

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

### 4.1.1 Introduction

This section addresses the potential impacts of the project on aesthetics and visual resources. It describes the existing visual character of the project area and identifies the applicable federal and state plans, policies, and laws and local plans, policies, and regulations. The analysis identifies the potential impacts of the project, including cumulative impacts, on aesthetics and visual resources and identifies mitigation measures to reduce the level of impacts to less than significant.

Important terms for specific parts of the project are discussed in detail in Section 4.0, “Approach to the Environmental Analysis.” The following brief discussion is intended to remind the reader how those terms are defined and used in the EIR analysis, including this section. “SAP area” refers to the entire SAP area, which includes the PRSP area. “Net SAP area” refers to the portion of the SAP area outside the PRSP area. The “project” encompasses the entirety of the SAP, including the PRSP and all associated off-site improvements. “Project area” refers to the entire area covered by the project. Because the project area is composed of three pieces (the net SAP area, the PRSP area, and areas where other off-site infrastructure would support the project), the impact analysis typically is divided into three subsections: “Net SAP Area,” “PRSP Area,” and “Other Supporting Infrastructure.” (“Other Supporting Infrastructure” refers to improvements outside the SAP area and is divided into “Pleasant Grove Retention Facility” and “Off-Site Transportation and Utility Improvements.”) Some required infrastructure improvements are planned outside the PRSP area but still in the SAP area; those improvements are addressed in the “PRSP Area” sections.

No scenic vistas and no designated or eligible scenic highways are located in the project area. The nearest eligible state scenic highway, SR 49, is located at least 14 miles away. Therefore, impacts on scenic vistas and on scenic resources near a state scenic highway are not discussed in this section.

Potential impacts related to urban decay are addressed in Chapter 5, “Other CEQA-Mandated Sections.”

One comment on aesthetics was received in response to the NOP. It suggested that the analysis should address impacts related to aesthetics on future residents because of the project’s proximity to the Western Placer Waste Management Authority (WPWMA) facilities.

As discussed in Chapter 1, “Introduction,” the PRSP land use plan has been slightly revised since circulation of the NOP. Changes primarily relate to increasing the distance between the landfill property and land designated for residential uses, modifying the density of proposed residential areas, reducing the proposed commercial intensity, slightly decreasing the acreage of open space, and increasing the acreage of parks to meet County parkland provision standards. The size of the PRSP area (2,213 acres) has not changed since release of the NOP, and the overall area of development would be nearly identical. The minor reduction in residential development density and commercial intensity would not appreciably change the visual characteristics of proposed development within the PRSP area. Likewise, the change in parks and open space provided would not substantially change the appearance of the PRSP area, as a whole. Therefore, the impacts associated with the land use plan analyzed in this EIR are essentially the same as the previous land use plan.

### 4.1.2 Environmental Setting

Visual resources are the natural and human-built features of the landscape that can be seen in a particular view and that contribute to an attractive landscape appearance and the public’s enjoyment of the environment. Scenic resources can include natural open spaces, topographic formations, and landscapes.

Many people associate natural landforms and landscapes, such as oak woodlands, lakes, rivers, streams, and some historical areas, with scenic resources. Scenic resources also can include urban open spaces and the built environment. Examples of these include public parks, public open space, nature centers and preserves, historical resources, and architectural features. The aesthetic quality of a view is dependent on the visual resources present and the composition of the view. Aesthetic quality is described in terms of vividness, intactness, and unity:

- ▲ **Vividness:** The extent to which the landscape is memorable, which is associated with the distinctiveness, diversity, and contrast of visual elements.
- ▲ **Intactness:** The integrity of visual order in the landscape and the extent to which the existing landscape is free from atypical visual intrusions (i.e., an element that appears out of place with the visual order).
- ▲ **Unity:** The extent to which visual intrusions are sensitive to and in visual harmony with the existing landscape.

Visual character is determined based on the dominant land use and dominant visual elements of the area.

## REGIONAL AND LOCAL SETTING

### Regional Setting

The project area is located in west Placer County in the Sacramento Valley. Portions of the areas north and west of the project area are generally characterized by open land containing grazing, field crops, and other agricultural uses. A small residential area is located just east of the project area; there is another residential area northeast of the project area in the City of Lincoln. To the east, development in the City of Rocklin includes residences, commercial uses, and a university, among which are open, undeveloped grassy areas. To the south, in the City of Roseville, there are residences. The Sierra Nevada foothills and mountains of the Sierra Nevada are visible east of the project area, although the Sierra Nevada is not a dominant feature because of distance and atmospheric haze. The Sutter Buttes are visible northwest of the project area but, like the Sierra Nevada, are not a dominant feature because of distance and atmospheric haze. To the west, north, and south, no mountains are visible because the topography of the Central Valley in these directions is flat.

### Local Setting

#### Viewshed

For the purpose of describing the visual setting and analyzing project impacts, the study area is defined as the project's viewshed—that area visible from a fixed vantage point and, more specifically, the portion of its viewshed from which the public could perceive changes in the landscape caused by implementing the project. Any other location or viewer group not exposed to the visual impacts of the project (i.e., outside the study area) is not relevant to this analysis.

The net SAP area is analyzed at a program level, and the PRSP area is separately analyzed below at a project level.

#### SAP Area Visual Characteristics

##### **Visual Character and Quality**

The SAP area is characterized by relatively flat terrain with natural grasslands and agricultural uses, such as field crops and grazing. Development is mostly rural, with pockets of urbanized land developed primarily with business park and industrial uses, including a railroad. The lack of tall vegetation and buildings allows viewers in the SAP area to see portions of the cities of Rocklin and Lincoln in the middleground with views of the foothills in the background, although small changes in elevation or the presence of buildings, tall bushes, or trees can obscure long-range views from viewpoints throughout the SAP area. Views also diminish

with increasing distance. Thunder Valley Casino Resort and Western Regional Sanitary Landfill (WRSL) are the two most prominent visual features in the area, although their prominence also depends on the viewer's distance from these facilities. The 17-story hotel and casino structure is visible from much of the SAP area and can be seen from residential developments north of the area. The WRSL appears as a low hill of unvegetated soil from nearby vantage points, particularly from Fiddymment Road and Athens Avenue. Several tall radio antennae can be seen in the SAP area near SR 65; however, the antennae are thin and are not easily noticed when the larger landscape is viewed. A power transmission line transects the area northwest to southeast, and the large transmission line towers are visible from most of the SAP area. Lower-voltage power lines are located adjacent to some roads in the area. The visual character of the area is largely agricultural and rural, with some developed commercial and industrial areas.

The views of the SAP area are considered low to moderate in quality. The SAP area has low vividness because it lacks distinctive scenic resources, and there are no distinguishable topographic, geologic, or other natural features. Areas such as the WRSL and truck storage area off Athens Avenue generally have low visual order in the landscape, and intrusions are not in visual harmony with the landscape. In these areas, there is low unity and low intactness. Other areas such as agricultural areas with agriculture-related development, as well as business park areas, have some visual order and have intrusions consistent with the landscape. In these areas, there is moderate unity and moderate intactness.

To further illustrate the visual character and views of the SAP area, photos taken from key viewpoints in and near the area are presented below (Viewpoints 1–5, Exhibits 4.1-1 through 4.1-5, presented under “Viewpoints” below).

#### **Light and Glare**

Typical of rural, agricultural, and undeveloped areas, the SAP area has few light or glare sources, except in pockets of developed land. Development such as the casino resort and industrial and business park areas have lighting consistent with these uses that generate nighttime lighting. Light from vehicles on SR 65 also generate nighttime glare in the area. Outside the SAP area, but perceptible from the SAP area, residential and commercial uses in the cities of Lincoln, Roseville, and Rocklin generate light pollution typical of urban development. Sources of daytime glare in the SAP area are limited primarily to light glancing off glass and reflective material, such as the casino resort's high-rise hotel building and car windshields in the resort parking lot and on local roadways.

#### **Viewers**

The typical viewers in this area include rural residents and residents of adjacent cities, workers, and commuters driving through the area, as well as delivery vehicle drivers, and consumers. Residents in the area tend to have high sensitivity to visual changes because they spend more time in the area and are accustomed to the existing views. Although those driving, working, and commuting in the area may look for local landmarks and scenery, they typically are less sensitive to visual changes than local residents because they are not focused on scenery. Because they spend less time in an area, nonresident motorists are of moderate sensitivity. Those visiting the Thunder Valley Casino Resort are considered of lower sensitivity because they are visiting the area to spend time within the casino complex that has lighting consistent with an entertainment venue.

#### **PRSP Area Visual Characteristics**

##### **Visual Character and Quality**

Located in the southwest portion of the SAP area, the PRSP area is relatively flat and consists almost entirely of areas used for grazing, with minimal structures or modifications. The PRSP area affords views of Rocklin and Lincoln, although views of Lincoln are substantially diminished because of distance and intervening features, such as trees and buildings. There are no visually prominent features in the area, although Thunder Valley Casino Resort and WRSL can be seen outside the PRSP area in some views (see description above). Their prominence in the viewshed depends on the viewer's distance from these facilities. A power line is located along Fiddymment Road. The visual character of the PRSP area is predominantly agricultural/grazing and rural, with residential areas south of the PRSP area.

The views of the PRSP area are considered low to moderate in quality. The PRSP area has low vividness because it lacks distinctive scenic resources, and there are no distinguishable topographic, geologic, or other natural features. Areas such as the southern border where residential development substantially contrasts with grazing areas have minimal visual order and visual intrusions that are not in harmony with the landscape. These areas therefore have low intactness and low unity. In the northern part of the PRSP area, encroachments such as wood power poles and barbed wire fences are consistent with the agricultural/grazing and rural visual character of the site and therefore have moderately high intactness and moderately high unity. To further illustrate the visual character and views of the PRSP area, a photo taken from a key viewpoint near the area is presented below (Viewpoint 6, Exhibit 4.1-5). A detailed description of the view from this viewpoint as well as an assessment of visual quality and character of the view are also provided below.

### **Light and Glare**

Typical of rural, agricultural, and undeveloped areas, the PRSP area has virtually no light or glare sources. Light from traffic on local roadways is visible in the area. Residential and commercial uses in the City of Roseville generate light typical of urban development, which would be visible in the PRSP area. Sources of daytime glare are limited primarily to light glancing off reflective surfaces, which in the PRSP area are mostly limited to vehicle windows.

### **Viewers**

No residences or businesses exist in the PRSP area. The typical viewers in this area include off-site rural residents and residents of adjacent cities, workers, and commuters driving through the area. As stated above for the net SAP area, residents in an area tend to have high sensitivity to visual changes, while workers and commuters would have moderate sensitivity.

### **Other Supporting Infrastructure Area Visual Characteristics**

#### **Pleasant Grove Retention Facility**

**Visual Character and Quality:** The Pleasant Grove Retention Facility site consists almost entirely of flat land used for agricultural use/field crops. A creek meanders through the center of the site, and some natural vegetation is present associated with the waterway. On the larger Pleasant Grove Retention Facility property owned by the City of Roseville, there are some buildings associated with agricultural operations, but not within the actual footprint of the proposed retention basins. There are no visually prominent features in the site, though the taller trees associated with the waterway can be seen from local roads in the area. Power lines and fences are located along Phillip Road and Sunset Boulevard West, which border the Pleasant Grove Retention Facility property. The visual character is agricultural/field crops and rural.

The views of the Pleasant Grove Retention Facility retention facility site are considered moderately low to moderate in quality. The site has low vividness because it lacks distinctive scenic resources, and there are no distinguishable topographic, geologic, or other natural features. In most locations, there is moderately high intactness because the agricultural landscape is generally free from atypical visual intrusions. Some areas, such as north of Phillip Road at its eastern extent, have more disturbed areas that detract from the visual order and result in moderate intactness. There is also moderately high unity because the intrusions—powerlines on wood poles, roadways, and fences—are generally consistent with an agricultural landscape with field crops. Therefore, on balance, the views of the Pleasant Grove Retention Facility site are considered moderate in quality.

**Light and Glare:** Typical of agricultural areas, the Pleasant Grove Retention Facility site has virtually no light or glare sources. Light from traffic on local roadways is visible in the area, as would be any lighting associated with the few existing structures on the property. Daytime glare is limited primarily to light glancing off reflective surfaces, which in the PRSP area are mostly limited to vehicle windows on roadways. More regionally, flooded agricultural parcels can create glare.

**Viewers:** The typical viewers in the vicinity include rural residents driving through the area and, more distantly, residents in the City of Roseville driving through the area, as well as agricultural workers. No major commute routes are located in the vicinity of the Pleasant Grove Retention Facility; therefore, the number of viewers is

very limited. As stated above for the net SAP area, residents have a high sensitivity whereas workers would have a moderate sensitivity.

#### **Off-Site Transportation and Utility Improvements**

The visual character and quality of area, viewers, and light and glare in the off-site transportation and utility improvements areas are as described below:

- ▲ **Fiddymont Road and Woodcreek Oaks Boulevard:** These areas are characterized by residential development and are wide parkways lined with vegetation and cinder-block style privacy walls. The visual character is residential. Vividness is low, as there are no distinct visual elements or patterns. There is moderately high intactness because of the substantial visual order created by the housing development, with some unmaintained encroaching elements, such as an open field off Fiddymont Road. There is moderately high unity because intrusions such as small unmaintained areas are somewhat expected in residential developments. Overall, visual quality is moderate. Viewers include motorists, many of whom are probably residents in the area. Therefore, visual sensitivity is high. Light and glare sources include windows and windshields as well as lighting from homes.
- ▲ **Duluth Avenue, Sunset Boulevard, Industrial Avenue:** These areas are characterized by industrial buildings and development and adjacent agriculture. Vividness is low, as there are no distinct visual elements or patterns and there is high contrast between industrial development and adjacent agriculture/grazing and undeveloped areas. Intactness is low because industrial buildings are not a typical visual intrusion in an agricultural or undeveloped area. Similarly, unity is low because the industrial buildings are not in visual harmony with the existing landscape. Overall, visual quality is low. Viewers include motorists, many of whom are probably workers in the area. Therefore, visual sensitivity is moderate. Light and glare sources include windows and windshields as well as lighting from businesses.
- ▲ **Woodcreek Recycled Water Tank Site:** This area and its immediate surroundings are characterized by vegetated, industrial, and residential areas. Vividness is low as there are no distinct patterns or visual elements. Intactness is low; while there are some more-natural elements, the water tank and adjacent homes are atypical and dominant visual intrusions. For similar reasons, unity is low. Therefore, visual quality is low. Viewers are limited because vegetation acts as a screen and because there are limited publicly accessible viewpoints. Some golfers may be able to see the area from the Woodcreek Golf Club. These viewers are of moderate sensitivity, because their focus is on golfing, and visual quality is somewhat important to that experience. Light and glare sources include windows and windshields as well as lighting from adjacent homes.

#### **Viewpoints**

The key viewpoints shown in Exhibits 4.1-1 through 4.1-5 represent typical views in the project area and provide an overall sense of the visual setting of the project area and a basis for describing the range of impacts that would occur with project implementation. (The viewpoints are not intended to identify important views or specific visual characteristics.) Detailed descriptions of views from these viewpoints as well as an assessment of visual quality and character of the views are also provided below.

#### **Viewpoint 1 (Net SAP Area)**

The area pictured in the view from Viewpoint 1 is located in the most urbanized portion of the net SAP area (Exhibit 4.1-2). The roads in this area are wide and bordered with sidewalks and landscaped strips. Most of the buildings are large, single-story structures grouped in business/industrial parks. A railroad that traverses the net SAP area from north to south is visible on the left side of the view. There are no scenic resources in this area. The development obscures long-range views of the foothills, grazing lands, and other scenic resources. The visual character is commercial. Vividness is low because there are no distinct visual patterns or elements. The developed area has a moderate intactness because there is moderate visual order related to the building and landscape design's mix with more industrial elements, such as the railroad tracks and the undeveloped area behind the parking lot. The development has moderate unity because development has mild contrast with less developed areas outside the business park. Therefore, this area has a moderately low visual quality. Viewers in this area include workers at the businesses, delivery vehicle drivers,

commuters traveling through the area, consumers coming to purchase goods or services, and churchgoers. Viewer sensitivity is therefore moderate.

#### **Viewpoints 2 and 3a (Net SAP Area)**

Thunder Valley Casino Resort, seen from Viewpoints 2 and 3a, is a collection of buildings adjacent to large paved parking lots (Exhibits 4.1-2 and 4.1-3). Surrounding the resort is undeveloped land. Power lines are visible and prominent along Athens Avenue in both views. The visual character is largely commercial, though some undeveloped areas are visible. Vividness is low because there are no distinct visual patterns or elements. These views have low intactness because of the mix of patterns and intrusion on the landscape by elements such as the power lines against the sky. Likewise, there is low unity because of the mix of elements such as barbed wire fences and power lines that may be associated with rural areas combined with modern development such as the water tank, vast parking lots, and casino buildings. Therefore, this area has low visual quality. Typical viewers in this area include resort workers and visitors, commuters, and delivery vehicle drivers. Viewer sensitivity is therefore moderate.

#### **Viewpoints 3b and 4a (Net SAP Area)**

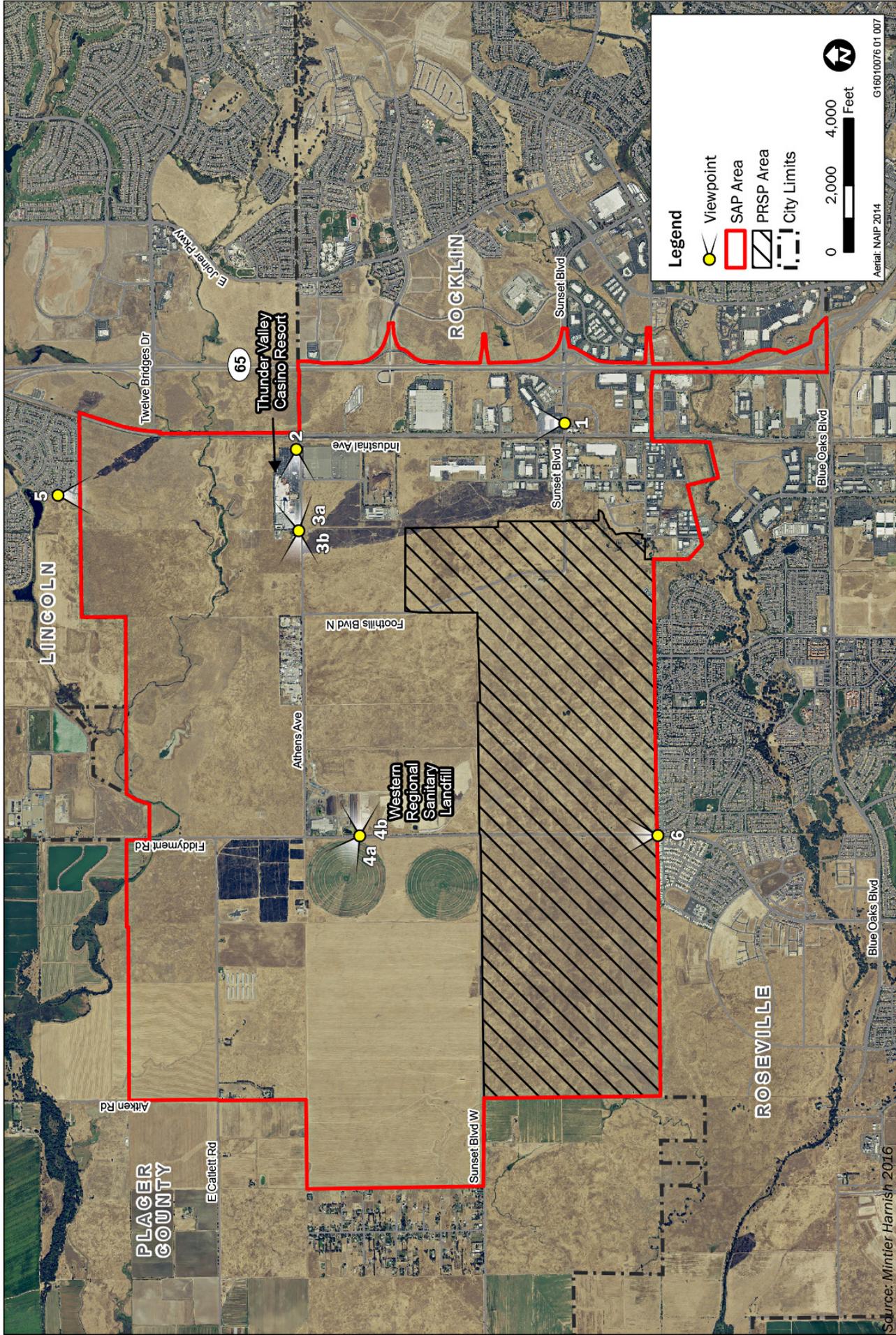
These viewpoints are dominated by flat grassy fields, with some development noticeable on the horizon (Exhibits 4.1-3 and 4.1-4). Power lines, barbed wire fences, and the roadway (in Viewpoint 3b) add linear elements to the view. The area pictured demonstrates rural and agricultural/field crops/grazing lands visual character associated with many portions of the net SAP area. Vividness is low because there are no distinct visual patterns or elements. These views have a moderately high intactness because encroaching elements of the roadway, power line, and fence are expected elements in a rural agricultural area. These views have a moderately high unity because of the aligned nature of the linear elements at Viewpoint 3b and the minimal skylining of the transmission line in Viewpoint 4a that reduces its prominence. Therefore, this area has moderate visual quality. Typical viewers in the area of Viewpoint 3b include resort workers and visitors, commuters, and delivery vehicle drivers. Viewer sensitivity is therefore moderate. At 4a, there may be motorists who are residents, who have a high viewer sensitivity.

#### **Viewpoint 4b (Net SAP Area)**

Viewpoint 4b shows a view of the WRSL (Exhibit 4.1-4). Transmission towers are visible across the WRSL property, and the very top of the view shows the power lines that are located along Fiddymont Road. The visual character is predominantly undeveloped and rural. Vividness is low because there are no distinct visual patterns or elements. This view has low unity because of the contrasting patterns of the horizontal fence and power line conductor, the angled alignment of the transmission line, the vertical tree, and the nonlinear hill. This view has several visual intrusions that reduce the intactness to low, including a transmission line that is not consistent with rural agricultural areas and the disturbed soil. Therefore, the visual quality is low. Viewers in this area include those driving along Fiddymont Road, which includes local residences, commuters, and those driving for work. Views in this direction, however, would see the area for a short period because this view is through a break in a row of trees that otherwise screens the landfill from drivers. Visual sensitivity is therefore moderate.

#### **Viewpoint 5 (Net SAP Area)**

This view shows the edge a large residential subdivision adjacent to the net SAP area, which in this view contains encroaching human elements such as a power line and the casino resort, visible just to the right of the residences. This view is representative of the portions of the net SAP area adjacent to residential development in the northeastern corner of the net SAP area. Here, the view shows the abrupt transition between homes and open space. The visual character is predominantly rural. Vividness is low because there are no distinct visual patterns or elements. The view has low unity because of the lack of a harmonious visual transition from the residential area to the undeveloped area. The intactness is low because residential subdivisions are not a common visual intrusion associated with open space and rural areas. Therefore, the visual quality is low. Viewers here are largely residents since the view is from a cul-de-sac in the residential area. Visual sensitivity is therefore high.



Source: Mintier Harnish 2016



**Viewpoint 1: From a parking lot off Industrial Avenue, looking north.**



**Viewpoint 2: North of Athens Avenue, looking west toward Thunder Valley Casino Resort.**

X16010153 01 028



**Viewpoint 3a: Looking east at Thunder Valley Casino Resort from the north side of Athens Avenue.**



**Viewpoint 3b: Looking west, away from Thunder Valley Casino Resort, on the north side of Athens Avenue.**

X16010153 01 029



**Viewpoint 4a: Looking northwest from Fiddyment Road.**



**Viewpoint 4b: Looking east from Fiddyment Road toward the Western Regional Sanitary Landfill.**

X16010153 01 030



**Viewpoint 5: Looking southeast from the end of Middlefork Court.**



**Viewpoint 6: Looking north from Fiddymet Road at the edge of the PRSP area.**

X16010153 01 031

**Viewpoint 6 (PRSP Area)**

This view is from a large residential area to the south of the PRSP area, which in this view contains minimal encroaching elements such as a power line and road. This view shows landscaped strips, paved streets, and sidewalks that abruptly end at the grazing land in the PRSP area. The visual character of the immediate view is residential, and the visual character of the rest of the view is agricultural/grazing. The agricultural/grazing land character dominates because of the expansiveness of the grazing area. Vividness is low because there are no distinct visual patterns or elements. The view has low unity because of the lack of integration of residences into the grazing area and the resulting abrupt transition. The intactness is low because modern residential developments are not a common visual intrusion associated with grazing areas. Therefore, the visual quality is low. Viewers here are largely residents since the view is from a road in the residential area. Visual sensitivity is therefore high.

**4.1.3 Regulatory Setting****FEDERAL AND STATE**

There are no applicable federal or state plans or laws related to aesthetics and visual resources and relevant to the proposed project.

**LOCAL****Placer County General Plan****Visual and Scenic Resources**

**GOAL 1.K:** To protect the visual and scenic resources of Placer County as important quality-of-life amenities for County residents and a principal asset in the promotion of recreation and tourism.

- ▲ **Policy 1.K.3:** 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.
- ▲ **Policy 1.K.5:** 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 conform to the natural terrain.

**GOAL 1.O:** To promote and enhance the quality and aesthetics of development in Placer County.

- ▲ **Policy 1.O.1:** Except as otherwise provided in the Design Guidelines of an approved Specific Plan, the County shall require all new development to be designed in compliance with applicable provisions of the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual*.
- ▲ **Policy 1.O.2:** The County shall require that specific plans include design guidelines for all types of development within the area covered by the plan.
- ▲ **Policy 1.O.3:** 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:
  - a) they do not silhouette against the sky above ridgelines or hilltops;
  - b) roof lines and vertical architectural features blend with and do not detract from the natural background or ridge outline;

- c) they fit the natural terrain; and
  - d) they utilize building materials, colors, and textures that blend with the natural landscape (e.g., avoid high contrasts).
- ▲ **Policy 1.0.4:** The County shall require that new rural and suburban development be designed to preserve and maintain the rural character and quality of the County.
  - ▲ **Policy 1.0.9:** The County shall discourage the use of outdoor lighting that shines unnecessarily onto adjacent properties or into the night sky.
  - ▲ **Policy 1.0.10:** The County shall require that in downtowns/village centers the tallest buildings be clustered in the core area and that building heights transition down to the scale of buildings in the surrounding area.

### Placer County Design Guidelines

Placer County has adopted design guidelines, and procedures are established under the County Zoning Ordinance for the performance of design review. The design guidelines are applicable to all commercial, industrial, and multifamily development located in the -Dc (Design Scenic Corridor), -Ds (Design Sierra), and -Dh (Design Historic) zoning districts (Placer County 2003). None of the three districts is proposed for the project area; however, the SAP, in Policy LU/ED-3.1, states that projects in the project area will comply with applicable provisions of the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual*, among other guidelines. The County's design guidelines are applicable to all commercial, industrial, and multifamily development and identify principles related to the height, bulk, color, and scale of buildings. Other subjects covered include architectural design, site planning, parking and circulation, and signs. Specific site planning and design criteria are included for commercial, industrial, and multifamily development. Other proposed SAP policies are described in "Proposed Sunset Area Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies," below. Also, the proposed SAP Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines are described below.

Additionally, where the PRSP design guidelines, described under "Proposed Placer Ranch Specific Plan Development Standards and Design Guidelines," or the SAP Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines do not specifically supersede the County's guidelines, the Placer County design guidelines would apply.

### Placer County Landscape Design Guidelines

Placer County also maintains landscape design guidelines (Placer County 2013) applicable to the design review process. As noted above for the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual*, the landscape design guidelines are intended to be applicable in the project area where the SAP or PRSP design guidelines do not specifically supersede the landscape design guidelines. The landscape design guidelines contain a series of "general requirements" for landscaping, including the preservation of existing trees and shrubs where feasible; a 15 percent site coverage landscape requirement; requirements for consistency of landscape design and scale; requirements for water efficient landscaping; standards for size of planting areas; a requirement for landscaping along property borders; screening to minimize light, noise, and physical distractions; use of deciduous trees in the interior of parking lots; screening of parking, loading, and other similar areas; and a requirement for comprehensive master landscape plans for major developments. Other guidelines pertaining to size, installation, maintenance, and irrigation of plantings also are described in the guidelines manual.

## 4.1.4 Analysis, Impacts, and Mitigation

### STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Under the Placer County CEQA Checklist and Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, implementing the project would result in a potentially significant impact on aesthetics or visual resources if it would:

- ▲ 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.

### METHODS AND APPROACH

This visual impact analysis is based on field observations, review of the project policies, the conceptual land use plan, aerial photographs, applicable scenic policies, SAP Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines, PRSP Development Standards and Design Guidelines, photographs of the project site, and projected visual changes in the project area after implementation of the plans.

The analysis of visual impacts is based on the nature and degree of change to the existing visual environment resulting from buildout of the project area. Visual changes resulting from implementing the project could affect different viewer groups in a variety of locations on and in the vicinity of the project area. Affected viewers could include individuals traveling along SR 65, Fiddymont Road, Sunset Boulevard, and other local roadways; residents in existing, adjacent communities of Roseville to the south, Lincoln to the northeast, Rocklin to the east, and unincorporated areas of Placer County to the west; and employees of, and visitors to, existing business establishments and industrial enterprises within and adjacent to the project area. The effect on each viewer would vary based on viewing location. In determining the extent and implications of the visual changes, consideration was given to the following factors for each of the significance criteria listed above:

- ▲ existing visual qualities of the affected environment and specific changes to its visual character and qualities;
- ▲ the visual context of the affected environment;
- ▲ the extent to which the affected environment contains places or features that provide unique visual experiences or that have been designated in plans and policies for protection or special consideration; and
- ▲ the sensitivity of viewers, access of viewers, their activities, and the extent to which these activities are related to the aesthetic qualities affected by the project-related changes.

A whole step-down in visual quality is considered a substantial degradation in visual quality. For example, a reduction in visual quality from high to moderate or from moderately high to moderately low would be considered a significant impact on visual quality. A substantial degradation in visual character is, generally, considered to be a complete change in visual character or the introduction of elements that result in a view with multiple prominent visual characters. For example, a change from agricultural to suburban residential would be considered a substantial degradation in the agricultural visual character. And, introduction of substantial commercial development to an area that is completely agricultural in character would be considered a substantial degradation in the open space visual character.

## PROPOSED SUNSET AREA PLAN GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND POLICIES

The SAP includes goals and policies related to aesthetics. The County would require consistency of future projects with SAP policies and SAP Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines. The following SAP policies are relevant to the analysis of aesthetics:

**GOAL LU/ED-3: Design and Land Development Practices.** To promote high-quality design and land development practices in the Sunset Area.

- ▲ **Policy LU/ED-3.1: High-Quality Design.** The County shall require high-quality design in both the public and private realm to ensure an attractive setting for investment in planned uses in the Sunset Area, especially along key transportation corridors (e.g., Placer Parkway, Highway 65, Sunset Boulevard, Foothills Boulevard North, Athens Avenue, Fiddyment Road). All projects shall comply with the Placer County Street Improvements Ordinance by constructing the required frontage improvements and providing ultimate planned right-of-way dedications to the County. Except as otherwise provided in design guidelines for approved specific plans, this will include compliance with applicable provisions of the Sunset Area Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines, the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual* and *Landscape Design Guidelines*, and the *Placer County Land Development Manual*, including the Placer County General Specifications and Engineering Design Details. Such design shall include appropriate buffering (e.g., distance, sound walls, fencing, and landscaping) between sensitive uses, such as residential uses, and the key transportation corridors listed above [in the General Plan].
- ▲ **Policy LU/ED-3.2: Environmentally Responsive Design.** The County shall encourage buildings and sites to be designed in a manner that blends with existing natural conditions, including site topography, existing woodland vegetation, wetlands, stream channels, and other natural features. Where existing resources are preserved by other policies and programs, adjacent buildings and other improved areas shall be designed in harmony with the preserved area and shall not seek to replace or dominate those resources.
- ▲ **Policy LU/ED-3.9: Lighting.** The County shall balance the need for lighting in new developments with concern for the environment and existing uses by encouraging the use of efficient, strategic, and aesthetic lighting methods that address public safety and reduce light pollution. Lighting design should adhere to the following principles:

  - a) Lighting on site should be designed to promote pedestrian comfort and safety and to enliven public gathering places.
  - b) Lighting for individual buildings should be integrated into the architecture.
  - c) Lighting shall be designed to minimize projection into adjacent properties and onto adjacent roads and not provide a source of glare.
  - d) The height of light standards in parking areas shall not exceed eighteen (18) feet.
  - e) Energy-efficient technology should be used wherever possible.
- ▲ **Policy LU/ED-3.11: Mirrored or Reflective Glass.** The County shall prohibit the use of mirrored or reflective glasses as the dominant architectural theme in industrial, office, or commercial buildings. Reflection surfaces of multi-story buildings facing streets, open spaces, parks, and residential neighborhoods shall be oriented to avoid generating glare that could create a nuisance.

**GOAL LU/ED-13: Public Facilities.** To designate adequately-sized, well-located areas for the development of public facilities to serve the Sunset Area and regional needs.

- ▲ **Policy LU/ED-13.2: Minimize Visual Impacts of Public Improvements.** The County shall require that new roads, parking, and utilities be designed to minimize visual impacts. Unless limited by geological or

engineering constraints, utilities shall be installed underground and roadways and parking areas shall be designed to fit the natural terrain.

## **PROPOSED SUNSET AREA PLAN CORRIDOR DESIGN STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES**

The proposed SAP Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines provide standards and guidelines related to the character for the streets and roads that already exist in SAP area, as well as future corridors that would be constructed to accompany land development. These are intended to promote a cohesive, aesthetically pleasing community character. The standards and guidelines relate to creation of complete streets (standards and guidelines for sidewalks, bike lanes, road crossings and traffic signals, street furnishings, roadway medians and islands, and pavement treatments); community identity (standards and guidelines for site design, building orientation, and landscape design); and sustainability (standards and guidelines for stormwater quality features and low impact development measures). Specific standards from the Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines that inform the environmental analysis below include:

- ▲ all lighting shall be Dark Sky compliant;
- ▲ all lighting should utilize cut-off type fixtures to minimize glare and visibility from adjacent areas, and should be the appropriate size and height given the activities for which they are designed; and
- ▲ lighting is allowed to illuminate signage at night, but should be designed appropriately to not create hazardous glare for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles.

## **PROPOSED PLACER RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS AND DESIGN GUIDELINES**

The PRSP Development Standards and Design Guidelines provide specific detail regarding the appearance of the proposed PRSP development, including guidance related to the size and placement of structures and materials used.

The following protective measures from the design guidelines are specifically related to the standards of significance considered in this analysis of impacts on aesthetics:

### **Residential and Architectural Design—General Architectural Guidelines**

- ▲ All roof or ground-mounted mechanical equipment, satellite dishes, antennas, or other similar structures should be screened from view with an enclosure that is compatible to architectural theme of attached or adjacent structure.
- ▲ Visually confusing or disordered facades, including a mixture of architecturally incompatible roof forms, window/door shapes, styles and sizes, are discouraged.

### **Residential Architectural Design—Scale and Massing—Elements to Encourage**

- ▲ Integrating a combination of single and multiple-story elements into each neighborhood to create a varied streetscape skyline.
- ▲ Pairing homes in conventionally-plotted neighborhoods so that garages and entries are adjacent to each other, to create an undulating setback of building mass, resulting in larger, combined front yard spaces. To avoid monotony, this pattern should be broken occasionally.

### **Residential Architectural Design—Scale and Massing—Elements to Discourage**

- ▲ Repeated building forms that create visual monotony along the street.
- ▲ Homes that have repetitious flat wall planes, similar building profiles, and similar ridge heights.

### **Community Gateways—Hardscape Elements and Lighting**

- ▲ Lighting for hardscape elements and signage should not create upward glare visible to drivers or from adjacent land uses.

### **Residential Architectural Design—Window Treatments—Encouraged Elements**

- ▲ Utilizing glass with no glazing (clear), or with lightly-tinted, non-reflective glazing.

### **Residential Architectural Design—Window Treatments—Discouraged Elements**

- ▲ Glass with dark or reflective glazing.

### **Residential Architectural Design—Materials, Colors, & Exterior Finishes—Encouraged Elements**

- ▲ Utilizing material changes in a logical and aesthetically-pleasing manner such as at reverse corners or a return on a side-wall towards the privacy fence. Unless a material is being used to create a column effect, side-wall returns should be no less than 4 feet.

### **Residential Architectural Design—Materials, Colors, & Exterior Finishes—Discouraged Elements**

- ▲ Reflective glass and exterior materials and colors that reflect light.
- ▲ Single color use on an entire home, with no distinction between the primary body and architectural elements or trim.

## **IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **Impact 4.1-1: Substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings during construction**

---

Construction activities associated with the project would cause a slight reduction in visual quality and would not substantially change visual character. Construction activities would be temporary and limited to localized sites within the project area. Visual impacts from construction would therefore be **less than significant**.

---

#### **Net SAP and PRSP Areas**

Construction of individual developments implemented under the project would involve clearing and grading in areas where new structures and other facilities (e.g., roadways, sidewalks, trails, and stormwater facilities) would be built and trenching for placement of utility connections. Equipment and materials would be stored throughout the area during construction, with the location dependent on where construction is occurring. Motorists (residents and workers), casino visitors, and consumers would see construction activities and equipment. Construction activities would add more unnatural elements to views that would contrast with and encroach on natural elements. Construction activities and associated visual characteristics (e.g., denuded areas) are not uncommon in rural and agricultural areas. Construction activities would occur in pockets throughout the project area as individual projects are built and would be temporary. This would limit the number of viewers of any particular active construction area. Furthermore, most viewers in the project area would be transient, limiting the duration of views. Construction activities may reduce visual quality from moderate to moderately low or moderately low to low. Areas with low visual quality would maintain low visual quality. As a result, any reduction of visual quality would be less than significant.

#### **Other Supporting Infrastructure**

##### **Pleasant Grove Retention Facility**

Construction of the Pleasant Grove Retention Facility would require excavation of material over 103 acres and placement of excavated material as fill across 164 acres (a total disturbance of 267 acres). Equipment and materials would be stored throughout the area. The existing visual quality is moderate. Excavation and placement of fill across 267 acres would look similar to agricultural activities where there is equipment and

denuded soil but would be more intense because there would be more pieces of equipment on the site at the same time. These activities would be temporary. Vividness would remain low. Intactness would be reduced from moderately high to moderate and from moderate to moderately low, while unity would be reduced from moderately high to moderate. Viewers are of moderate to high sensitivity. Construction activities would reduce visual quality to moderately low in areas that are moderate for a period of years. Areas of moderately low visual quality would, on balance, remain moderately low. This impact would be less than significant.

#### **Off-Site Transportation and Utility Improvements**

Off-site transportation and utility improvements involve extending water lines, widening intersections, widening roadways, and relocating utilities. Many of these improvements would take place within existing roadways or at existing facilities, where construction activities would be expected to have temporary encroachments. For other off-site improvements that do not occur within existing roadways, the existing visual setting includes vacant land interspersed with existing development, which is consistent with the general visual setting of the SAP area. Construction activities in these areas would result in impacts similar to those described above for the Net SAP and PRSP. Construction impacts would be less than significant.

#### **Conclusion**

Construction activities in the project area would not substantially reduce visual quality and would not substantially change the existing visual character. Therefore, the impact related to visual quality and character during construction would be **less than significant**.

#### **Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is required.

### **Impact 4.1-2: Substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings after buildout**

---

Implementing the project would maintain or improve visual quality in several parts of the project area. However, in areas where there would be a contrast between rural areas and new development, implementing the project would substantially degrade visual quality. In locations where the visual character is rural or agricultural and the project calls for development rather than preservation of existing conditions, development of the project area would substantially change the visual character of portions of the sites. This impact would be **potentially significant**.

---

#### **Net SAP Area**

##### **Overview**

Implementation of the SAP would result in several types of development, including industrial, sales-service, hotels, industrial, manufacturing, entertainment, retail, and other urban uses in the net SAP area. A portion of the net SAP area is also designated for conservation as permanent open space. In many places in the net SAP area, although development was contemplated under the 1997 SIA Plan, there is no existing development, and the development under the SAP would substantially change the visual character of the area. In other places in the net SAP area, proposed development under the SAP would be visually consistent with the character of existing development and may improve visual quality with newer buildings, roadway design, and landscaping, consistent with the SAP policies and SAP Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines. However, where developed areas would abut areas slated for conservation as permanent open space, there would be an abrupt visual transition between development and open space, similar to that shown in Viewpoints 5 and 6, that could substantially degrade visual quality. The various impact scenarios are discussed in greater detail below by SAP-proposed change in land use, with references to viewpoints that are representative of the impact scenario.

### No Change to Existing Land Use

In some portions of the net SAP area, there are existing land uses that would not change as a result of implementation of the proposed project. Views that would not change as a result of project implementation include the views from the intersection of Nichols Drive and Cincinnati Avenue in an already developed industrial park, where the land uses and building height allowances remain the same. The view of the WRSL looking east from Fiddymont Road (Viewpoint 4b) may change where the proposed SAP increases the allowed building height from 36 feet to 100 feet. For example, Viewpoint 4b is in the Eco-Industrial/Manufacturing/ WPWMA Thematic District and contains, where the WRSL and Materials Recovery Facility are located. The view is limited to the landfill parcel, and, although implementing the project would not change types of uses of this parcel, there is a potential for increased height with new development within the Eco-Industrial/Manufacturing/ WPWMA Thematic District.

In some portions of the net SAP area, land use designations would not change but additional development with higher buildings may occur in areas that are mostly developed. In views of such areas, proposed development would be consistent in visual character with existing development, although the new development could be taller. Implementation of the project could result in additional development in views along Industrial Boulevard in the Industrial Infill Thematic District, which includes Viewpoint 1. Viewpoint 1 could have light industrial, sales-service, and ancillary highway service commercial uses behind the building shown on the right of the view. New development would be subject to several policies and design standards:

- ▲ *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.1* requires that new development is designed in compliance with the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual*.
- ▲ *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.3* requires that all new development be designed to be compatible with the scale and character of the area and that roof lines and vertical architectural features blend with and do not detract from the natural background.
- ▲ Proposed *Sunset Area Plan Policy LU/ED-3.1* requires high-quality design to ensure an attractive setting for investment in planned uses in the Sunset Area, which includes compliance with applicable provisions of the *Sunset Area Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines*, the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual*, the *Landscape Design Guidelines*, and the *Placer County Land Development Manual*, including the *Placer County General Specifications and Engineering Design Details*.

The new development would be similar in use and designed to be visually compatible with development already present in Viewpoint 1. Therefore, although new development could be taller, new development would be consistent with the existing visual character. Intactness and unity would remain moderate because there would still be a mix of development and some infrastructure elements such as the railroad tracks. Scenic quality would therefore remain moderately low at Viewpoint 1. At Viewpoint 1 and other similar views where project development would be similar in use and visually compatible with existing uses, impacts would be less than significant.

In summary, for views where project implementation would not change the existing land use and would not result in additional development, there would be no impact on visual character or quality. For views where there is substantial existing development, where land use would not change, but more development could occur under the project, visual quality and visual character would be maintained, and impacts would be less than significant.

### Partial Change to Existing Land Use

In some parts of the net SAP area, there is a mix of existing development, agricultural land, and preserved open space; project implementation would result in additional development and maintenance of the remaining open space, as well as buildings that could be much taller than existing development. The SAP would allow for development of up to 100 feet in the Entertainment and Mixed-Use (EMU) district for most uses and an allowance for up to 225 feet for commercial recreation (indoor and outdoor) and hotel and hotel resort uses. Other districts in the SAP allow increased maximum building heights of 75–150 feet. (It should be noted that these are maximum building heights, and it is uncertain whether any future structures

would actually be developed at these heights.) Views where there would be such a mix of development and open space include the view to the east on Athens Avenue of Alta Transport, the view to the east at Thunder Valley Casino Resort from Athens Avenue (Viewpoint 3a), and the view to the southeast from the end of Middlefork Court (Viewpoint 5). Viewpoint 3a is in the EMU Thematic District and already contains a view of the Thunder Valley Casino Resort. In this area, height allowances would increase from 50 feet to 100 feet for most uses and 225 feet for commercial recreation (outdoor and indoor) and hotel/hotel resort uses, which would be substantially taller than most existing development. The undeveloped area to the right of Athens Avenue could be developed into entertainment related uses like major event venues and regional retail concepts, while the open space to the left of Athens Avenue would be preserved as part of the Preserve/Mitigation Reserve Thematic District. There would be a minor shift in visual character toward commercial, though some open space would remain. Unity and intactness would improve to moderate because a more cohesive visual appearance would distract from more rural encroaching elements in Viewpoint 3a, increasing visual quality to moderately low. In Viewpoint 5, development within the EMU Thematic District would be visible on the horizon, but most of the view would remain undeveloped as part of the Preserve/Mitigation Reserve District. The visual character would remain largely open space, since development would be limited to the horizon, almost 1.5 miles from Viewpoint 5. While taller development on the horizon may limit expansiveness of the views, intactness and unity would remain low because the additional development would add only an incremental encroachment of an unnatural element into the view. Scenic quality would therefore remain low at Viewpoint 5. Adverse impacts on visual character and quality would be less than significant at Viewpoint 3a and 5 and other similar views where there is a mix of development and open space and some additional development would occur.

In parts of the net SAP area, there is a mix of developed and undeveloped areas. Implementation of the SAP would result in additional urban uses in areas proposed for development, and preservation sensitive lands in the northern portion of the SAP area. The views from north of Athens Avenue, looking west toward Thunder Valley Casino Resort (Viewpoint 2) would be mostly developed after SAP buildout. The currently undeveloped areas in the distance in Viewpoint 2 may be developed into entertainment-related uses like special event venues and regional retail concepts as part of the EMU Thematic District, which already contains the 17-story Thunder Valley Casino Resort. As previously mentioned, the height allowance in this district would increase from 50 feet to 100 feet for most uses and 225 feet for commercial recreation and hotel resort uses. New buildings and other structures would be noticeable along the horizon behind the existing parking lot. The existing casino resort building would still be prominent, however, as structures would not be allowed to be as tall as the casino resort building. Development would be set back from the viewpoint and would be visually consistent with existing facilities. Visual character would shift to being completely commercial because undeveloped land would no longer be visible, but the shift would be minimal because the visual character is already dominantly commercial. The additional development along the skyline could increase intactness and unity to moderate by creating a more cohesive visual appearance and eliminating the rural encroaching elements. Visual quality would therefore improve to moderately low from low at Viewpoint 2. Adverse impacts on visual character would be less than significant at Viewpoint 2 and other similar views where development is dominant and remaining undeveloped areas would be developed.

In summary, visual character would not substantially change in areas where SAP implementation would only slightly shift the balance between development and undeveloped areas toward development. In some cases, such as in Viewpoints 2 and 3a, additional development would increase unity and intactness and improve visual quality. In areas where development would not be as prominent and visual quality is low, such as Viewpoint 5, visual quality would be maintained. Overall, where there would be a partial change in land use, adverse impacts would be less than significant.

#### **New Land Use**

As noted above, the existing 1997 SIA Plan identified development in most parts of the SAP area, and those areas have not yet developed. Under buildout conditions of the proposed SAP, many parts of the net SAP area would be developed where there is no existing development. Some areas would be completely developed into industrial, residential, or commercial areas. The SAP would allow for building heights of up to 225 feet for commercial recreation and hotel resort uses in the EMU district, with other areas allowing increased maximum

building heights of 75–150 feet. Views of areas that would be completely developed include those from North Foothills Boulevard and from Fiddymont Road near the WRSL (Viewpoint 4a). At Viewpoint 4a, which is located in the Eco-Industrial/Manufacturing/WPWMA Thematic District, the entire area could be developed into eco-industrial and manufacturing uses for goods production. The height allowance in the Eco-Industrial District would be up to 100 feet. *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.4* states that the County shall require that new rural and suburban development be designed to preserve and maintain the rural character and quality of the County. However, it is unlikely that an area slated for development of industrial and manufacturing uses up to 100 feet in height could be designed to maintain rural character of the net SAP area seen from Viewpoint 4a. As a result, development of this area would substantially change visual character to industrial. New development would be subject to several policies and design standards:

- ▲ *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.1* requires that new development is designed in compliance with the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual*.
- ▲ *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.3* requires that all new development be designed to be compatible with the scale and character of the area, and that roof lines and vertical architectural features blend with and do not detract from the natural background.
- ▲ Proposed *Sunset Area Plan Policy LU/ED-3.1* requires high-quality design to ensure an attractive setting for investment in planned uses in the Sunset Area, which includes compliance with applicable provisions of the *Sunset Area Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines*, the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual*, the *Landscape Design Guidelines*, and the *Placer County Land Development Manual*, including the *Placer County General Specifications and Engineering Design Details*.

As a result of these policies, intactness and unity would likely remain moderately high because the entire area would have minimal encroaching elements and would have substantial design cohesiveness. Therefore, visual quality would remain the same at Viewpoint 4a, although impacts on visual character would be potentially significant at Viewpoint 4a and other similar views where there is no existing development and the SAP proposes all new development and no remaining undeveloped areas or land used for agriculture, grazing, and field crops.

Some undeveloped parts of the net SAP area would be developed adjacent to open space. Even though some of these areas may have been slated for development under the 1997 SIA Plan, they have not yet been developed. Views where SAP buildout would result in undeveloped areas adjacent to development include looking east on East Catlett Road near its intersection with Fiddymont Road and looking west, away from Thunder Valley Casino Resort, on the north side of Athens Avenue (Viewpoint 3b). Viewpoint 3b has views of the EMU Thematic District and the Preserve-Mitigation Reserve Thematic District; therefore, buildings and other development could occur in some but not all parts of the view. In the EMU Thematic District, the height allowance would be up to 100 feet for most uses and up to 225 feet for commercial recreation and hotel resort uses. Modern, tall buildings would not be consistent with the rural agricultural visual character of Viewpoint 3b and would substantially change the visual character to a mix of commercial and open space. Development would be directly adjacent to open space, although several land use policies seek to address visual impacts caused by contrasts between rural areas and new development:

- ▲ *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.K.3* requires that development in rural areas incorporates landscaping that provides a transition between vegetation in developed areas and adjacent open space or undeveloped areas.
- ▲ *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.4* requires that new rural and suburban development be designed to preserve and maintain the rural character and quality of the County.
- ▲ Proposed *Sunset Area Plan Policy LU/ED-3.2* encourages buildings and sites to be designed in a manner that blends with existing natural conditions. And states that buildings adjacent to preserved resources shall be designed in harmony with the preserved area and shall not seek to replace or dominate those resources.

Although these policies may slightly visually improve the transition area between development and open space, none of them would ameliorate the substantial contrast between entertainment and mixed-use development and undeveloped open space that would occur at Viewpoint 3b. Intactness would be reduced from moderately high to low because commercial development is an atypical visual intrusion in a rural agricultural area. Unity would also be reduced from moderately high to low because of the potential for an abrupt transition from the new, tall development to the undeveloped open space in the Preserve-Mitigation Reserve district. Visual quality would therefore be reduced from moderate to low, which would be a substantial degradation in visual quality. Physical impacts on visual character and quality would therefore be potentially significant at Viewpoint 3b and other similar views where the SAP places development adjacent to open space in currently undeveloped areas.

In summary, the change in visual character would be substantial in areas that are currently undeveloped where new development is proposed under the SAP. SAP implementation would not adversely affect visual quality where views would be entirely developed because following design standards would result in cohesive design. However, in views where development is placed adjacent to open space, visual quality would substantially decrease because of the abrupt transition between development and open space. Therefore, impacts on visual character and quality in certain areas of new development would be potentially significant where there are new land uses.

### **PRSP Area**

The PRSP area is almost completely undeveloped. Even though some of these areas may be slated for development under the 1997 SIA Plan (most of the PRSP area is currently designated for agricultural use in the 1997 SIA Plan), they have not been developed as planned. In some parts of the PRSP area, the entire view would be developed upon implementation of the PRSP. For example, views from the center of the PRSP area from Fiddymont Road after PRSP buildout would be of educational, commercial, and residential uses. Similar to impacts described for Viewpoint 4a for the net SAP area, visual character would substantially change because currently agricultural and rural areas would be developed to contain educational, commercial, and residential uses. *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.4* states that the County shall require that new suburban development be designed to preserve and maintain the rural character and quality of the County. However, it is unlikely that an area slated for development of educational, commercial, and residential uses could be designed to maintain rural character of the PRSP area. The proposed *Placer Ranch Specific Plan Development Standards and Design Guidelines* have extensive detail regarding appearance of the proposed development that would require various design aspects to enhance the individual attractiveness and overall visual appeal of development. As a result, similar to visual quality impacts described for Viewpoint 4a and other similar views that are not currently developed, visual quality would be maintained, although impacts on visual character would be potentially significant.

In other parts of the PRSP area, part of a view would be developed upon implementation of the PRSP, while adjacent areas would remain undeveloped. For example, views from Sunset Boulevard looking south at the western edge of the PRSP area would be of a residential area adjacent to agricultural/grazing land. Similar to impacts described for Viewpoint 3b, visual character would substantially change because currently undeveloped land would be developed. It is unlikely that an area slated for development of residential uses could be designed to maintain rural character of the PRSP area consistent with *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.4*, previously described. As discussed for Viewpoint 3b, several land use policies seek to address visual quality impacts caused by contrasts between rural areas and new development. However, none of the policies would ameliorate the substantial contrast between development and agricultural areas, and although the proposed Placer Ranch Development Standards and Design Guidelines would promote visual quality of the PRSP development itself, they would not ameliorate the contrast between agricultural areas and development. As a result, similar to visual quality impacts described for Viewpoint 3b, PRSP buildout would substantially reduce visual quality where development is located adjacent to agricultural areas. Impacts on visual character and quality in these areas would be potentially significant.

In other parts of the PRSP area, new development is proposed near existing development. For example, Viewpoint 6 is located just outside of the PRSP area and has a view of the PRSP's Campus Arcade Neighborhood. This area would have low-density, single family homes around a central park space. It is unlikely that an area slated for development of residential uses could be designed to maintain rural character of the PRSP area consistent with *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.4*, previously described. Visual character would change from dominantly agricultural/grazing land to residential. Unity would increase to moderately high because the view would contain all residential development that would be consistent with proposed Placer Ranch Development Standards and Design Guidelines, though design of new homes may not be consistent with the design of the existing development partially visible from Viewpoint 6. Similarly, because of the homogeneity of development, there would be minimal intrusions that are not consistent with the visual characteristics of residential development. Therefore, intactness would be moderately high. Although visual quality would increase, impacts would be potentially significant because of the substantial change in visual character where the PRSP proposes development in areas where there is some existing development but agricultural/grazing land is visually dominant.

In summary, because the PRSP area is currently undeveloped, development of the area would substantially change its visual character. In areas where only development is visible, the development would be implemented according to extensive design guidelines and would maintain or increase visual quality. In areas where PRSP development would be adjacent to agricultural/grazing land, visual quality could be substantially reduced. Impacts related to visual character and quality would therefore be potentially significant in certain parts of the PRSP area.

### **Other Supporting Infrastructure**

#### **Pleasant Grove Retention Facility**

The visible components of the Pleasant Grove Retention Facility would include topographically lower areas (relative to viewers on Phillip Road), an embankment adjacent to Phillip Road, and an inlet structure just north of Phillip Road. Previously disturbed areas from excavation and fill would be denuded, which would be visually similar to cyclical agricultural operations. Once the area naturally revegetates, the area would look like a grassy agricultural area, similar to existing conditions. Inundation areas would be visible from Phillip Road and could contain standing water during the rainy season. Vividness would remain low because there would not be distinct patterns or visual elements. Intactness would remain moderately high and moderate because concrete conveyance type structures are visually similar to intrusions often seen in agricultural areas for water conveyance. Unity would decrease to moderate because the basin would change the topography of the area by creating tall mounds of fill up to 10 feet tall in upland areas. Embankments and other fill areas would largely be set back from more heavily traveled roads (Sunset Boulevard and South Brewer Road) and would be noticeable only from a distance by most motorists, limiting overall visibility. Therefore, visual quality would decrease from moderately high to moderate or from moderate to moderately low. Visual character would remain similar, since the facility would not substantially change the agricultural/grazing and rural character of the area. This impact would be less than significant.

#### **Off-Site Transportation and Utility Improvements**

Off-site transportation and utility improvements, such as relocating gas transmission lines, undergrounding existing aboveground utilities, and installing underground utilities, would have no or minimal aboveground components; therefore, underground improvements would not affect intactness, unity, or vividness. Aboveground off-site transportation and utility improvements, such as an additional recycled water storage tank and a booster pump station at the Lincoln Wastewater Treatment Plant site, aboveground power lines, and roadway improvements and extensions would be visually consistent with existing visual character and would not result in a substantial decrease in intactness, unity, or vividness. For example, aboveground power lines are generally expected intrusions in neighborhoods and in agricultural and rural areas. Similarly, roadway expansions would be completed to accommodate planned development, which means the roadways would be commensurate with the level of development and would be visually consistent with the existing visual character of the improvement sites. Therefore, this impact would be less than significant.

**Conclusion**

In many views of the project area, visual character would be maintained or would change only slightly. Similarly, there are many views of the project area where visual quality would stay the same or improve with project implementation. However, the change to visual character would be substantial in areas that are currently completely undeveloped where new and potentially substantially taller development than existing development is proposed under the project. In views where project development would be placed adjacent to preserved open space, visual quality would substantially decrease because of the abrupt transition between substantially taller development and open space. Therefore, impacts on visual character and quality in certain areas would be potentially significant where there are new land uses. Design guidelines have been prepared for the project that facilitate a cohesive aesthetic appearance of development and landscaping within the overall project area. There are no additional feasible mitigation measures available that would reduce visual impacts of development adjacent on open space or the transformation in visual character from open space to developed. Therefore, the project's overall impact related to visual quality would be **significant and unavoidable**.

**Mitigation Measures**

Placer County General Plan Policies and proposed SAP and PRSP policies and design standards would help reduce impacts of the project by creating a more cohesive and aesthetically-pleasing design in the developed areas; however, the project would allow substantially taller buildings than currently exists in the project area, and existing and proposed policies would not substantially ease the abrupt transition between the tall buildings and the preserved open space areas. No additional mitigation is available.

**Impact 4.1-3: New source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area during construction**

Sources of glare during construction of the proposed project would be temporary, distributed across the project area, and transient, such that glare would not be substantial. Nighttime lighting for construction activities could result in substantial adverse effects on nighttime views. This impact would be **potentially significant**.

**Net SAP Area, PRSP Area, and Other Supporting Infrastructure**

During construction of buildings, improvements, and other elements of the project, glare would be produced from sources such as reflective surfaces of construction vehicles. These sources would be temporary during construction vehicle use. Glare would depend on the time of day and would be transient and distributed as vehicles move through the project site. Therefore, glare would not be substantial. Temporary lighting may be needed for nighttime construction, for construction site security, and for deliveries. Nighttime construction could occur for utilities and roadway improvements. Generally, the sites have low levels of existing nighttime lighting. Therefore, this nighttime lighting impact would be potentially significant.

**Conclusion**

Implementation of the project could result in construction at night that, depending on intensity of construction activities, could result in a substantial lighting impact on nighttime views in the area. This impact would be **potentially significant**.

**Mitigation Measures****Mitigation Measure 4.1-3a: Shield and angle nighttime construction lighting downwards (Net SAP Area and PRSP Area)**

Before issuance of grading or building permits for the net SAP and PRSP areas, a note shall be identified on the grading or other improvement plans requiring construction managers or contractors to include shielding on all nighttime lighting used for construction activities and angle all such lighting downwards.

### **Mitigation Measure 4.1-3b: Shield and angle nighttime construction lighting downwards (Pleasant Grove Retention Facility and Off-Site Transportation and Utility Improvements)**

The County shall coordinate with the City of Roseville with regard to mitigation for nighttime lighting impacts during construction of the Pleasant Grove Retention Facility and off-site transportation and utility improvements, which are located in the City of Roseville, including shielding for all nighttime lighting used for construction activities and to angle all such lighting downwards.

#### **Significance after Mitigation**

Implementing Mitigation Measure 4.1-3a would reduce potentially significant impacts on nighttime views related to temporary nighttime construction lighting because shielding and angling lighting downwards would prevent most of the light from being visible to substantial numbers of off-site viewers. This impact would be reduced to a **less-than-significant** level in all areas except the Pleasant Grove Retention Facility site and the off-site transportation and utility improvement areas. Mitigation Measure 4.1-3b would require coordination with the City of Roseville to require measures to reduce impacts. While it is likely that impacts would be mitigated by the City of Roseville in its role as lead agency for projects within its jurisdiction, Placer County would have no control over the timing and implementation of mitigation for off-site improvements that occur within the City of Roseville. Therefore, impacts would remain potentially **significant and unavoidable**.

### **Impact 4.1-4: New source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area after buildout**

---

Nighttime lighting from buildout of the project area would create substantial light pollution. Glare from reflective surfaces of development could also be substantial, depending on building locations. This impact would be **potentially significant**.

---

#### **Net SAP and PRSP Areas**

##### **Light**

Implementation of the project would result in development of residential, commercial, and public structures in an area currently characterized by sparse development and mostly open agricultural land. New homes and commercial and institutional structures would introduce a substantial amount of new nighttime lighting to the project area. For example, some buildings in the project area may be up to 225 feet tall, taller than most other buildings in the region. Also, entertainment venues could be developed in the SAP area (EMU), and a sports stadium and athletic fields could be developed in the PRSP area (associated with the Sac State-Placer Center); these facilities would include substantial outdoor lighting, potentially including stadium lights. Lighting on the tall buildings and the entertainment and sports facilities would be very noticeable. Park areas and other structures would also have nighttime lighting for safety and nighttime activities. Parking lots and other similar areas may have tall light standards for safety and security. *Placer County General Plan Policy 1.0.9* discourages the use of outdoor lighting that shines unnecessarily onto adjacent properties or into the night sky. Proposed SAP Policy LU/ED-3.9 requires adherence to several lighting design principles, including designing lighting to minimize projection into adjacent properties and onto adjacent roads, and capping the size of light standards to 18 feet. The SAP Corridor Design Standards and Guidelines require all lighting to be Dark Sky compliant and for lighting to minimize glare. A PRSP Development Standard and Design Guidelines requirement is that lighting for hardscape elements and signage should not create upward glare visible to drivers or from adjacent land uses. These measures would help limit brightness and amount of light associated with the project development. However, the abundant light sources across the large portions of the project area would combine to add substantial light pollution to the area. The impact would be potentially significant.

##### **Daytime Glare**

Windows associated with new residential, commercial, and other structures in the project area would increase daytime glare. Commercial and public use structures would be more likely to have large expanses of materials that can reflect sunlight, such as large glass surfaces, and would be more likely to be visible

because of building height, in particular because building heights in the net SAP area are allowed to reach 100–150 feet and up to 225 feet in height for certain uses in the EMU district Proposed SAP Policy LU/ED-3.11 prohibits the use of mirrored or reflective glasses as the dominant architectural theme in industrial, office, or commercial buildings and requires that reflective buildings facing open spaces, parks, and neighborhoods to be oriented to avoid creating nuisance glare. Proposed PRSP Development Standard and Design Guidelines requirements include using glass that is clear or has nonreflective glazing and using low-reflective glass and exterior materials and colors that absorb light. This impact would be less than significant.

### Other Supporting Infrastructure

#### **Pleasant Grove Retention Facility**

Some lighting may be required for the inlet and outlet locations to provide for emergency night-time access. This lighting would be similar to the existing light associated with rural residences and existing lights at irrigation pumps. Therefore, new lights would not be a substantial new source of light on the site. Standing water in the retention basins could create glare. However, because of the berms adjacent to roadways, the limited viewers on Phillip Road, and the existing periodically flooded parcels in the area that also create some glare, this impact would be less than significant.

#### **Off-Site Transportation and Utility Improvements**

Off-site transportation and utility improvements, such as relocating gas transmission lines, undergrounding existing aboveground utilities, and installing underground utilities, would have no or minimal aboveground components and would not have aboveground nighttime lighting or create glare. Aboveground off-site transportation and utility improvements, such as an additional recycled water storage tank and a booster pump station at the Lincoln Wastewater Treatment Plant site and roadway improvements and extensions may have nighttime lighting for security of public safety. Roadway extensions are identified in areas with no current adjacent development. Addition of lights along these roadway extensions could create a substantial source of light. The linear nature of street lighting and the light directed on roadways would still be visible and of sufficient quantity to create a substantial new source of light in an area without substantial existing lighting. Some aboveground off-site transportation and utility improvements, such as metal utility poles and powerline conductor, may create minimal glare during the daytime by reflecting sunlight, but the glare from utility poles and powerlines would not be considered substantial. Therefore, only impacts related to nighttime lighting for off-site transportation improvements would be potentially significant.

### Conclusion

Existing General Plan policies and proposed policies and design guidelines would emphasize use of less-reflective surfaces and orientation of buildings, as well as other lighting requirements, to limit the adverse effects associated with the creation of new sources of substantial glare. Although lighting would be minimized to the extent possible as a result of existing and proposed General Plan policies, including the directional requirements, capping of light standards, and minimizing spillover, the sheer quantity of lighting would create a new source of light pollution related to the substantial source of light across the project area. As a result, nighttime lighting impacts would be potentially significant. No feasible mitigation, beyond the policies and design measures, would be available to prevent the cumulative effect of light across the entire project area. Therefore, the impact related to nighttime lighting would be **significant and unavoidable**.

### **Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is available.

## **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Aesthetic and visual resources impacts are project-specific and highly localized; therefore, the list approach was used to evaluate potential cumulative impacts related to aesthetics. Aesthetic impacts of projects visible from the same areas where the proposed project would be visible were evaluated to determine whether there would be significant cumulative aesthetic and visual impacts. The geographic extent for

considering cumulative impacts on aesthetics includes all projects within the same viewshed (i.e., area visible from viewer's location) of the proposed project, which is a conservative estimate of the likely maximum distance from which the project would be visible, particularly considering the flat terrain of the project area that does not afford elevated viewpoints with very expansive views.

As shown in Table 4.0-2, "Cumulative Project List," cumulative projects in surrounding communities would result in construction of a substantial number of residential units (from fewer than 1,000 to more than 17,000 per development). These developments would also include, together, millions of square feet of commercial uses. Some of these developments are already under construction, and construction of developments could overlap with construction in the project area. This analysis focuses on the proposed project after it is built out because the precise timing and location of construction of individual projects and structures within the expansive project area is not known. The built-out phase of cumulative projects would overlap with that of the proposed project after all projects are constructed. Most of the projects on the cumulative project list would be visible in the same viewshed as the proposed project because they would be adjacent to the project area. For example, the *Amoruso Ranch Specific Plan* area is directly west of the PRSP area and directly south of the Innovation District of the net SAP area. The visual settings of the cumulative projects are similar to those described for the project area, including agricultural/grazing areas, areas with some development, and open space areas adjacent to developed areas.

#### **Cumulative Impact 4.1-5: Cumulative degradation of visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings**

The cumulative projects involve substantial residential, commercial, and other development and would result in similar visual changes as the proposed project. For example, many of the cumulative developments would be adjacent to agricultural/grazing and open space areas and could degrade visual quality by placing residential development adjacent these areas. The developments and the proposed project would therefore together cause substantial degradation of visual quality in some areas south and west of SR 65 where development creates abrupt transitions between open space and agricultural/grazing areas and development. Additionally, as described for the proposed project, the development of rural and agricultural areas into areas with commercial, residential, and industrial development would cause a substantial change in visual character. These would be cumulatively significant impacts on visual quality and character. As described for Impact 4.1-2, implementing the proposed project would alone result in a significant and unavoidable impact on visual quality and character, and no feasible mitigation would reduce this impact. Therefore, the proposed project's contribution to the significant cumulative impact would be cumulatively considerable. This impact would be **significant and unavoidable**.

#### **Cumulative Impact 4.1-6: Contribution to substantial glare that would adversely affect daytime views in the area**

The cumulative projects involve substantial residential, commercial, and other development and would result in creation of daytime glare sources similar to the proposed project. For example, buildings in these other developments may be tall enough and close enough such that glare from buildings in multiple other developments would be visible from major commute corridors such as SR 65. The developments and the proposed project could cumulatively create a substantial source of daytime glare. These would be cumulative significant impacts. As described for Impact 4.1-4, proposed SAP Policy LU/ED-3.11 contains measures that would limit glare created by new development, and glare from off-site development would not be substantial. Glare from the proposed project would therefore not be a nuisance. Furthermore, most of the project area is located more than 1 mile from SR 65, whereas many projects considered in the cumulative analysis are located in the SR 65 corridor. Therefore, the proposed project's contribution to glare impacts would not be cumulatively considerable. The glare impact would be **less than significant**.

#### **Cumulative Impact 4.1-7: Contribution to substantial light that would adversely affect nighttime views in the area**

The cumulative projects involve substantial residential, commercial, and other development and would result in creation of nighttime light sources similar to the proposed project. For example, many of the cumulative

developments have extensive residential development that would together create geographically extensive sources of light pollution in areas that currently have scattered and dispersed sources of nighttime lighting. The developments and the proposed project could cumulatively create a substantial source of nighttime light. These would be cumulative significant impacts. As described for Impact 4.1-4, implementing the proposed project would result in a significant and unavoidable impact related to nighttime lighting from structures. Therefore, the proposed project's contribution to the significant cumulative nighttime lighting impacts would be cumulatively considerable. The nighttime lighting impact would be **significant and unavoidable**.