It should be noted that any analysis of impacts to visual character is subjective by nature since the qualities that create an aesthetically pleasing setting will vary from person to person. For the purposes of this analysis, site reconnaissance, aerial photos, and topographic maps were used to analyze the existing visual character of the project site and evaluate impacts of proposed NMMP program-level components, while the visual simulations of project-level ski facility components were used to determine how the project would alter the existing character. The analysis further considers whether the anticipated alterations to the visual character of the site would constitute a significant adverse effect to existing views and scenic resources.

The determination of the significance of visual impacts considers the current visual landscape character of Northstar (developed resort community with ski terrain facilities) and evaluates whether the addition of the proposed NMMP project- and program-level components would result in a new substantial alteration that would dominate current public views.

#### 8.3.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

##### **IMPACT 8.1:** Damage Visual Resources Within a Scenic Highway Corridor

The proposed NMMP project- and program-level components are not located within the corridors of SR 267 and I-80, which are listed as County scenic highways. Given that the proposed NMMP would not alter the corridors of these County scenic highways, **no impact** to scenic highways would occur.

### **IMPACT 8.2:** Adversely Affect a Scenic Vista

Although there are no officially designated scenic vistas in the area, Northstar is part of the larger forested mountain features of the Martis Valley area that are viewed from several public vantage points both within and outside of the Martis Valley (e.g., views from I-80, SR 267, SR 89, Donner Pass, and Pacific Crest Trail) (**Figures 8-1** through **8-4**).

#### Visibility of Project-Level Components

**Views from I-80.** As shown in the visual simulation provided in **Figure 8-1**, proposed NMMP project-level components related to the improvement of existing ski trails adjacent to the Backside lift would not substantially alter views from this location and would blend with the existing visual character of the current ski terrain. Improvement of existing ski trails associated with the Vista Express, Rendezvous, Arrow, and Comstock Express lifts would be noticeable as would the proposed new W and V lifts and associated ski terrain from I-80 east of the I-80/SR 267 interchange (**Figure 8-3**). However, these features would blend with the existing visual character of the current ski terrain and would not result in a substantial alteration of this view. Visual impacts to views from I-80 would be considered **less than significant**.

**Views from SR 267.** As shown in the visual simulation provided in **Figure 8-2**, proposed NMMP project-level components related to the improvement of existing ski trails associated with the Vista Express, Rendezvous, Arrow, and Comstock Express lifts would be noticeable as would the proposed new W and V lifts and associated ski terrain. However, these features would blend with the existing visual character of the current ski terrain and would not result in a substantial alteration of this view. In addition, views of Northstar along SR 267 south of the Northstar Golf Course are obstructed by topography (Porcupine Hill) and forest screening along the highway. Visual impacts to views from SR 267 would be considered **less than significant**.

**Views from SR 89.** As shown in the visual simulation provided in **Figure 8-4**, proposed NMMP project-level components related to the improvement of existing ski trails associated with the Backside lift would be noticeable as would the proposed new W and V lifts and associated ski terrain. The addition of these ski terrain features from this view point would appear as a substantial increase in existing ski terrain features over existing conditions. As identified in Section 3.0, Project Description, and the Northstar HMP, the proposed ski trail improvements and trails would incorporate tree islands and utilize existing open areas, featuring varying trail widths to minimize visual impacts. However, visual impacts to views from SR 89 would be considered **potentially significant**.

Other project-level components would not be visible from these view points and associated vistas as a result of their size, location, intervening topography, and/or forest conditions.

#### Visibility of Program-Level Components

Based on review of the proposed NMMP project-level component visual simulations (**Figures 8-1** through **8-4**), field review, and review of topographic mapping, the Q lift and associated ski terrain improvements would likely be visible from viewpoints along I-80 (Donner Pass and east of the I-80/SR 267 interchange), SR 267, and SR 89. The alterations of views from Donner Pass are anticipated to be minimal given the distance of the view and would likely blend with existing visible ski terrain features. The Q lift and its ski terrain are also anticipated to blend with existing Lookout ski terrain features from views associated with I-80 east of the I-80/SR 267 interchange and SR 267. However, the Q lift would likely add to an appearance of the expansion of ski terrain

(in combination with improvement of existing ski trails associated with the Backside lift and the proposed new W and V lifts and associated ski terrain) from views along SR 89. No details of alignment of character of the ski trails and improvements are available at this time to fully evaluate the extent of this impact. Visual impacts to views from SR 89 would be considered **potentially significant**.

**MITIGATION MEASURE 8-2**      Design Q, W, and V Lift Ski Trails to Blend with Natural Conditions

The project applicant shall design ski trails to utilize the existing unforested/open areas of the Q, W, and V lifts as well as the topography and forests to minimize the appearance of the trails from views along State Route 89 north of Interstate 80. This may include the use of tree islands and other design features set forth in the Northstar Habitat Management Plan. Ski trail details shall be provided in project application materials for the lifts as well as in proposed grading plans.

**SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION**

Implementation of the above mitigation measure and project design practices from the Northstar Habitat Management Plan (e.g., incorporation of tree islands, utilization of existing open areas, and varying trail widths to minimize the visual impacts) would assist in reducing visual impacts. However, the proposed Q lift in combination with the improvement of existing ski trails associated with the Backside lift and the proposed new W and V lifts and associated ski terrain would result in a **significant and unavoidable** impact to scenic vistas given the substantial alteration of the visual character from views along SR 89.

**IMPACT 8.3:**                      Degrade Visual Character

As noted above under Impact 8.2, the ski terrain improvements of the proposed NMMP would complement the existing visual ski resort character of Northstar. There are also public views of the project- and program-level components of the NMMP within Northstar. **Table 8-3** provides an analysis of the effect of proposed NMMP components on public views. As noted below, each project feature has varying visual impacts to the existing character of Northstar.

**TABLE 8-3  
PUBLIC VIEW LOCATIONS AND VISUAL IMPACT OF NMMP COMPONENTS**

NMMP Component	Public View Location	Analysis
<b>Project-Level Components</b>		
Additional ski trails and improvement of existing ski trails associated with Vista, Rendezvous, Arrow, Comstock, and Backside lifts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northstar Village</li> <li>• Northstar Highlands development area at mid-mountain</li> <li>• Mountain trails (Sawmill Lake, Village Run, Crossover, Tahoe High, and Triumph)</li> </ul>	Improvement of existing ski trails would not substantially alter views and would blend with the existing visual character of the current ski terrain.
C lift and associated ski terrain improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sawmill Lake trail</li> </ul>	Development of the C lift and associated ski terrain improvements would alter the existing visual character at Sawmill Reservoir. This would be observed as an addition to the existing ski terrain features west of the reservoir.

NMMP Component	Public View Location	Analysis
J lift and associated ski terrain improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northstar Village</li> <li>• Northstar Highlands development area at mid-mountain</li> <li>• Mountain trails (Sawmill Lake, Village Run, and Lookout)</li> </ul>	Development of the J lift and associated ski terrain improvements would not substantially alter views and would blend with the existing visual character of the current ski terrain.
V, W, and Z lifts and associated ski terrain improvements and skier bridges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain trails (Tryumph, Sunset Loop, and Lookout)</li> </ul>	Development of the V, W, and Z lifts and associated ski terrain improvements would alter the existing visual character of Sawtooth Ridge. This would be observed as an addition to the existing ski terrain features associated with the Backside lift.
Skier service site improvements associated with Summit Deck and Grille, warming hut, and deck at bottom of Backside lift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain trails (Tahoe High Traverse, Tryumph, Sunset Loop, and Lookout)</li> </ul>	Development of these skier service facilities would not substantially alter views and would blend with the existing visual character of the current ski terrain.
Seasonal road spur improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain trails (Sawmill Lake, Tryumph, Sunset Loop, and Lookout)</li> </ul>	Seasonal road spur improvements would not substantially alter views and would blend with the existing visual character of the current ski terrain and existing mountain access roads.
<b>Program-Level Components</b>		
Q lift and associated ski terrain improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain trails (Tryumph, Sunset Loop, and Lookout)</li> </ul>	Development of the Q lift and associated ski terrain improvements would alter the existing visual character of Lookout Mountain. This would be observed as an addition to the existing ski terrain features associated with the Backside and Martis Camp lifts.
Skier service site improvements associated with the relocation of the cross-country ski center and provision of skier service site at C lift, skier service site at top of Martis Camp lift	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain trails (Sawmill Lake, Tryumph, Sunset Loop, and Lookout)</li> </ul>	Development of skier service facilities at the C lift would alter the existing visual character at Sawmill Reservoir. This would be observed as an addition to the existing ski terrain features west of the reservoir. Development of skier services at the top of the Martis Camp lift would not substantially alter views and would blend with the existing visual character of the current ski terrain and facilities.
Campsites at C lift and Backside	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mountain trails (Sawmill Lake, Tryumph, Sunset Loop, and Lookout)</li> </ul>	Development of the campsite at the C lift would alter the existing visual character at Sawmill Reservoir, but would complement the outdoor recreation character of the area. Given the distance and forest conditions, it is not anticipated that the Backside campsite would be visible from these trails.
Castle Peak Parking Lot Transport Gondola	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Northstar Drive</li> <li>• Northstar Village</li> <li>• Mountain trails (Village Run, West Martis Creek, and Tompkins Memorial)</li> <li>• Northstar Recreation Center</li> </ul>	Development of the Castle Peak Parking Area Gondola would alter the existing visual character, but would generally be observed as a complementary feature of the Northstar ski resort visual character.

**MITIGATION MEASURE 8-3** Design Skier Services/Relocated Cross-Country Ski Center Facilities and Castle Peak Parking Lot Transport Gondola Terminals to Blend with Natural and Resort Character

Skier services, relocated cross-country ski center facilities, and the Castle Peak Parking Lot Transport Gondola shall be designed consistent with the Northstar-at-Tahoe Design Guidelines provided in Section IV (Community Design) of the Martis Valley Community Plan. This consists of site design requirements on roadways and parking as well as building materials. Improvements at the Summit Deck and Grille shall be designed consistent with TRPA Code of Ordinances Chapters 36 (Design Standards) and 37 (Height). Building plans and improvement plans for the project shall identify compliance with this measure.

### **SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION**

Implementation of the above mitigation measure and project design practices from the Northstar Habitat Management Plan (e.g., incorporation of tree islands, utilization of existing open areas, varying trail widths to minimize the visual impacts, use of non-glare materials – see Table 4-1 of the Northstar HMP in **Appendix 3.3**) would reduce the extent of alteration of the visual character of Northstar and will ensure the proposed NMMP project- and program-level components complement the existing resort character of Northstar. This would be mitigated to a **less than significant** level.

#### **IMPACT 8.4:** Construction Impacts

Construction of each phase of the proposed project would likely require grading, trenching and excavation, vegetation removal, use and storage of construction equipment and building materials, installation of erosion control measures, and other visual disturbances within Northstar. Such disturbances would be typical of other construction sites in the county and would be temporary in nature. This impact is **less than significant**.

#### **IMPACT 8.5:** Create New Source of Light or Glare

The proposed NMMP does not propose any new major sources of nighttime lighting or glare (e.g., lighting for night skiing). However, skier service sites, relocated cross-country ski center facilities, lift terminals, campsites, and the Castle Peak Parking Area Gondola may include lighting fixtures that could result in new sources of nighttime lighting. This impact is considered to be **potentially significant**.

#### **MITIGATION MEASURE 8-5a** Minimize Lighting

All outdoor lighting installed as part of the proposed project shall be limited to the minimum amount needed for safety and shall be designed to limit upward and sideways spillover of light. All lighting shall be consistent with the most recent update of the Nonresidential Compliance Manual for California's 2005 Energy Efficiency Standards. Outdoor light fixtures shall be shielded and directed down to preserve the night sky and away from residential areas to minimize light and glare effects on such areas. In addition, all light poles shall be finished in a color that will blend into the landscape and prevent glare (i.e., black, bronze, or dark bronze). Light fixtures at the Summit Deck and Grille shall be designed consistent with TRPA Code of Ordinances Section 36.8 (Exterior Lighting Standards). These lighting requirements shall be included in lighting plans for the project prior to issuance of any building permits.

**MITIGATION MEASURE 8-5b**      Use Nonreflective Building Materials

Nonreflective building materials shall be used for the exterior of all buildings. Building windows shall be coated with tinting materials to reduce glare and to minimize the visibility of interior lighting.

**SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION**

Implementation of the above mitigation measures would ensure this impact would be mitigated to a **less than significant** level.