

# 4

# AESTHETICS

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

The Aesthetics chapter of the EIR describes existing aesthetic resources in the area of the proposed projects and the broader region, and evaluates the potential aesthetic impacts of the projects. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) describes the concept of aesthetic resources in terms of scenic vistas, scenic resources (such as trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway), and the existing visual character or quality of the project area. In addition, pursuant to CEQA Guidelines, this chapter describes potential impacts related to light and glare. The following analysis is based on information drawn from the Placer County General Plan,<sup>1</sup> the Placer County General Plan EIR,<sup>2</sup> the Granite Bay Community Plan (GBCP),<sup>3</sup> the Placer County Design Guidelines,<sup>4</sup> and the Placer County Landscape Design Guidelines.<sup>5</sup>

## 4.2 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The following setting information provides an overview of the existing conditions of visual resources in the vicinity of the Whitehawk I (WHI) and Whitehawk II (WHII) project sites, which are located on the south side of Douglas Boulevard, east of Sierra College Boulevard and west of Barton Road, within the GBCP area of Placer County. Douglas Boulevard is a major travel corridor that is designated as a Scenic Roadway per the GBCP. The WHI and WHII sites include 18.09 and 32.97 acres, respectively.

### Visual Character of the Region

The natural terrain in the GBCP area varies from nearly flat, gently rolling lands to fairly steep hillsides. Elevations range from 180 feet near the Sacramento County line to 800 feet in the northern portion of the Plan area near Folsom Lake. Vegetation in the area is divided among areas of oak woodlands, annual grasses, and a network of riparian vegetation in the vicinity of drainageways and depressions. Currently, the project region is developed primarily with single-family residential subdivisions and rural residential uses. A limited amount of commercial development is provided along the portion of Douglas Boulevard within Granite Bay.

<sup>1</sup> Placer County. *Countywide General Plan Policy Document*. August 1994 (updated May 2013).

<sup>2</sup> Placer County. *Countywide General Plan EIR*. July 1994.

<sup>3</sup> Placer County. *Granite Bay Community Plan*. Adopted February 28, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Placer County. *Design Guidelines Manual*. Revised September 24, 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Placer County. *Placer County Landscape Design Guidelines*. Adopted May 7, 2013.

## State Scenic Highways

According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) map of designated and eligible scenic routes under the California Scenic Highway Program, officially-designated State Scenic Highways do not exist within the vicinity of the proposed project sites or in Placer County.

## Visual Character of the Project Sites and Surrounding Area

The following information provides an overview of the existing conditions of the WHI and WHII project sites and the surrounding area in relation to visual character. Figure 4-1 and Figure 4-2 provide examples of typical views of the WHI and WHII sites from Douglas Boulevard.

### WHI Project Area

The WHI project site has an elevation of approximately 270 feet; however, the topography of the site varies primarily due to the presence of dredge tailings throughout the site. The site is vacant, undeveloped, and absent of any existing structures. Historic mining operations have resulted in an irregular and disturbed landscape. A 15-foot driveway has been cut into the site along Douglas Boulevard; however, the terminus of the driveway is gated and the driveway does not connect to any existing internal roadway network.

Strap Ravine, an intermittent stream, transects the WHI site and flows from east to west; however, due to intervening vegetation within the northern portion of the site, Strap Ravine is not visible from Douglas Boulevard. The Strap Ravine complex is a mosaic of fringe wetland and active stream channel that runs through the central portion of the property. Seasonal wetlands occur in depressions between placer mine tailing piles where fine material has collected to impede the percolation of water. Tailings are the bi-product of mining: the scraped, washed, or otherwise processed boulders, cobbles, and finer sediments left as an end result of mining. The site is dominated by oak woodlands and a riparian corridor along Strap Ravine. Generally, tree density is greatest in the central and southeastern portions of the site near Strap Ravine.

Douglas Boulevard forms the site's northern boundary, across from which are medium-density, single-family residential neighborhoods. The Greyhawk I subdivision is located to the west, with an open space lot between the WHI site and adjacent Greyhawk homes. Larger-lot (one to eight-acre parcels) single-family residential uses, as well as a radio antenna facility, are located south of the site at the north end of Quail Lane. The intervening parcel east of the site (the Mac Bride Parcel) is developed with a rural single-family residence and various sheds and outbuildings.

**Figure 4-1**  
**Existing View of WHI Site from Douglas Boulevard Looking Southeast**



**Figure 4-2**  
**Existing View of WHI Site from Douglas Boulevard Looking Southwest**



## WHII Project Area

Similar to the WHI site, the WHII site is vacant and undeveloped, with varied topography ranging from 255 to 295 feet in elevation primarily due to the presence of dredge tailings throughout the site. Historic mining operations have resulted in an irregular and disturbed landscape. Although structures are not present within the project site, the remnants of a mine shaft have been identified within the project site. In addition, the southeast portion of the site contains an unauthorized BMX bicycle riding area with dirt ramps/embankments.

Strap Ravine transects the WHII site and flows from east to west. Due to dense intervening vegetation within the northern portion of the WHII site, Strap Ravine is not visible from Douglas Boulevard along the project frontage. Similar to the WHI site, the Strap Ravine complex within the WHII site is a mosaic of fringe wetland and active stream channel that runs through the central portion of the property. The WHII site is dominated by oak woodlands and a riparian corridor along Strap Ravine. Several dirt and unpaved access roads are located throughout the WHII site, providing limited access from the southern half of the site to the south side of Strap Ravine.

A portion of the WHII site's northern boundary abuts the intersection of Douglas Boulevard and Seeno Avenue. Other portions of the site are separated from Douglas Boulevard by intervening vacant parcels, with the exception of the site's northeastern boundary, where a single family residential unit, also used for commercial business purposes, is located. Single family homes and vacant five-acre lots are located east of the site and accessed from Quartzite Circle. Larger-lot single-family residential uses are located south of the site along the north ends of Buddecke Place, Farschon Place, and Carriage Drive. As shown in Figure 4-3, views of the WHII site from residences along Quartzite Circle are screened by dense intervening vegetation.

## **Viewer Types**

Viewer types with views of the project sites include motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and residents, which are discussed in further detail below.

Motorists along Douglas Boulevard have existing views of the project sites while driving past the sites.

Pedestrians and bicyclists along Douglas Boulevard have existing views of the sites. It should be noted that Douglas Boulevard does not include a sidewalk on the south side of the roadway along the project frontage. Views of the project sites from the sidewalk on the north side of Douglas Boulevard are partially obscured by landscaping features within the center median of the roadway.

**Figure 4-3  
Existing View of WHII Site from Quartzite Circle Looking West**



Residents of the existing single-family residential subdivisions to the north of the project sites, across Douglas Boulevard, have limited views of the project sites from upper-story windows. Ground-level views for such residents are blocked by intervening hardscape and landscape features. To the south of the project sites, residents of the large-lot single-family homes have existing views of the southern portions of the sites. In addition, residents of the existing single-family home located south of the Kingsgate Drive/Douglas Boulevard intersection are afforded views of the WHII site from the south-facing windows and backyard areas of the residence. The Mac Bride residents would have a direct view from their rear windows of Lot 1. To maintain privacy, in addition to being at a lower elevation, the project's landscape plan includes a solid fence and landscaping along all three homes proposed along that eastern property line.

### Public Versus Private Views

Travelers along nearby roadways, as well as the nearby residences north and south of the project site, would be considered sensitive visual receptors. However, it is important to distinguish between public and private views. Private views are views seen from privately-owned land and are typically viewed by individual viewers, including views from private residences. Public views are experienced by the collective public. In the case of the proposed projects, public views would consist primarily of views from Douglas Boulevard in the project vicinity.

CEQA (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq.) case law has established that only public views, not private views, are protected under CEQA. For example, in *Association for Protection etc. Values v. City of Ukiah* (1991) 2 Cal.App.4th 720 [3 Cal. Rptr.2d 488] the court determined that “we must differentiate between adverse impacts upon particular persons and adverse impacts upon the environment of persons in general. As recognized by the court in *Topanga Beach Renters Assn. v. Department of General Services* (1976) 58 Cal.App.3d 188 [129 Cal.Rptr. 739]: “[A]ll government activity has some direct or indirect adverse effect on some persons. The issue is not whether [the project] will adversely affect particular persons but whether [the project] will adversely affect the environment of persons in general.” Therefore, it is appropriate to focus the aesthetic impact analysis on potential impacts to public views. In addition to analyzing potential impacts to public views, however, this analysis will also evaluate potential impacts to private views due to comments received to this effect during the scoping period for the EIR.

### **Existing Visual Character and Quality of WHI and WHII Sites**

As shown in Figure 4-1 and Figure 4-2, views of the WHI and WHII project sites from Douglas Boulevard and the rural residences to the south and east of the sites consist primarily of oak woodland along the sites' northern and southern boundaries, respectively. Views of the eastern portion of the WHII site from Douglas Boulevard are partially blocked by the existing single-family residence and accompanying sound wall located south of the Kingsgate Drive/Douglas Boulevard intersection. Because the project sites are relatively level, views of the interiors of the sites, as well as distant views of areas to the south of the sites, are obscured by intervening vegetation. Views of the existing single-family home on the Mac Bride property between the WHI and WHII sites are primarily limited to an unpaved driveway. Dense trees and shrubs along the property's Douglas Boulevard frontage partially screen views of the home.

Generally, the existing visual character and quality of the project sites is defined by oak woodland with limited elements of rural residential development, which provides a contrast to the more densely developed areas to the north of the sites.

### **Light Pollution and Glare**

Light pollution refers to all forms of unwanted light in the night sky, including glare, light trespass, sky glow, and over-lighting. Views of the night sky could be an important part of the natural environment, particularly in communities surrounded by extensive open space. Excessive light and glare could also be visually disruptive to humans and nocturnal animal species.

The proposed project sites are primarily characterized by an undeveloped, unlit landscape. As such, minimal sources of light and glare currently occur on the project sites. However, the project sites are located within the vicinity of existing residential development in the vicinity. Lighting associated with such development, as well as street lighting on Douglas Boulevard, contributes to the overall nighttime lighting environment of the project area.

## **4.3 REGULATORY CONTEXT**

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Applicable federal or State laws or regulations pertaining to the aesthetics of the project area do not exist. However, the existing goals and policies established in the Placer County General Plan and the GBCP are listed below, as applicable. In addition, this section includes a summary of various Placer County guidelines related to aesthetic resources.

### Placer County General Plan

The relevant goals and policies from the Placer County General Plan related to aesthetics are presented below.

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.4 The County shall require that new development incorporates sound soil conservation practices and minimizes land alterations. Land alterations should comply with the following guidelines:

- a. Limit cuts and fills;
- b. Limit grading to the smallest practical area of land;
- c. Limit land exposure to the shortest practical amount of time;

- d. Replant graded areas to ensure establishment of plant cover before the next rainy season;
- e. Create grading contours that blend with the natural contours on site or with contours on property immediately adjacent to the area of development; and
- f. Provide and maintain site-specific construction Best Management Practices (BMPs).

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.5 The County shall require that new development at entrances to rural communities be designed to include elements such as signage, landscaping, and appropriate architectural detailing to help establish distinct identities for such communities.

Policy 1.O.9 The County shall discourage the use of outdoor lighting that shines unnecessarily onto adjacent properties or into the night sky.

Goal 6.D To preserve and protect the valuable vegetation resources of Placer County.

Policy 6.D.12 The County shall support the retention of heavily vegetated corridors along circulation corridors to preserve their rural character.

### Granite Bay Community Plan

While vacant or mostly vacant areas have a natural aesthetic quality, there are no designated scenic vistas within the GBCP area that are protected. There are designated scenic corridors however. The GBCP Community Design Goal 4 expresses a desire to “maintain a landscaped scenic corridor along Douglas Boulevard and Auburn-Folsom Road to enhance and maintain the existing landscaping and scenic qualities.” Auburn-Folsom Road was designated as a “Scenic Corridor” within the Placer County Scenic Highway Element. Both Auburn-Folsom Road and Douglas Boulevard are designated as a “Scenic Road” in the GBCP.

According to the GBCP, as Scenic Roads, the following guidelines should be considered for land development projects: building setbacks for residential development on the south side of Douglas Boulevard shall be a minimum of 300 feet; and, when practical, trees and significant shrubs should not be removed beyond 15 feet of edge of pavement during road construction, except for significant defined safety issues.

The GBCP Community Design Section also states that “all parcels currently undeveloped, or created after the adoption of the Community Plan and intended for residential use, shall maintain a 300-foot scenic setback/noise buffer along the south side of Douglas Boulevard as measured from the edge of the ultimate right-of-way. Within this buffer area, vegetation removal shall be kept to a minimum and revegetation of all disturbed areas shall be required.”

The relevant goals and policies from the GBCP related to aesthetics are presented below.

Goal 3.1.7           Assure that all new buildings and residences are developed in a manner that minimizes disturbance to natural terrain and vegetation and maximizes preservation of (and/or enhances) natural beauty and open space.

Policy 3.2.9           Buildings shall be of a size and scale conducive to the character of the immediate neighborhood.

Goal 4.1.1           Protect and preserve the unique rural character of the community and maintain the identity of Granite Bay as a scenic, tranquil, family-oriented rural/residential community compatible with the area’s physical constraints and natural features.

Goal 4.1.2           Safeguard and preserve important views, natural waterways and riparian habitat.

Goal 4.1.3           Ensure that development complements the natural setting and reinforces the rural and natural identity of Granite Bay.

Goal 4.1.4           Maintain a landscaped scenic corridor along Douglas Boulevard and Auburn-Folsom Road to enhance and maintain the existing landscaping and scenic qualities.

Goal 4.1.5           Subdivisions shall maintain the pastoral nature of the community through site-sensitive design.

Goal 4.1.10          Preserve the character of those areas designated for Rural Residential and Rural Estate housing that contribute to the rural nature of much of Granite Bay.

Policy 4.2.1           Implement the design standards in this section to meet the specific goals of this Community Plan.

Policy 4.2.7           Require development/projects to comply with the Placer County Landscape Guidelines, Placer County Design Guidelines, Rural Design Guidelines and the specific design standards herein, where applicable.

- Policy 4.2.10      Where appropriate, encourage the use of greater setbacks along designated Scenic and Country Roadways.
- Policy 4.2.11      To the maximum extent possible, all structures, including residences, should complement and blend in with the natural setting of the project area, and to this end the following principles shall be adhered to:
- a. The visual impact of the structure shall be mitigated either through reduction of building bulk, increased setbacks, or screened by incorporating additional landscaping. In general, hillside structures shall be designed to step down the natural hillside in order to achieve a lower building profile.
  - b. Structures may be located in existing tree covered areas to the extent possible and still be consistent with slope, geologic and related conditions, and the need to preserve natural terrain and locally unique or especially wooded areas.
- Policy 4.2.12      Encourage use of natural materials (i.e. wood siding and field stone). Exterior colors shall blend with the surrounding natural landscape. The use of "earth tones" or natural finishes which blend with the natural background is encouraged.
- Policy 4.2.13      Landscaping shall be used to reduce visual impact of all structures and sound walls. Natural vegetation should dominate where possible. The use of native plant materials is encouraged. Landscaping plans and raw materials provide an informal character and smooth transition between buildings, parking lots, adjacent roadways, and open areas.

#### Placer County Landscape Design Guidelines

The *Placer County Landscape Design Guidelines* were adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors on May 7, 2013. The overall purpose of the Placer County Landscape Design Guidelines is to provide County staff, prospective developers, and stakeholders with a basic framework for designing landscaped areas within unincorporated Placer County and to ensure continuity, consistency, and quality design. In addition, the Guidelines are used to assist the Planning Services Division with their review of submitted plans for landscape improvements by providing consistent and specific design criteria intended to help determine if a proposal is acceptable. The Guidelines focus on landscaping requirements for streetscape and parking lots.

## Placer County Design Guidelines Manual

The *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual* includes guidelines and standards that aim to remove as much design discretion as possible at the staff level in order for prospective developers to assess their chances of approval based on consistency with the manual. The overall goal of the Placer County Design Guidelines Manual is to promote visual environments in the communities of western Placer County that are of high aesthetic quality, offer variety in developing community design images reflective of community heritage, and, in some cases, maintain an overall rural continuity while, in others, identify an appropriate urban design theme.

## Granite Bay Community Plan Design Standards

Section 4.2.5 of the GBCP, provides design standards specific to residential subdivisions within the Community Plan area. Specific guidelines are provided for subdivision design, grading, vegetation removal and landscaping, and public trails. Per the design standards for road corridors within Granite Bay (Section 4.2.11 of the GBCP), all currently undeveloped parcels (or parcels created after adoption of the Community Plan and intended for residential use) are required to maintain a 300-foot setback/noise buffer along the south side of Douglas Boulevard as measured from the edge of the ultimate right-of-way. Within the buffer area, vegetation removal must be kept to a minimum, and revegetation of all disturbed areas is required. Greater flexibility in design is permitted for each project's major access point onto Douglas Boulevard. The use of wood, brick, plaster, or other building material can be permitted where an owner wishes to establish an individual character to their project entry. A smooth and well-designed transition from the public right-of-way to these individualized entries is required. The Community Plan also has design guidelines for residential subdivision gates (Section 4.2.6). The aforementioned design standards supplement the provisions of the Placer County Land Development Manual and the land use policies provided in Section 3.2 of the Community Plan.

## **4.4 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

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

### **Standards of Significance**

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

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or

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

Issues related to the following issue areas are discussed in Chapter 16, Effects Not Found to be Significant, of this EIR, including whether the proposed projects would:

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

### Method of Analysis

The section below gives full consideration to the development of the project sites and acknowledges physical changes to the existing setting. Impacts to the existing environment of the project area are to be determined by the contrast between the sites' visual setting before and after buildout of the proposed projects. The standards of significance listed above will be used to delineate the significance of any visual alterations of the site, including alterations that would impact views from public viewsheds in the project area.

### Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

As discussed in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this EIR, although the County has elected to evaluate both the WHI and WHII projects in a single EIR, it is reasonable to consider WHI and WHII as separate projects under the independent utility test, given that each proposal has independent utility and is not necessary for the other to proceed. As such, the following discussion analyzes the potential impacts of the WHI and WHII projects separately. In addition, each impact statement includes an analysis of the combined effects of the two projects.

#### **4-1 Degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the project sites and/or the sites' surroundings. Based on the analysis below and with implementation of mitigation, the impact is *less than significant*.**

The proposed projects would include the subdivision of the project sites into 24 single-family lots on the WHI site and 55 single-family lots on the WHII site, along with development of park areas and various associated on- and off-site improvements. Single-family homes would be constructed within the WHI and WHII sites on padded and fenced lots. Within the WHI site, the minimum and maximum lot sizes would be 9,049 sf and 16,661 sf, respectively, with an average lot size of 10,869 sf. Within the WHII site, the minimum and maximum lot sizes would be 9,007 sf and 14,501 sf, respectively, with an average lot size of 10,999 sf. Rear yards associated with the homes would typically be fenced with open iron fencing, except when backing to another lot, where a six-foot decorative solid wood fence would be used to provide privacy.

The two residential communities would be designed with California Timeless and Traditional home design styles. In order to provide a unifying aesthetic theme to the projects, the proposed projects would be developed per the proposed Whitehawk

Architectural and Design Guidelines, which would address architectural design, building materials, colors, streetscape design, setbacks, massing, entry features, lighting, streetscape design, landscaping, fencing and hardscapes. Landscaping within the WHI and WHII sites would emphasize the use of drought-tolerant, native plant species. Consistent with Community Plan Trail Map included in the Circulation Element of the GBCP, the proposed projects would include an eight-foot-wide, concrete, Class I meandering sidewalk/bike trail along the south side of Douglas Boulevard. A split rail fence would be provided along the south side of the sidewalk/trail.

## WHI

Development of the WHI project would result in the conversion of approximately 8.27 acres of the 18.09-acre project site from woodland habitat to low-density single-family residential uses and associated improvements. Fifty-four percent, or 9.82 acres, of the project site would be open space including 5.39 acres of ‘restricted open space’, 4.1 acres of ‘open space – common area’, and a 0.33-acre park. The open space – common area would include various landscaping elements along the WHI site’s southern boundary that would act as a buffer between the proposed residences and the existing residential uses to the south. Trench locations for all necessary utility improvements, including off-site water and sewer infrastructure, would be adjacent to existing roadways or within existing sewer line easements. Because of the limited size of the required utility installations, installation of utilities would not result in significant alteration to existing vegetation.

### *Public Views from Douglas Boulevard*

Placer County has designated Douglas Boulevard as a scenic roadway.<sup>6</sup> Consistent with the setback design standards established with Section 4.2.11 of the Community Plan, the WHI project would include a 300-foot scenic setback between the proposed residential units and the northern site boundary at Douglas Boulevard. The scenic setback would be retained and rezoned as open space and the existing oak woodland therein would be protected from development in order to provide a permanent visual separation between Douglas Boulevard and the proposed residential uses. Development within the 300-foot scenic setback would be limited to a new private, gated road that would extend southward from Douglas Boulevard to provide access to the site, a guest parking area, central postal station, and an unpaved public trail along the WHI site project frontage to Douglas Boulevard. Overall, approximately 5.39 acres of the site, including Strap Ravine and the associated floodplain, would be retained as ‘restricted open space’; development within the restricted open space areas would be limited to the aforementioned private roadway and an unpaved public trail.

The restricted open space areas would be preserved with a declaration of covenants and restrictions. Both the restricted open space areas and the open space – common areas would be managed according to an Operations & Maintenance Plan (O&M Plan)

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<sup>6</sup> Placer County. *Granite Bay Community Plan* [pg. 41]. February 2012.

implemented by the HOA. The O&M Plan would be prepared with open space management strategies including fire/fuel modification, maintenance (e.g. mowing), permitted and prohibited uses, preserve management techniques, trail and preserve maintenance, wetland monitoring, storm drainage systems, utility crossings, etc. Funding for necessary maintenance would be provided through an assessment of the landowners within the development.”

As a result of the proposed 300-foot scenic setback, changes to views of the WHI project site for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians traveling on Douglas Boulevard would be limited to the aforementioned frontage improvements, minor road widening, and the proposed gated entryway; all other on-site improvements would be screened from view by the intervening oak woodland on the northern portion of the site. The gated project entryway would be landscaped with native vegetation and marked with enhanced hardscape features, consistent with the applicable standards within the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual*, the proposed Whitehawk Architectural and Design Guidelines, and all applicable sections of Article 17.54, General Development Regulations, of the Placer County Code. Therefore, while a noticeable change to the views currently afforded to the motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians north of the WHI site would occur, the overall visual character and quality of the site would not be substantially degraded.

#### *Private Views from Existing Residences South of the WHI Site*

To the south of the WHI site, views of the site afforded to residents of the existing large-lot single-family residences would change from an undeveloped, wooded landscape to a primarily landscaped open space area. Approximately 0.67-acre of open space – common area would be provided between the proposed structures and the southern boundary of the WHI site. An emergency vehicle access (EVA) would be provided at the southwest boundary of the WHI site within the open space – common area, connecting to Chestnut Court in the existing Greyhawk subdivision to the west. Existing vegetation and proposed landscaping elements within the open space – common area would screen views of the proposed residential structures. Therefore, while a noticeable change to the views currently afforded to the residents south of the WHI site would occur, the overall visual character and quality of the site would not be substantially degraded.

#### *Private Views from Mac Bride Parcel*

To the east of the WHI site, residents of the single-family home on the Mac Bride parcel could have limited views of the proposed residences. However, as shown in Figure 4-4 below, the WHI project would provide for a 15-foot landscaped lot along the eastern site boundary. In addition, the nearest proposed residence would be set back 47 feet from the property line, for a combined 75-foot setback from the Mac Bride parcel residence. Existing vegetation within this 75-foot area would help screen views of the proposed single-family homes.

**Figure 4-4**  
**Proposed WHI Edge Conditions at Mac Bride Parcel**



Therefore, while a noticeable change to the views currently afforded to the residents east of the WHI site at the Mac Bride parcel would occur, the overall visual character and quality of the site would not be substantially degraded.

### WHII

Development of the WHII project would result in the conversion of approximately 17.5 acres of the 32.97-acre project site from woodland habitat to low-density single-family residential uses and associated improvements. Forty-seven percent, or 15.47 acres, of the project site would be open space, including 10.8 acres of ‘restricted open space’, 3.8 acres of ‘open space – common area’, and a 0.87-acre park. The open space – common area would include various landscaping elements along the WHII site’s southern and eastern boundaries that would act as a buffer between the proposed residences and the existing residential uses to the south and east of the site. Trench locations for all necessary utility improvements, including off-site water and sewer infrastructure, would be adjacent to existing roadways or within existing sewer line easements. Because of the limited size of the required utility installations, installation of utilities would not result in significant alteration to existing vegetation.

#### *Public Views from Douglas Boulevard*

Similar to the WHI project, the WHII project would include a 300-foot scenic setback between the proposed residential units and the northern site boundary at Douglas Boulevard. Development within the 300-foot scenic setback would be limited to a new private, gated road that would extend southward from Douglas Boulevard to provide access to the WHII site, and an unpaved public trail along the WHII site frontage to Douglas Boulevard. This area will be rezoned to Open Space. Overall, approximately 10.8 acres of the site, including Strap Ravine and the associated floodplain, would be retained as ‘restricted open space’; development within the restricted open space areas would be limited to a system of unpaved public trails and the aforementioned private roadway. The restricted open space areas would be preserved with a declaration of covenants and restrictions. Both the restricted open space areas and the open space – common areas would be managed according to an O&M Plan implemented by the HOA.

As a result of the proposed 300-foot scenic setback, changes to views of the WHI project site for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians traveling on Douglas Boulevard would be limited to the aforementioned frontage improvements, minor road widening, and the proposed gated entryway; all other on-site improvements would be screened from view by the intervening oak woodland on the northern portion of the site, as well as the existing single-family residence located adjacent to the site’s northern boundary. The gated project entryway would be landscaped with native vegetation and marked with enhanced hardscape features, consistent with the applicable standards within the *Placer County Design Guidelines Manual*, the proposed Whitehawk Architectural and Design Guidelines, and all applicable sections of Article 17.54, General Development Regulations, of the Placer County Code. Therefore, while a noticeable change to the views currently afforded to the motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians north of the WHII

site would occur, the overall visual character and quality of the site would not be substantially degraded.

*Private Views from Existing Residences East and South of the WHII Site*

Public concerns have been raised during the Notice of Preparation (NOP) review period regarding the need for visual separation between the residential development proposed on the WHII site and the existing residential uses to the east and south of the site. As discussed previously and shown in Figure 4-3, views of the WHII site from existing single-family residences along Quartzite Circle to the east of the site are entirely screened by dense intervening vegetation. As such, with implementation of the project, residents of the homes east of the WHII site would not experience a substantial change to the visual character and quality of the site.

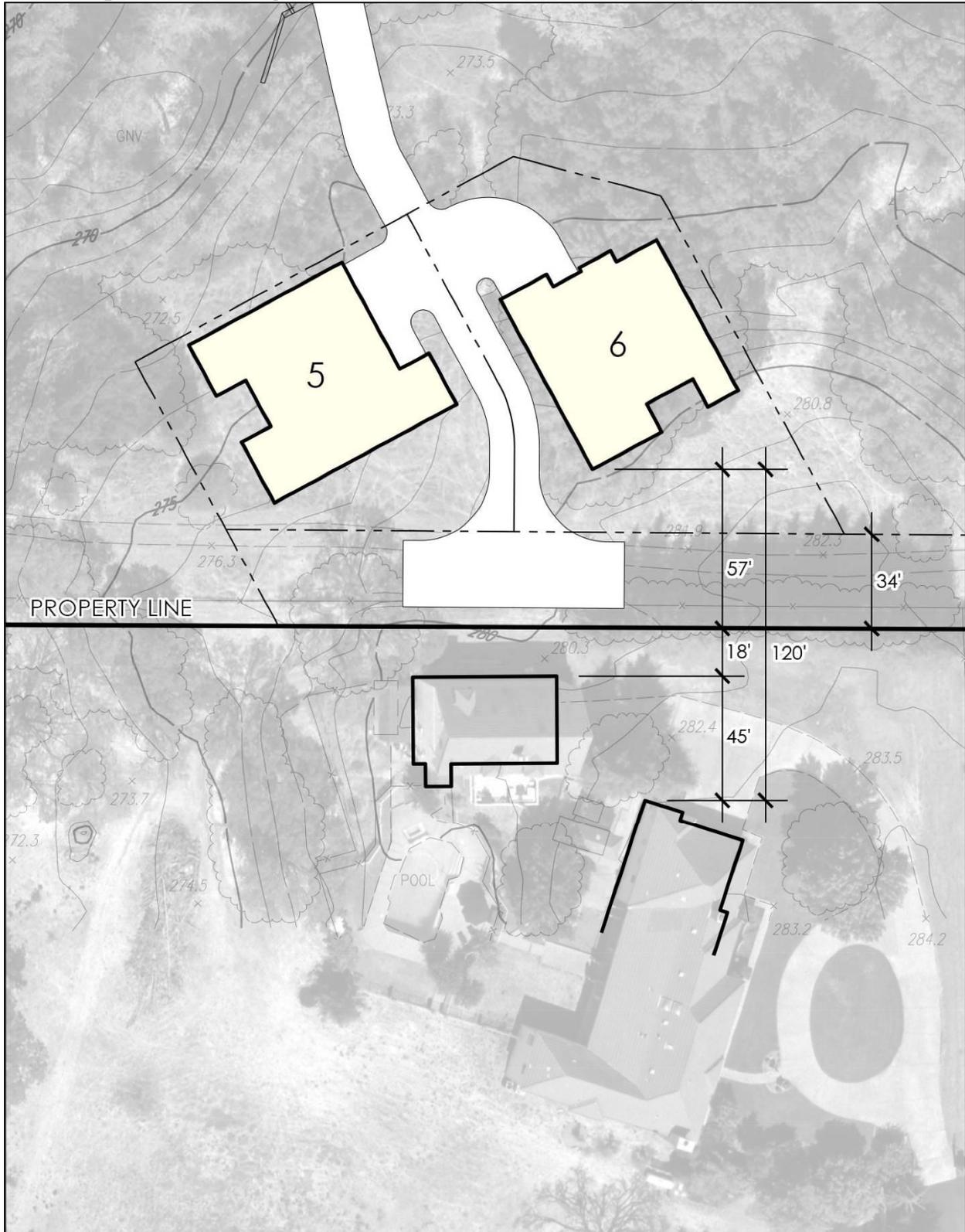
To the south of the WHII site, views of the site afforded to residents of the existing single-family residences would change from an undeveloped, wooded landscape to a landscaped open space area. Approximately 1.36 acres of open space – common area, and 2.78 acres of restricted open space would be provided between the majority of proposed structures and the southern boundary of the WHII site. An unpaved utility access road would parallel a portion of the WHII site's southern boundary. Figure 4-5 provides a typical view of the WHII site from the backyard of one of the nearest existing residences, located at the terminus of Farschon Place, along with a visual simulation illustrating the potential changes in visual character that could result from implementation of the WHII project.

As shown in Figure 4-5, existing vegetation within the proposed open space – common area at the site's southern boundary would help to screen views of the proposed residences; existing sensitive viewers to the south of the WHII site would have very limited views of proposed homes. In addition, as noted above, the proposed single-family homes would be subject to the standards included in the proposed Whitehawk Architectural and Design Guidelines and would be relatively low profile given that all of the proposed residences would be single-story. Furthermore, as shown in Figure 4-6 and Figure 4-7 below, the existing homes closest to the WHII property line are nearest to proposed WHII Lots 5, 6, 24, and 40. The existing home site south of Lots 5 and 6 includes what appear to be two residential structures, set back 75 and 120 feet from the proposed homes on WHII Lots 5 and 6, respectively. The existing home south of proposed WHII Lot 24 would be setback 26 feet from the property line, or approximately 138 feet from the proposed residential structure on Lot 24 (see also Figure 4-5 representing this view). The existing home south of proposed WHII Lot 40 would be setback 115 feet from the property line, or approximately 151 feet from the proposed residential structure on Lot 40. Therefore, while a noticeable change to the views currently afforded to the residents south of the WHII site would occur, the overall visual character and quality of the site would not be substantially degraded.

**Figure 4-5**  
**Existing and Post-Development Views of WHII Site**



**Figure 4-6**  
**Proposed WHII Edge Conditions at Southern Site Boundary (Western Portion)**



**Figure 4-7**  
**Proposed WHII Edge Conditions at Southern Site Boundary (Eastern Portion)**



## WHI and WHII

In the event that both the WHI and WHII projects are approved, changes to the visual character of the project sites occurring as a result of the proposed projects would be relatively limited. Views of the on-site oak woodlands from Douglas Boulevard would be preserved by the proposed 300-foot open space buffers. Consistent with residential subdivision gating design standards included in Section 4.2.6 of the GBCP, both project entries on Douglas Boulevard would include native vegetation, enhanced hardscape features including decorative pilasters, stamped concrete and project identification monuments, and a landscaped median. The WHI and WHII projects would include a meandering sidewalk/bike trail along the south side of Douglas Boulevard, which would connect to existing and future trail segments east and west of the project sites. A split rail fence would be located south of the sidewalk/trail to separate the trail from the proposed open space. Generally, the visual character and quality of the sites as viewed from Douglas Boulevard and the areas to the north of the project sites would not be substantially altered.

Within the southern portions of the project sites, the proposed residential developments would change the visual character of the area from an undeveloped, natural landscape to a large-lot residential subdivision. However, the WHI and WHII projects would be designed to maximize the visual quality of the areas of the sites which would be visible from the existing single-family residences to the south of the site. Specifically, such areas would include landscaped common areas to help screen the proposed single-family homes from view (see Figure 4-5). Furthermore, existing vegetation between the WHII site boundary and the existing single-family homes along Quartzite Circle to the east would continue to screen the project site from view for such residences.

## Conclusion

Based on the above, if the WHI and WHII projects are designed to be consistent with the *Placer County Design Guidelines*, the specific design guidelines contained in the GBCP, and all applicable sections of Article 17.54, General Development Regulations, of the Placer County Code, the proposed projects would not result in any individual or combined impacts. However, if the project components are not designed to be consistent with the aforementioned standards, the proposed projects could result in a **significant** impact related to substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the WHI and WHII sites and/or the sites' surroundings.

## Mitigation Measure(s)

Implementation of the following mitigation measures would reduce the above impact to a *less-than-significant* level.

### *WHI and WHII*

- 4-1(a) *All onsite utilities shall be undergrounded from the point of connection. This information shall be shown on the project Improvement Plans.*

4-1(b) *All frontage improvements including, but not limited to, landscaping, trails, fencing, the gated entry features, signage and lighting shall be reviewed and approved by the Development Review Committee (DRC). DRC review shall be conducted concurrent with submittal of project Improvement Plans and shall be completed prior to Improvement Plan approval. Project frontage improvements shall comply with the Granite Bay Community Plan Community Design Element. Frontage improvements shall preserve, to the maximum extent possible, existing native trees along the project frontage; newly planted trees shall consist primarily of native tree species listed in the Community Design Element. The entryway features, including cross section views, shall be shown on the Improvement Plans. The decorative masonry entry wall material and design shall be approved by the Development Review Committee prior to construction. Drought tolerant landscaping shall be installed within the Douglas Boulevard right-of-way, including the meandering multi-use trail and split-rail fencing, and may include low berming to provide additional screening.*

WHI

4-1(c) *The Improvement Plans and Final Subdivision Map shall show Open Space and Restricted Open Space. Areas located on Lots B, C, H, and I as depicted on the Tentative Subdivision Map, shall be defined and monumented as “Open Space”. Areas located on Lots F and G shall be defined and monumented as “Restricted Open Space”.*

*One of the purposes of the proposed restricted open space areas is for the protection of the 300’ scenic setback on the south side of Douglas Boulevard. A note shall be provided on the Final Subdivision Map information sheet prohibiting any disturbances within such areas, including the placement of fill materials, lawn clippings, oil, chemicals, or trash of any kind within the areas; nor any grading or clearing activities, vegetation removal, or domestic landscaping and irrigation, and fencing (excepting that specifically required by these conditions). Trimming or other maintenance activity is allowed only for the benefit of fish, wildlife, fire protection, and water quality resources, and for the elimination of diseased growth, or as otherwise required by the fire department, and only with the written consent of Development Review Committee.*

WHII

4-1(d) *The Improvement Plans and Final Subdivision Map shall show Open Space – Common Areas. Areas located on Lots B, C, D, E, and F as depicted on the Tentative Subdivision Map, shall be defined and monumented as “Common Area”. Lots H, I, J, K, and L shall be defined as “Restricted Open Space”.*

*One of the purposes of the proposed restricted open space areas is for the protection of the 300' scenic setback on the south side of Douglas Boulevard. A note shall be provided on the Final Subdivision Map information sheet prohibiting any disturbances within such areas, including the placement of fill materials, lawn clippings, oil, chemicals, or trash of any kind within the areas; nor any grading or clearing activities, vegetation removal, or domestic landscaping and irrigation, and fencing (excepting that specifically required by these conditions). Trimming or other maintenance activity is allowed only for the benefit of fish, wildlife, fire protection, and water quality resources, and for the elimination of diseased growth, or as otherwise required by the fire department, and only with the written consent of Development Review Committee.*

**4-2 Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. Based on the analysis below and with implementation of mitigation, the impact is less than significant.**

As noted previously, the proposed project sites are primarily characterized by an undeveloped, unlit landscape. Thus, development of the project sites with single-family residences and associated improvements would introduce additional sources of light and/or glare to a site where few currently exist.

WHI

Individual homes within the proposed WHI project site would introduce new sources of night lighting in the form of exterior light sources such as porch and patio lights, architectural accent lighting, motion activated security lighting, driveway lighting, landscape lighting, and interior lighting visible through windows. Streetlights are not proposed along internal roadways within the WHI site. One street light is proposed at the project entrance along Douglas Boulevard; however, consistent with the County's standard practices, the lighting would be sited and designed to avoid light spillage and glare on adjacent properties, with timers or photo-electric cells for turning the lights on and off within one-half hour after dusk and one-half hour prior to dawn.

All on-site lighting would be required to comply with Section 17.54.070(i) of the Placer County Code, as well as Section 4.2.4, Signs/Lighting, of the GBCP. Per the Community Plan, lighting must be designed to minimize projection into adjacent properties and roads, and must not provide a source of glare. In addition, the WHI project would be subject to compliance with the applicable sections of the proposed Whitehawk Architectural and Design Guidelines related to lighting and light pollution. Existing mature trees to be preserved and proposed landscaping between the development and adjacent properties would help to further minimize any light spillage. Therefore, given compliance with applicable standards related to lighting and glare, impacts associated with the WHI project would be less than significant.

## WHII

While the WHII project would include a greater number of residential units compared to WHI, the types of light and glare that would be introduced to the WHII site would be similar to WHI. All of the aforementioned standards and regulations related to light and glare would apply to the WHII project. It should be noted that because the WHII site is located in closer proximity to existing residential uses, the potential for light spillage onto such properties would be slightly greater for the WHII project. However, with compliance with applicable standards related to lighting and glare, and proposed landscaping and fencing along those edges, impacts associated with the WHII project would be less than significant.

## WHI and WHII

Based on the above, given compliance with applicable standards related to lighting and glare, combined development of the WHI and WHII projects would not result in impacts related to introducing new sources of substantial light and glare to the project sites.

## Conclusion

Based on the above, if the WHI and WHII projects are designed to comply with the Section 17.54.070(i) of the Placer County Code, Section 4.2.4 of the GBCP, and applicable sections of the proposed Whitehawk Architectural and Design Guidelines related to lighting and light pollution, the proposed projects would not result in any individual or combined impacts. However, because the types of lighting and the specific locations have not yet been determined, the proposed projects could increase the amount of light and glare generated on-site, which could be visible from the surrounding residential development and roadways in the project vicinity. Therefore, the proposed projects could be considered to create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or night-time views in the area, and a *significant* impact could occur.

## Mitigation Measure(s)

Implementation of the following mitigation measure would reduce the above impact to a *less-than-significant* level.

## *WHI and WHII*

- 4-2                    *Streetlights at the project entries shall not exceed the minimum standard required by the Department of Public Works and Facilities (DPWF) unless otherwise approved by the DRC. Any street lighting required by DPWF for safe roadway access at project entries shall be designed to be consistent with the "Dark Sky Society" standards for protecting the night sky from excessive light pollution. Metal halide lighting is prohibited. All streetlights shall be reviewed and approved by the DRC for design, location, and photometrics. A limited amount of low-intensity bollard*

*lighting may be utilized along the on-site roadways, subject to DRC approval.*