

CHAPTER 5 VISUAL RESOURCES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The following analysis identifies potential impacts due to project-related visual changes as experienced by existing and future viewers with exposure to the project site. These effects are discussed in terms of compatibility of character and visual quality in relation to visual sensitivity of these viewers. The analysis included in this chapter evaluates physical changes that would occur, considering both natural and constructed features, and considers the Alpine Sierra Subdivision (proposed project) in the context of planning guidance documents applicable to the project area, including the Alpine Meadows General Plan (Placer County 1968) and the Placer County General Plan (Placer County 2013).

Public comments related to visual resources that were received in response to circulation of the Notice of Preparation (Appendix A) and the public scoping meeting for the proposed project included concerns that the project would degrade the visual character of the area; be visible from off-site locations, including the Five Lakes Trail and nearby ski trails; and create light that would impact nighttime views. Concerns regarding the visual impacts of defensible space requirements and project design were also received.

5.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

5.2.1 Regional Setting

The proposed project site is within the Alpine Meadows General Plan area, set on the eastern side of the Sierra Nevada. The Alpine Meadows General Plan planning area is composed of Bear Creek Valley, which encompasses approximately 3,600 acres south of Squaw Valley and west of the Truckee River, approximately 5 miles northwest of Tahoe City and 12 miles south of the Town of Truckee.

Bear Creek Valley is located on the westerly side of the Truckee River. The valley is surrounded by mountains on three sides and contains open fir and pine forests, rock outcroppings, perennial streams, seasonal streams, and ephemeral drainages, which all provide substantial scenic resources. Scenic vistas are generally available from the mountains surrounding the valley and from various locations within the valley, such as at rock outcroppings and meadows where openings in the trees allow for broad and expansive views.

Bear Creek Valley contains several existing residential subdivisions, primarily consisting of second homes. Alpine Meadows Road runs along the valley floor from State Route (SR) 89 to

the Alpine Meadows Ski Resort. SR-89 is not officially designated as a State Scenic Highway, although it is eligible for state designation (Caltrans 2015).

Long-range views within Bear Creek Valley are precluded by the steep mountain slopes rising from the valley floor. Views of the Sierra Nevada crest and Lake Tahoe are available from the mountains surrounding the valley.

Important natural features seen in mid-range views include the forest, scrub, and riparian vegetation communities that occupy the valley and surrounding slopes. These features are seen from Alpine Meadows Road and roadways providing circulation to existing residential subdivisions.

Constructed features that typify the area include existing residences, the Alpine Meadows Ski Resort (including base facilities), and Alpine Meadows Road.

5.2.2 Project Site

The project site is currently undeveloped with no existing structures. The elevation on site ranges from approximately 6,600 to 7,080 feet above mean sea level. An existing U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS) trail traverses the eastern portion of the site. Bear Creek runs through the western end of the project site, and an unnamed seasonal stream crosses the eastern area of the site, flowing north/south into Bear Creek. Other minor ephemeral drainages are located in the northeast end of the site. The site contains mostly white fir forest, with lesser acreages of montane chaparral, montane riparian, and rocky forb–subshrub vegetation. Photographs showing typical site conditions are provided on Figure 5-1, Site Photos.

Alpine Meadows Road connects Alpine Meadows Ski Resort and the residences within Bear Creek Valley to SR-89, and represents a prominent constructed landscape feature through the valley. Views from Alpine Meadows Road vary; in many locations, topography and vegetation screen or limit the expansiveness of views from the roadway. Portions of the project site are visible from Alpine Meadows Road and from existing residential subdivisions surrounding the project site, including those accessed by Bear Creek Road, John Scott Trail, and Chalet Road. The project site is also visible from Five Lakes Trail (within the USFS Granite Chief Wilderness) and the unnamed USFS trail on site. Photographs showing typical views of the project site from off-site locations are provided on Figure 5-2, Project Site Views from John Scott Trail, and Figure 5-3, Project Site Views from Chalet Road.

5.2.3 Sensitive Receptors: Key Viewpoints

Sensitive receptors are those viewers who would be most sensitive to changes in the character of the project site. Individuals may have high sensitivity to visual changes if they have frequent or lengthy exposure to the view, are familiar with the existing condition of the site, or have a unique

view of the site. Sensitive receptors are often represented by residents of adjacent parcels with views to a project site, or people viewing the site from public land.

The primary views of the proposed project would be from Alpine Meadows Road and Five Lakes Trail. These existing views are generally characterized by conifer-covered hillsides and riparian vegetation. When snow cover is present, riparian vegetation is not as visually prominent. The project site comprises an undeveloped portion of the wide views of Bear Creek Valley from Five Lakes Trail. As shown in Figures 5-2 and 5-3, views of the project site from within the Alpine Chalet and Bear Creek Association subdivisions are limited by existing vegetation, primarily conifer forest, and topography. Additionally, potential views of the site from Alpine Meadows Ski Resort ski trails were considered through a review of aerial photography and topographic maps. Although the project site is a component of views from the ski terrain, the intervening vegetation and limited angle of view due to topography limit the vividness of these views of the project site.

5.2.4 Viewer Sensitivity

The following factors influence the visual quality of the local landscape:

- Vividness of short-range and mid-range views of natural landscape features
- Seasonal variety in views
- Visual contrast, unity, and intactness of natural elements of the existing landscape
- Previous alteration of the natural visual quality from constructed features, including Alpine Meadows Road, residential development and associated infrastructure (including roadways and power lines), and ski area development

Considering these factors, the visual quality of the area may be characterized as high in terms of vividness, intactness, and unity, since the site does not support any existing development and is characterized by natural vegetation, topography, and rock outcroppings. Additionally, although current views from Five Lakes Trail include some development, particularly the upper portion of Alpine Meadows Road, the Alpine Meadows Ski Resort parking lot and base lodge, and the Stanford Alpine Chalet and the Alpine Chalet residential condominiums, views from the trail are also characterized as high in terms of vividness, intactness, and unity. Further, visual response to the area is considered to be high, as the natural vegetation comprises the dominant visual component of the landscape in a well-used recreational area with a number of established residential communities.

5.3 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

5.3.1 Federal Regulations

There are no specific federal regulations pertaining to visual quality or aesthetics.

5.3.2 State

Although there are no specific state regulations pertaining to aesthetics, the California Department of Transportation identifies a state system of eligible and designated scenic highways that, if designated, are subject to various controls intended to preserve their scenic quality. There are no state-eligible or state-designated scenic highways within the viewshed of the proposed project.

5.3.3 Local

Placer County General Plan

The intent of the Placer County General Plan (Placer County 2013) with respect to visual resources is summarized in the following goal:

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.

Placer Legacy

The Placer Legacy Open Space and Agricultural Conservation Program (Placer Legacy Program) was adopted in 1998 to implement goals, policies, and programs of Placer County's General Plan regarding protection and conservation of open space and agricultural lands (Placer County 2000). Objectives of the Placer Legacy Program include maintaining agricultural activities in Placer County; conserving natural features as part of Placer County's outdoor recreation opportunities; retaining scenic and historic areas; preserving plant and animal communities, including special-status species; separating urban areas into distinct communities; and ensuring public safety.

As documented in the Placer Legacy Program (Placer County 2000), implementation efforts focus on 10 study areas in Placer County. The study area nearest to the project site is the East Slope Sierra. Implementation measures for this area related to visual resources are the following:

ES-5: Protect important remaining areas of wetlands, mountain meadow, wet meadow and riparian habitat through conservation easements and/or interagency coordination.

- ES-7:** Protect river and stream corridors, specifically the Truckee River, Martis Creek, Coldstream Creek, and Pole Creek, from incompatible development.
- ES-14:** Identify and preserve scenic transportation corridors and ridgelines that contribute to the quality and value of the region.

The Placer Legacy Program recognizes the need to balance growth and tourism demands in the East Slope Sierra area with protection of “some of the most significant scenic resources in the County and state” (Placer County 2000).

Alpine Meadows General Plan

The proposed project site is located within the bounds of the Alpine Meadows General Plan area; therefore, the policies and regulations of that plan govern development of the project site. The Alpine Meadows General Plan (Placer County 1968) is a community plan that emphasizes quality and balance of development in order to maintain and preserve the plan area and its relationship to nature, as well as complement and enhance the residential amenity of the valley.

The Alpine Meadows General Plan provides the following six goals relevant to the analysis of impacts to visual resources [numbering maintained from original]:

3. To maintain the quality of development with a balanced regard for amenity, character, beauty, and function.
5. To incorporate design concepts that preserve the natural amenities and advantages that makes the area desirable. Design should be specifically oriented to the topographical and landscape concerns of the individual situation with an emphasis on “averaging” densities, planned unit development, preserving steeper slopes, minimizing cuts and fills, protecting views, and recognizing inherent hazardous areas.
6. To maintain the quality of the area’s appearance through architectural and design controls.
9. To identify clearly a desired character by establishing a strong system of focal points reflective of the area’s potential. These might be oriented to such aspects as the creek, rocky promontories, the ski lodges, and park areas.
11. To guarantee the retention of the open space and natural scenic beauty within the area.

5.4 IMPACTS

5.4.1 Significance Criteria

As evaluated in the Initial Study circulated with the Notice of Preparation for the proposed project (Appendix A), the project would have no impact with respect to the following significance criterion:

- Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

Therefore, this topic is not discussed further in this Draft EIR.

The analysis below evaluates potentially significant project impacts related to visual resources based on the following significance criteria:

- Would the project cause a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?
- Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Following professionally accepted practice in visual analysis, visual impacts that cross a threshold of “substantial adverse effect” are defined as a consequence of three primary factors: (1) the existing scenic quality and character of an area (landscape attributes), (2) the level of viewer exposure and concern with visual change (viewer sensitivity), and (3) the level of actual change to existing visual character and quality caused by the project as seen by a given viewer group (BLM 1987; FHWA 2015). The overall visual sensitivity of each key viewpoint, reflecting the anticipated level of viewer concern and visual exposure, is first established. This rating is then considered with the level of expected visual change experienced by key (existing) viewer groups and caused by the project to arrive at an assessment of potential impacts and their significance.

5.4.2 Project Impacts

Impact 5.1

Would the project cause a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Significance and Mitigation	Alternative A	Alternative B
Significance before mitigation:	Significant	Significant
Mitigation measures:	Mitigation Measures 5.1a through 5.1e	Mitigation Measures 5.1a through 5.1e
Significance after mitigation:	Less than Significant	Less than Significant

Existing Conditions

A scenic vista is defined as a viewpoint that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the benefit of the general public. Views from Five Lakes Trail include scenic vistas that could be affected by Alternative A. Viewers using Five Lakes Trail are expected to have high sensitivity to changes in the viewshed, as these viewers are using a recreational facility that provides expansive views of an area primarily characterized by largely intact natural habitat.

Five Lakes Trail provides viewers with an expansive view of Bear Creek Valley. Bear Creek Valley, characterized by both natural and built features, rises sharply from the valley floor to high mountain peaks to the north, south, and west. Five Lakes Trail traverses the northern ridge of Bear Creek Valley, which separates Olympic Valley and Bear Creek Valley. The ridgelines to the north, south, and west form the boundaries of the visual environment from the lower and middle portions of Five Lakes Trail. The highest portion of Five Lakes Trail includes views of Five Lakes, Bear Creek Valley, and limited views to Lake Tahoe in the background.

Views from Five Lakes Trail are characterized by substantial topographical changes and a largely intact natural landscape. Views in the near foreground are made up of montane chaparral, conifer forest, and rock outcroppings. Midground views to the south and east include dense conifer forest from the valley floor to the ridgeline, with interspersed rock outcroppings. They also include the existing residential development in the valley, including Bear Creek Estates, Alpine Meadows Estates, the Stanford Alpine Chalet, and Alpine Meadows Ski Resort. The forested ridgelines contrast sharply against the sky, providing for a characteristic high-mountain vista.

The Alpine Meadows Ski Resort composes the most scenically apparent development within the viewshed of Five Lakes Trail. Areas that have been cleared for ski runs, chairlifts, and base development make up both the near foreground, foreground, and midground views from Five Lakes Trail. Existing residences, roadways, and powerlines are visible among the forested areas of the valley floor.

As discussed in Section 5.1, the project site is visible from Five Lakes Trail. For south-facing viewers along the lower and middle portions of the Five Lakes Trail, the project site is located within the approximate center of the midground views. The site composes the majority of the middleground views when observed from the portion of Five Lakes Trail roughly north and northeast of the intersection of Alpine Meadows Road and Bear Creek Drive. In these views, the site is characterized by a dense conifer forest across the majority of the site. Some rock outcroppings are also visible. Filtered views of some of the residences and roadways in the Bear Creek Association subdivision are visible, with the residences in the Stanford Alpine Chalet more noticeable. The Alpine Meadows Ski Resort parking lot is also a noticeable feature in these

views. The project site is visually similar to the surrounding area. The project site does not provide any distinctive scenic resources within the views from Five Lakes Trail, but rather is a part of the larger intact conifer forest that defines the local landscape.

Alternative A and Alternative B Construction Phase Impacts

Construction phase activities would temporarily place vehicles and construction equipment, construction materials stockpiles, and construction fencing within the scenic viewsheds identified and discussed above. The presence of construction equipment, materials, and fencing would present a limited, temporary adverse visual impact to the existing view available from Five Lakes Trail. Mitigation Measure (MM) 5.1a requires that construction material staging areas be identified on project plans and placed, to the extent possible, to screen views of staging areas from Five Lakes Trail and Alpine Meadows Road. Implementation of MM 5.1a under both Alternative A and Alternative B would ensure that temporary effects to scenic viewsheds during construction remain **less than significant**.

Project construction would also result in temporary grade cuts that would be visible from Five Lakes Trail. Substantial tree removal would be required on site for road and infrastructure construction and fuel-load reduction. Under either Alternative A or Alternative B, the on-site primary roadway would be constructed from west to east across the site, generally along the hillside contour and parallel to the project site boundary adjacent to the Bear Creek Association open space area. Tree removal would occur within and adjacent to this roadway alignment, while tree removal and pruning associated with fuel reduction would occur throughout the site, as described in the Alpine Sierra Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan provided in Appendix J. This Plan identifies four fuel reduction zones, requiring removal of all vegetation within 5 feet of any structure (the Fire Free Zone), with lesser amounts of vegetation removal required at further distances from the structures. Tree removal and pruning that would occur along with construction of the subdivision improvements would be located within the Wildland Fuel Reduction Zone described in Appendix J, which covers approximately 9 acres of the project site. Fuel management prescriptions for this zone require variable-density thinning and retention of riparian vegetation. Thinning would occur to reduce the vertical and horizontal continuity of trees. Construction of the subdivision improvements and implementation of the Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan would result in a less dense overall forest canopy and the elimination of small areas of forest habitat within the site. Thus, the changes in the site during and as a result of construction of the subdivision improvements would result in a **significant** impact to views from Five Lakes Trail. MM 5.1a requires that Improvement Plans must be approved by the Placer County Development Review Committee approval prior to recordation of the Final Map. MM 5.1b, requires that stockpiles of materials be screened from the views of trailhead staging areas, such as the Five Lakes Trail while MM 5.1c requires that all grade cuts be revegetated and/or be retained using natural or natural-appearing materials and

MM 5.1d requires that guard rails and other roadway safety features be constructed using materials that mimic rusted steel. Lastly, MM 5.1e would require the project to implement the proposed Architecture Handbook (Alternative A and Alternative B) and supplemental development standards (Alternative B only) through County review and approval of a Development Notebook for each project phase prior to approval of Improvement Plans or recordation of a Final Map. These measures would reduce the adverse visual effects associated with construction of subdivision improvements such that ongoing construction activities would be screened from view to the extent feasible and, following construction, the appearance of subdivision improvements, such as Road A and other infrastructure constructed on site, would not detract from the existing views. With implementation of these mitigation measures, changes in views from the Five Lakes Trail due to construction activities would be **less than significant**.

Alternative A Post-Construction Impacts

Alternative A would develop 47 single-family residential lots, two recreation lots, and associated infrastructure within an undeveloped, natural landscape.

Although the project site is anticipated for residential development under the Alpine Meadows General Plan, the project's impact to visual resources is compared to the existing physical conditions at the project site. A visual simulation of the proposed Alpine Sierra Subdivision was prepared to evaluate the visibility of Alternative A from the selected key observation viewpoint along Five Lakes Trail. The simulation is presented on Figure 5-4, Visual Simulation. As shown, most of the homes in the proposed subdivision would be visible from Five Lakes Trail. The western portion of the site would support the proposed halfplex units. These units would be somewhat smaller than the residences anticipated for the eastern portion of the site, and would be laid out in a more compact arrangement. This would intensify the disturbance to the natural vegetation, but would contain the disturbance to a smaller area within the site. In comparison, the residences on the eastern portion of the site would be larger but spaced less densely. This would allow for existing vegetation and topography to provide more screening and filtering of views of the residences. The development standards proposed under Alternative A are presented in the Architecture Handbook provided in Appendix B include requirements intended to ensure residential design and construction would blend with the natural environment. These include minimum setbacks and maximum building coverage, maximum building heights, requirements that grading and site disturbance be minimized, requirements that natural or earth tone materials and colors be used for the residential units to reduce the contrast with existing vegetation or soils, and limitations on tree removal unless such removal is required by the Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan. Lots adjacent to the seasonal stream would maintain a setback of 50-feet from the centerline of the stream channel, which is consistent with requirements of the Placer County General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance

and would further minimize visual impacts. Furthermore, no buildings or improvements would be constructed within the floodplain.

The policies and requirements of the proposed Architecture Handbook would ensure that changes to existing vegetation and topography are minimized to the extent feasible, and would reduce the contrast between the constructed elements of Alternative A and the natural landscape. As shown in Figure 5-4, when viewed from the Five Lakes Trail, the homes and other site improvements constructed under Alternative A would be features in the midground view that would be integrated with the surrounding vegetation and would blend with the natural variations in vegetative cover and exposed soil in the area. While Alternative A would alter the current views of natural forest habitat by introducing filtered views of residences in two primary development pods, it would not diminish the overall character of the expansive views from the Five Lakes Trail.

As discussed previously, linear project features, including the proposed roadway and retaining walls, would also be visible from Five Lakes Trail. These features would also blend into the forest landscape due to the angle of view and the natural qualities of the materials used for retaining walls.

As described in the Alpine Sierra Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan provided in Appendix J, tree removal would be required on each residential lot for the purposes of clearing vegetation within the building footprint as well as for fuel reduction and wildfire prevention, which would result in some visible vegetation loss within this portion of the viewshed from Five Lakes Trail. The Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan identifies four fuel reduction zones, requiring removal of all vegetation within 5 feet of any structure (the Fire Free Zone), with lesser amounts of vegetation removal required at further distances from the structures. In the Structural Protection Zone, which extends 30 feet from the Fire Free Zone and would encompass approximately 24 acres of the site, the Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan requires thinning to reduce the vertical and horizontal continuity of trees. However, due to the distance of the Five Lakes Trail from the project site, the retention of substantial areas of natural forest around the perimeter of the site, and presence of forest surrounding the site, the tree removal associated with the Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan would not substantially alter views from the trail. Implementation of MMs 5.1a through 5.1e would ensure that long-term impacts to visual resources would be minimized and that Alternative A would blend with the natural topography and vegetation to prevent adverse impacts to views from the Five Lakes Trail. In addition, the proposed project-specific development standards (included in Appendix B) include requirements intended to ensure residential design and construction would blend with the natural environment. These include minimum setbacks and maximum building coverage, maximum building heights, requiring that grading and site disturbance be minimized, and requiring that natural or earth tone materials and colors be

used for the residential units to reduce the contrast with existing vegetation or soils. With the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in this chapter, Alternative A would have a less than significant impact on scenic vistas.

Alternative B Post-Construction Impacts

Alternative B would develop 38 single-family residences and 5 guest houses on the undeveloped project site. As under Alternative A, residences would be divided into two primary development pods. However, all of the proposed residences would be separate single-family units; no halfplexes would be constructed. Therefore, Alternative B would result in a less dense clustering of residences within the western portion of the project site, permitting the existing vegetation and topography to provide more screening and filtering of views of the residences.

The policies and requirements of the proposed Supplemental Development Standards, which are somewhat more restrictive than the standards in the Architecture Handbook, would ensure that changes to existing vegetation and topography are minimized to the extent feasible, and would reduce the contrast between the constructed elements of Alternative B and the natural landscape. For example, the development standards proposed for Alternative B include larger stream setbacks than would be required under Alternative A. Similar to the views shown in Figure 5-4, the site development under Alternative B would appear in the midground of views from the Five Lakes Trail.

As under Alternative A, the Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan identifies four fuel reduction zones, requiring removal of all vegetation within 5 feet of any structure (the Fire Free Zone), with lesser amounts of vegetation removal required at further distances from the structures. In the Structural Protection Zone, which extends 30 feet from the Fire Free Zone and would encompass approximately 24 acres of the site, the Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan requires thinning to reduce the vertical and horizontal continuity of trees. However, due to the distance of the Five Lakes Trail from the project site, the retention of substantial areas of natural forest around the perimeter of the site, and presence of forest surrounding the site, the tree removal associated with the Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan would not substantially alter views from the trail. Implementation of MMs 5.1a through 5.1e would ensure that impacts of Alternative B on scenic vistas and views would be minimized because the residences constructed on the project site would blend into the hillside. This would prevent adverse impacts to views from the Five Lakes Trail. In addition, the proposed Alternative B Supplemental Development Standards (included in Appendix B) include requirements intended to ensure residential design and construction would blend with the natural environment. Similar to Alternative A though somewhat more restrictive under Alternative B, these include minimum setbacks and maximum building coverage, maximum building heights, requiring that grading and site disturbance be minimized, and requiring that natural or earth tone materials and colors be used for the residential units to reduce the contrast with existing vegetation or soils.

With the implementation of the mitigation measures identified in this chapter, Alternative B would have a less than significant impact on scenic vistas.

Mitigation Measures

- MM 5.1a:** The project applicant shall implement MM 11.2c, which requires the applicant to prepare and submit Improvement Plans which must be approved by Placer County prior to recordation of each Final Subdivision Map.
- MM 5.1b:** Stockpiling of materials on site shall be minimized during construction. Construction staging areas and stockpile storage locations shall be identified on project Improvement Plans and shall be located within existing disturbed areas, as close to or within the areas of construction as possible, and as far as practical from existing dwellings and protected resources in the area. Material stockpiles shall be located to screen views of staging areas from Five Lakes Trail, Alpine Meadows Road, John Scott Trail, and Chalet Road to the extent feasible. A note stating this information shall be included on the Improvement Plans to the satisfaction of the Planning Services Division.
- MM 5.1c:** The Implementation Plans shall show that all grade cuts shall be revegetated and/or shall be stabilized with retaining walls constructed from natural or natural-appearing materials to the satisfaction of the Planning Services Division.
- MM 5.1d:** The Improvement Plans shall show that all guard rails and other roadway safety features shall be constructed using materials that mimic rusted steel to the satisfaction of the Planning Services Division.
- MM 5.1e:** The project applicant and all developers of individual lots shall implement the proposed Development Standards regarding setbacks, building envelopes, maximum lot coverage, grading and drainage improvements, and vegetation removal to ensure that site development minimizes alterations to existing topography and vegetation to the extent feasible.

Prior to recordation of each Final Subdivision Map, a reference manual (i.e., development notebook) shall be submitted for approval to the Planning Services Division which shall include plot plans for each lot in the project, depicting all dimensions, easements, setbacks, height limits, no access strips and other restrictions which might affect the construction of structures on said lot and the permitted lot coverage per Placer County Zoning Ordinance Section 17.54.100.A.2.e. No Building Permits may be issued for the project until this

manual is provided to and accepted by the Development Review Committee for format and content requirements.

Impact 5.2

Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

Significance and Mitigation	Alternative A	Alternative B
Significance before mitigation:	Significant	Significant
Mitigation measures:	Mitigation Measure 5.2a	Mitigation Measure 5.2a
Significance after mitigation:	Less than significant	Less than significant

Alternative A and Alternative B Construction Phase Impacts

Construction phase activities would temporarily place vehicles and construction equipment, construction materials stockpiles, and construction fencing within the project site. If visible from surrounding residences and roadways, the presence of construction equipment, materials, and fencing would present a limited, temporary adverse visual impact. MM 5.2a requires implementation of MM 5.1a through MM 5.1e. These measures regulate locations of construction material staging areas, content and approval requirements for Improvement Plans, treatment of grade cuts and material selections for guard rails, and other roadway safety features. Implementation of MM 5.2a under both Alternative A and Alternative B would ensure that temporary effects to sensitive viewers during construction remain less than significant.

Alternative A Post-Construction Impacts

Alternative A would develop 47 single-family residential lots, 2 recreation lots, and associated infrastructure within an undeveloped, natural landscape. Road A would be constructed from west to east across the site, generally along the hillside contour and parallel to the project site boundary adjacent to the Bear Creek Association open space area.

Figure 5-1 provides photographs displaying typical conditions on site, which include a variety of features, including forest, rock outcroppings, meadows, and stream corridors and associated vegetation. The project site provides views characteristic of the landscape in the Alpine Meadows area, which contribute to the overall scenic quality of the area. Sensitive viewers include existing residents in adjacent subdivisions as well as drivers and pedestrians along public right-of-way adjacent to the project site, including Alpine Meadows Road, John Scott Trail, and Chalet Road. Views from Five Lakes Trail are considered under Impact 5.1. Views of the site from Alpine Meadows Ski Resort ski trails are limited due to the intervening vegetation and limited angle of view due to topography.

Viewers adjacent to the project site currently experience views characterized by conifer-covered hillsides and limited areas of riparian vegetation. When snow cover is present, riparian vegetation is not as visually prominent. Views from adjacent and nearby roads to the proposed development areas within the project site are somewhat limited by steep topography and dense vegetative cover, as shown on Figure 5-2, Project Site Views from John Scott Trail, and Figure 5-3, Project Site Views from Chalet Road. Figure 5-5, Potential View Corridors, illustrates Key Observation Points (KOPs) 2, 3, and 4. KOP 2 represents views to the project site from John Scott Trail, and KOPs 3 and 4 represent views from the residences at the terminus of Chalet Road to the project site. Figure 5-5 also identifies roadways and building envelopes nearest to the KOPs. Road A is proposed to be located generally between 150 and 300 feet south of John Scott Trail.

As shown on Figure 5-5, there is substantial forest vegetation between the proposed development areas and the adjacent roadways. Under existing topographical and vegetative conditions, many of the proposed residences would be screened from adjacent neighbors and roadway users. However, because of the grading and fuel reduction efforts necessary to ensure safety and stability of the proposed residences, it is likely that some of the natural features that would otherwise shield the proposed residences would be removed. Specifically, the Alpine Sierra Forest Management and Fuel Reduction Plan provided in Appendix J prescribes vegetation removal and thinning treatments that would be implemented throughout the project site. All vegetation within 5 feet of any structure (the Fire Free Zone) would be removed, while vegetation thinning would be required at further distances from the structures. In the Structural Protection Zone, which covers approximately 24 acres of the site, thinning would occur to reduce the vertical and horizontal continuity of trees. A distance of 15 feet between leave tree crowns would be maintained in the Wildland Fuel Reduction Zone, which covers approximately 9 acres of the project site. Where tree removal and thinning occurs, neighboring residents may have more direct views of the homes and other improvements that would be constructed on site. Thus, the project could result in a **significant** impact by degrading the existing visual character or quality of the site as viewed from adjacent residential properties.

As discussed in Impact 5.1, Alternative A's Architecture Handbook and its emphasis on compatibility with the existing landscape would ensure that site development minimizes alterations to existing topography and vegetation to the extent feasible. Specifically, the Architecture Handbook requires that the architectural and site design utilize features that blend into the natural terrain to reduce the contrast with the existing landscape. Further, the Architecture Handbook stipulates that structures should be made of wood, steel or stone and that weathered materials and textured cementitious materials are permitted if appropriate coloring is used. It also requires that exterior coloring blend with the natural environment as opposed to competing with it. The Architecture Handbook would be used to ensure that aspects of the built landscape maintain compatibility with each other and promote high-quality architectural design.

With adherence to the Architecture Handbook, as required by MM 5.2a, and considering the screening provided by the existing topography and vegetation, it is expected that filtered views of retaining walls associated with Road A and residences would be visible between trees in some locations, but the project would not substantially alter the visual character of the project site. Therefore, with implementation of MM 5.2a, this impact would be reduced to a **less-than-significant** level.

Alternative B Post-Construction Impacts

Alternative B would reduce the number of residential units that would be developed from 47 single-family residences and 5 guest houses to 38 single-family residences and 5 guest houses. However, the impacted area would be similar to that of Alternative A. Specific to views from KOPs 2, 3, and 4, there would be no changes in the extent or intensity of potential development. Under Alternative B, one of the proposed lots along the northern property boundary near John Scott Trail would be changed from a residential lot to a recreation/utility lot (Lot 22), which would slightly reduce the amount of development that could be visible from John Scott Trail. However, overall there would be no substantial change in the project's alteration of visual character under Alternative B. The residential development that would occur under Alternative B would create two distinct residential development pods within the site. The Supplemental Development Standards would be used in conjunction with the Architecture Handbook to ensure that aspects of the built landscape maintain compatibility with each other and promote high-quality architectural design. With adherence to the Development Standards, as required by MM 5.2a, and considering the screening provided by the existing topography and vegetation, it is expected that filtered views of retaining walls associated with Road A and residences would be visible between trees in some locations, but Alternative B would not substantially alter the visual character of the project site; this impact would be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures

MM 5.2a: The project applicant shall implement MM 5.1a through MM 5.1e. These measures regulate locations of construction material staging areas, content and approval requirements for Improvement Plans, treatment of grade cuts, and material selections for guard rails and other roadway safety features to the satisfaction of the Planning Services Division, and require that all future development on the site comply with the proposed Development Standards.

Impact 5.3

Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Significance and Mitigation	Alternative A	Alternative B
Significance before mitigation:	Significant	Significant
Mitigation measures:	Mitigation Measures 5.3a and 5.3b	Mitigation Measures 5.3a and 5.3b
Significance after mitigation:	Less than significant	Less than significant

Alternative A and Alternative B Impacts

Under existing conditions, the project site contains no sources of light or glare. Both Alternative A and Alternative B would add potential sources of light and glare, including exterior lighting, circulation lighting, metal guard rails, and building materials, to the project site. Thus the project, under either alternative, would have a **potentially significant** visual impact related to light and glare.

As discussed in the proposed Development Standards (see Appendix B), exterior lighting would be required to be “Dark Sky Society” compliant. These standards direct that outdoor lighting should be used for safety and for way finding and shall be directed downward towards the ground. Façade lighting is prohibited. The Alpine Sierra Design Committee would review lighting plans prior to approving building plans. The Design Guidelines provide that exterior lighting would be permitted as needed in circulation areas as well as outdoor areas intended for occupation (e.g., porches). Light fixture enclosures must be constructed to conceal or substantially diffuse the light source. As stipulated in the Architecture Handbook and the Alternative B Supplemental Development Standards, the Final Design Submittal must include catalog sheets with photographs for light fixtures, finishes, and lamp sizes must be submitted alongside the landscape plans and elevations. The Architecture Handbook also requires that large windows be set back under roof overhangs or other recesses in shadow to avoid creating glare. When window planes are not recessed or somewhat obscured by structure or overhangs and have a significant solar exposure at any time of day, they must use non-reflective glass. MM 5.3a requires that the Architecture Handbook and the Alternative B Supplemental Development Standards be modified to include specific recommendations of the Dark Sky Society to ensure that the residences on-site do not create new sources of light and glare. Additionally, MM 5.3b requires that guard rails along the proposed roadway be constructed with weathered steel in order to reduce glare and to improve consistency with the natural aesthetic. With implementation of these mitigation measures, the project would have a **less-than-significant** impact related to the creation of light or glare.

Mitigation Measures

MM 5.3a: Prior to recordation of the first Final Map the project applicant shall modify the Development Standards to include the following Dark Sky Society recommendations:

- Full cutoff and fully shielded fixtures shall be used,

- Freestanding street lighting shall be limited to that necessary to meet roadway safety requirements
- Compact fluorescent (2300K) or High Pressure Sodium is recommended unless the light is motion sensor activated, in which case incandescent or the instant start compact fluorescent bulbs can be used. Metal halide (due to its higher costs, energy use, impact on the environment, and greater contribution to “sky glow”) is discouraged
- “Shut off” controls such as sensors, timers, motion detectors, shall be used. “Dusk-to-dawn” sensors without a middle-of-the-night shut off control shall be avoided.
- Fixtures shall be located no closer to the property line than four times the mounting height of the fixture, and shall not exceed the height of structures within 120 feet of the fixture.

These requirements shall be incorporated into the Development Notebook prepared for each project phase.

MM 5.3b: The project applicant shall implement MM 5.1d, which requires that all guard rails and other roadway safety features be constructed using materials that mimic rusted steel to the satisfaction of the Planning Services Division.

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Location of Proposed Entrance Roadway



Location of Proposed Roadway Crossing of Bear Creek



Representative Site Conditions



Representative Site Conditions



Representative Site Conditions



Representative Site Conditions

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Key Observation Point 2



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Key Observation Point 4



Key Observation Point 3



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SOURCE: Dudek 2016

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FIGURE 5-4
Visual Simulation of Alternative A

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FIGURE 5-5
Potential View Corridors

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