

VISUAL RESOURCES TECHNICAL REPORT
for the
Newland Sierra Project
San Diego, California

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The following visual impacts are anticipated as a result of implementation of the proposed Newland Sierra Project (hereafter referred to as “project” or “proposed project” or “Community”):

1. Construction and operation of the proposed project would introduce features that would contrast with the existing visual character of the proposed project Site and would result in the removal of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character of the Site. The project as viewed from Interstate (I) 15, Deer Springs Road near I-15, North Centre City Parkway, Mountain Meadow Road, and Deer Springs Road near Mesa Rock Road would reduce the vividness, intactness, and unity of existing views, and would appear inconsistent with the existing visual character of the Site and immediate surrounding area. As a result, visual impacts associated with changes to existing visual character and quality would be significant.

Several project features, including balanced grading, focusing project development on lower-elevation valley areas on the proposed project Site, conservation of open space, landscaping, and grade-adaptive architecture, would help to reduce the visual impacts created by the proposed project by minimizing grading (to the extent feasible), avoiding particularly prominent development locations, retaining the natural characteristics of portions of the Site, partially screening structures, and incorporating natural terrain in project design. These features would not, however, mask or otherwise obscure the physical changes to the existing visual environment of the proposed project Site as viewed from certain public roadways in the area, including I-15, Deer Springs Road at I-15, North Centre City Parkway, and Mountain Meadow Road. Because there are no mitigation measures available that would further reduce the anticipated level of contrast associated with development of the proposed project Site and implementation of roadway improvements along the identified segment of Deer Springs Road, impacts would be significant and unmitigable. Mitigation measures have not been identified that would further reduce the anticipated changes to the existing visual character and quality of the Site and surroundings; therefore, for the purposes of this report, a less-than-significant impact cannot be achieved.

2. Construction and operation of the proposed project, including improvements to Deer Springs Road, would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from a public road, a trail within an adopted county or state trail system, a scenic vista or highway, or a recreational area. Therefore, project impacts to panoramic and/or valued focal vistas would be less than significant.

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3. The project would be consistent with all applicable visual-resource-related policies from the San Diego County General Plan, the North County Metro Subregional Plan (including the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines) and the Bonsall Community Plan. As a result, visual impact associated with inconsistencies with applicable visual resource policies in local planning documents would be less than significant.
4. All applicable outdoor lighting installed within the proposed project planning areas and along the improved segment of Deer Springs Road would conform to the requirements of the San Diego Light Pollution Code. Highly reflective building materials, including reflective glass and high-gloss surface colors, are not proposed for installation on the project Site. Solar panels would be included on all residential units (both attached and detached), including the residential portions of the Town Center. Although off-site receptors at elevated viewpoints (such as at a limited number of ridgeline residences located east of the project Site) would be afforded views to these features, solar panels are designed to be highly absorptive of incoming sunlight and are not anticipated to create glare that would be received by receptors in the surrounding area. As a result, visual impacts associated with light and glare would be less than significant.
5. Despite the presence of existing agriculture and rural residential development in the project viewshed and resulting alterations to the landscape, identified cumulative projects would combine with the proposed project to change the existing composition of the visual environment. With implementation of the identified projects and the proposed project, the area would transition from primarily agriculture and rural residential development to a suburban pattern of development. Physical changes associated with vegetation removal, grading, and the addition of sparse and dense residential developments would adversely affect the viewshed.

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to assess potential visual impacts of the proposed Newland Sierra Project (hereafter referred to as “project” or “proposed project”); determine the significance of the impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and to propose measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse visual impacts associated with construction and operation of the proposed project on the surrounding visual environment.

1.2 Visual Resource Concepts and Terminology

Visual Resources

For purposes of this study, visual resources are defined as the various elements and features of the landscape that contribute to the visual character of a particular setting. Natural and built elements and features are considered visual resources, as are objects, vistas, and viewsheds. A visual resource assessment typically begins with fieldwork and an inventory of the existing visual resources and conditions of a particular site. In general, a visual resource assessment includes the following processes:

- Inventory and describe the existing visual quality, character, and visual resources of a proposed project site and surrounding viewshed area.
- Identify visually sensitive resources.
- Identify sensitive viewers and representative viewpoints (also known as key observation points) to a proposed project; representative viewpoints are used in the visual assessment to document the anticipated level of visual change occurring in an area as a result of the project in question using visual simulations.
- Analyze the anticipated effects on visual resources occurring as a result of a project.
- If effects will be potentially significant, identify appropriate mitigation measures to avoid or reduce these effects, if possible.

The process described above is based on the Federal Highway Administration’s (FHWA) assessment method, and is consistent with the County of San Diego Report Format and Content Requirements for Visual Resources. The intent of the process outlined above is to measure the aesthetic value of an area according to visual character, quality, and viewer response to a particular visual resource change due to a project. These concepts and other key issues discussed in this visual resource assessment are described below.

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Visual Character

The descriptive attributes of a landscape (including natural and built features) contribute to the visual character of an area or view. Influenced by geologic, hydrologic, botanical, and recreational features, as well as by roads, structures, utilities, and other urban features, the perception of visual character can vary according to season and time of day, as the elements that comprise the viewshed (e.g., weather, light, and shadow) fluctuate over time and work to either obscure or highlight particular features. The fundamental pattern elements used to describe visual character are form (bulk, mass, size, and shape), line, color, and texture, and the appearance of a landscape is often described according to the dominance of these elements. For example, the geometric lines and vertical forms of an urban setting can dominate the visual landscape and produce very little contrast in terms of color and texture. On the other hand, a natural setting composed of rolling hills; rough textured vegetation; flat, rolling, and rugged forms; and earth-tone colors could contribute to a visual character where none of the pattern elements is particularly dominant. However, in absence of viewer response to change in the environment, neither landscape is considered to have greater or higher visual character.

Visual Quality

Visual quality is evaluated according to the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the viewshed as modified by public judgment/viewer sensitivity. The three criteria used to evaluate visual quality are defined as follows:

- ***Vividness*** is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns.
- ***Intactness*** is the visual integrity of the natural and built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. Intactness can be present in developed urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings.
- ***Unity*** is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. Unity frequently attests to the careful design of individual built components in the landscape.

High-quality views are highly vivid, mostly intact, highly coherent, and exhibit visual continuity, and low-quality views are not particularly memorable and contain numerous contrasting and encroaching elements that contribute to weak visual unity.

Viewshed

A project's viewshed is composed of all surface areas from which views of project components would be visible. In addition, the viewshed includes the location of viewers likely to be affected

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by visual changes brought about by project features. For purposes of this analysis, the viewshed depicted in report graphics does not consider the screening effect of existing vegetation and structures from viewpoints; incidents of screening associated with vegetation and structures are discussed in the text.

Viewer Response

Viewer response is composed of two elements: viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure. These elements combine to form a method of predicting how the viewers might react to visual changes brought about by a project. The concepts of viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure are described below.

Viewer Sensitivity

Viewer sensitivity is described in qualitative terms of high, medium, or low, and is based on user volume and attitudes toward changes to the visual environment. Factors considered include the number and types of viewers potentially affected, viewing distances, and documented public concerns about visual changes.

Viewer Exposure

In addition to the visual factors described previously, the visual resources analysis considered viewer exposure. The elements of viewer exposure help to define viewer perceptions resulting from a dynamic experience with the landscape and related visual resources. Viewer exposure varies depending on the angle of view (i.e., normal, inferior, or superior viewing angles), view distance (foreground, middleground, and background), relationship to sun angle (backlighting vs. front or side lighting), spatial relationships (i.e., whether views are panoramic or limited by vegetation, topography, or other land uses), and viewer screening conditions (e.g., whether the project facilities will be skylined on ridgelines, backscreened by topography and/or vegetation, or screened by structures or vegetation in the foreground). Viewer exposure also considers the duration of a view based on viewer activity (e.g., travel route, residential, recreation), and often relates to speed of travel (pedestrian, vehicular, or stationary). Viewer exposure is considered long term for residents and short term for travelers along roadways.

Viewer Groups – Number and Types of Viewers

Potentially sensitive viewers are determined based on the type and amount of use various land uses receive. Land uses that derive value from the quality of their settings are considered potentially sensitive. Land uses within project areas that are considered sensitive to visual changes to their settings include residential and natural areas, designated and eligible state historic routes, and scenic highways.

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Distance Zones – Foreground, Middleground, and Background Distances

The distance from which a project component may be viewed affects the visual dominance and clarity that a feature or component may have within the landscape. Distance zones are described in this section according to foreground views, middleground views, and background views. Foreground views pertain to viewing distances where the viewer has close range visibility to a given object (generally 0.25 to 0.5 mile away). Middleground views typically pertain to viewing distances between 0.5 mile and 3 miles away, where objects are still distinguishable from other adjacent visual features. Background views pertain to viewing distances up to 15 miles away, where visibility of objects is less distinctive, and where ridges and skylines provide the greatest potential viewing opportunities to an object. Distance zones often juxtapose visual elements depending on the viewing angle, most often causing foreground and middleground views to merge. The effects of distance zones can be modified by environmental conditions such as angle of view related to landscape topography (acute angles can foreshorten distance zones), ambient atmospheric conditions (e.g., clouds, fog, dust, haze), and view angle relative to sun location (backlighting can reduce visual clarity that modifies the effective viewing distance). These factors can reduce visibility of distance zones individually or in combination. For example, atmospheric factors can essentially cause visual elements in the middleground to appear more as background due to reduced visibility.

Key Issues

Adverse effects typically associated with development include the loss of natural vegetation, removal of natural features with aesthetic value, terrain modification (e.g., alteration of topography through grading), and/or the introduction of contrasting elements within the existing landscape setting. The loss or degradation of significant visual features or views and the introduction of project features that would significantly contrast with the visual character of an area or with the existing elements of form, line, color, or texture can be considered significant adverse visual effects. The effects and elements of the proposed project that could potentially result in significant visual quality impacts include the following:

- Removal of vegetation from development areas on the 1,983-acre project Site and replacement with a residential subdivision to include attached and detached single-family residences, a school, commercial retail space, parks, recreation trails, and on- and off-site access roads.
- Contrasts in color and texture between graded building pads, residential homes, streets, landscaping, and the surrounding natural landscape.
- Operation of maintenance and nighttime lighting along project roads and at residential and commercial land uses.
- Potential glare effects from reflective building materials.

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1.3 Principal Viewpoints to be Covered

The project Site is located within the northern portion of the Merriam Mountains. Natural topography consists of moderate to steeply sloping hills and intervening valleys dominated by native chaparral vegetation and occasional rock outcroppings. Because the project would generally avoid alteration and development of prominent on-site ridgelines and would steer the majority of development pads and access roads to lower-lying hills and valleys, the project viewshed is relatively limited. Views to the project Site are available to passing motorists on roads in the surrounding area; residences in the communities of Hidden Meadows, Twin Oaks, and Lawrence Welk Village; and parks and trails in the Twin Oaks Valley area. However, because CEQA does not provide for the protection of private views, viewpoints such as those located on private residences or private roads in the Hidden Meadows and Lawrence Welk Village areas have been excluded from consideration as principal viewpoints. Private views are discussed and analyzed qualitatively in the analysis, but no visual simulations were prepared from these locations. Private viewing locations were not identified as key viewpoints, as these views are not public and are not representative of the primary public viewer groups (i.e., motorists) afforded views of the project Site. Instead, principal viewpoints to be considered in this analysis include off-site public viewing locations such as local highways/roads and parks. More specifically, principal viewpoints or key views used to assess the potential visual changes associated with the project were established on Deer Springs Road, Mountain Meadow Road, North Twin Oaks Valley Road, and Interstate (I) 15. A key view was also established at Walnut Grove Park and is intended to be representative of views to the project Site afforded to residents and recreationists in the Twin Oaks Valley area.

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2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project Site is located within an unincorporated portion of the County of San Diego (County) within the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan area, as shown in Figure 1, Regional Map. As shown in Figure 2, Vicinity Map, the proposed project Site consists of approximately 1,985 acres, bounded by I-15 on the east, Deer Springs Road (County Road S12) on the south, and Twin Oaks Valley Road on the west, with a small portion of the northwestern edge of the project Site traversed by Twin Oaks Valley Road. Gopher Canyon Road is located approximately 0.5 mile north of the Site.

The proposed project would include a General Plan Amendment that would allow a greater intensity of clustered development beyond current planned land uses. The proposed project would include seven neighborhoods (also referred to as “planning areas”) with a total of 2,135 residential units, described below in greater detail and shown in Figure 3, Site Plan. The proposed project would include a variety of housing types—some of which would be designed with grade-adaptive architecture—to meet the varied needs of future residents. Grade-adaptive architecture results in minimized site grading impacts by incorporating one or more steps in the ground floor that conform to the underlying slope of a site. Development of the project would be focused into seven planning areas designed to promote land stewardship and avoid the most sensitive biological, cultural, and topographical resources. Taking inspiration from the property’s unique landscape character and distinct landforms, the proposed project would consist of a series of neighborhoods that individually respond to their unique topographical settings.

The location and design of the planning areas strategically preserve natural areas and provide for wildlife movement and connectivity throughout the Site. The proposed open space design would consist of two large continuous blocks of key biological resources situated within the northern half and along the eastern boundary of the project Site, and a large third block of open space in the center of the proposed Site that connects the abovementioned blocks of open space to open space located east and south of the project Site. In total, the proposed project would preserve approximately 1,209 acres of on-site open space.

Town Center

The Town Center would be located off Deer Springs Road, east of the primary access road in the southernmost portion of the project Site. The Town Center would include commercial retail space, townhomes, and a school site. The Town Center would provide employment opportunities for future residents and the surrounding area. The Town Center would be compact, walkable, visually appealing, and compatible with surrounding development. The Town Center would include 95 residential units, 81,000 square feet of commercial space, a 6-acre school site, and approximately 5.7 acres of parks.

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Terraces Neighborhood

The Terraces would be located directly north of the Town Center on the west side of the primary access road in the southern portion of the project Site. This planning area would range in elevation between approximately 1,200 feet above mean sea level (amsl) and 1,350 feet amsl. The Terraces would include 446 residential units.

Valley Neighborhood

The Valley planning area would be located northwest of the Terraces and south of the Knoll. This planning area would be composed of single-family clusters, townhomes, and small single-family lots ranging from 3,500 to 4,000 square feet. The average elevation for the Valley planning area would be approximately 900 feet amsl. The Valley would include 505 residential units and approximately 12.3 acres of parks.

Hillside Neighborhood

The Hillside planning area would be located north of the Terraces planning area and east of the primary access road in the southeastern portion of the project Site. This planning area would range in elevation between approximately 1,265 feet amsl and 1,300 feet amsl. Hillside would be composed of lots ranging from 4,500 square feet to 5,000 square feet. Hillside would include 241 residential units and approximately 2.3 acres of parks.

Knoll Neighborhood

The Knoll planning area would be located south of the Summit, southwest of the Mesa, and north of the Valley. This planning area would be composed of lots ranging from 4,500 square feet to 5,000 square feet, and include 372 residential units and approximately 9.5 acres of parks. The topography of this planning area has some of the highest elevations in the project Site. Elevations range from 1,175 feet amsl up to 1,400 feet amsl. There are a number of viewing points scattered throughout this planning area. The Knoll planning area would contain single-family lots and single-family clusters that are designed to preserve the primary knolls in the area.

Mesa Neighborhood

The Mesa planning area would be located north of the Hillside, east of the Knoll, and southeast of the Summit. This planning area would be composed of lots ranging from 3,000 to 6,000 square feet. Average elevation in the Mesa planning area ranges from 1,250 feet amsl to 1,350 feet amsl. The Mesa would include 325 residential units and approximately 4.1 acres of parks. The Mesa planning area would contain age-qualified (55 years and older) single-family lots and age-qualified single-family clusters. Age-qualified lots are intended in neighborhoods that offer

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homes and community features specifically aimed at adults 55 years of age and older, where housing must include at least one person who is 55 years of age or older as a permanent resident. Residents typically lead an independent, active lifestyle in a setting with private amenities such as a clubhouse and private recreational spaces. The term “cluster” is used to describe a neighborhood where housing would be clustered together on relatively small lots with a larger amount of common area shared by the homeowners, and sharing of common areas such as a courtyard, motor court, or open space. The Mesa’s age-qualified single-family lots and clusters would surround a neighborhood park.

Summit Neighborhood

The Summit planning area would be the northernmost area of development, located just north of the Knoll and northwest of the Mesa. This planning area would be composed of the largest lots proposed throughout the development, with lots ranging from 6,000 to 7,500 square feet. Only 151 dwelling units and approximately 2 acres of parks are proposed for this planning area. The highest elevations in the project Site occur in this planning area. Average elevations range from 1,390 feet amsl up to 1,600 feet amsl. A trail would lead up to the highest point in the planning area where a lookout would be located. The Summit planning area proposes the least-dense development of all the planning areas. The Summit planning area would contain grade-adaptive large lots and clusters designed to maximize views.

Access Points and Internal Circulation

The project’s multimodal transportation network would support pedestrian, equestrian, bicycle, shuttle service, and vehicular use throughout the Community, with connections to off-site roads supporting the same. The project Site would have two primary access roads along Deer Springs Road at Mesa Rock Road and Sarver Lane, with an additional access point at Camino Mayor off North Twin Oaks Valley Road. The Mesa Rock Road access would be built as a six-lane entry road with a median that transitions into a four-lane divided road farther into the Site, and then into a two-lane undivided roadway until it reaches the Sarver Lane access where it would transition into a three-lane undivided roadway. The loop road is primarily designed with a width of 32 feet and would include striped bike lanes and a 10-foot-wide multi-use pathway along its entire length. The bike lanes and multi-use pathway would connect to bike routes and a 10-foot-wide multi-use pathway along Deer Springs Road.

An electric bike share program would be included to further link the neighborhoods to one another and reduce internal vehicle trips. The electric bike share program would include the placement of a kiosk in close proximity to each planning area to allow electric bikes to be taken from one kiosk and left at another, encouraging sustainable transportation between planning areas within the project. The program includes the placement of eight kiosks throughout the Community, with 10 to

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20 electric bikes at each kiosk. Additionally, the project would include bike lanes, an extensive trail system consisting of roadside pathways within the linear greenbelts, and pathways. With incorporation of these internal circulation features, the project would provide residents the opportunity to access employment, education, and recreational and commercial uses via multiple modes of transportation.

Off-Site Mitigation Requirements

In addition to the improvements described above, traffic impacts to off-site roadways would necessitate various off-site improvements. These improvements are identified as mitigation measures to reduce traffic impacts. They include improvements to the Deer Springs Road/I-15 Interchange, Deer Springs Road, Twin Oaks Valley Road, Buena Creek Road, Monte Vista Drive, S. Santa Fe Avenue, and various intersections, and they are necessary to improve the capacity and operations of these roadways. Several of these roadway improvements are located within the jurisdiction of another lead agency. Because these additional off-site improvements are identified as mitigation measures, the EIR discusses the environmental effects of the improvements to the extent known at this time, and as required by CEQA, in less detail than the significant effects of the proposed project (See CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.4(a)(1)(D)).

Deer Springs Road

Of the off-site mitigation requirements identified in the EIR, the improvements to Deer Springs Road would involve two options. Option A would improve an approximately 6,600-foot-long section of the segment of Deer Springs Road between Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road to a 2.1B Community Collector (two lanes of travel with a continuous center turn lane). The balance of the road southwest into the city of San Marcos and east to I-15, including its intersections with Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road, would be improved to a 4.1A Major Road (a four-lane road with a raised median). Consistent with these sets of improvements, Option A would reclassify Deer Springs Road in the Mobility Element of the County's General Plan from a 6.2 Prime Arterial (six-lane) to a 4.1A Major Road with Raised Median and a 2.1B Community Collector with Continuous Turn Lane classifications. The centerline of Deer Springs Road would be realigned to ensure a minimum 750-foot turning radii along the entire alignment.

Option B would construct the entire length of the road from the I-15 interchange to its intersection with Twin Oaks Valley Road as a four-lane road, with an approximately 7,600-foot-long section of the road between Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road as a 4.1B Major Road (four lanes of travel with a continuous center turn lane), and the balance of the road, including its intersections with Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road, as a 4.1A Major Road. Option B would not reclassify Deer Springs Road; the roadway would remain as a 6.2 Prime Arterial (six-lane) in the

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Mobility Element of the General Plan. The centerline of Deer Springs Road would be realigned to ensure a minimum 750-foot turning radii along the entire alignment.

Both Option A and Option B would provide increased capacity on Deer Springs Road relative to existing conditions, although when considering level of service, only Option B would meet the County's level-of-service standards at project buildout. As is standard, the ultimate design of the road would be subject to County final engineering review and approval, whereby the County may require minor adjustments to the design details described herein.

Off-Site Utilities Improvements

Off-site sewer and water improvements would be completed in accordance with the approved water and sewer master plans prepared for the project. These improvements would be made in conjunction with surface improvements to Sarver Lane, Deer Springs Road, and Twin Oaks Valley Road. Additional segments of sewer would be improved in Twin Oaks Valley Road to Del Roy Avenue and East of Twin Oaks Valley Road within an existing Vallecitos Water District easement. Additionally, an 800-foot-long pipeline segment would require upsizing from the existing 18-inch-diameter line to a 21-inch-diameter line. This segment is located north of East Mission Road between Twin Oaks Valley Road and Vineyard Road within the City of San Marcos. The existing sewer is located behind a commercial/retail development. For the purposes of this analysis, it is assumed that the entire 30-foot-wide easement would be impacted to upsize the existing sewer line.

2.1 Land Use Designations and Zoning

The existing Community Plan Land Use Designations include General Commercial (C-1), Office-Professional (C-2), Semi-Rural 10 (SR-10), and Rural Lands 20 (RL-20). The proposed Community Plan Land Use Designations are Village Core Mixed Use (C-5), Semi-Rural 1 (SR-1) and 10 (SR-10), and Open Space Conservation (OS-C).

The proposed project would include a General Plan Amendment that would allow a greater intensity of clustered development beyond current planned land uses. The Site lies within the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan area and the Bonsall Community Plan area. The General Plan Land Use Element Regional Categories for the project Site is Rural Lands in the Bonsall Community Plan area, and Village, Semi-Rural, and Rural Lands in the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan area. The General Plan Amendment proposes to amend the Regional Category Map to change the Regional Category Designation from Rural to Semi-Rural for a portion of the project Site in the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan area. The boundary of the Village area in the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan area would not be modified and the acreage designated as Village would remain unchanged. No changes in

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Regional Category are proposed for the Bonsall Community Plan area. Proposed land uses on the project Site are shown in Figure 8.

Existing zoning on the project Site is General Commercial (C36), Office Professional (C30), Rural Residential (RR), Limited Agriculture (A70), Extractive (S82), and General Rural (S92). The proposed zoning would include General Commercial/Residential (C34), Single Family Residential (RS), Limited Agriculture (A70), and Open Space (S80). Proposed zoning is shown in Figure 9.

2.1.1 Surrounding Land Uses

Surrounding land uses to the north, west, and south of the project Site include large-lot, single-family development and avocado groves. Many of the prominent ridges surrounding the Site are occupied by existing homes. Lawrence Welk Village and the community of Hidden Meadows are located to the east of the project Site across I-15. South of the Site is a mobile home park, Golden Door Properties LLC, and estate development along the border of the City of San Marcos and the unincorporated portion of the County of San Diego.

2.2 Regulatory Framework

2.2.1 Federal

There are no relevant federal policies concerning the protection of visual resources that would be applicable to residential and commercial retail development on County of San Diego jurisdictional land.

2.2.2 State

California Environmental Quality Act

Under CEQA, impacts to aesthetic resources resulting from a project must be considered by state and local agencies. Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines includes a series of questions that agencies may use when assessing the potential aesthetic impacts of a proposed project. The questions, which identify scenic vistas, trees, rock outcropping, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway system as important scenic resources, often formulate the impact analysis within the relevant environmental document accompanying a project.

Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines states that the potential for aesthetic resource impacts exists if the project would:

- have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;

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- substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings viewed from a state scenic highway;
- substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; and/or
- create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The County of San Diego Department of Planning & Development Services has adopted specific guidelines for determining the significance of impacts to visual resources and dark skies and glare. Adopted County guidelines (and not CEQA Appendix G Guidelines) are used in this report when analyzing the potential impacts of the Newland Sierra Project.

California Scenic Highway System

Created by the California State Legislature in 1963, the California Scenic Highway Program includes highways designated by Caltrans as scenic. The purpose of the program is to protect the scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through conservation and land use regulation. For a highway to be included in the program, it must first be nominated by the specific city or county where it is located. The nomination/eligibility process also entails that the city/county identify and define the scenic corridor of the highway to better understand the extent of visual resources requiring conservation. For an eligible highway to be officially designated and included in the program, the local government with jurisdiction over lands abutting the highway must implement a scenic highway corridor protection program that safeguards the scenic appearance of the corridor. Corridor protection may be achieved through a variety of means, including regulation of land uses and intensity of development, detailed land and site planning, control of outdoor advertising, consideration of earthmoving and landscaping, and the design and appearance of structures and equipment. If the local Caltrans district and State Scenic Highway Coordinators determine that the corridor protection program meets the five legislatively required elements discussed above, a recommendation to designate the highway as scenic is forwarded to the Caltrans Director (Caltrans 2008).

There are four officially designated scenic highways in San Diego County: State Route (SR) 163 (from the north to the south boundary of Balboa Park), SR-75 (from Imperial Beach city limits to Avenida Del Sol in the city of Coronado, and the Coronado Bridge), SR-125 (from SR-94 to SR-8), and SR-78 (from the west to east boundary of Anza-Borrego Desert State Park). There are no designated or eligible state scenic highways in the immediate project area. The nearest scenic highway, SR-76, is an eligible state scenic highway but is not officially designated by Caltrans (Caltrans 2014).

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2.2.3 Local

San Diego County General Plan

The County General Plan, through elements established to address the various issues accompanying planning and development, provides guidance for the protection of visual resources. Select policies within the Land Use, Mobility, and Conservation and Open Space Elements of the General Plan (County of San Diego 2011a) address the protection of existing visual character and/or quality of areas and contain general direction regarding the minimization of adverse impacts to visual resources. Policies from the remaining elements of the County General Plan were not considered applicable, as they do not concern the protection of visual resources.

The following goals and policies of Land Use (L), Mobility (M), and Conservation and Open Space (COS) Elements concern the preservation of visual and scenic resources:

- **Goal LU-2: Maintenance of the County’s Rural Character.** Conservation and enhancement of the unincorporated County’s varied communities, rural setting, and character.
 - **Policy LU-2.8: Mitigation of Development Impacts.** Require measures that minimize significant impacts to surrounding areas from uses or operations that cause excessive noise, vibrations, dust, odor, aesthetic impairment and/or are detrimental to human health and safety.
 - **Policy LU-2.9: Maintaining Rural Character.** Consider level of service criteria, in accordance with Policy M-2.1, to determine whether adding lanes to a Mobility Element road would adversely impact the rural character of a community or cause significant environmental impacts. In those instances, consider other options to mitigate LOS where appropriate.
- **Goal LU-6: Development – Environmental Balance.** A built environment in balance with the natural environment, scarce resources, natural hazards, and the unique local character of individual communities.
 - **Policy LU-6.6: Integration of Natural Features into Project Design.** Require incorporation of natural features (including mature oaks, indigenous trees, and rock formations) into proposed development and require avoidance of sensitive environmental resources.
 - **Policy LU-6.9: Development Conformance with Topography:** Require development to conform to the natural topography to limit grading; incorporate and not significantly alter the dominant physical characteristics of a site; and to utilize natural drainage and topography in conveying stormwater to the maximum extent practicable.

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- **Policy LU-10.2: Development – Environmental Resource Relationship:** Require development in Semi-Rural and Rural areas to respect and conserve the unique natural features and rural character, and avoid sensitive or intact environmental resources and hazard areas.
- **Policy LU-11.2: Compatibility with Community Character:** Require that commercial, office, and industrial development be located, scaled, and designed to be compatible with the unique character of the community.
- **Policy LU-12.4: Planning for Compatibility:** Plan and site infrastructure for public utilities and public facilities in a manner compatible with community character, minimize visual and environmental impacts, and whenever feasible, locate any facilities and supporting infrastructure outside preserve areas. Require context sensitive Mobility Element road design that is compatible with community character and minimizes visual and environmental impacts; for Mobility Element roads identified in Table M-4, an LOS D or better may not be achieved.
- **Policy M-4.5: Context Sensitive Road Design:** Design and construct roads that are compatible with the local terrain and the uses, scale and pattern of the surrounding development. Provide wildlife crossings in road design and construction where it would minimize impacts in wildlife corridors.
- **Policy COS-11.1: Protection of Scenic Resources.** Require the protection of scenic highways, corridors, regionally significant scenic vistas, and natural features, including prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, reservoirs, and scenic landscapes.
- **Policy COS-11.2: Scenic Resource Connections.** Promote the connection of regionally significant natural features, designated historic landmarks, and points of regional historic, visual, and cultural interest via designated scenic corridors, such as scenic highways and regional trails.
- **Policy COS-11.3: Development Siting and Design.** Require development within visually sensitive areas to minimize visual impacts and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in rural areas, through the following:
 - Creative site planning;
 - Integration of natural features into the project;
 - Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape;
 - Minimal disturbance of topography;

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- Clustering of development so as to preserve a balance of open space vistas, natural features, and community character; and
- Creation of contiguous open space networks.
- **Policy COS-11.7: Underground Utilities.** Require new development to place utilities underground and encourage “undergrounding” in existing development to maintain viewsheds, reduce hazards associated with hanging lines and utility poles, and to keep pace with current and future technologies.
- **Policy COS-12.1: Hillside and Ridgeline Development Density.** Protect undeveloped ridgelines and steep hillsides by maintaining semi-rural or rural designations on these areas.
- **Policy COS-12.2: Development Location on Ridges.** Require development to preserve the physical features by being located down and away from ridgelines so that structures are not silhouetted against the sky.
- **Policy COS-13.1: Restrict Light and Glare.** Restrict outdoor light and glare from development projects in Semi-Rural and Rural Lands and designated rural communities to retain the quality of night skies by minimizing light pollution.
- **Policy COS-13.2: Palomar and Mount Laguna.** Minimize, to the maximum extent feasible, the impact of development on the dark skies surrounding Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories to maintain dark skies which are vital to these two world-class observatories by restricting exterior light sources within the impact areas of the observatories.

In addition to goals and policies, the General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element establishes a County Scenic Highway System that is composed of particularly scenic segments of county roadways, state routes, and interstate freeways. Within the North County Metro and Bonsall areas, I-15 (Escondido city limits north to Riverside County line) and Twin Oaks Valley Road (Gopher Canyon Road to San Marcos city limits) are included within the County Scenic Highway System (County of San Diego 2011a).

North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan

The southern portion of the proposed project Site is located within the North County Metropolitan Subarea. The subarea is composed of non-contiguous areas interspersed among the cities of Escondido, San Diego, San Marcos, Vista, and Oceanside, and includes the unincorporated communities of Hidden Meadows (located east of the project Site and I-15) and Twin Oaks (located west of I-15). The North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan does not contain specific goals or policies for visual resources. Nonetheless, Goal 1 of the plan is to

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“accommodate urban development in appropriate areas” and Goal 4 is “protect environmental resources” through use of rural and semi-rural land use designation. In addition, the plan identifies specific areas requiring special attention “to conserve resources in a manner best satisfying public and private objectives” (County of San Diego 2011b). Resource Conservation Areas (RCAs) in the subregional plan area include scenic landforms such as the San Marcos Mountains and the Merriam Mountains. According to the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan, within RCAs, “County departments and other public agencies shall give careful consideration and special environmental analysis to all projects that they intend to carry out, propose, or approve” (County of San Diego 2011b).

Bonsall Community Plan

The northern portion of the project Site is located in the Bonsall Community Plan area (CPA). According to the Bonsall Community Plan, the CPA consists of low-density estate-type residential homes located far apart from one another on hillsides and hilltops, and in valleys. Homes are typically surrounded by fallow fields, undisturbed native vegetation, and agriculture. In addition, estate residential uses, agricultural, and equestrian uses are key factors in Bonsall’s rural community character (County of San Diego 2011c).

Relevant policies of the Bonsall Community Plan related to community character and visual and/or scenic resources include the following:

- **Policy LU-1.1.3:** Require development to be sensitive to the topography, physical context, and community character of Bonsall.
- **Policy LU-1.2.1:** Require development that is designed to be consistent with the rural character of the Bonsall community.
- **Policy LU-3.1.2:** Require subdivision design to minimize adverse impacts to community character, or to the environment, and to mitigate any impacts from other constraints on the land that could not be avoided. Require mitigation actions to remain within the CPA.
- **Policy LU-3.1.5:** Preserve ridgelines by siting buildings below ridges or set back with sufficient distance to minimize visual impacts. Encourage screening to visually shield all structures, including the use of vegetation, as well as appropriate and varied building materials.
- **Policy LU-5.1.2:** Require grading to be contoured to blend with natural topography, rather than consist of straight edges.

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- **Policy LU-5.1.3:** Minimize grading to preserve natural landforms, major rock outcroppings and areas of existing mature trees. Integrate hillside development with existing topography and landforms.
- **Policy LU-5.1.4:** Restrict, to the maximum extent feasible, extensive grading for development projects in areas with slopes that are 20% or greater, in order to preserve and protect the environment, and to lessen grading and erosion.
- **Policy LU-5.1.5:** Require development on slopes to be stepped to follow and preserve topography to the maximum extent feasible.
- **Policy LU-5.1.6:** Minimize cut and fill grading for roads and access ways to the absolute minimum necessary.
- **Policy CM-5.1.3:** Require new development to provide trees, in compliance with the suggested trees for defensible space, within the development but along and outside of the public right of way.
- **Policy COS-1.1.4:** Require development to be compatible with adjacent natural preserves, sensitive habitat areas, agricultural lands, and recreation areas, or provide transition or buffer areas.
- **Policy COS-1.1.5:** Require that landscaping be designed to prevent erosion on graded sites and, if adjacent to sensitive habitats, require re-vegetation with the appropriate drought tolerant plant species with specific restrictions on the use of any invasive species.
- **Policy COS-1.4.1:** Discourage street lighting, unless necessary for safety. Require street lighting to meet basic safety standards and the County Light Pollution Code, Ordinance #7155.

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance

The provisions of Sections 5000 through 5964 of San Diego County's Zoning Ordinance, also known as the Special Area Regulations, set forth regulations to ensure that consideration is provided for areas of special interest or unusual value. When Special Area Regulations require the issuance of a Minor Use Permit or a Major Use Permit, such permits are only issued when the proposed use satisfies all conditions and requirements of the Special Area Regulations and is found consistent with the intent and purpose of the applicable Special Area Regulations. The Special Area Regulations and associated Zoning Ordinance Sections that apply to the proposed project include Scenic Area (S), Sections 5200–5212.

The provisions of Sections 6000 through 6991 of San Diego County's Zoning Ordinance outline general zoning regulations and include a few regulations regarding glare and outdoor lighting.

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Sections of the general regulations applicable to the proposed project include Sections 6320, 6322, and 6324 (County of San Diego 1978).

San Diego Light Pollution Code

The Light Pollution Code was developed by the County Department of Planning & Development Services and Department of Public Works in cooperation with lighting engineers, astronomers, land use planners from San Diego Gas & Electric (SDG&E), Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories, and local community planning and sponsor groups to address and minimize the impact of new sources of light pollution on nighttime views. For purposes of lighting requirements, the code separates the unincorporated portion of the County of San Diego into two zones: Zone A and Zone B. Zone A includes all unincorporated lands located within a 15-mile radius of the Palomar or the Mount Laguna observatories, and Zone B includes all areas not included in Zone A (County of San Diego 2009a). Section 59.105 includes general lighting requirements applicable to all unincorporated lands in the County, and Section 59.106 includes shielding requirements per fixture by lighting type (i.e., outdoor lighting used for outdoor sales, eating areas, or advertisements (Class I), security lighting (Class II), and decorative lighting (Class III)) and according to location (Zone A or B) (County of San Diego 1986). Because the Palomar Observatory is located greater than 15 miles from the eastern project boundary, the proposed project is located in Zone B.

I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines

The I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines apply to the unincorporated portion of the I-15 corridor extending from the northern city limits of Escondido to the Riverside County line (County of San Diego n.d.). The I-15 corridor extends approximately 20 miles from the Escondido city limits to the Riverside County line. It contains the 0.5-acre to 2-mile “viewshed” area on either side of the freeway, which is what generally can be seen while driving along I-15. The “B” Design Review Area Special Designator is applied to properties within the corridor, which requires the preparation of a Site Plan in accordance with the Scenic Preservation Guidelines. The eastern portion of the proposed project has an existing “B” Special Area Designator (see Figure 10). In addition, the proposed project is located within Segments 1 and 2 of the I-15 Corridor Study Area (six segments have been delineated) and within the North County Metropolitan Subregional Plan and Bonsall Community Plan areas.

The three objectives of the scenic preservation guidelines are as follows (County of San Diego n.d.):

- Protect and enhance scenic resources within the I-15 corridor planning area while accommodating coordinated planned development, which harmonizes with the natural environment.

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- Establish standards to regulate the visual quality and the environmental integrity of the entire corridor.
- Encourage scenic preservation and development practices compatible with the goals and policies of the five community and subregional planning areas encompassed by the I-15 corridor area, when appropriate.

To achieve the identified objectives, design standards related to Site planning, parking and circulation design, lighting, landscape design, public utilities and safety, development for steep topography and natural features, and architecture were established and remain applicable to development within the corridor study area. Although all policies apply to the proposed project, the following policies are particularly relevant as they pertain to visual character and/or lighting:

- **Site Design, Site Planning Standards, Policy 1:** Individual projects shall reinforce the character of the sites, the attributes of adjacent properties and preserve the viewsheds, natural topographic features and natural watercourses.
- **Site Design, Site Planning Standards, Policy 4:** Building orientation shall take maximum advantage of existing views and create view corridors.
- **Site Design, Site Planning Standards, Policy 5:** Ridgeline projects can be highly sensitive and are generally discouraged; (a) Ridgeline projects shall maintain a low profile appearance and the natural physical character of the ridgeline shall be substantially maintained; (b) Ridgeline projects shall be limited to one story; (c) Ridgelines that have been graded or disturbed shall be supplemented with a sufficient amount of trees, shrubs, and ground cover to minimize visual impacts resulting from such disturbances.
- **Parking and Circulation Design Standards, Policy 2:** Project entries shall provide for safe and efficient circulation; (a) Project entries and the transition from major circulation routes into the project interior shall be accomplished through the use of landforms, open space, landscape plantings, and architectural elements (i.e., wall, signs); (b) The number of driveway entrances into parking areas from public streets shall be minimized. Use of common easements for parking and circulation systems integrated between properties shall be encouraged; (c) The number of driveway entrances into parking areas from public streets shall be minimized. Use of common easements for parking and circulation systems integrated between properties shall be encouraged.
- **Site Lighting Standards, Policy 1:** Site lighting shall minimize emission of light rays into both the night sky and neighboring properties, especially as it pertains to Mt. Palomar Observatory; (a) Site lighting shall be limited to that necessary for security, safety and identification and shall be integrated with project landscape design.

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- **Site Lighting Standards, Policy 2:** Site lighting plans that conflict with the character of the community shall be discouraged.
- **Landscape Design Standards, Policy 2:** Project boundary landscaping shall compliment adjacent landforms and plant materials.
- **Landscape Design Standards, Policy 3:** Landscape plans shall utilize native and drought tolerant plants, where possible, per the plant list provided by County staff.
- **Landscape Design Standards, Policy 4:** Trees and plantings adjacent to pedestrian paths and within parking areas shall be selected to enhance the human scale; (a) Tree canopies shall be encouraged to soften the visual impact of vehicular circulation and parking areas, and relieve them from heat build-up. Trees shall be placed away from entrances to buildings, parking lots, and street intersections for visibility and safety, where possible; (b) Low-scale plantings shall be located adjacent to driveway entrances and street corners, where possible, and shall not obscure drive visibility; (c) Parking areas shall be visually screened with peripheral landscaping, wherever feasible. Exposed vehicular use areas shall include a minimum of 10% of the paved areas in landscaping dispersed throughout the parking area.
- **Development Standards for Steep Topography and Natural Features, Policy 1:** Extensive grading of slope areas within viewsheds will be minimized; (a) Revegetation and erosion control shall be provided in all newly graded areas.
- **Development Standards for Steep Topography and Natural Features, Policy 2:** Hillside development shall be integrated with existing topography and landforms. Areas of steep topography, tree stands, hillside agricultural activity, and rock outcroppings shall be respected and preserved.
- **Development Standards for Steep Topography and Natural Features, Policy 3:** Variety in the development of hillsides shall be encouraged through the use of appropriate site preparation techniques, grading techniques, and in the configuration, size, and placement of lots.
- **Development Standards for Steep Topography and Natural Features, Policy 6:** The visual quality shall be maximized and the erosion potential shall be minimized by planting native and naturalized plants, especially in disturbed areas adjacent to upgraded hillsides and watercourses.
- **Development Standards for Steep Topography and Natural Features, Policy 8:** Any grading above 25% slope will blend with the surrounding area, and be landscaped appropriately to look natural.

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- **Architectural Design, Policy 1:** Building forms, materials, and colors shall complement adjacent topography, landscape, and buildings in the area; (1) Architectural harmony with the surrounding community shall be achieved through the use of natural appearing materials and complementary styles; (2) Colors for primary building forms shall be coordinated with landscaping materials. Earthtones and muted pastels are preferred for large areas, with primary colors limited to accent points and trim; (4) Where a site is visible from higher elevations, roof forms shall be considered integral design elements with consideration given to colors and pattern of roofing materials and (5) The use of mirrored glass, which can cause the sun to glare into drivers' eyes and, is therefore, a potential safety hazard, shall be prohibited on buildings visible from I-15.
- **Architectural Design, Policy 2:** Building forms shall be of appropriate scale, provide visual interest, avoid block-like configurations, and, where feasible, be integrated into the existing topography; (3) Building forms shall be scaled to step up and away from primary circulation routes and from each other; parallel and continuous building facades and paved surfaces shall be avoided, where possible.
- **Architectural Design, Policy 3:** Signage shall not adversely impact the environmental and visual quality of the area; (1) All signs shall be limited to the minimum size and height necessary to adequately identify a business location; (2) All signs shall be kept as low to the ground as possible; (3) Signs shall be used for identification, not advertisement; (4) Signage design shall be carefully integrated with the site and building design concepts to create a unified appearance for the total development; (5) Signs shall be predominately constructed of natural materials, non-moving, and externally illuminated; and (6) Off-premise signs shall be prohibited, except for temporary real estate directional, community identification, and directional signs, as specified in Section 6207 of the County Zoning Ordinance.

The project proposes to amend the existing North County Metropolitan I-15 Design Corridor boundaries to better follow the topographical limit of the I-15 viewshed on the project Site. Following the amendment, the majority of the proposed project (with the exception of the Town Center planning area) would be excluded from the design corridor boundaries.

3 VISUAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PROJECT

3.1 Project Setting

The proposed project Site is located within an unincorporated portion of the County of San Diego within the North County Metro Subregion, as shown in Figure 1, Regional Map. The North County Metro Subregion is composed of several non-contiguous areas interspersed among the cities of Escondido, San Diego, San Marcos, Vista, and Oceanside, with the most easterly portion adjacent to Valley Center. The North County Metro Subregion includes the communities of Hidden Meadows and Twin Oaks, with the proposed project located in the community of Twin Oaks. The proposed project is directly west of I-15, north of SR-78, and south of SR-79. The cities of Escondido and San Marcos are approximately 1 mile south of the Site. The Site is bounded by I-15 on the east, Deer Springs Road (County Road S12) on the south, and Twin Oaks Valley Road on the west, with a small portion of the northwestern edge of the Site traversed by Twin Oaks Valley Road. Gopher Canyon Road is located approximately 0.5 mile north of the Site.

The project Site is located within the northern portion of the Merriam Mountains, a narrow chain of low mountains generally running north/south with a variety of east/west-trending ridgelines and scattered peaks. These mountains originate near the northern end of the urban parts of the city of Escondido and are bordered by Gopher Canyon Road to the north, I-15 to the east, and Twin Oaks Valley Road to the west. The mountain range is approximately 8.5 miles long and the proposed project would be situated on approximately 3 miles of the northern portion of the Merriam Mountains.

Natural topography of the Site is composed of hills and valleys dominated by significant rock outcroppings with moderate to steeply sloping terrain. On-site elevation ranges from approximately 660 feet amsl near the northwestern limits of the proposed project Site at Twin Oaks Valley Road to approximately 1,750 feet amsl in the west central portion of the Site. Topography generally increases toward the center of the Site, forming a number of ridgelines and some prominent rock outcrops. In some locations the gently sloping perimeter gradually rises to higher elevations, and in other areas the slopes are more acute. Portions of the Site contain Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO)-defined steep slope lands in excess of 25 percent slope. Prominent, east/west-trending ridgelines divide the Site into five separate drainage basins, which are tributaries to Moosa Canyon, Gopher Canyon, and San Marcos Creek. Gopher Canyon is located north of the project Site, and a small portion of the South Fork of Gopher Canyon Creek runs southeast/northwest through the northwestern area of the Site, eventually meeting the San Luis Rey River. Both Gopher Canyon and the San Marcos Mountains show favorable attributes as habitat and corridors for larger wildlife.

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The proposed project Site is currently undeveloped and is largely dominated by undisturbed chaparral. Chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), white fairy-lantern (*Calochortus albus*), ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.), and other species characterizing the on-site chaparral range from approximately 5 to 10 feet in height, display green to brown to greyish colors, and are often intermixed with patches of bare soil. Smaller pockets of coastal scrub habitat are scattered throughout the chaparral across the project Site. On-site biological resources are depicted in Figure 11. In addition to native vegetation communities, a number of dirt roads and trails that provide access to each parcel and service roads for the existing water infrastructure traverse the project Site. The tan-colored bare soil surface of trails and roads are distinguishable from adjacent natural habitat due to contrasts in line and color. Portions of the Site have been and continue to be used for various unauthorized land uses, including horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, off-roading, motorcycling, shooting, and occasional dumping. An abandoned quarry is located in the northwest portion of the Site fronting Twin Oaks Valley Road, and an abandoned private landing strip is located in the north-central portion of the Site.

3.2 Project Viewshed

The project viewshed is depicted in Figure 12. For purposes of this report, viewshed is the landform from which the proposed project would be visible. The viewshed presented in Figure 12 does not consider the screening effect of existing vegetation and structures. Although the proposed project encompasses a portion of the Merriam Mountains, the project viewshed is relatively limited in extent due to the design of development toward valleys and other less visually prominent locations. Development of ridgelines would largely be avoided, and with the exception of the southeasterly development area, the proposed project would be well-screened and difficult to detect by viewers in the surrounding area. Views to the proposed project from ridgelines to the east and northeast are available; however, views at these locations tend to be from private residences and, as such, they are not available to the public. The viewshed analysis indicates that the viewshed extends to I-15, Deer Springs Road, North Twin Oaks Valley Road, Twin Oaks, Hidden Meadows, Lawrence Welk Village, and other locations near the project Site.

3.3 Landscape Units

A landscape unit (LU) is a portion of the regional landscape that exhibits a distinct visual character. Topography, vegetation, and existing landform contribute to the distinctness of visual character. Slopes, watershed ridges, rock outcroppings, vegetation, and other physical elements can serve to distinguish one unit from another. The lines and elements that define landscape character units may be abrupt and obvious (a mountainous ridgeline for example) but may also be less obvious and transitional (a transitional uplands area featuring irregular clumps of granite boulders that slowly gradate to distinct boulder-strewn mountain foothills). A landscape unit

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often corresponds to a place or district that is commonly known among local viewers by its visual character.

For purposes of this study, a regional perspective to landscapes was considered, and two LUs were identified in the project area: the I-15 Corridor LU and the Twin Oaks Valley LU. The LU boundaries are depicted in Figure 13.

I-15 Corridor Landscape Unit

The I-15 Corridor LU is composed of the terrain, vegetation, and development visible to I-15 motorists near the project Site. The landscape is characterized by a series of north/south-running rolling hills and steep slopes located east and west of I-15. The presence of high-elevation terrain parallel to I-15 creates a generally narrow and enclosed landscape that is occasionally interrupted by a system of east/west canyons and drainages that expand available views and broaden the scene. The hills and steep slopes of the corridor typically support native chaparral vegetation of varying density, and large, white to gray-colored boulder outcrops. Undeveloped terrain tends to be densely covered by a mosaic of brown and gray colors (color varies slightly by season) that are intermittently interrupted by thin, red to tan-colored horizontal lines associated with access roads. In contrast, developed hills and flat, lower-lying terrain features pockets of single-family residential development intermixed with non-native landscaping, remnants of native vegetation, plant nurseries, gas stations, and other commercial uses. As with residential and commercial uses, pockets of agricultural operations, including avocado crops on east- and west-facing slopes and interstate-adjacent nurseries, are visible along the corridor.

Large-lot residential development atop ridgelines is commonplace through the corridor but is more prevalent north of Deer Springs Road. Single-family residences are perched high above the corridor and the structures and ornamental landscaping are silhouetted against the sky. The base of more moderately sloped east- and west-facing terrain and lower-lying valley areas tend to be developed with residential and recreational uses. The most prominent occurrence of this development pattern is the golf course and multi-story condominium development at Lawrence Welk Village. Mobile homes associated with the Champagne Village development and the golf course and surrounding residential development of near Castle Creek are other examples of development within flatter, more favorable terrain areas of the LU. The abovementioned developments are visible to interstate motorists and create visual contrast with the surrounding natural elements in the landscape.

Photographs of existing visual conditions within the I-15 Corridor Landscape Unit are presented in Figure 13a.

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Twin Oaks Valley Landscape Unit

Located west and southwest of the proposed project, the Twin Oaks Valley LU consists of the flat and moderately developed valley bottom and surrounding foothills and ridgelines of the Deer Springs Road and Twin Oaks Valley areas. Twin Oaks Valley is generally bound by the Merriam Mountains and San Marcos Mountains to the north and rising terrain located west and east of Twin Oaks Valley Road and the Twin Oaks Valley Golf Course to the south. Development within the landscape unit consists of residential, agricultural, recreation, an utility (i.e., the Twin Oaks Valley Water Treatment Plans and overhead electrical lines) uses.

Development along Deer Spring Road generally consists of 10- to 20-acre sized lots featuring one- or two-story homes and typically, several accessory structures surrounded by landscaping, disturbed vegetation, and vacant fields. Trees along Deer Springs Road fronting property lines are commonplace. Although several lots are visibly maintained and landscaping appears to be tended to on a regular basis, other property owners have elected to use the vacant portions of their property for the storage of personal items, including seemingly inoperable vehicles and trailers. Although generally hidden from view due to perimeter fencing and landscaping, the multiple building, gardens, and groves of the Golden Door Properties LLC are also located along Deer Springs Road in the LU. Development adjacent to Deer Springs Road tends to back to mountainous terrain featuring dense chaparral vegetation and occasional boulder outcrops and avocado groves.

Development along Twin Oaks Valley Road generally consists of 1- to 10-acre sized lots featuring modest one-story single-family residential structures intermixed with tall oak, pine, eucalyptus and palm trees east and west of Twin Oaks Valley Road. A Community market, floral stands, tool repair shop, the approximately two-story Home Town farms warehouse, active agricultural fields and Twin Oaks Elementary School are also located along the Twin Oaks Valley Road corridor. In addition to nurseries and farm lands located farther east and west of the corridor, small, gated residential development and denser, tract-style single-family residential neighborhoods are also located in the LU. Overhead electrical lines are located throughout the LU and travel alongside Twin Oaks Valley Road and Buena Creek Road. The North Twin Oaks Valley Road landscape consists of undeveloped, hilly terrain, large nurseries and growing operations, active agricultural fields, large residential lots featuring expansive two –story homes, equestrian rings and stable facilities, and more modest one- and two-story homes. The Twin Oaks Valley Water Treatment Plant is located in the northern extent of the LU and consists of multiple blue-green colored administrative and treatment buildings, tanks, and tall venting pipes.

Although residential development is clustered at the valley floor and extends to low-lying foothills, several ridgelines have been modified by grading associated with and construction of residences and access roads. The natural density of vegetation on west and south-facing

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slopes in the area has been altered because of fuel modification practices at development boundaries. Agricultural development is prevalent in the valley and primarily consists of small commercial nurseries featuring long, linear rows of container trees and shrubs and larger operations featuring long rows of rectangular, lightly colored greenhouses. Several parcels have been cleared and/or tilled and as a result, these lands display a relatively flat form with horizontal lines of low vegetation adjacent to linear bands of bare soil. In addition to commercial nurseries and planted fields, avocado and other fruit tree operations occur within the valley and on east- and west-facing foothills of terrain in the area. The orderly organization of crops and the spherical form and bright green color of fruit tree canopies produces a visual contrast when viewed against the rough form and drab green and brown color of native chaparral vegetation that populates surrounding terrain.

Recreational uses in the area are concentrated near the intersection of North Twin Oaks Valley Road and Deer Springs Road. A large equestrian center featuring a feed and supply store, outdoor riding rings, a large covered riding arena and stables is located east of North Twin Oaks Valley Road and north of Deer Springs Road. Maintained by the City of San Marcos, the 39-acre Walnut Grove Park is located southeast of the equestrian center and across Twin Oaks Valley Road and features a relatively narrow and paved surface parking lot that wraps around the perimeter of the park, a large, triangular-shaped turf area for team sporting events, a historic barn structure used for community meetings and other events, two outdoor riding rings/arenas, and a recreation center. A dirt equestrian trail lines the perimeter of the park and trail extends over one mile to the south and east along Sycamore Drive and East La Cienega Road. In addition to the large public park, turf play areas and two baseball/softball diamonds are located approximately 0.20 and 0.30 mile to the south of Walnut Grove Park at Twin Oaks Elementary School and The Oaks Christian Church.

Photographs of existing visual conditions within the Twin Oaks Valley Landscape Unit are presented in Figure 13b.

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4 EXISTING VISUAL RESOURCES AND VIEWER RESPONSE

4.1 Existing Visual Resources

4.1.1 Visual Character

The visual character of each of the identified Landscape Units (LUs) is described above in Section 3.3, Landscape Units.

4.1.2 Visual Quality

A discussion of the visual quality as it pertains to the vividness, intactness, and unity associated with each identified landscape unit identified in the project area is provided below. Vividness, intactness, and unity are descriptively discussed below and visual quality is evaluated according to a scale of low, moderate and high.

I-15 Corridor Landscape Unit

As described above, the east- and west-facing slopes of terrain adjacent to I-15 is covered by brown and drab green colored chaparral shrubs, small boulders, and larger expanses of lightly colored boulder outcrops. The darkly colored, undulating lines of ridges create a strongly defined skyline that is occasionally interrupted by the silhouettes of landscape trees and the boxy, rectangular form of ridgeline residential development. With the exception of a long, diagonal line created by Welk View Drive and variations in the form, color, and density of vegetation associated with fuel modification, the more distant west-facing slopes of local terrain appear intact. In contrast, east-facing slopes are located in closer proximity to I-15 and steep terrain cuts and thinning of native vegetation are visible along the interstate. The light green color, tall spreading form and dense organization of commercial avocado crops also cover several hillsides west of I-15 and these features contrast with the relatively low form and dull greens, browns and grey colors of native chaparral vegetation. Rugged ridgelines increase the vividness of the landscape, and there is noticeable contrast between the rough textures and drab color of native vegetation and pockets of light green-colors crowns of agricultural crops. The intactness and unity of the landscape, however, is reduced due to residential and other visible development that tends to be concentrated on lower lying terrain located east of the interstate; the visual pattern of valley development and primarily intact slopes, and interrupted ridgelines is repeated throughout the delineated corridor. The I-15 Corridor LU is considered to be of moderate visual quality and has a moderate sensitivity to change.

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Twin Oaks Valley Landscape Unit

The Twin Oaks Valley LU consists of the flat and moderately developed valley bottom and surrounding foothills and ridgelines of the Deer Springs Road and Twin Oaks Valley areas. The valley bottom has been developed with residential, agricultural, recreation, and utility uses but also features unaltered parcels supporting native vegetation. Residential and agricultural development also extends to several foothills areas where these uses are intermixed with boulder outcrops and intact dark green and brown colored chaparral vegetation. Ridgelines generally display rugged and undulating lines but evidence of alteration (i.e., residential development and associated fuel modification) atop ridges is visible. The Twin Oaks Valley landscape unit displays an altogether consistent visual character; hillside and ridgeline residential development and fuel modification practices reduce the memorability and intactness of terrain and vegetation. Unaltered ridgelines and chaparral and boulder covered slopes at the northern portion of the Twin Oaks Valley LU enhance the vividness of the landscape but due to noticeable alterations to landform and vegetation associated with single-family residential development and agricultural production, the area is considered to be of moderately low visual quality and has moderately low sensitivity to change.

4.2 Viewer Response

Viewer response is based on several factors including viewer sensitivity, viewer groups, viewer exposure, and viewer awareness. Each of these factors influences how a viewer might respond to a change or changes in the environment and in particular to changes involving development of a site from a natural, undeveloped state. Each factor contributing to viewer response is discussed below.

4.2.1 Viewer Sensitivity

The Newland Sierra project Site is primarily located within the North County Metro Subregional Plan area but also extends into the Bonsall Community Plan area. Both the North County Metro Subregional Plan and the Bonsall Community Plan areas have adopted subregional/community plans. In addition, the project Site encompasses lands subject to review by the I-15 Corridor Design Review Board and the Bonsall Community Sponsor Group. In March 2015, the Bonsall Community Sponsor Group submitted comments on the Notice of Preparation for the Newland Sierra Project from the Bonsall Community Sponsor Group. Based on the comments received, the concerns of the Bonsall community as they relate to the Newland Sierra Project include the following: locating growth far from existing and planned communities, infrastructure, and services (and as a result, increasing greenhouse gas emissions); alteration of the Site and urbanization of the existing rural agricultural community; disruption of wildlife corridors; failing to provide transit options; and development of commercial uses along the I-15 corridor. Comments on the NOP were not

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received from the Twin Oaks Valley and Hidden Meadows Community Sponsor Groups and the project has yet to be presented to the I-15 design review board.

Although the specific concerns of the I-15 design review board and the Twin Oaks Valley and Hidden Meadow Community Sponsor Groups are not known at this time, concerns similar to those expressed by the Bonsall Community Sponsor Group are anticipated. As such, concerns are likely to include effects to the existing rural character of the project Site as a result of grading activities and construction of residential neighborhoods, commercial uses, and roads. Although the project viewshed is limited in extent due to the screening effect of terrain (see Figure 12, Viewshed), vegetation and structures, the project would be visible to local area residents and motorists on surrounding area roadways including Interstate 15, Deer Springs Road, North Twin Oaks Valley Road, Old Highway 395 and Mountain Meadows Road. Also, policies established in County of San Diego General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element, the North County Metro Subregional Plan, the Bonsall Community Plan and the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines support the protection of existing visual resources and character and Interstate 15 and Twin Oaks Valley Road are included in the County Scenic Highway Program. Therefore, for purposes of this report, a high level of visual sensitivity is assumed in the project area.

4.2.2 Viewer Groups

Viewer groups analyzed in this study consist of individuals that frequent public viewpoints in the project viewshed. Primary viewer groups exposed to the project consist of surrounding residents, motorists and recreational users.

4.2.3 Viewer Exposure

The number of viewers in area residences (stationary view), and the duration of their view of a project would be very different from the number of people afforded views of the project from a highway or roadway (moving view). Whether the viewers on the highway and/or roadway are residents of the local community or visitors may also affect their responses to changes occurring within a viewshed.

Viewer exposure is typically assessed by measuring the number of viewers exposed to the resource change, type of viewer activity, duration of their view, speed at which the viewer moves, and position of the viewer. Portions of the proposed project Site are currently visible to nearby residences in the Twin Oaks Valley, Lawrence Welk Village and Hidden Meadows areas. Generally, residents are afforded long-term/permanent views of the surrounding landscape and as such, their rate of exposure is high. However, as previously discussed, exposure is also assessed by position of the viewer that may include the presence of intervening elements capable of screening the proposed project from view. Viewing angle and distance of the viewer to the

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proposed project must also be considered in the assessment of viewer exposure and response. In addition to residents, motorists on I-15, Deer Springs Road, Mountain Meadow Road, North Twin Oaks Valley Road and other local area roadways are afforded views to portions of the proposed project. Due to a relatively brief view and high speed of travel, motorists are generally afforded short-term/temporary views of the surrounding landscape and as such, viewer exposure is moderately low but ultimately dependent on several factors as discussed above for residences. Lastly, although the duration of views is longer and speed of travel is slower than that of motorists, Twin Oaks Valley area recreationists including park goers at Walnut Grove Park, equestrians, and trail users are considered to have short-term/temporary views to the southernmost portions of the proposed project.

Viewer exposure is described in detail in Section 5, Visual Impact Assessment.

4.2.4 Viewer Awareness

A viewer's response is also affected by the degree to which he/she is receptive to the visual details, character, and quality of the surrounding landscape. A viewer's ability to perceive the landscape is affected by his/her activity. A viewer on vacation in San Diego County would probably take pleasure in looking at the landscape, and an individual may be strongly attached to the view from his/her home, but a local County resident commuting to work may not "register" those same visual resources on a daily basis.

Viewer awareness for the various viewer groups is described in detail in Section 5, Visual Impact Assessment.

5 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The visual impact assessment uses visual simulations of the proposed project from key views to analyze the level of visual change and overall effects to visual resources within the project viewshed. Key views are essentially static images of the area that are selected based on proximity to likely viewer locations. Visual resources are experienced in dynamic conditions as people move through the environment. This dynamic experience forms human perception of surroundings and perception that can be modified by many variables such as viewer activity (e.g., driving, work activities, recreational activities).

This visual impact assessment focuses on the dynamic experience associated with the proposed project and uses key view simulations to inform the analysis. Factors that modify perception and public attitudes are considered in order to reach conclusions regarding visual resource impacts and significance determinations. The potential effects of the project on visual resources are evaluated for each key view in the context of the overall LU and how viewers experience and form perceptions of the visual resources through an experiential process.

5.1 Guidelines for Determining Significance

The County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance and Report Format and Content Requirement for Visual Resources (County of San Diego 2007a) and for Dark Skies and Glare (County of San Diego 2007b) were reviewed to determine the applicable significance thresholds for the proposed project. According to the County guidelines, a project will generally be considered to have a significant effect if it proposes any of the following, absent specific evidence to the contrary:

- the project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials, etc.) or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines;
- the project would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood, community, or localized area, including but not limited to landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings;
- the project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from:
 - a public road,
 - a trail within an adopted County or State trail system,

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- a scenic vista or highway, or
- a recreational area.
- the project would not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning.
- the project will install highly reflective building materials, including but not limited to reflective glass and high-gloss surface color, that will create daytime glare and be visible from roadways, pedestrian walkways or areas frequently used for outdoor activities on adjacent properties.

5.2 Key Views

Methodology

Key views of the project were selected that would typify the effects on visual resources as experienced by a range of expected viewers in a dynamic experiential setting. Locations in the project viewshed from which views of the proposed project would be available were identified on aerial photography prior to the initial Site visit. Once identified, candidate key view locations and extent of viewshed were field verified to confirm orientation and visibility to the proposed project. Initial key viewpoint locations were modified and/or new locations were established based on field conditions. Digital images from multiple candidate key view locations were collected and the existing conditions including time of day, weather, vegetation, topography and visual character were noted and recorded. In addition, the landscape character of the proposed project Site and surrounding areas were documented through digital imagery. Public routes into and out of the project viewshed were field reviewed multiple times to assess the experiential component that viewers would rely on to form visual perceptions of the landscape and project environment.

Ten key views were submitted to the County of San Diego for review and were approved for use in this visual resource assessment. The locations of selected key views are presented in Figure 14. Figures 15 through 24 present static images of the proposed project Site from the selected public key viewing locations in the surrounding area where conditions generally afford clear visibility to the proposed project. Visual simulations are also included in Figures 15 through 24 and, combined with photographs of existing conditions, provide a before and after (i.e., after completion of construction and generally with mature landscaping) depiction of the proposed project as experienced by viewers in the project vicinity. Pursuant to County staff request, an additional visual simulation has been prepared from Key View 1 to depict project landscaping at installation so that the public and decision makers are better able to conceptualize anticipated visual changes following construction and installation of landscaping. Also, the proposed project includes two scenarios for improving Deer Springs Road. Therefore, visual simulations depicting the two scenarios were prepared for identified key views located on segments of Deer Springs

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Road (i.e., Key Views 5 and 6) that would be improved and potentially widened to four travel lanes total by the proposed project.

With the exception of Key View 9 (Walnut Grove Park), all key viewing locations are from roadways in the surrounding area and views from these locations to the proposed project would be made in passing.

Consistent with visual resource reports prepared for other discretionary housing projects in the County of San Diego, a numerical rating for each contributing factor (vividness, intactness and unity) to visual quality at each representative key view is provided below. A rating scale of 0 to 5 is used with a rating of 0 equating to a landscape with an utter lack of vividness, intactness or unity and a rating of 5 describing a highly vivid, intact, and unified landscape. Ratings are provided for each individual contributing factor of visual quality.

5.2.1 Key View 1 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 1 is located at the northeast corner of the Deer Springs Road/I-15 northbound on-ramp intersection and provides a representative view to the project Site available to westbound motorists on Mountain Meadow Road/Deer Springs Road. As shown in Figure 15, view orientation at Key View 1 is to the west-northwest across the lanes of I-15 travel lanes and toward the eastern project boundary and proposed development areas that are located approximately 0.20 mile (950 feet) away. Key View 1 is located at an approximate elevation of 1,022 feet amsl and the visible ridgeline traversing the project Site ranges from approximately 1,240 feet amsl to 1,590 feet amsl as measured from south to north.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (3.2)

The relatively flat forms and diagonal lines display by foreground elements (i.e., on- and off-ramps and interstate right-of-way) transition to rugged and mounded forms west of the interstate that abruptly rise to create a strongly defined, rolling skyline. The disturbed interstate right-of-way primarily consists of the smooth textured and tan to brown colored bare soils but does include low and sparse, green hued shrubs west of the interstate. Farther west, a dense cluster of dark green to brown-canopied trees along the southern terminus of Mesa Rock Road and the light green foliage of several isolated trees to the north are visible against the rough and dense textures and grey colors of chaparral vegetation. Lightly colored boulder outcrops, a visible bare soil surface trail and the removal of vegetation adjacent to Mesa Rock Road create breaks in the monotonous texture and color displayed by chaparral vegetation. Hexagonal and lightly colored

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gas station structures, asphalt and concrete surfaced roadways, interstate signage, and thin, lightly colored overhead lights and cell towers visible from Key View 1 contrast with the line, color, and texture of background terrain and vegetation.

Intactness (3.5)

On- and off-ramps and adjacent interstate right-of-way display a consistent flat form and diagonal to horizontal line. Interstate signage is of an appropriate scale for identification by passing motorists. Although the lightly colored exterior of gas station structures contrasts with the green and grey color of background trees and chaparral shrubs, the structures are visually subordinate to the background rugged terrain and dense and rough vegetation. The line and color of gas station signage and cell towers help them to stand out in the landscape; however, due to distance, the apparent size of these features is reduced. Lastly, the diagonal line and light brown color of bare soils created by vegetation removal adjacent to Mesa Rock Road attracts attention and disrupts the continuity of dense, grey to brown colored shrubs on rising terrain situated between the interstate off-ramp and Mesa Rock Road.

Unity (3.5)

Overall unity in the Key View 1 landscape is reduced due to contrasts in line, color and texture between development and local terrain and vegetation. Although the lightly colored exterior surface of gas station structures relates to the white to tan color of rock outcrops and visible occurrences of bare soils, the concentration of lightly colored surfaces and hexagonal form of roofs/coverings displays little relation to natural features in the landscape. Similarly, the diagonal line and light brown color of bare soils resulting from vegetation removal adjacent to Mesa Rock Road creates contrast with the dense expanse of brown to grey colored shrubs. With the exception of these elements and the tall, vertical form of overhead lights and cell towers, the visual scene is coherent and is free of particularly chaotic elements.

Proposed Project Features

From Key View 1, development within the Sierra Town Center and Sierra Terraces planning areas would be visible as would a short segment of the new primary access road to the project Site constructed off Deer Springs Road. In addition to vegetated building pads that seemingly climb the Merriam Mountain terrain, grading activities on east- and south-facing slopes, the installation of fire-resistant planting (i.e., vineyard, shrubs, and trees) and landscape features, and the thinning of existing vegetation for fuel modification purposes would also be visible and produce noticeable color, line and texture contrasts with existing terrain and native chaparral vegetation. The commercial retail and townhome development within the Sierra Town Center planning area would occupy the foreground and middleground landscape west of I-15. Tan

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colored roofs and lightly colored exteriors would populate the Site. The proposed school development would be primarily screened by existing mounded and chaparral-covered topography and townhomes. Beyond the Sierra Town Center planning area, residential development and associated grading within the Sierra Terraces planning area would be visible. A cylindrical water tank would be installed atop a once pyramidal peak. From Key View 1, residential development would seemingly descend from higher to lower elevation terrain to the northwest and west and the establishment of fuel modification zones would disrupt the existing expanse of dense chaparral vegetation draped across east- and south-facing slopes.

Changes to Visual Character and Quality

Vividness (2.0)

Although segments of the western ridgeline would remain unaltered by proposed development within the Sierra Terraces planning area, the flowing line of two centrally located peaks would be modified by grading activities, vegetation removal and establishment of fuel modification. Furthermore, upon implementation of the proposed project, the existing rolling ridgeline would occasionally be interrupted by portions of skylined, two and three-story residential townhomes, spreading landscape trees, and a flat, albeit large and wide water tank. In addition, visual contrast at the boundary of the vineyards, fuel modification zone 2, and existing vegetation to remain in place would create a series of undulating and wavy lines and bands of light to greyish color that would attract the eye of passing motorists and compete with the mountainous ridgeline for attention. As shown in Figure 15, development is proposed on east- and south-facing slopes of the proposed project Site and although terrain would continue to display a primarily mounded form following project implementation, textures would alternate from rugged and coarse where vegetation would remain in place to patchy, dotted and smooth areas where development is proposed. The rectangular form of townhome and other planned structures and angular rooflines would contrast with existing terrain and vegetation; however new structures would be eventually become partially screened by mature landscape trees and the light to tan colors of structure exteriors would visually blend with the exposed underlying soils of cut slopes, vineyards, and fuel modification zone 2. Upon implementation of the proposed project, the Site would appear less visually distinct and striking. As a result, the vividness of the view would be noticeably reduced.

Mature project landscaping is depicted in the Figure 15 visual simulation and the approximate height and spread of trees and shrubs at 10 to 15 years is displayed. As discussed, above and depicted in the Figure 15 visual simulation, mature trees and shrubs would be capable of partially screening project structures within the Town Center planning area. However, following installation of landscaping, trees and shrubs would display a shorter and comparatively thinner form and habit (see Figure 15a visual simulation that depicts project landscaping at installation) and as such, the partial visual screening of structures within the Town Center as depicted in the Figure 15 visual simulation would not yet be realized.

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Intactness (1.5)

Although fuel modification practices and the installation of agricultural uses on sloping terrain occur throughout the I-15 corridor north and south of Key View 1, the southeastern extent of Merriam Mountains depicted in Figure 15 (existing conditions) is relatively free of large scale alteration and encroaching features. Trails, gas station development, signage and cell towers are visible but remain subordinate to existing natural features (i.e., terrain and vegetation) present on Site. However, upon implementation of the proposed project, the existing visual pattern of dense, green hued chaparral vegetation draped across mounded and mountainous terrain would be altered by the introduction of encroaching features. As shown in Figure 15 (visual simulation), grading activities and the establishment of fuel modification zones on east- and south-facing slopes on the proposed project Site would produce a series of wavy lines and contrasting colored bands marked by varying densities of planting materials. Exterior fuel modification areas would be supported by temporary irrigation to aid establishment and vineyards would require a relatively low volume of water during operations. In addition to grey, brown and green colored shrubs, underlying soils would be exposed by thinning and/or vegetation removal practices and as a result, the characteristic dark green color of mountainous terrain would be replaced by light to dark brown hues. Furthermore, where existing native vegetation would remain in place, such as atop a relatively low ridgeline located uphill and west of the AM/PM gas station and beyond the extent of required fuel modification zones (see Figure 15, visual simulation) and where new vegetation would be installed and irrigated during operations (i.e., fuel modification zone 1), additional color and texture contrasts would be visible. The low ridgeline located west of the extents of required fuel modification zones is visible within the southernmost boundary of the proposed project Site adjacent to Deer Springs Road (see Figure 6, Fuel Modification Zone Map).

In addition to grading, vegetation removal, and fuel modification, the construction of townhomes in the Sierra Terraces planning area and Town Center development would also be visible and would encroach upon the scene. As shown in Figure 15, proposed townhome and commercial development would display warm exterior color and sloped, tan colored roofs that would distinguish them from the cool and bright exterior and red-tile roofs of existing gas station development. The installation of landscaping trees would help to partially screen several structures from view and warmed colored exteriors would tend to blend in with the underlying soils of vineyards and fuel modification zone 2 yet the introduction of rectangular and angular forms would detract from the existing intactness of the scene. Lastly, although relatively common throughout the region, the installation of a water tank atop prominent terrain would contribute a wide, rounded rectangular form and flat line that would interrupt the existing rolling line of the horizon.

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Unity (2.0)

As shown in Figure 15, reduced visual unity would occur on the proposed project Site and would be most apparent at the boundary of existing vegetation to remain in place and fuel modification zones where vegetation would be thinned or removed. Although thinned vegetation would tend to display a similar grey/green hue as the characteristic chaparral shrubs that currently cover the Site, thinning would reduce the spread of individual shrubs and would expose underlying soils. As a result, the visual pattern would be a patchwork of grey/green hues interrupted by pockets of tan colored soils that would contrast with adjacent areas of existing vegetation. Additional contrast is anticipated at the boundary of vineyards and fuel modification zone 2 (i.e., areas where existing vegetation would be thinned) as vineyards would display a relatively ordered and uniform texture and individual vines would be backscreened by underlying soils. Furthermore, the sharp boundary at the extents of these areas would create a series of wavy lines on east- and south-facing on-site slopes that would stand out and attract the attention of passing motorists. As viewed from Key View 1, the visual effect of grading, vegetation removal and fuel modification would be more apparent than the construction of townhomes and Town Center uses. These structures and uses would display warm exterior colors that would tend to blend in with the tans and browns displayed by fuel modification areas. Development would also be partially screen by newly installed and irrigated landscape trees that would in and off themselves introduce circular forms and vibrant green colors not currently supported on the proposed project Site. Structures and contrast associated with vegetation management practices would bear little resemblance to natural land cover. As a result, the unity between natural elements and new built elements would be moderately low.

Viewer Response (4.0)

As viewed from Key View 1, the visual effects of new construction and fuel modification would be located at a middleground viewing distance, between approximately 0.25 and 1.25 miles to northwest. Views to the proposed project from northeast corner of the Deer Springs Road/I-15 northbound on-ramp intersection would be clear and relatively unobstructed by foreground elements. Furthermore, development and vegetation management practices on the proposed project Site would be viewed from an inferior viewing angle at Key View 1. Although daily traffic could include some new viewers, it would most likely include daily viewers (including residents of Hidden Meadows community) familiar with the local landscape and existing resources on the proposed project Site. Although rural residential structures, fuel modification, and agricultural development are relatively common in existing views from the westbound travel lanes of Mountain Meadow Road, northbound North Centre Parkway, Old Highway 395, and westbound Deer Springs Road, the proposed project Site is currently undeveloped. Therefore, for purposes of this report, viewer response is moderately high at Key View 1.

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Resulting Visual Impact

Although motorists would be exposed to brief views of the proposed project at Key View 1, the grading activities, vegetation removal, construction of new multi-family residential neighborhoods and commercial development, and the establishment of fuel modification would create substantial line, color, and texture contrast with existing natural features on Site. As such, the resulting visual impact of implementation of the proposed project as viewed from Key View 1 would be potentially significant.

5.2.2 Key View 2 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 2 is located off the shoulder of the westbound lanes of Mountain Meadow Road, approximately 220 feet west of High Mountain Drive and approximately 2,900 feet (0.55 mile) east of the Old Highway 395/Deer Springs Road intersection. At Key View 2, view orientation is to the west toward the proposed project Site, which is located approximately 3,740 feet (0.70 mile) away. As shown in Figure 16 (Existing), Key View 2 provides a brief, representative view of the proposed project Site available to westbound motorists on Mountain Meadow Road that primarily consists of residents of the Hidden Meadows community. Key View 2 is located at an approximate elevation of 1,370 feet amsl and the elevations on the visible portions of the proposed project Site range from approximately 980 feet amsl at the eastern project boundary to 1,590 feet at a locally prominent, granitic boulder and chaparral draped peak to the northwest.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (3.5)

The flat form and striped white lines of Mountain Meadow Road are visible from Key View 2; however, the converging diagonal forms and lines of north- and south-facing slopes in the foreground directs the view toward the proposed project Site and Merriam Mountains. The mounded, rising form and rugged line of the Merriam Mountains are visible, and although prominent terrain within the range is skylined, lower-elevation ridgelines are backscreened by rugged terrain surrounding the Twin Oaks Valley. Sloping terrain in the foreground tends to enclose the landscape and limit views to the north and south, but on clear days, limited views to the coast are available. The color and texture of vegetation on the proposed project Site is repetitively grey and dense and is occasionally broken by the light brown color and smooth surface of trails and outcrops of white/grey granitic boulder. Foreground vegetation includes dry grasses, an isolated cactus, tall eucalyptus trees, dark green and densely clustered oaks and other trees on the visible north-facing slope and grey, dying shrubs, occasional clumps of bright green, low and mounded shrubs and moderately sized boulders on the adjacent south-facing slope.

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Mountain Meadow Road is visible but is not central to the view and is visually subordinate to natural features. The visual effects of fuel modification practices in the foreground and establishment of trails on the proposed project Site disrupts the continuity of dense chaparral vegetation on south- and east-facing terrain.

Intactness (3.5)

As stated above, Mountain Meadow Road, a private driveway and the line and color contrast associated with the development of fuel modification zones in the foreground are visible from Key View 2. The thinning of vegetation on the south-facing slope in the foreground creates a noticeable line at the top of the slope and sparse vegetation and boulders cover the downslope terrain. Sparse, grey colored vegetation and boulder outcrops on the south-facing slope in the foreground contrasts with the character of the north-facing slope that supports a dense coverage of dark to light green canopied oak and other trees and shrubs. On the proposed project Site the continuity of dense and drab toned chaparral vegetation site draped over rising terrain is occasionally broken by the tan to brown color and straight to curving lines of trails. The visible breaks in the dense expanse of vegetation and creation of artificial lines slightly reduces the overall intactness of the visual pattern.

Unity (3.5)

The occurrence of fuel modification on the south-facing slope in the foreground viewing distance results in a disharmonious visual pattern as the north-facing slope is densely vegetated and displays a continuous green toned color. Visible line and color disparities created by the development of trails reduces the overall unity of elements on the proposed project Site; however, trails generally display a thin line and are not visually dominant. The narrow form and white color of a cell tower located near the eastern project boundary is visible but is backscreened by terrain and vegetation. In addition to back screening, distance reduces the apparent scale and visual prominence of this feature. Although the Key View 2 landscape contains elements with contrasting features, the scene is coherent and lacks visual chaos.

Proposed Project Features

In addition to planned development within the northern portion of the Sierra Town Center planning area, nearly the entirety of the Sierra Terraces planning area would be visible from Key View 2. Two-story residential town homes, one-story buildings associated with the proposed school, and associated landscaping in the Sierra Town Center planning area would be constructed/installed atop elevated building pads on lower elevation terrain near the eastern project boundary. Commercial retail development within the Sierra Town Center planning area proposed south of the residential townhome development would be screened by the north-facing slope in the foreground. Along with building pads and vineyards, shrubs, trees, and lightly

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colored exposed soils displayed by fuel modification zones, two- and three-story residential development and associated landscaping in the Sierra Terraces planning area would be visible and would seemingly climb the graded, altered Merriam Mountains terrain. A wide and large water tank would be constructed atop prominent terrain located upslope of the two and three-story townhomes in the Sierra Tierra planning area.

Changes to Visual Character and Quality

Vividness (2.0)

As shown in Figure 16, the distinct visual pattern of dense chaparral and occasional boulder covered terrain across the southeastern portion of the proposed project Site would be noticeably altered by construction and operation of the proposed project. Although the sloped form and tan color of roofs and the lightly colored exteriors of newly installed townhomes and school buildings would be visible, the anticipated color and line contrasts associated with establishment of fuel modification would produce a stronger effect to existing views. The slopes of building pads would be irrigated and densely planted with groundcover and occasionally dotted by landscape trees. Regular applications of water in fuel modification zone 1 would produce a darker green hue of vegetation that would contrast with adjacent areas of existing thinned vegetation or temporarily irrigated planting materials (i.e., fuel modification zone 2). Furthermore, a sharp contrast in color would occur at the boundary of fuel modification zones 1 and 2 and a similar line, color and texture contrasts would be visible at the boundary of fuel modification zone 2 and existing vegetation to remain in place (i.e., chaparral vegetation located outside of the fuel modification bubble). Proposed vineyards would also be visible from Key View 2 and grading activities, vegetation removal and planting of vines would expose underlying soils and produce seemingly denuded, tan colored and smooth textured slopes.

Intactness (2.0)

As stated previously, converging slopes in the foreground enclose the visible landscape and frame the view to the proposed project. From Key View 2, views to the southeastern portion of the proposed project would be relatively clear and as shown in Figure 16, the integrity of the existing on-site visual pattern displayed by dense chaparral covered mountainous terrain would be reduced by implementation of the proposed project. Grading activities, vegetation removal and the establishment of temporarily irrigated fuel modification zones would produce light and dark brown bands of color that would contrast with irrigated landscaping areas. Native chaparral vegetation to remain in place beyond the edge of development would abut areas of thinned existing (or new, temporarily irrigated planting materials) vegetation and noticeable contrast in density, color and texture would result. Brown and green hued colors would be draped across the mountainous terrain of the Merriam Mountains range and would encroach upon the existing scene.

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Unity (1.5)

In addition to the construction of residential townhomes and other structures, vegetation removal and the establishment of fuel modification would reduce the existing unity of on-site visual resources. Although built elements and the visual effects of trail development are present on Site, the visual pattern is largely defined by natural elements such as mountainous terrain, chaparral vegetation and occasional outcrops of white granitic boulders. Construction of proposed uses in the Sierra Town Center and Sierra Terraces planning areas would occur on primarily undeveloped and rolling to mountainous terrain. As viewed from Key View 2 proposed development would climb the terrain from south to north and would produce a central swath of green hued colors bordered by light to dark brown bands and expanses of greyish vegetation to remain in place. Proposed development would be clearly visible and would bear little resemblance to the existing harmonious visual pattern created by natural pattern elements.

Viewer Response (3.0)

As viewed from Key View 2, the visual effects of new construction and fuel modification would be located at a middleground viewing distance, between approximately 0.70 and 1.25 miles to west. Views to the proposed project from westbound Mountain Meadow Road would be available for approximately 0.40 mile, generally between Stickley Ranch Road and Key View 2. Views would be clearer and would encompass a greater portion of the proposed project as motorists approach Key View 2. The posted speed limit on Mountain Meadow Road is 50 miles per hour. Although daily traffic would include some new viewers, it would also include daily viewers (including residents of Hidden Meadows community) that are familiar with the landscape and the proposed project Site. Although the proposed project Site is currently undeveloped, rural residential structures, fuel modification, and agricultural development are common in existing views from the westbound travel lanes of Mountain Meadow Road, the project Site is currently undeveloped. Therefore, for purposes of this report, viewer response is moderate at Key View 2.

Resulting Visual Impact

Although motorists would be exposed to brief views of the proposed project from the westbound travel lanes of Mountain Meadow Road, the resulting visual effects from grading activities, vegetation removal, construction of new multi-family residential neighborhoods, and the establishment of fuel modification on the proposed project Site would create substantial line, color, and texture contrast with existing on-site visual resources. Therefore, the resulting visual impact of implementation of the proposed project as viewed from Key View 2 would be potentially significant.

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5.2.3 Key View 3 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 3 is located off North Centre City Parkway, approximately 180 feet south of Silver Tree Lane and approximately 1,960 feet (0.37 mile) southwest of the North Centre City Parkway/Deer Springs Road intersection. Key View 3 is also located approximately 110 feet east of the northbound I-15 travels and was selected as it provides a representative view of the proposed project Site available to northbound motorists on North Centre City Parkway and I-15 (see Figure 17, Existing). View orientation is to the northwest and at Key View 3, the southern project boundary is located approximately 1,900 feet (0.36 mile) away near Deer Springs Road and the existing AM/PM gas station. Key View 3 is located at an approximate elevation of 1,020 feet amsl and the elevations on the visible portions of the proposed project Site range from approximately 1,000 feet amsl north of the Mesa Rock Road/Deer Springs Road intersection to approximately 1,590 feet amsl at the prominent, boulder and chaparral covered peak central to the view.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (3.0)

The interstate and right-of-way display a flat form and horizontal line, and the proposed project Site consists of rising, rugged terrain that creates a series of mounded and rolling ridgelines. East of the interstate, and with the exception of a cluster of tall and green eucalyptus trees to the north, vegetation is routinely managed/cut. The right-of-way exhibits the smooth texture and soils and low grasses display a tan-brown color. West of the interstate, the bright to dark green color of tree canopies line Mesa Rock Road and continues north toward Deer Springs Road. These trees are associated with a commercial nursery and a private storage facility and the vibrant green effused by canopies stands out against the backscreening drab green and brown chaparral vegetation covering the proposed project Site. Development, including I-15, overhead lighting, and the AM/PM gas station, occupy the foreground viewing distance; however, with the exception of overhead lighting, these elements tend to display a relatively low form and horizontal line. Distant ridgelines to the north enhance the vividness of the view yet the scene is a relatively common visual experience to local area motorists through the project area.

Intactness (3.0)

The light color and tall, arching form of interstate lighting in the foreground disrupts the continuity of mounded, rolling ridgelines on the proposed project Site. Portions of these elements are skylined. The vibrant green color of trees lining Mesa Rock Road contrasts with the drab greens and browns of chaparral vegetation on the proposed project Site. Due to distance, the

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apparent scale of the AM/PM gas station is reduced and this feature is not spatially dominant. While form, color and line contrasts are visible and reduce overall intactness, the occurrence of encroaching elements in the landscape is relatively low.

Unity (3.0)

As viewed from Key View 3, development is concentrated along a linear corridor parallel to the interstate. The establishment of a trail on the proposed project Site is evident from this location, however, the terrain displays a consistent line and form and the resulting visual pattern is coherent. The light brown color and edge line associated with fuel modification practices northeast of the AM/PM gas station creates visual contrast yet the modified area is relatively small and does not dominate the scene. The local terrain does however tend to abruptly rise from the flat form and horizontal pattern created by the interstate and the contrast in density and color between vegetation in the immediate foreground and on the proposed project Site attracts attention.

Proposed Project Features

Development within the Sierra Town Center and Sierra Terraces planning area would be visible from Key View 3 (see Figure 17). The proposed grocery store development site would be partially visible (the structure would be partially screened by the existing AM/PM gas station and newly installed landscape trees) and proposed two-story townhome development would be located on a series of elevated building pads to the north. The primary access road would wind around new development and border a steep slope populated with vineyards prior to climbing the altered Merriam Mountains terrain. The asphalt road eventually disappears from Site behind altered and vineyard planted terrain. The establishment of fuel modification zones and the removal and thinning of existing chaparral vegetation would create noticeable line and color contrasts in the landscape. Two- and three-story residential development within the Sierra Terraces planning area and a large, prominently located and cylindrical water tank would be apparent to passing motorists. New residences located in the northwest corner of the Sierra Terraces planning area would be partially obscured by existing terrain and the proposed water tank.

Changes to Visual Character and Quality

Vividness (2.0)

While implementation of the proposed project would introduce similar colors and textures displayed by foreground elements (i.e., disturbed interstate right of way and trees along Mesa Rock Road), the vividness of existing views from Key View 3 would be reduced. In addition to grading activities, vegetation removal and the establishment of fuel modification zones would

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substantially alter the existing visual pattern created by dense, drab green and brown chaparral vegetation stretched across east and south-facing slopes on the proposed project Site. As shown on Figure 17, grading and required vegetation management would modify the form, color and texture of vegetation. Furthermore, areas of thinned vegetation would display a less dense texture than adjacent peaks that would not be altered by development and proposed vineyards would present a stippled texture. Vineyards and the establishment of continuous rows of vines would also introduce uniformed, ordered element not currently supported on the proposed project Site. Irrigated vegetation near proposed development would display a similar form, color and texture as existing trees installed along Mesa Rock Road and immediately north of Deer Springs Road yet the disparity between existing vegetation, and proposed landscaping would lack distinctness. Similarly, the construction of residential townhomes and commercial uses within the Sierra Town Center would contribute rectangular and angular forms and warm exterior colors to an otherwise drab green, grey and brown, rugged mountainous area. Upon implementation of the proposed project, the proposed project would display similar form, color and texture contrast as existing larger scale residential development located along the I-15 corridor. The Lawrence Welk Village Resort and the Castle Creek Villas development are located approximately 1.3 and 3.75 miles north of the Sierra Town Center, respectively, and have resulting in similar modification of existing terrain and vegetation as depicted in Figure 17. As such and as viewed from Key View 3, implementation of the proposed project would result in a less visually distinct landscape through removal and other modification of characteristic visual pattern associated with existing chaparral vegetation across the proposed project Site.

Intactness (2.0)

Although trails, gas station development, cell towers, overhead lights and Mesa Rock Road encroach upon the natural visual pattern of chaparral and occasional boulder covered terrain on the proposed project Site, the scene exhibits moderate intactness. This is due largely in part to the relatively consistent pattern of dense, drab green and brown chaparral vegetation on mountainous terrain located in the middleground. From Key View 3, the Merriam Mountains appear to be primarily unaltered and display a rugged and natural character. Implementation of the proposed project would reduce the integrity of the visual pattern displayed by existing natural features. For example, chaparral vegetation would be removed or thinned, east and south facing slopes would be modified through grading activities, and the characteristic drab green/brown color of the Site would be altered by the introduction of brown-hued soils and vibrant green and irrigated newly installed vegetation. Residential townhomes, commercial uses and the project access road would interrupt the diagonal line of terrain and create a series of straight and angular lines (i.e., building exteriors and rooflines). New lines resulting at the boundary of vegetation management zones would also be visible and would compete with the otherwise rolling ridgeline of terrain for the attention of passing motorists.

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Unity (1.8)

With implementation of the proposed project, noticeable form, line, color and texture contrast would be visible on the proposed project Site. The resulting color and texture of fuel modification zones would bear little resemblance to the color and texture of existing on-site chaparral vegetation and larger scale residential and commercial development is not currently supported on Site. The boundary of fuel modification zones and existing vegetation to remain in place would create a series of visible wavy lines that would be apparent to viewers in the area due to color disparities. Furthermore, the varying density of plantings within adjacent fuel modification zones and the curving line of vegetation management boundaries would create a somewhat busy and jumbled visual scene.

Viewer Response (3.0)

From Key View 3, proposed development in the Sierra Town Center planning area would be located as close as 1,900 feet to the northeast and residential townhome development and fuel modification occurring within the Sierra Terraces planning area would extend to south-facing slopes of the Merriam Mountains located approximately 1.10 miles away. Due to south/north rising terrain, views to proposed uses in the Sierra Town Center and Sierra Terraces planning areas would be relatively clear and unobstructed. Although Key View 3 is located off North Centre Parkway, the northbound travel lanes of I-15 are located nearby and are situated at a similar elevation as the roadway. Therefore, in addition to surface road traffic, Key View 3 also approximates views to the proposed project available to interstate motorists. The posted speed limit of North Centre City Parkway is 55 miles per hour and the posted speed limit on I-15 is 70 miles per hour. Although rural residential and residential development, fuel modification, and agricultural development are relatively common along the I-15 corridor near the proposed project and along North Centre City Parkway, the existing primarily undeveloped and unaltered nature of the project Site suggests that viewers may have a heightened sensitivity to modification of existing visual patterns. Therefore, for purposes of this report, viewer response is moderately high at Key View 3.

Resulting Visual Impact

The resulting visual impact of implementation of the proposed project as viewed from Key View 3 would be potentially significant.

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5.2.4 Key View 4 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 4 is located on the shoulder of southbound I-15 and provides a representative view to the Site available to southbound interstate motorists. The key view location is located approximately 0.35 mile south of Lawrence Welk Lane and 2.4 miles north of the segment of Deer Springs Road spanning I-15. As shown in Figure 18 (Existing), the view orientation at Key View 4 is to the southwest. At Key View 4, the project boundary is located approximately 0.22 miles to the southwest (the conical hill in the foreground and prominent, backscreening terrain are located on the proposed project Site) however, the proposed project development would be located farther away, approximately 1 mile to the southwest. Key View 4 is located at an approximate elevation of 625 feet amsl and prominent terrain on the proposed project Site ranges from approximately 1,230 feet amsl to 1,350 feet amsl from south to north.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (3.7)

The local terrain is composed of a series of mounded and, at times, pyramidal forms. East-facing slopes display soft, diagonal lines that climb to the west from I-15 and create a somewhat rolling and rugged ridgeline. With the exception of thinned, sparse vegetation and tan-colored bare soils in the immediate foreground and within the interstate right-of-way and median, native chaparral vegetation displays tones of green and brown and densely covers the local terrain. Clusters of large, white boulders occasionally break the uniformly dark-green color of vegetation atop prominent east-facing terrain. The flat form of I-15 winds its way through the area and creates continuous and horizontal lines of grey, black, and tan in the landscape that contrast with the form, line, color, and texture of surrounding natural elements. From Key View 4, development is concentrated along the I-15 corridor and the project Site displays a rugged, natural character.

Intactness (3.8)

From Key View 4, I-15 is located atop the low western foothills of a valley and ridge landscape. The development of I-15 has altered the natural landscape but is not considered an encroaching element, as it is the means by which motorists experience views of the surrounding landscape. Views to the proposed project Site consist of seemingly unaltered rugged terrain blanketed by a dense expanse of native vegetation. Development west of I-15 is not visible from the particular vantage point offered at Key View 4 and instead, prominent terrain to the west attracts the attention of passing southbound motorists.

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Unity (3.7)

While the colors and lines associated with I-15 do not relate to that of surrounding vegetation and terrain, the interstate occupies a lower elevation area in the landscape and displays a consistent flat form and horizontal, slightly curving line. From Key View 4, maintenance of this theme along the interstate corridor and with inclusion of seemingly unaltered natural terrain west of the interstate, the visual pattern is coherent and the landscape displays moderately high unity.

Proposed Project Features

From Key View 4, southbound interstate motorists would be afforded brief views to the Sierra Mesa and Sierra Hillside planning areas. However, the majority of visible portions of the proposed project Site would remain unmodified. Landscape alteration including grading of mounded, chaparral and exposed boulder colored peaks in the Merriam Mountain range located approximately 0.75 and 1.30 mile to the southwest of Key View 4, and the installation of fire-resistant planting and landscape (i.e., boulders) materials would be visible to southbound motorists. The removal of native vegetation and the establishment of fuel modification zones would create noticeable line and color contrast. The border between native and installed vegetation would be apparent. The ordered spacing and light color of shrubs and pockets of exposed soils displayed by fuel modification would stand out when alongside unaltered portions of the proposed project Site. Fire-resistant planting materials would be draped over the prominent ridgelines in the middleground distance. However, as viewed from Key View 4, fuel modification activities would appear discontinuous and would be separated by unaltered terrain and vegetation.

Changes to Visual Character and Quality

Vividness (3.2)

Implementation of the project would subtly soften the rolling line of middleground ridgelines and create color contrast in mountainous terrain located approximately 0.75 and 1.30 miles to the southwest and south of Key View 4. As shown in Figure 18, grading activities would alter the rolling line created by the chaparral and boulder covered ridgeline located to the southwest of Key View 4 and would result in a relatively short, horizontal horizon line. The establishment of fuel modification zones and vegetation thinning practices would reveal pockets of brown colored soils and could expose rocks and/or low grasses and forbs, which would noticeably alter the existing visual pattern of dense chaparral vegetation and occasional boulders. Furthermore, the perimeter of the fuel modification zone would create a hard line in the terrain due to the color contrast between chaparral vegetation to remain in place and thinned vegetation. As shown in Figure 18, vegetation thinning would occur on a portion of

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east-facing slope of the dark, prominent, and pyramidal form and the comparatively horizontal, chaparral and boulder covered peak located immediately to the southeast. Vegetation thinning on the less prominent and mounded ridgeline located farther to the south would also be visible to motorists at Key View 4; however, the resulting color contrasts between native vegetation and fuel modification zones would be difficult to distinguish due to distance.

Intactness (3.4)

The establishment of fuel modification on east-facing mountainous terrain located approximately 0.75 mile to the southeast would affect the integrity of the existing visual pattern of seemingly unaltered terrain covered by dense expanse of native vegetation. As shown in Figure 18, vegetation thinning would both alter the density of chaparral on the east-facing slope, would reveal pockets of brown colored soils and could expose smaller boulders and/or shrubs that could contribute to the anticipated color contrasts depicted in Figure 18. Motorists would be afforded brief views to the fuel modification zones of the Sierra Mesa and Sierra Hillside planning areas (Figure 18), and the project would be built atop prominent landforms (i.e., mountains in the Merriam Mountains range) that would be viewed by motorists. Despite the anticipated changes to the existing visual pattern depicted in Figure 18, overall effects to the intactness of the Key View 4 landscape would be moderately low. Although color contrasts are anticipated to occur and be visible from I-15, landforms would retain their existing rugged character, and the dark green color of chaparral vegetation would remain a dominant element in the landscape. In addition, the anticipated visual effects of vegetation thinning depicted in Figure 18 would appear similar to the occurrences of concentrated boulder outcrops where the density of chaparral vegetation is noticeably reduced.

Unity (3.3)

While the project would be visible atop a prominent ridgeline in the Merriam Mountains range, views would be limited to discontinuous areas of fuel modification and vegetation thinning. As viewed from Key View 4, the mountainous terrain would continue to display mounded and rugged forms and lines. Color and line contrasts would be visible on east-facing slopes to the southeast of Key View 4; however, visual effects associated with planned fuel modification would appear similar to areas of concentrated boulder outcrops that occur west of I-15 under existing conditions. Therefore, effect to the existing unity of the Key View 4 landscape associated with the proposed project would be low.

Viewer Response (3.4)

As viewed from Key View 4, visual effects of fuel modification would be located at a middleground viewing distance and more specifically, visible vegetation thinning would occur

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on mountainous terrain located approximately 0.75 and 1.3 miles to the southwest and south. At and near Key View 4, I-15 motorists would be located at an inferior viewing position to vegetation thinning proposed on local slopes and ridgelines and the duration of mobile views would be brief. The posted speed limit on I-15 south of Gopher Canyon Road and north of Deer Springs Road is 70 miles per hour and according to Caltrans, in 2013 the average annual daily traffic (AADT) on the interstate segment was 122,000 vehicles (Caltrans 2013). While daily traffic would include some new viewers, it would also include occasional and daily viewers that are familiar with the landscape. While terrain located west and visible from Key View 4 is primarily unaltered, development is relatively commonplace and is noticeable on the valley floor and on ridgelines located east of the interstate. Therefore, for purposes of this report, viewer response is moderate at Key View 4.

Resulting Visual Impact

Project effects to the quality of the existing view at Key View 4 would be moderately low and as such, impacts would be less than significant.

5.2.5 Key View 5 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 5 is located on Deer Springs Road, approximately 0.33 mile west of the Deer Springs Road/Mesa Rock Road intersection. View orientation at Key View 5 is to the east, and the viewpoint provides a representative view to the easterly segment of Deer Springs Road proposed to be widened by the project (see Figure 19a (Existing)). Under existing conditions, an east- and westbound travel lane (both 13 foot wide) and 2 to 4 foot wide shoulders are provided along Deer Springs Road. From Key View 5, motorists would be afforded views of proposed roadway improvements (e.g., widened roadway and shoulders, bike lanes, curbs and gutters, landscaped parkways, and a pathway parallel to the westbound travel lane) on Deer Springs Road. The proposed Town Center planning area would not be visible from Key View 5. Key View 5 is located at an approximate elevation of 890 feet and the local terrain rises to the north and east.

There are no striped bicycle lanes on Deer Springs Road and the adjacent right-of-way is narrow and unimproved. In addition, according to the interactive San Diego Region Bike Map (SANDAG 2015), there are no designated bike facilities on Deer Springs Road north of Buena Creek Road. Despite a lack of striping, formal designation of bike facilities and the presence of a narrow, unimproved right-of-way, a limited number of cyclists may use Deer Springs Road and the adjacent right-of-way. However, it is anticipated that cyclists would be paying attention almost solely to the road and their spatial position relative to motor vehicles as opposed to scanning the surrounding landscape. Due the extremely narrow width of the right-of-way, the

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curving alignment of the roadway that creates a “blind” corner, and a lack of business/uses at Deer Springs Road and I-15 that would attract pedestrian travel, pedestrians are not considered receptors that are afforded views of the Key View 5 landscape under existing conditions. A limited number of cyclists may however, elect to use Deer Springs Road and would thus be afforded views to existing conditions and proposed roadway improvements on Deer Springs Road at Key View 5.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (3.0)

South of Deer Springs Road the terrain is masked by the presence of mature, dark green and spreading oak trees lining a local drainage. To the north, higher elevation terrain falls toward the roadway and creates a weakly defined diagonal and slightly curving line. With the exception of bare soils resulting from a sharp cut into the terrain (the soils create a horizontal, tan colored band that is dotted with occasional clumps of low, yellow grasses), vegetation is relatively dense, coarsely textured and displays colors ranging from light to dark green, yellow, brown, and grey. Lightly colored boulders are commonplace and are clumped among chaparral shrubs. The flat form and horizontal line of Deer Springs Road occupies much of the immediate foreground but abruptly turns to the northeast in the distance and is screened by intervening terrain. The tall, vertical form of wood support poles and horizontal lines of cross arms and electrical and communication lines are skylined and attract the attention of passing viewers.

Intactness (2.5)

Deer Springs Road separates the dense chaparral and lightly colored boulder covered south-facing slope from the linear stand of mature oak trees to the south. Deer Springs Road, signage and electrical and communication infrastructure create strongly defined horizontal and vertical forms and lines that stand out against chaparral shrubs displaying weak lines and spreading but at times, indeterminate forms. The horizontal band resulting from cut grading disrupts the continuity of dense coverage on the south-facing slope. Electrical and communication infrastructure displays a rugged character, however, the apparent scale of support poles from Key View 5 appears to increase due to their location atop higher elevation terrain.

Unity (2.5)

The horizontal and vertical form lines created by Deer Springs Road and electrical and communication infrastructure reduce the overall unity of the landscape. Development commands attention in the scene and an electrical distribution line is displayed prominently atop local terrain. The continuity of vegetation on the south-facing slope is broken by occasional and small rock outcrops that are generally backscreened by shrubs and by a visible cut in the terrain

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associated with construction of Deer Springs Road. The roadway and associated signage exhibit low visual unity with the dense stand of mature oak trees maintained along the south side of Deer Springs Road.

Proposed Project Features

From Key View 5, motorists (and potentially, cyclists) would be afforded views of proposed roadway improvements including the widened roadway and shoulders, new bike lanes, curbs and gutters, landscape parkways on Deer Springs Road. A multi-use pathway would also be installed north of the westbound travel lane and would be separated by traffic by fencing. In addition, the existing overhead utility lines located along the westbound travel lane would be placed underground and removed from the local viewshed. A substantial cut into the south-facing slope located in the foreground and north of the westbound travel lane would be required to expand Deer Springs Road to two- or four-lanes (see Figures 19a and 19b). The south-facing slope would be steep and would not be planted or irrigated. Rather, it is anticipated that grasses and low chaparral shrub species common in the area would eventually recolonize the disturbed slope to the density depicted in Figures 19a and 19b. The project would incorporate erosion- and sediment-control design considerations, including construction and post-construction best management practices (BMPs) pursuant to the County Storm Watershed Protection Ordinance, and other measures required as part of the County Grading Permit. Lastly, proposed roadway improvements would result in the removal of several oak trees lining the eastbound travel lane.

Under the two-lane road scenario (Figure 19a), Deer Springs Road would be regraded, widened and repaved. As proposed, the curb-to-curb width of the widened roadway would be approximately 52 feet and would include a 12-foot-wide striped, unraised median, 12-foot-wide east- and west-bound travel lanes, and 8-foot-wide striped areas to accommodate bike lanes and shoulders. In addition, an approximate 10-foot-wide landscape parkway would be provided south of the eastbound travel lane and a 4-foot-wide landscape parkway and an 8-foot-wide pathway would be provided north of the westbound travel lane. The pathway and landscape parkway installed north of the westbound travel lane would be separated by a post and rail fence.

Under the four-lane road scenario (Figure 19b), the south-facing slope located north of Deer Springs Road would appear slightly steeper than the slope under the two-lane road scenario. Deer Springs Road would be regraded, widened and repaved. As proposed, the curb-to-curb width of the widened roadway would be approximately 76 feet and would include a 12-foot-wide striped, unraised median, two 12-foot-wide east- and westbound travel lanes, and 8-foot-wide striped areas to accommodate bike lanes and shoulders. In addition, an approximate 8-foot-wide landscape parkway would be provided south of the eastbound travel lanes and a 4-foot-wide landscape parkway and an 8-foot-wide pathway would be provided north of the westbound travel

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lanes. A post and rail fence would also be installed under the four-lane scenario to separate the pathway and landscape parkway installed north of the westbound travel lanes.

Changes to Visual Character and Quality

Vividness (Two-Lane Road – 2.5, Four-Lane Road – 2.2)

Under both the two-lane and four-lane scenarios, road-widening activities would necessitate the removal of tall and mature oak trees that currently line the eastbound travel lane of Deer Spring Road. Removal of these features to accommodate the widened roadway and shoulder, new bike lane, and landscape parkway would reveal an expanse of tree crops displaying a consistent height and color. Terrain located north of Deer Springs Road would be substantially altered to accommodate the widened roadway and shoulder, bike lane, landscape parkway, and decomposed granite pathway. As shown in Figure 19a, the cut slope located north of Deer Springs Road would display a steep form and a diagonal/near vertical line. Following the completion of construction and at an approximate 5-year post-construction timeframe, recolonization of the cut slope with low grasses and small mounded shrubs, as depicted in Figure 19b, could create an orderly appearance that, in combination with the removal of tall and mature oak trees along Deer Springs Road, would increase the homogeneity of the landscape. Similarly, the flat form of Deer Springs Road would appear wider and larger than the existing narrow two-lane roadway and would occupy a greater portion of the Key View 5 landscape. When compared to planned expansion to two lanes, expansion to four lanes would have a slightly greater effect on the existing vividness of the landscape. Deer Springs Road would display a wider, flat form and would create low visual interest in the landscape and as such, the memorability of the existing view would be reduced.

Intactness (Two-Lane Road – 2.0, Four-Lane Road – 1.8)

Planned road widening would necessitate alteration of the slope located north of Deer Springs Road. As shown in Figure 19a, the chaparral and boulder covered terrain would be substantially cut and graded to accommodate widened travel lanes and shoulders, a new bike lane, landscape parkway, and multi-use pathway. Under the four-lane scenario (see Figure 19b), a slightly steeper cut and slope would be required to incorporate additional lanes of travel on Deer Springs Road. While roadway widening would result in the removal of existing vertical features that encroach on the scene (under both the two- and four-lane scenario the existing overhead distribution lines and communication lines would be removed and installed underground), the resulting visual scene would be dominated by Deer Springs Road and the cut slope. When compared to existing conditions, the landscape would appear orderly yet the density of plantings on the slope and regular occurrence of rocks would bear little resemblance to the existing visual pattern of dense chaparral and occasional boulder covered terrain.

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Unity (Two-Lane Road – 2.0, Four-Lane Road – 2.0)

Planned widening of Deer Springs Road and installation of bicycle lanes, landscape parkways, and a pathway would require significant cut and grading of existing terrain. As shown in Figures 19a and 19b, grading activities on terrain located north of Deer Springs Road would be substantial and the resulting slope would be steep. When compared to existing conditions, recolonized vegetation could display a more orderly and less random appearance but would bear little resemblance to the existing density of chaparral vegetation. Similarly, expansion of Deer Springs Road and installation of a pathway, post and rail fencing, landscaped parkways, and bike lanes would create a more coherent, harmonious visual pattern but natural elements would be almost entirely removed from the view. Further, modification of terrain and removal of existing vegetation would create visible contrast and discontinuity in the visual pattern created by chaparral and boulder covered terrain commonplace along the Deer Springs Road corridor.

Viewer Response (3.0)

From Key View 5, the visual effects of planned roadway and right-of-way improvements (and the visually prominent cut slope proposed north of Deer Springs Road) would be located at a foreground viewing distance. At Key View 5, Deer Springs Road motorists would be located at a normal viewing position to planned roadway and right-of-way improvements and at an inferior viewing angle to the proposed cut slope. The posted speed around the existing curve depicted in Figures 19a and 19b (Existing) is 35 miles per hour and therefore, the duration of mobile views (including the views of motorists and cyclists) would be relatively brief as they pass the Key View 5 landscape. As such, viewer response to project components is moderate at Key View 5.

Resulting Visual Impact

Although project effects to the quality of the existing view at Key View 5 would be moderate, overall visual impacts would be less than significant.

5.2.6 Key View 6 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 6 is located on Deer Springs Road, approximately 0.22 miles east of Deer Springs Place and 1 mile west of the Deer Springs Road/Mesa Rock Road intersection. Key View 6 is also located approximately 0.07 mile (385 feet) east of the gated driveway to the Golden Door Properties LLC. View orientation is to the northeast and the viewpoint provides a representative view to the proposed project Site (the southern project boundary is located approximately 0.30 mile to the northeast) afforded to eastbound Deer Springs Road motorists. At Key View 6, the

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southern project boundary is located approximately 0.30 mile to the northeast. Due to proximity, Key View 6 is somewhat representative of views to the proposed project Site available from the Golden Door Properties LLC; however, the presence of mature oak trees along the property's frontage with Deer Springs Road may partially screen views. As shown in Figures 20a and 20b (Existing), views from Key View 6 to the proposed project Site are generally unencumbered by intervening elements. The majority of the ridgeline visible from Key View 6 is located on the proposed project Site and the foothills and rural residential development located north of the roadway are located outside of the project boundary. Lastly, Key View 6 is located at an elevation of approximately 810 feet amsl and the elevation of the visible ridgeline to the northeast ranges from approximately 1,400 feet amsl to 1,220 feet amsl from west to east.

As indicated in Section 5.2.5 for Key View 5, despite a lack of striping, formal designation of bike facilities, and presence of a narrow, unimproved right-of-way, a limited number of cyclists and pedestrians may use Deer Springs Road and the adjacent right-of-way. As such, cyclists and pedestrians may also be afforded views to proposed Deer Springs Road improvements on at Key View 6. In addition, because of the slower rate of travel and longer view duration, pedestrians at Key View 6 are more likely than cyclists to notice proposed project fuel modification activities. For cyclists that do travel on Deer Springs Road, it is assumed that they would be experienced riders given the lack of bike lanes and generally narrow width of the road. Given these factors, it is anticipated that cyclists would be paying attention almost solely to the road and their spatial position relative to motor vehicles. Therefore, they would not likely be actively scanning the landscape along Deer Springs Road.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (3.0)

North of Deer Springs Road, the relatively flat form and slight diagonal line displayed by terrain across modified rural residential parcels quickly transitions to the rugged, tall form of south-facing slopes. The visible ridgeline to the northeast creates a bold, undulating line that falls and rises between a series of pyramidal points. Low, chaparral shrubs have been removed from the parcel located immediately north of Deer Springs Road and the expanse of bare soils are interrupted by scattered and spreading dark green oaks, yellow citrus, and light green palm trees. Random tall palms and pines and ordered low palms line the parcel to the northeast and function as a landscape screen. With the exception of a low-mounded hill where most native vegetation has been removed (clumps of low, green and brown shrubs remain visible), chaparral vegetation on south-facing slopes is dense and continuously grey in color. The smooth texture and light tones of boulders also dot the south-facing slopes and create a harmonious blend of colors and textures on the terrain. Rural residences are visible but partially obscured by tall native and non-native trees. The tall, narrow form and horizontal line of electrical and communication

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infrastructure is skylined and detracts from the memorability of the seemingly unaltered ridgeline. See Figures 20a and 20b (Existing).

Intactness (2.5)

The overall intactness of the scene is reduced by the visual effects of vegetation removal, the introduction of tall, non-native trees on rural residential parcels and the tall form and continuous horizontal line of electrical and communication infrastructure. While south-facing slopes and the rugged ridgeline are seemingly unaltered and display a consistent character and combination of colors and textures, that character is altered by the rural residential development and landscaping located north of Deer Springs Road. Tall screening trees obscure portions of the local terrain and vegetation from view and present a vertical green and grey colored wall of smooth and rough textures.

Unity (2.5)

The tall screening trees and low palms and yuccas lining the residential property to the northeast create a slightly jumbled assemblage of forms and textures. Horizontal bands and larger expanses of lightly colored bare soils disrupt the continuity of green and grey colored vegetation visible in the scene. From Key View 6, the pattern elements of natural and built features bare little relation to one another and as a result, the unity of the visible landscape is moderately low.

Proposed Project Features

From Key View 6, limited views to proposed development within planning areas would be available to passing motorists and potentially, pedestrians. Visible project components would include widened and repaved Deer Springs Road (two- or four-lane option) and installation of new bike lanes, curbs and gutters, vegetated parkways, and a multi-use pathway. New post and rail fencing separating the pathway from Deer Springs Road would also be visible. In addition, the existing overhead utility lines currently located along the westbound travel lane would be placed underground and removed from the local viewshed. Outside of the Deer Springs Road corridor, fuel modification practices proposed along the southwesterly perimeter of the Sierra Terraces planning area and a portion of the large cylindrical water tank planned in the southeastern corner of the planning area would be visible from Key View 6. The effects of grading, vegetation thinning, and the exposure of lightly colored soils associated with the establishment of fuel modification zones would be visible along the ridgeline at an approximate distance of 0.50 mile. See Figure 20a and Figure 20b.

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Changes to Visual Character/ Quality

Vividness (3.2 – Two-Lane Road, 2.7– Four-Lane Road)

The establishment of fuel modification and the installation of a large water tank in the southwestern corner of the Sierra Terraces planning area would have a minor effect on the existing vividness of the view. While vegetation thinning would have little to no effect on the rugged, undulating ridgeline of mountainous terrain located north of Deer Springs Road, color contrast between thinned and natural areas is anticipated. As shown in Figure 20a and 20b, the characteristic visual pattern of chaparral and boulder terrain would be interrupted by altered, thinned areas; however, due to distance, effects would not be visually prominent and would appear similar to south-facing slopes supporting a high number of boulder outcrops. In regards to planned road and right-of-way improvements, the existing presence of shoulders along the east and westbound Deer Springs Road travel lanes suggests that widening the road to two lanes and incorporating a median left turn lane would not substantially deviate from the existing character of the roadway. Expansion of Deer Springs Road to four-lanes would produce a wider line through the area and the characteristic grey asphalt surface of the roadway would occupy a larger percentage of the view available from Key View 6 (see Figure 20b).

At Key View 6, expansion to four-lanes and a median left turn lane would appear large and generally inconsistent with the primarily single-family, large-lot rural residential character of the surrounding area. As shown in Figure 8, land uses designations surrounding Deer Springs Road near Key View 6 primarily consist of Open Space and Semi-Rural Residential where the maximum allowable density is 1 unit per 10 or 20 gross acres. Given the land use designations and maximum density permitted in the surrounding area and without consideration of existing roadway segment operations, a four-lane roadway would appear inconsistent with the permitted scale and density of development in the area. Under the two-lane (see Figure 20a) and four-lane (see Figure 20b) roadway widening scenario, the installation of post and rail fencing and a landscaped parkway parallel to eastbound Deer Springs Road would reiterate the planned character of the corridor and would begin to establish a distinct visual pattern along the right-of-way.

Intactness (Two-Lane Road – 3.0, Four-Lane Road – 2.0)

While the installation of a landscaped parkway and a low vegetated slope would mask portions of exposed tan soils on rural residential properties located north of Deer Springs Road, bands and pockets of lightly colored soils would remain visible. Furthermore, the low vegetated slope would create a hard line when viewed against unimproved residential lands and would disrupt the pattern of tan-colored soils gradually descending toward Deer Springs Road. Despite these anticipated effects, the landscaped parkway and low vegetated slope would soften the transition between the natural and built landscape. The removal of overhead electrical and

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communication infrastructure and underground installation of these features would reduce visual encroachment in the landscape and would enhance viewing opportunities to ridgelines located north of Deer Springs Road. Post and rail fencing would be appropriately scaled and wooden materials would be appropriate for inclusion in the surrounding rural residential area. While expansion to two lanes would have a minor positive effect on existing intactness (see Figure 20a), expansion to four lanes would create a wider line through the area and would substantially increase the width of the existing travel corridor (see Figure 20b).

Unity (Two-Lane Road – 3.0, Four-Lane Road – 2.0)

Due to the softened transition between Deer Springs Road and adjacent, unimproved parcels to the north resulting from installation of the landscape parkway and low vegetated slope, the coherence and harmony of visual patterns would slightly increase. When compared to the existing expanse of tan colored soils at the northern edge of Deer Springs Road, these elements would help built and natural elements to better blend together. While expansion to two-lanes and a median left turn lane would be coherent and consistent with existing conditions (see Figure 20a), expansion to four lanes would generally lack consistency with the character of the surrounding rural residential area (see Figure 20b).

Viewer Response (3.0)

From Key View 6, visual effects of planned roadway and right-of-way improvements would be located at a foreground viewing distance. Fuel modification effects on ridgelines located north of Deer Springs Road would be located at a middleground viewing distance. At Key View 6, Deer Springs Road motorists would be located at a normal viewing position to planned roadway and right-of-way improvements and at an inferior viewing angle to planned fuel modification areas. The posted speed limit on Deer Springs Road east of Sarver Lane is 55 miles per hour and therefore, the duration of mobile views would be relatively brief. The view duration of pedestrians and cyclists would be slightly longer than that of motorists due to a slower travel speed. As such, viewer response to project components is moderate at Key View 6.

Resulting Visual Impact

Project effects to the quality of the existing view at Key View 6 resulting from expansion to two lanes would be beneficial and as such, impacts would be less than significant. Project effects to the quality of the existing view at Key View 6 resulting from expansion to four lanes would be moderately low and as such, impacts would be less than significant.

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5.2.7 Key View 7 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 7 is located on Deer Springs Road, approximately 290 feet (0.06 mile) southwest of the Deer Springs Road/Sarver Lane intersection. The view orientation is to the north toward Sarver Lane and a seemingly low distant ridgeline. Key View 7 is representative of views to the planned widened segment of Deer Springs Road and improvements at the Deer Springs Road/Sarver Lane intersection. The elevation at Key View 7 is approximately 765 feet amsl and the terrain slightly rises (to approximately 775 feet amsl) at the Deer Springs Road/Sarver Lane intersection. The low and slightly diagonal ridgeline to the north is located on the proposed project Site and elevations of visible terrain in the middleground ranges from approximately 1,280 feet amsl to 1,395 feet amsl from west to east.

As indicated in Section 5.2.5 for Key View 5, despite a lack of striping, formal designation of bike facilities, and presence of a narrow, unimproved right-of-way, a limited number of cyclists and pedestrians may use Deer Springs Road and the adjacent right-of-way. As such, cyclists and pedestrians may also be afforded views to proposed Deer Springs Road improvements at Key View 7.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (2.5)

The distant ridgeline is rugged, relatively low in the landscape and is repeatedly screened or obscured by foreground elements (see Figure 21 (Existing)). Large boulder outcrops on the pyramidal peak to the north-northeast enhance the vividness of the terrain; however, outcrops are relatively common on slopes and ridges in the immediate area. Foreground shrubs lining the tan colored wall are clumped and display light to dark green colors. Large, dark green and spreading oaks are installed along Deer Springs Road and the continuity of color is broken by the thin brown trunks and bright green to yellow color of fan palm fronds. Dark green chaparral vegetation on distant terrain to the north is dense and due to distance, appears smoothly textured. Deer Springs Road and adjacent bare soils of the disturbed right-of-way contribute grey and tan colors and curving lines to the landscape that generally contrast with the color and line of visible natural elements. A segment of the foreground electrical support pole and multiple electrical lines are skylined and attract the attention of passing motorists.

Intactness (2.7)

As shown on Figure 21 (Existing) tall, skylined palm trees are prevalent in the scene and encroach on views to dark green, spreading oak trees along Deer Springs Road in the foreground and dense, chaparral and boulder covered terrain in the middleground. While a portion of the

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foreground electrical support pole is skylined, the scale and materiality of the pole appear appropriate for the rural character of the area. Additional poles located to the north and north-northeast of Key View 7 are backscreened and difficult to detect. The horizontal, slightly concave line of multiple electrical lines contrast with the rugged and at times diagonal line of distant ridgelines. Citrus and avocado groves on prominent terrain to the northeast contrast in color with nearby native chaparral vegetation, bare soils, and lightly colored boulders.

Unity (2.5)

The presence of thin and tall palm trees along the visible curve of Deer Springs Road and the confluence of multiple electrical lines at the foreground electrical support pole reduce the unity of the scene. These elements contribute narrow, vertical forms and darkly colored horizontal lines that stand out and divert attention from native oaks trees along Deer Springs Road and chaparral and boulder covered terrain in the middleground.

Proposed Project Features

From Key View 7, the planned expansion of Deer Springs Road would be visible (see Figure 21). South of Sarver Lane, Deer Springs Road would be widened to four-lanes and east- and westbound traffic would be separated by an approximate six-foot wide raised median. The widened roadway would be realigned near Key View 7 and the existing curve would be softened and replaced with a moderate, nearly diagonal alignment. While existing overhead utility lines would be removed and installed underground, tall and arching traffic signals would be erected at the Deer Springs Road/Sarver Lane intersection. Sarver Lane would be widened at the intersection to accommodate one northbound lane and two southbound lanes. North of the intersection, the roadway would include a 12-foot wide northbound and a 12-foot-wide southbound lane and an enhanced parkway featuring a linear greenbelt and a multi-use trail would be constructed north from the intersection to the project boundary. Pole and rail fencing would be installed parallel to the northbound travel lanes of Deer Springs Road. Shrubs, rocks and boulders would be installed within the disturbed right-of-way located east of the roadway and in the immediate foreground viewing distance of Key View 7.

Outside of the Deer Springs Road corridor, fuel modification activities, two-story residential development, and common area landscaping within the southeastern extent of the Knoll planning area would be visible atop ridgelines to the north-northeast. In addition, a rock cut and fuel modification activities occurring north and south of a project interior roadway linking the Mesa and Summit planning areas would be visible on mountainous terrain to the north of Key View 7.

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Changes to Visual Character and Quality

Vividness (2.0)

While implementation of the planned roadway improvements on Deer Springs Road would improve views from Key View 7 through the removal of overhead electrical infrastructure and installation of these features underground, viewers would experience enhanced visibility to middleground terrain that would be altered by development of the project. As shown in Figure 21, the prominent boulder-covered terrain to the northeast would continue to be interrupted by tall oak and palm trees installed adjacent to Deer Springs Road near Sarver Lane. Furthermore, the lack of consistency in the existing vegetative visual pattern (i.e., tall and short palm trees, tall eucalyptus and spreading oak trees in the foreground and chaparral, boulder and tree crop covered terrain in the middleground) would remain. However, fuel modification activities in the Mesa planning area and fuel modification and residential development in the Knoll planning area would be visible from Key View 7 and would reduce the vividness of the existing landscape.

As shown on Figure 21, light-brown colored soils would be exposed on middleground terrain to the north and northwest because of vegetation thinning (i.e., fuel modification activities). The light brown color and relatively smooth texture displayed by these areas would contrast with the dark greens and rough textures of adjacent areas of chaparral vegetation that would remain in place. While limited in number, visible residential development to the northwest would be located atop prominent middleground terrain and the earth tone colors and rectangular form of structures would interrupt the existing flat, nearly straight line of existing terrain. In the foreground viewing distance a portion of the new traffic signal at the Deer Springs Road/Sarver Lane intersection would be skylined; however, the scale of this feature would be consistent with the scale of surrounding oak and palm trees. Planting materials and rocks/boulders would be installed east of realigned Deer Springs Road and would occupy the existing denuded right-of-way (see Figure 21). When compared to the existing flat form of the exposed soil surface right-of-way, shrubs and rocks/boulders would enhance visual interest along the Deer Springs Road corridor.

Intactness (2.5)

While the underground installation of existing skylined electrical distribution lines would remove encroaching elements from the scene, visible alteration of middleground terrain would result in an overall reduction in intactness of the existing view. As shown in Figure 22, contrasting elements including narrow and skylined palm trees, vibrant green crowns of tree crops surrounded by comparatively drab colored chaparral vegetation on prominent terrain to the northeast, are currently present in the existing landscape. However, the alteration of middleground terrain and the introduction of exposed, light-brown soils and the prominently

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located, rectangular forms of residential development would detract from the visual integrity of the middleground landscape. When viewed from Deer Springs Road, the installation of planting materials and rocks/boulders to the disturbed right-of-way located adjacent to Deer Springs Road in the foreground viewing distance would enhance visual interest and create a more distinct visual pattern through noticeable contrasts in form, line, texture and color with the roadway. Considering all project elements and due to the anticipated visual effects of terrain alteration in the middleground viewing distance, implementation of the project would decrease the intactness of the landscape as viewed from Key View 7.

Unity (2.3)

Similar to proposed post and rail fencing that would separate the planned pedestrian trail from vehicular traffic, the planted area located in the immediate foreground distance of Key View 7 would follow the line created by the realigned Deer Springs Road. Planting materials would soften the transition from Deer Springs Road to the right-of-way and would mask the majority of the existing expanse of exposed tan colored soils that is relatively uncommon in the surrounding landscape. Underground installation of electrical distribution infrastructure would remove darkly colored, skylined features from the landscape and would reduce the visual prominence of manmade elements in the scene. Alteration of terrain and the resulting color and texture contrasts from vegetation removal (i.e., fuel modification activities) would create visible disharmony in the middleground visual pattern that is typically characterized by dark green and occasionally, boulder-covered, mountainous terrain. The overall unity of the Key View 7 landscape would be reduced by implementation of the project.

Viewer Response (3.0)

From Key View 7, visual effects of planned roadway and right-of-way improvements would be located at a foreground viewing distance. Alteration of existing terrain and the introduction of rectangular, residential structures would be located in the middleground viewing distance of receptors. At and near Key View 7 (the planned realignment of the Deer Springs Road would realign the roadway to the west of the Key View 7), motorists on Deer Springs Road would be located at a normal viewing position to planned roadway and right-of-way improvements. The posted speed limit on Deer Springs Road east of North Twin Oaks Valley Road and south of Sarver Lane is 55 miles per hour and therefore, the duration of mobile views would be relatively brief. As such, viewer response to project components is moderate at Key View 7.

Resulting Visual Impact

Project effects to the quality of the existing view at Key View 7 would be moderately low and as such, impacts would be less than significant.

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5.2.8 Key View 8 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 8 is located at the Deer Springs Road/Sycamore Road, approximately 1,000 feet south of Key View 8 and 1,190 feet southwest of the Deer Springs Road/Sarver Lane intersection. The view orientation is to the north and Key View 8 provides representative views to northbound motorists of Deer Springs Road and the surrounding rural, agricultural character of the Twin Oaks Valley Area. Key View 8 is located at an approximate elevation of 745 feet amsl. The terrain gently rises to the north (the approximate elevation at the dirt driveway to the north of Key View 8 and east of Deer Springs Road (see Figure 22 (Existing)) is approximately 750 feet amsl) and is relatively flat from east to west.

As indicated in Section 5.2.5 for Key View 5, despite a lack of striping, formal designation of bike facilities, and presence of a narrow, unimproved right-of-way, a limited number of cyclists and pedestrians may use Deer Springs Road and the adjacent right-of-way. As such, cyclists and pedestrians may also be afforded views to proposed roadway improvements on Deer Springs at Key View 8.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (3.1)

The foreground terrain displays a flat, horizontal form and while visibly modified, rising hills to the north create contrast in form and line; tall, intervening trees repeatedly obscure these features. A series of distant and dark colored peaks to the northwest are visible between stands of tall trees installed on private property west of Deer Springs Road. The tan color and slight diagonal line created by cut grading and removal of vegetation on the south-facing slope of the lower peak is visible from Key View 8. Clumped and mounded citrus trees and a dense line of tall, spreading pepper trees are located west of Deer Springs Road. A dense grove of tall and thin eucalyptus trees displaying olive and brown-colored foliage is located north and east of Key View 8. Native chaparral vegetation has been removed from a visible portion of the prominent hill to the north and appears to be partially planted with agricultural crops/trees. Several tall and thin wooden support poles and darkly colored electrical and communication lines run parallel to the southbound Deer Springs Road lanes as does an approximately 6-foot tall chain link fence. The property to the north and northwest has been graded and tilled, is actively engaged in agricultural operations and features a long row of white nursery structures that create arching and horizontal lines in the landscape.

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Intactness (2.5)

The flat form and tan color of the agricultural field to the north is interrupted by a long, relatively low row of white nursery structures. These features reinforce the agricultural character of the Twin Oaks Valley area but nonetheless create noticeable contrast in color and line. A sandy colored, slight diagonal line is visible on the south-facing slope of prominent background terrain to the northwest and the visual effects of this cut stands out against the dense texture dark green color of chaparral vegetation draped over surrounding terrain. Rough chaparral vegetation on prominent middleground terrain to the north has been removed and planted with orderly rows of agricultural crops/trees. Expanses of bare soils are also visible. In addition to visible alterations, rugged terrain to the north is obscured from view by tall, spreading trees located east and west of Deer Springs Road. Lastly, tall wooden support poles and thin, darkly colored electrical and communication lines are skylined and contribute to the moderately low intactness of the visible landscape.

Unity (2.4)

Spray paint markings and darkly colored patches and cuts on Deer Springs Road create a relatively jumbled ground plane that is further muddled by the occurrence of parallel bands of bare soils and horizontal lines of perpendicular driveways. Electrical and communication poles and lines are skylined and along with linear stands of screening pepper trees detract from views of prominent terrain in the middleground. Background ridges and slopes to the north display a rugged, natural character that is interrupted by expanses of bare soils and orderly rows of low agricultural crops/trees on rising terrain in the middleground. The symmetrical, uniform arching lines of white nursery structures bear no resemblance to the pattern elements of native landforms or vegetation. As a result, unity of the Key View 8 landscape is moderately low.

Proposed Project Features

From Key View 8, the regrading, widening, and repaving of Deer Springs Road to four lanes would be apparent as would the installation of a tree and shrub planted, raised median separating north and southbound lanes. While the travel lanes, bike lane, and curb and gutter installed along the southbound lanes would eventually be partially screened by median landscaping (see Figure 22), the incorporation of bikes lanes and the installation of curbs and gutters and planted parkways adjacent to the widened lanes of Deer Springs Road would be visible following construction. The planted, raised median along Deer Springs Road would extend north of the Sycamore Road intersection and would transition to an unraised, striped median near the Deer Springs Road/Sarver Lane intersection. A dirt pedestrian path is proposed along the northbound Deer Springs Road lanes and post and rail fencing would separate the path from the vegetated parkway, bike lane and lanes. Widening of the roadway

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would require removal of existing pepper trees planted on private property located adjacent to the southbound lane of Deer Springs Road. Tall and arching traffic signals would also be installed at the Deer Springs Road/Sycamore Road intersection.

Lastly, the existing overhead electrical line running parallel to Deer Springs Road would be placed underground along a similar alignment. Due to the underground alignment of electrical lines, utility boxes/cabinets would be sporadically installed in the right-of-way however, the specific location of these elements has not been determined (locations would be identified during final design). As such, utility boxes/cabinets are not depicted in the Key View 8 visual simulation. Given the scale of the proposed roadway improvements, new utility boxes/cabinets would be a relatively minor visual feature in the Key View 8 landscape. Furthermore, once installed these features are likely to display a low vertical profile and would be scattered along the Deer Springs Road right-of-way.

Project features on Site would not be visible from Key View 8.

Changes to Visual Character and Quality

Vividness (3.4)

While project components visible from Key View 8 would encompass foreground elements, planned improvements to Deer Springs Road and the adjacent right-of-way would affect the quality and vividness of existing views. As shown on Figure 22, views to prominent terrain to the north would be expanded and made clear, yet more distant, darkly colored peaks to the northwest would periodically be screened by new trees to be installed in the raised median. The installation of trees would create short, briefly experienced view windows through which views to the west and northwest would be available and enhanced due to the removal of dense and tall pepper trees lining the southbound lane of Deer Springs Road. The small grove of tall and mature eucalyptus trees located east of Deer Springs Road would not be disturbed or otherwise modified by planned roadway and right-of-way improvements including the installation of utility boxes/cabinets. Rather, the roadway would be realigned farther to the west and the existing overhead distribution line located west of Deer Springs Road would be installed underground. As such, implementation of the proposed project would remove the thin, darkly colored, and skylined distribution and communication lines from the views of motorists. Regrading, widening, and repaving of Deer Springs Road would address the existing color contrast in the roadway surface from patchwork and graffiti lines and text. While the transition from roadway to disturbed right-of-way would be softened through the installation of gutters, curbs, shrubs and trees, and rustic post and rail fencing, new line and color contrasts associated with these elements would also occur. Despite these anticipated contrasts, overall effects to the existing vividness would be beneficial because proposed improvements would establish a distinct travel corridor with enhanced views.

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Intactness (3.2)

At maturity, landscape trees planted in the proposed Deer Springs Road median would be skylined and would briefly obscure available views to more distant landscape features including mountainous terrain to the northwest. However, due to the spacing of median plantings, the resulting blockage of views would be less severe and constant than view blockage associated with the existing line of tall, mature pepper trees installed west of Deer Springs Road. A new traffic signal is proposed at the Deer Springs Road/Sycamore Roadway intersection. This feature would be skylined as motorists approach the intersection. The existing skylined distribution lines, communication lines, and tall and thin wooden support poles would be installed underground. As a result, overhead distribution infrastructure would not be visible in northerly views from near the Deer Springs Road/Sycamore Roadway intersection. At Key View 8, project components would be experienced by motorists in the foreground viewing distance. Planned roadway and right-of-way improvements would enhance the visual character of the travel corridor through the installation of planting materials and rustic post and rail fencing (which acknowledges the historic agricultural character of the Twin Oaks Valley) and the removal of tall and skylined communication and distribution infrastructure.

Unity (3.0)

Proposed roadway and right-of-way improvements would enhance the unity of the landscape visible from Key View 8. The removal of a dense line of tall pepper trees and skylined distribution lines, communication lines, and wooden support poles would remove prominent built features from the scene. Although the increased width of Deer Springs Road and the newly installed traffic signal would attract the attention of passing motorists, enhanced viewing opportunities and corridors to the north and northwest would also garner attention. Views of prominent terrain to the north would no longer be completely screened by roadside-adjacent landscape trees and darkly colored distribution and communication lines would no longer frame views of distant peaks to the northwest. As shown in Figure 22, proposed roadway and right-of-way improvements would be appropriately scaled for the surrounding character of the area and vertical elements would not substantially or continuously block viewing opportunities to middleground features in the landscape.

Viewer Response (3.0)

As viewed from Key View 8, visual effects of planned roadway and right-of-way improvements would be located at a foreground viewing distance and while project features would be visible to northbound motorists as shown in Figure 22, southbound motorists would also be exposed to similar views. At and near Key View 8, Deer Springs Road motorists and potentially, pedestrians and cyclists, would be located at a normal viewing position to planned roadway and right-of-way

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improvements and the duration of mobile views would be relatively brief. The view duration of pedestrians and cyclists would be slightly longer than that of motorists due to a slower travel speed. The posted speed limit on Deer Springs Road east of North Twin Oaks Valley Road and south of Sarver Lane is 55 miles per hour and while daily traffic would include some new viewers, it would include occasional and daily viewers that are familiar with the landscape. As such and for purposes of this report, viewer response is moderate at Key View 8.

Resulting Visual Impact

Project effects to the quality of the existing view at Key View 8 would be beneficial and as such, impacts would be less than significant.

5.2.9 Key View 9 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 9 is located in the City of San Marcos at Walnut Grove Park, and more specifically, approximately 75 feet north of Williams Barn and 580 feet east of the Deer Springs Road/North Twin Oaks Road intersection. As shown in Figure 23 (Existing), view orientation is to the northeast and Key View 9 looks across the park's turf area and toward a series of ridgelines located north and south of Deer Springs Road. Key View 9 provides a representative view of the park and surrounding landscape available to park users. Key View 9 is located at an approximate elevation of 715 feet amsl and ridgelines located north and south of Deer Springs Road to the northeast are situated at an elevation of approximately 1,515 feet amsl and 1,365 feet amsl.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (2.8)

The flat form and horizontal form of green-colored, turf in the foreground contrast sharply with the rugged and prominent form of dark chaparral and speckled boulder covered terrain to the northeast. The continuity in green/grey color of chaparral covered terrain is repeatedly broken by light colored boulder outcrops and less often by the green canopies of agricultural crops and the tan color of bare soils associated with fuel modification practices. The green color displayed by landscape trees installed around the perimeter of the park presents a consistent and harmonious color palette that extends beyond the park to tall, eucalyptus trees to the north and northeast. An asphalt parking lot and vehicles occupy a small sliver of the foreground but these elements are not spatially dominant or visually prominent. Landforms to the north are visually prominent but have been noticeably modified by agricultural development or fuel modification and as a result, the vividness of the view is moderately low.

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Intactness (3.6)

While Walnut Grove Park displays a consistent developed recreational theme and character, the removal of greyish chaparral vegetation and installation of densely spaced, dark green crop trees on mountainous terrain to the northeast creates noticeable line and color contrast in the landscape. The removal of native vegetation and the smooth, light tan color of exposed soils associated with building pads and fuel management is also evident downslope to the west and south of the prominent peak to the northeast of Key View 9 (Figure 23 (Existing)). While partially hidden by crop trees, the lightly colored exterior and red tiled roof of a large home is visible and skylined. Similar to the dark green crowns of crop trees, the prominently located residence disrupts the intactness of native vegetation on the mountainous terrain. Walnut Grove Park is located on the valley floor where other alterations to the existing landscape are concentrated and therefore, the park itself and the large expanse smooth and short green turf visible in the immediate foreground from Key View 9 is not considered an encroaching element.

Unity (3.4)

With the exception of the dark green crowns of crop trees and the lightly colored exterior of the prominently located residence, the Key View 9 landscape is visually coherent and free of jumbling or chaotic elements. Foreground elements at Walnut Grove Park are distinct and visually separated from native chaparral vegetation draped over mountainous terrain by green and brown hued landscape trees installed along Deer Springs Road and around the perimeter of the park. The presence of landscape trees softens the transition from the park to native vegetation and terrain in the middleground distance.

Proposed Project Features

From Key View 9, visible project features would be limited to the removal of existing chaparral vegetation and the establishment of a perimeter fuel modification zone on the middleground ridgeline located approximately 1.4 miles to the northeast. The removal of existing vegetation and installation of appropriate fire-resistant planting materials would create line and color contrasts that would be relatively subtle to viewers at Walnut Grove Park due to distance (Figure 23).

Changes to Visual Character and Quality

Vividness (2.6)

As viewed from Key View 9, the removal of native vegetation and installation of fire-resistant planting materials on discontinuous segments of the middleground ridgeline would have a minor effect on the vividness of the existing view. Due to distance, modification of the vegetation at the ridgeline would be difficult to detect.

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Intactness (3.4)

The visible portions of fuel modification associated with the southwestern perimeter of the Sierra Terraces planning area would occur in an area of existing color contrast. As opposed to west-facing slopes that are generally covered with dense expanses of chaparral vegetation separated by lightly colored bands of exposed soils, rocks and thinned vegetation, south-facing slopes to the northeast where project fuel modification would be established are generally unaltered. East of the prominently located residence surrounded by dense, dark green tree crops, the mountainous terrain has dense stands of chaparral vegetation and granitic boulders that creates a mosaic of light and dark colors. Due to the existing contrast present on south-facing slopes and the presence of visible line, color and texture contrast resulting from fuel modification practices elsewhere in the landscape, the establishment of fuel modification zones within the Sierra Terraces planning area would have a relatively minor effect on the intactness of the existing view.

Unity (3.2)

Because visible portions of proposed fuel modification would occupy a small area on the prominent ridgeline located to the northeast, project effects to unity would be relatively subtle as viewed from Key View 9 (see Figure 23). The removal of native chaparral vegetation and the installation of fire-resistant planting materials would create line, color and texture contrast when compared to the existing conditions on the ridgeline. However, the contrast would be moderated by distance (visible fuel modification practices would be located approximately 1.4 miles to the northeast), and by the existing contrast created by dark green/grey chaparral vegetation and white granitic boulders. As a result, project effects to the existing unity of Key View 9 would be minor.

Viewer Response (2.0)

Viewers at Walnut Grove Park would be temporarily exposed to views of fuel modification practices within the southwestern most edges of the Sierra Terraces planning area as they recreate. Although viewers would generally be focused on activities occurring at a foreground viewing distance and within the park, the availability of longer views and mountainous ridgelines may attract attention and draw eyes to elements beyond the park and at a middleground viewing distance. As stated above, project effects to the intactness and unity of existing views would be minor and due to the small area of visible alteration on the prominent ridgeline to the northeast, overall visual change would be minor. Further, viewer response is anticipated to be relatively subdued given the existing alterations of south- and west-facing slopes associated with agricultural development and fuel modification present in the landscape.

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Resulting Visual Impact

Project effects to the quality of the existing view at Key View 9 would be low and as such, impacts would be less than significant.

5.2.10 Key View 10 – Existing Conditions

Orientation

Key View 10 is located on North Twin Oaks Valley Road, approximately 0.20 mile north of Twin Oaks Crest Drive, and at the proposed project northwestern access driveway, Camino Mayor. As shown in Figure 24 (Existing), view orientation is to the northeast and the viewpoint Key View 10 is oriented toward the terminus of an unpaved and relatively narrow private road (Camino Mayor) as it descends higher elevation and mountainous terrain and approaches North Twin Oaks Valley Road. Key View 10 provides a representative view of the North Twin Oaks Valley Road/Camino Mayor intersection and the characteristic landscape present in the northwestern extent of the proposed project Site to passing motorists on North Twin Oaks Valley Road. Key View 10 is located at an approximate elevation of 950 feet amsl and the high point of the mounded, chaparral-covered terrain located to the northeast is located at an approximate elevation of 1,350 feet amsl.

Visual Character/Quality

Vividness (2.3)

East and northeast of Key View 10 the terrain abruptly rises and creates diagonal and rugged lines in the foreground viewing distance. The denuded and relatively steep slope located immediately south of Camino Mayor is a bold feature that produces noticeable color, line and texture contrast in the landscape. The mounded form and arching line of mountainous terrain to the northeast attracts the attention of motorists toward the convergence of adjacent west-facing slopes separated by Camino Mayor. Mountainous terrain is covered by dense dark green and grey chaparral vegetation that is regularly interrupted by large, lightly colored boulders. Several light green and grey trees and shrubs are located immediately north of Camino Mayor and along an unseen, narrow drainage. A distribution line traverses the landscape from west to east and several horizontal transmission lines are silhouetted against the sky. Despite the contrasting elements displayed by natural and developed features and activities, the view from Key View 10 is limited to the foreground viewing distance and does not contain particularly striking or distinct features.

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Intactness (3.3)

The denuded slope located south of Camino Mayor and the thin, darkly colored, and skylined distribution lines encroach upon the scene and deviate from the pattern created by the linear row of vegetation along a narrow, unseen drainage backscreened by chaparral and boulder covered mountainous terrain. The dense and tall, bright green hued trees located north of Camino Mayor appear particularly busy and contrast with the low form and drab green/grey color of background chaparral vegetation. The light grey surface of Camino Mayor and parallel tan colored soils continue the contrast associated with the asphalt surface of North Twin Oaks Valley Road and the roadside adjacent denuded slope.

Unity (2.9)

When viewed against the matte, drab grey/green chaparral vegetation, dense, green hued trees and shrubs located north of Camino Mayor display a slightly jumbled and busy appearance. Camino Mayor and the denuded slope in the foreground disrupt the continuity of the patterns created by drainage vegetation and by more distant chaparral vegetation. These elements also add light tan and grey colors and smooth textures to the scene.

Proposed Project Features

As proposed, Camino Mayor would be regraded and widened to accommodate two lanes of travel. Widening activities require the removal of vegetation from the adjacent narrow drainage and curbs and gutter would be installed for stormwater conveyance (see Figure 24). A curb and gutter would also be installed on a segment of the northbound lane of North Twin Oaks Valley Road. Regraded and widened Camino Mayor would also be paved and lined and roadside adjacent tree and shrubs would be removed and managed to ensure adequate line of sight provisions. A portion of the North Twin Oaks Valley Road and Camino Mayor intersection would be regraded and repaved to create a consistent and level driving surface at the confluence of the two roadways. Lastly, fuel modification would be established off the shoulder of Camino Mayor. More specifically, 30 feet of Zone 1 fuel modification (i.e., new, irrigated vegetation) and 70 feet of Zone 2 fuel modification (i.e., existing, thinned vegetation) would be established off Camino Mayor and would be visible from Key View 10. Due to the presence of existing development and fuel modification on the private property located at the southeastern corner of the North Twin Oaks Valley/Camino Mayor intersection, establishment of Zone 2 fuel modification south of Camino Mayor would begin approximately 350 feet east of the intersection.

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Changes to Visual Character and Quality

Vividness (2.1)

As shown on Figure 24, regrading and widening of Camino Mayor would require the removal of dense trees and shrubs from the narrow drainage located immediately north of the roadway. Fuel modification would also be established north and south of project driveway. While removal of trees and shrubs would reduce the vegetative diversity and range of green hues displayed in the existing scene, the rugged form and line of mountainous terrain would be extended to the north and a stronger skyline would be revealed. Enhanced views of mountainous terrain to the northeast would tend to strengthen the vividness of the view; however, the thinning of vegetation north of Camino Mayor would produce noticeable density and texture contrast between Zone 2 of fuel modification and chaparral vegetation that would remain in place. While this contrast would be noticeable, the green/browns of the Zone 2 fuel modification tends to blend in with the green/browns of unaltered, chaparral-covered mountainous terrain. From Key View 10, proposed alteration of vegetation would generally have an overall mild effect on the visual prominence of terrain in the scene.

With the exception of bright green palm trees and other landscape materials located within the fenced residential lot located north of Camino Mayor, existing and altered vegetation would generally display a consistent drab green/brown hue and rough texture. Smooth textured soils would however be exposed by vegetation thinning and these patchy areas would contrast with nearby rough chaparral vegetation. Given the relatively common occurrence of fuel modification practices in the surrounding rural residential area, the pattern of smooth textures juxtaposed against rough textures would not be overly striking or distinct. The paved surface of Camino Mayor would display a darker tone than the light grey surface of North Twin Oaks Valley Road and the drab color of vegetation; however, this visual pattern and occurrences of features is also relatively routine in the project area. Vegetation removal and grading activities north of Camino Mayor would increase the visibility of the roadway from Key View 10. However, the road would not substantially affect the vividness of the existing view as construction activities would result in enhanced viewing opportunities to mountainous terrain. Furthermore, the two-lane road would be constructed at similar scale and would display a similar form and texture as North Twin Oaks Valley Road.

Intactness (3.2)

When compared to existing conditions, paving Camino Mayor and installing pedestrian paths, curbs and gutters, and roadway striping would create a more orderly scene. Grading, removal of tall vegetation from the narrow drainage, and establishment of fuel modification would also substantially reduce the jumbled and busy appearance of foreground vegetation. As stated

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above, vegetation would generally display a consistent drab green/brown hue and rough texture. The widening and paving of Camino Mayor and establishment of Zone 1 and Zone 2 fuel modification would not result in the insertion of obvious eyesores to the landscape. Both paved roadways and fuel modification activities are commonplace in the surrounding rural residential area. Furthermore, the exposure of soils resulting from vegetation thinning would create smooth gaps in the density of rough vegetation similar to gaps created by large, granitic boulder outcrops. Improvements to Camino Mayor including roadway widening, paving, installation of curbs, and gutters, and roadway striping would not substantially affect the integrity of the existing visual order present in the landscape and these features would be compatible with the existing character of the surrounding area. The underground installation of existing overhead distribution lines would reduce occurrences of skyline visual clutter and would remove an encroaching element from existing views.

Unity (2.6)

Regrading, widening and paving of Camino Mayor would have a moderately low effect on the existing unity present in the Key View 10 landscape. While private, Camino Mayor is an existing roadway that creates a greyish, straight and eventually curving line in the landscape. Grading activities and vegetation removal to support the widened roadway would enhance the visibility of the road from Key View 10 when compared to existing conditions; however, the resulting visual scene would be harmonious and free of jumbled or chaotic elements. Visual contrast between fuel modification zones and chaparral vegetation to remain in place would be noticeable to motorists. However, the establishment of fuel modification north and south of Camino Mayor would soften the transition from flat, paved roadway surface to dense and rough chaparral vegetation on adjacent lands.

Viewer Response (2.5)

Similar to existing conditions, motorists on North Twin Oaks Valley Road would be afforded brief, passing views of planned improvements to Camino Mayor and fuel modification activities. The posted speed limited on North Twin Oaks Valley Road is 40 miles per hour. South of Key View 10, views to Camino Mayor and fuel modification areas north and south of the roadway are blocked from the view of northbound North Twin Oaks Valley Road motorists by the elevated and denuded slope located at the southeastern corner of the North Twin Oaks Valley/Camino Mayor intersection (see Figure 24). Camino Mayor and fuel modification areas are in the normal field of vision of passing motorists for 2-3 seconds at the posted speed limit of 40 miles per hour as they pass the North Twin Oaks Valley Road/Camino Mayor intersection. Similarly, views to Camino Mayor and fuel modification areas from southbound North Twin Oaks Valley Road near Key View 10 are blocked by existing landforms and other features. In addition to descending, chaparral shrub and occasional tree-covered terrain, rural residential development and

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landscaping located east of North Twin Oaks Valley Road and north of Camino Mayor (see Figure 24) screen views of the improved, paved segment of Camino Mayor for north and southbound motorists. Although views to Camino Mayor and adjacent fuel modification areas afforded to passing motorists would be brief, the response of motorists that are not future residents of the proposed project to planned roadway improvements may be negatively affected by other factors. For example, increases in traffic on North Twin Oaks Valley Road associated with residents of the proposed project may trigger a heightened response to changes in the Key View 10 landscape. In addition, the conversion of Camino Mayor from a private roadway receiving very little use to a public project driveway used by future residents may result in reduced speeds near the intersection that could slightly increase the duration of views to the improved segment of Camino Mayor. The installation of a stop sign at the western terminus of Camino Mayor at North Twin Oaks Valley Road may have a similar affect.

Resulting Visual Impact

Project effects to the quality of the existing view at Key View 10 would be low and as such, impacts would be less than significant.

5.3 Assessment of Visual Character and Visual Quality

5.3.1 Assessment of Visual Character

Existing Condition

As previously stated in Section 3, Visual Environment of the Project, the proposed project is located within the northern portion of the Merriam Mountains. The natural topography of the Site is composed of hills and valleys dominated by significant rock outcroppings with moderate to steeply sloping terrain. Prominent, generally east–west trending ridgelines divide the Site into five separate drainage basins, which are tributaries to local canyons and creeks. The proposed project Site is primarily undeveloped and is largely dominated by undisturbed chaparral communities primarily composed of chamise (*Adenostoma fasciculatum*), manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.), white fairy-lantern (*Calochortus albus*), ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.), and other species. Green to brown to greyish shrubs on Site range from approximately 5 to 10 feet in height and are often intermixed with patches of bare, tan-colored soils. Small pockets of coastal scrub habitat are scattered throughout on-site chaparral. A number of private and narrow dirt roads and trails traverse the proposed project Site and due to the light tan color of exposed soils and linear nature of disturbance, trails and road surfaces are distinguishable from adjacent areas of natural habitat. Several of the existing private roads and trails are used without authorization for recreational use including horseback riding, hiking, mountain biking, off-roading, motorcycling, and shooting, and existing roads and trails also facilitate occasional dumping. Lastly, an abandoned

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quarry is located in the northwest portion of the Site fronting Twin Oaks Valley Road, and an abandoned private landing strip is located in the north central portion of the Site.

During Construction

Construction effects to the existing visual character of the proposed project Site would be most apparent to northbound motorists on I-15 and North Centre City Parkway, westbound motorists on the segment of Deer Springs Road spanning I-15, and residents of ridgeline developments located east of the proposed project and I-15. Regarding planned roadway improvements, construction effects to the existing visual character and quality of Deer Springs Road would be most apparent to east and westbound motorists on Deer Springs Road.

The proposed project would require grading, excavation, blasting and improvements including the construction of public sewer, water and storm drain system and public roads. These activities would occur within the seven planning areas and be designed to avoid the most sensitive biological, cultural, and topographical resources on the proposed project Site. Grading has been designed to balance and reduce off-site truck trips and hauls during construction. In several instances, grade-adaptive architecture would be incorporated into planning areas to minimize Site grading impacts by constructing one or more steps in the ground floor that conform to the underlying slope of the Site. However, as viewed from I-15 and North Centre City Parkway, development of the Town Center and Terraces planning areas would entail the removal of primarily undisturbed chaparral vegetation from east- and south-facing hillsides. Furthermore, portions of hillsides would be graded and terrain steepened. North of Deer Springs Road, Mesa Rock Road would be realigned to provide service to the proposed planning areas and the graded extents of the new roadway would climb and cut through the altered Site. Terrain would rise away from the new roadway alignment and would either display a relatively bare, orderly and dotted appearance (i.e., where vineyards are proposed) or display the forest green color of an applied slurry seed mix (i.e., where irrigated slopes near building pads are proposed). Over time, the frames of proposed development (commercial, residential, and educational) would rise from level building pads. Areas of thinned vegetation would be distinct from adjacent areas of natural and intact vegetation due to the inclusion of previously concealed underlying soils and seemingly sparse spacing of individual shrubs to the visual pattern. To construct and install the proposed water tank, an existing mounded peak would be graded and flattened. Grading activities associated with the proposed I-15 interchange and park-n-ride facility would entail vehicles and equipment working within the disturbed I-15 right-of-way. Proposed activities would require the removal of vegetation, alteration of the gently sloping terrain, and grading of level surfaces.

Along Deer Springs Road, existing vegetation located within the right-of-way and widening of the corridor would be removed. These areas would also be graded and leveled for the expansion

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of the roadway and the inclusion of associated improvements including curb and gutter, bike lanes, landscaped parkways and a pedestrian trail. Under both the two-lane and four-lane options between Sarver Lane and Mesa Rock Road, adjacent terrain would be graded and otherwise modified where necessary to accommodate proposed improvements. Where grading would be necessary, existing vegetation would be removed and the angle of slopes would be steepened. Under the two-lane option, Deer Springs Road would display a continuous asphalt surface from curb-to-curb and under the four-lane option a flat and relatively wide strip of land would separate the asphalt surface of widened east and westbound travel lanes.

The visual effects of roadway widening and general roadway improvements would also be visible to motorists on North Twin Oaks Valley Road, Sarver Lane, and Camino Mayor.

Completion of Construction

Upon completion of construction and occupancy of commercial, residential and education uses, the proposed project would generate regular traffic and project development would feature elements that contrast with existing Site conditions. Residential and commercial traffic would use Deer Springs Road and Mesa Rock Road to access the proposed project Site. The project would also generate additional traffic on North Twin Oaks Valley Road, Sarver Lane, and Camino Mayor. Outdoor signs in the Town Center planning area would advertise available commercial and retail services and would operate during evening hours. Graded and bare hillsides would be dotted with rows of vineyards and vegetation in fuel modification zone 1 would begin to become established. New landscape trees installed throughout the Town Center and Terraces planning area (and along segments of realigned and paved Mesa Rock Road) would display a tall, spreading form that would rise from irrigated and non-irrigated slopes and flat building pads. Commercial and retail development within the Town Center planning area would occupy a low, southwesterly portion of the proposed project Site and multi-story residential townhome structures (and associated fuel modification zones) would seemingly climb the terrain.

Following construction, the characteristic, dominant visual pattern of chaparral occasional boulder covered mountainous terrain would become discontinuous across the proposed project Site. Existing elements would be removed and replaced to accommodate proposed development. Vegetation at the project edges would appear sparser than adjacent areas of natural and intact vegetation and vineyards would display an ordered, uniform appearance. Deer Springs Road would be widened, restriped, and resurfaced. As a result, the Deer Springs Road surface would display a consistent smooth form and black color. Post and rail fencing would be installed alongside improved segments of Deer Springs Road and in addition to wider travel lanes, viewers would also see elements of movement in the form of cyclists and pedestrians.

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Maturity

With the exception of the establishment and maturity of vineyards and irrigated landscaping shrubs and trees, the visual character of the proposed project would be similar to that anticipated at the completion of construction. Generally, maturity of landscape materials would conceal previously exposed soils and denuded slopes and would reintroduce spreading green hue to recently altered areas. These forms and elements would however be discontinuous and would be sparser at project edges. While the maturity of trees would also help to partially screen development, the visual effects and contrasts associated with vegetation management and development would be clearly visible to viewers along nearby regional and local roads. Section 5.2, Key Views, provides an assessment of changes to existing visual character and quality anticipated at project maturity at each of the ten key view locations.

5.3.2 Assessment of Visual Quality

Existing Condition

Two distinct landscape units (LUs) were previously identified as occurring within the project viewshed: the I-15 Corridor LU and the Twin Oaks Valley LU. Under existing conditions, the rugged ridgelines lining the I-15 corridor increase the vividness of the landscape with noticeable contrast between the rough textures and drab color of native vegetation and pockets of light green-colored crowns of agricultural crops. However, the intactness and unity of the corridor is reduced due to residential and other visible development that tends to be concentrated on lower lying terrain located east of the interstate but also occasionally appears atop ridgelines. The visual pattern of valley development and primarily intact slopes, and interrupted ridgelines is repeated throughout the delineated corridor. As such, the I-15 Corridor LU is considered to be of moderate visual quality. Located west and southwest of the I-15 Corridor LU, the Twin Oaks Valley LU has been noticeably altered by the development of residential, agricultural, and recreational (more specifically, equestrian and park) uses primarily at the valley bottom. Residential and agricultural development also extends to several foothill areas where these uses are intermixed with boulder outcrops and intact dark green and brown colored chaparral vegetation. Unaltered ridgelines and chaparral and boulder covered slopes at the northern portion of the Twin Oaks Valley LU enhance the vividness of the landscape but due to noticeable alterations to landform and vegetation associated with single-family residential development and agricultural production, the intactness and unity of the landscape is noticeably weakened. Thus, the area is considered to be of moderately low visual quality.

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During Construction

Perceptions of changes to existing visual quality would largely depend on distance. More specifically, the closer a sensitive viewer is to an active construction site or construction zone, the more apparent changes to visual quality would be. For example, when the effects of grading and establishment of fuel modification are viewed from relatively distant viewing locations with limited visibility to construction activities (such as from Walnut Grove Park in the City of San Marcos), the existing vividness, intactness and unity present in the landscape would be largely maintained. While some discrepancy in the spacing of shrubs and color of vegetation at the border of existing and intact vegetation remain in place, vegetation would be visible and changes would be altogether subdued. However, when viewed from foreground viewing distances with clear visibility, the visual quality of the proposed project Site would be noticeably affected by grading activities, vegetation management and Site preparation. Grading activities within the Terraces and Town Center planning areas would disrupt the form and line of existing mountainous terrain and would interrupt the predominant visual pattern of dark green and rough textured chaparral vegetation spread across east and south facing slopes. While the vividness of the mountainous ridgelines would be slightly reduced by construction activities (as viewed from I-15 and North Centre City Parkway, development and fuel modification practices would be located primarily away from ridgelines), grading and the establishment of fuel modification would result in reduced intactness and unity of the landscape due to the subtraction of predominant and characteristic visual features (i.e., vegetation). In addition, the construction of manufactured slopes would introduce vertical and diagonal slopes where natural and gentle slopes currently exist. Furthermore, the removal of existing chaparral vegetation and the installation of landscape trees and vineyards would introduce tall and spreading forms and elements of uniformity and orderliness that are not currently present on Site. As a result, the existing intactness and unity displayed by native vegetation would be reduced during construction of the proposed project.

Widening efforts along Deer Springs Road would expand upon the existing linear disturbance associated with the roadway. The removal of adjacent vegetation and the introduction of linear bands of exposed soils in the right-of-way and along the current extent would be noticeable. Furthermore, the removal of vegetation and grading activities on hillsides located adjacent to Deer Springs Road (where required) would alter the color, texture, form and line of hillsides and would slightly reduce the vividness of existing views. The intactness and unity of visual patterns displayed by chaparral-covered terrain would also be lessened. The presence of construction workers, vehicles and activity along Deer Springs Road would jumble the existing landscape and would busy views.

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End of Construction

Upon completion of construction, overall effects to visual quality would be similar to those discussed above during construction. Construction vehicle, equipment and personnel would no longer dot the proposed project Site and the Deer Springs Road right-of-way; however, the effects of grading, establishment of fuel modification, and roadway widening would continue. The establishment of irrigated vegetation would enhance the intactness and unit of the proposed project when compared to construction, through continuity in color with existing vegetation; however, contrasting forms, line, and textures would be apparent at development and fuel modification boundaries. Furthermore, when viewed from locations near Key View 1 through 4, two- and three-story residential structures and lower profile commercial and retail development with the Terraces and Town Center planning areas would display vertical and rectangular forms, regular and straight lines, and smooth textures that would contrast with existing vegetation and terrain. As a result, the intactness and unity of the landscape would be reduced and the proposed project would display elements similar to those of existing residential and commercial developments located throughout the I-15 corridor. Thus, the previous natural and intact appearing Site would display reduced vividness and memorability.

Maturity

As with visual character, with the exception of productive vineyards and mature landscaped shrubs and trees, the visual quality of the Site would be similar to that anticipated at the completion of construction. Section 5.2, Key Views, provides an assessment of changes to the existing visual quality anticipated at project maturity at each of the ten key view locations.

5.4 Assessment of Viewer Response

Existing Condition

As previously stated in Section 4.2.1, the project viewshed is relatively limited in extent due to the screening effect of existing terrain, vegetation and structures. Furthermore and with the exception of the Town Center and Terraces planning areas, proposed development would be steered toward the less-visible valley areas located within the interior of the project Site. As a result, the presence of intervening elements (primarily the steep, mountainous terrain at the exterior of the project boundary) reduces the availability of clear views to the interior of the Site. Still, portions of the currently undeveloped Site are visible to local area residents, recreationists, and motorists on surrounding area roadways including I-15, Deer Springs Road, North Twin Oaks Valley Road, Old Highway 395, and Mountain Meadows Road and applicable planning documents for the area support the protection of existing visual resources and visual character.

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During Construction

Visible color, line, and texture contrasts would occur because of proposed grading vegetation removal activities. In addition, the establishment of fuel modification zones would decrease the density of tightly spaced chaparral shrubs and would expose underlying tan color soils. The resulting visual pattern of fuel modification zones in view of the Terraces and Town Center planning area would be distinct and would contrast with the dense form and dark green color displayed by surrounding swaths of on-site vegetation located outside of the construction zone. Where existing views to portions of the proposed project are available (such as from I-15 near Deer Springs Road, Deer Springs Road over the I-15 span, briefly from Mountain Meadow Road, and ridgeline residences located east of the proposed project and I-15), the character of the proposed project Site would change daily as construction progresses. Visual disturbance and contrast would increase as areas are graded and prepared for development. Viewer response would be heightened during construction as color contrasts on the proposed project Site become evident from the surrounding area. Furthermore, as construction activities affect the operation of surrounding roadways whether by slowing speeds and increasing queues during material and vehicle deliveries or by altering travel along Deer Springs Road as grading activities slowly expand the limits of the roadway, the potential for construction conflicts with viewers (primarily motorists) would increase.

End of Construction

At the end of construction, the potential for conflicts with construction vehicles and workers would decrease and operational project traffic would be added to local area roadways. Depending on whether Deer Springs Road is widened to two or four lanes, the visual experience of motorists would differ. Under the two-lane scenario, the addition of project traffic to existing traffic would likely exacerbate existing conditions. While lanes would be widened and the addition of a median and other project elements would enhance the visual experience when compared to existing conditions, these changes may be tempered by a perceived worsening of traffic operations. Under the four lane Deer Springs Road widening scenario, the additional capacity added to the roadway may positively affect the response of some motorists as travel times would be reduced. Elsewhere, the removal of construction vehicles, equipment and workers and introduction of residents, business owners and workers would create a similar element of daily activity on the project Site. While structures would partially mask the color and line contrast displayed by grade areas, these elements would display forms, lines and color that would contrast with the characteristic vegetation on the project Site. The visual effects of construction would remain apparent to off-site viewers; however, the initial heightened response of motorists, residents, and recreationists anticipated at the beginning of construction would lessen by the end of construction due to duration of exposure.

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Maturity

At maturity, viewers would have been exposed to visual changes occurring on the proposed project Site associated with grading, vegetation removal, the establishment of fuel modification, framing and finishing of proposed uses, and the relatively slow establishment of project landscaping. Over time, exposure to the various construction phases and the changing character of the Site is anticipated to reduce the sensitivity and response of viewers. In addition, viewers would eventually become accustomed to views of the proposed uses and activity occurring on the project Site. Landscaping, mature vineyards, shrubs and trees would display a fuller and wider form when compared to the end of construction phase. As a result, project landscaping would partially mask the exposed tan soils of graded areas and may slightly obscure anticipated line contrasts with adjacent areas. These elements would create their own visual pattern and would continue to contrast with the form, color and texture of the swaths of dense, dark green chaparral vegetation on the project Site.

5.5 Determination of Significance

The criteria used to assess the significance of visual impacts resulting from the proposed project is derived from the County of San Diego's Guidelines for Determining Significance and Report Format and Content Requirements, Visual Resources (County of San Diego 2007a). As such, the project is considered to have a significant impact if it proposes any of the following, absent specific evidence to the contrary:

1. The project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials, etc.) or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines.
2. The project would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood, community, or localized area, including but not limited to landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings.
3. The project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from:
 - a public road,
 - a trail within an adopted County or State trail system,
 - a scenic vista or highway, or
 - a recreational area.

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4. The project would not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning.

In addition, the County of San Diego's Guidelines for Determining Significance and Report Format and Content Requirements, Dark Skies and Glare (County of San Diego 2007b) were also used to assess the significance of visual impacts resulting from the proposed project. As such, the project is considered to have a significant impact if it proposed any of the following, absent specific evidence to the contrary:

1. The project will install outdoor light fixtures that do not conform to the lamp type and shielding requirements described in Section 59.105 (Requirements for Lamp Source and Shielding) and are not otherwise exempted pursuant Section 59.108 or Section 59.109 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code.
2. The project will operate Class I or Class III outdoor lighting between 11:00 p.m. and sunrise that is not otherwise exempted pursuant Section 59.108 or Section 59.109 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code.
3. The project will generate light trespass that exceeds 0.2-foot-candles measured five feet onto the adjacent property.
4. The project will install highly reflective building materials, including but not limited to reflective glass and high-gloss surface color that will create daytime glare and be visible from roadways, pedestrian walkways or areas frequently used for outdoor activities on adjacent properties.
5. The project does not conform to applicable Federal, State or local statute or regulation related to dark skies or glare, including but not limited to the San Diego County Light Pollution Code.

Visual Resources

Guideline 1

The project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials) or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines.

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Guideline 2

The project would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood, community, or localized area, including but not limited to landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings.

Impact Analysis

As discussed in Section 5.2, ten key views were used in this analysis to evaluate the anticipated visual effects resulting from project construction, operation and maturation. Existing views toward the proposed project Site and visual simulations of proposed project were analyzed, assessed and quantified on a rating scale of 0 to 5 for vividness, intactness and unity. Section 5.2, Key Views, provides a detailed analysis of the existing landscape and the visual effects of proposed development as experienced at each of the ten key views.

The anticipated visual effects resulting from implementation of the project are discussed below.

Operations

Upon completion of construction and occupancy of commercial, residential and education uses, the proposed project would generate regular traffic and project development would introduce elements that contrast with existing Site conditions. Residential and commercial traffic would use Deer Springs Road and Mesa Rock Road to access the proposed project Site, The proposed project would also generate additional traffic on North Twin Oaks Valley Road, Sarver Lane, and Camino Mayor. Outdoor signs in the Town Center planning area would advertise available commercial and retail services and would operate during evening hours. Graded and bare hillsides would be dotted with rows of vineyards and vegetation would begin to become established in fuel modification zone 1 areas. New landscape trees installed throughout the Town Center and Terraces planning areas (and along segments of realigned and paved Mesa Rock Road) would display a tall, spreading form that would rise from irrigated and non-irrigated slopes and flat building pads. Commercial and retail development within the Town Center planning area would occupy a low, southwesterly portion of the proposed project and multi-story residential townhome structures (and associated fuel modification zones) would seemingly climb the terrain.

As viewed from westbound Deer Springs Road at I-15, westbound Mountain Meadow Road, northbound North Centre City Parkway/I-15 (see Key Views 1, 2, and 3) and from ridgeline residential areas in the Hidden Meadows community, the characteristic and dominant visual pattern of chaparral and occasional boulder covered mountainous terrain would become discontinuous across the project Site. Existing elements would be removed and replaced to

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accommodate proposed development and as shown in Figure 18 (Key View 4 – Southbound I-15), the removal of native vegetation and the establishment of fuel modification zones would create noticeable line and color contrast. Vegetation at the project edges would appear sparser than adjacent areas of natural and intact vegetation and vineyards would display an ordered, uniform appearance (see Key Views 1, 2, and 3; Figures 15, 15a, 16, and 17). While maturity of landscape materials would eventually conceal previously exposed soils and denuded slopes and would reintroduce spreading green hued forms to areas altered by construction, these new forms and elements would be discontinuous and would be noticeably sparse at project edges. Mature landscape trees would partially screen development from view; however, the visual effects and contrast associated with vegetation management and development would be clearly visible to viewers along nearby regional and local roads including I-15, Deer Springs Road at I-15, North Centre City Parkway and Mountain Meadow Road.

Alternatively, views of the proposed project from roadways in the viewshed located south and/or west of the proposed project Site including Deer Springs Road (west of Mesa Rock Road) and North Twin Oaks Valley Road, and from Walnut Grove Park in the City of San Marcos would not generally include proposed residential and commercial development. Rather, visible project components would consist of proposed roadway improvements, slope alteration, perimeter fuel modification, and/or unmodified open space. From these locations, visual change occurring on the proposed project Site associated with residential, commercial, and educational development would be difficult to detect and would be relatively subtle. Instead, motorists (and potentially, cyclists) such as those on Deer Springs Road would be afforded views of proposed roadway improvements including a widened Deer Springs Road featuring new bike lanes, curbs and gutters, and landscape parkways (see Key Views 5, 6, 7, and 8; Figures 19a, 19b, 20a, 20b, 21, and 22).

At Key View 5, a substantial cut into the south-facing slope located in the foreground and north of the westbound travel lane would be required to expand Deer Springs Road to two- or four-lanes (see Figures 19a and 19b). Widening activities would require the removal of oak trees along the Deer Spring Road corridor. As depicted in the visual simulations, the south-facing slope would be steep and it is expected that grasses and low chaparral shrub species common in the area would eventually recolonize the disturbed slope. Compared to existing conditions at Key View 5, the proposed landscape would appear orderly and less chaotic due to the underground installation of existing overhead utilities yet the density of plantings on the slope and regular occurrence of rocks would bear little resemblance to the existing visual pattern of dense chaparral and occasional boulder covered terrain.

Elsewhere along the Deer Springs Road corridor (such as at Key View 6; see Figures 20a and 20b), proposed project effects to the quality of existing views resulting from proposed roadway widening and planned improvements would be beneficial. As proposed, the project would soften the transition from Deer Springs Road and adjacent, unimproved parcels to the north through the

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installation of the landscape parkway and low vegetated slope, resulting in an increasingly coherent and harmonious visual pattern. The underground installation of existing overhead utilities along the corridor would similarly enhance the quality of views and support an improved visual condition. At Key View 7 (see Figure 21), proposed roadway improvements would be visible in the foreground and modification activities, two-story residential development and common area landscaping within the southeastern extent of the Knoll planning area would be visible from Key View 7 in the middle ground atop ridgelines to the north-northeast. Alteration of terrain and the resulting color and texture contrasts from vegetation removal (i.e., fuel modification activities) would create visible disharmony in the middle ground visual pattern, but these elements would be obscured by existing vegetation and distance and overall visual character and quality effects would be moderately low. As viewed from Key View 7 and 8 (see Figures 21 and 22), proposed roadway and right-of-way improvements would be appropriately scaled for the surrounding character of the area and vertical elements (i.e., traffic signals) added to the scenes would not substantially or continuously block viewing opportunities to middle ground features in the landscape. As at Key View 6, the undergrounding of existing overhead utility lines along the Deer Springs Road corridor would enhance the quality of views available at Key View 7 and 8.

Lastly, from Walnut Grove Park and North Twin Oaks Valley Road, alteration of the Site and development of residential, commercial, and educational use would be obscured by intervening terrain, vegetation, and distance. Visible proposed project elements would generally consist of the removal of existing vegetation and the establishment of perimeter fuel modification zones and/or roadway and adjacent right-of-way improvements. For example, at Walnut Grove Park (Key View 9; see Figure 23), visitors would be afforded views to fuel modification zones within the southwestern most edges of the Sierra Terraces planning area. However, visitors to the park would generally be focused on activities occurring at a foreground viewing distance and within the park and as depicted in Figure 23, project effects to the intactness and unity of existing views would be minor due to the small area of visible alteration on the ridgeline to the northeast. Also, at North Twin Oaks Valley Road near Camino Mayor (Key View 10; see Figure 24), motorists would be afforded views to a regraded and widened Camino Mayor and adjacent fuel modification zones.

Given the existing character and quality of the Key View 10 landscape, regrading, widening and paving of Camino Mayor would have a moderately low effect on the existing unity present in the Key View 10 landscape. Camino Mayor is an existing private roadway that creates a greyish, straight, and eventually curving line in the landscape. Grading activities to support the widened roadway would create a line consistent in color, form, and texture with North Twin Oaks Valley Road and vegetation removal would remove drainage vegetation from the scene. As a result, the proposed visual scene would be increasingly harmonious and free of jumbled or chaotic elements.

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Construction

Construction effects to the existing visual character of the proposed project Site would be most apparent to northbound motorists on I-15 and North Centre City Parkway, westbound motorists on the segment of Deer Springs Road spanning I-15, and residents of ridgeline developments located east of the proposed project and I-15. Regarding planned roadway improvements, construction effects to the existing visual character and quality of Deer Springs Road would be most apparent to east and westbound motorists on Deer Springs Road.

The proposed project would require grading, excavation, blasting and improvements including the construction of public sewer, water and storm drain system and public roads. These activities would occur within the seven planning areas and would be designed to avoid the most sensitive biological, cultural, and topographical resources on the proposed project Site. Grading has been designed to balance and reduce off-site truck trips and hauls during construction. In several instances, grade-adaptive architecture would be incorporated into planning areas to minimize Site grading impacts by constructing one or more steps in the ground floor that conform to the underlying slope of the Site. However, as viewed from I-15, North Centre City Parkway, and Deer Springs Road at I-15, development of the Town Center and Terraces planning areas would entail the removal of primarily undisturbed chaparral vegetation from east- and south-facing hillsides. Furthermore, portions of hillsides would be graded and terrain steepened. North of Deer Springs Road, Mesa Rock Road would be realigned to provide service to the proposed planning areas and the graded extents of the new roadway would climb and cut through the altered Site. Terrain would rise away from the new roadway alignment and would either display a relatively bare, orderly and dotted appearance (i.e., where vineyards are proposed) or display the forest green color of an applied slurry seed mix (i.e., where irrigated slopes near building pads are proposed). Over time, the building frames of proposed development (commercial, residential, and educational) would rise from level building pads. Areas of thinned vegetation would be distinct from adjacent areas of natural and intact vegetation due to the inclusion of previously concealed underlying soils and seemingly sparse spacing of individual shrubs to the visual pattern. To construct and install the proposed water tank, an existing mounded peak would be graded and flattened. Grading activities associated with the proposed I-15 interchange and park-n-ride facility would entail vehicles and equipment working within the disturbed I-15 right-of-way. Proposed activities would require the removal of vegetation, alteration of the gently sloping terrain, and grading of level surfaces.

Views to the proposed project Site from public roads are relatively limited and the visual effects of construction activities would be experienced briefly by passing motorists. Furthermore, residential development is commonplace on hillsides, atop ridgelines, and within lower elevation valleys along the I-15 corridor. However, the introduction of expansive and light tan colored graded pads and hillsides and the removal of dense tracts of native, dark green and greyish

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chaparral vegetation and occasionally, alteration of granitic boulder outcrops, would introduce particularly contrasting features to the proposed project Site. Furthermore, the removal of vegetation, rock outcrops and modification of hillsides would result in an adverse change to these dominant features that contribute to the valued visual character of the proposed project Site. As such, construction activities would significantly alter the current visual character of the proposed project Site.

In addition to motorists and other mobile viewers, views to the proposed project are also available to ridgeline residences located east of I-15 in the community of Hidden Meadows. While receptors in ridgeline residences are afforded views to the proposed project and would experience the visual effects of construction, residences located east of ridgelines would not generally be able to view the project Site. Prominent, intervening structures (residences) would effectively block the proposed project from view of most residences located away from the western perimeter of the Hidden Meadows community. To demonstrate the approximate visibility of the proposed project from residential areas in the Hidden Meadows community, three non-public points were selected and viewshed maps were prepared.

The non-public points were situated on Meadow Mesa Drive (non-public point 1, Appendix A, Figure 25), Sandhurst Way (non-public point 2, Appendix A, Figure 26), and High Vista Drive (non-public point 3, Appendix A, Figure 27). As indicated in the figures, the viewers at each of the non-public points would be afforded views to different areas of the proposed project.

Of the three selected points, proposed project construction activities would be most visible from High Vista Drive (i.e., non-public point 3). The anticipated visual effects of project construction at non-public points would be similar to visual effects described above for public roads, the duration of private views would be longer and viewers would be stationary. Unlike passing motorists, the views at ridgeline residents would not be brief and would not be made in passing. During construction, residents would experience daily the transformation of the project Site from primarily undeveloped, chaparral and boulder covered to a developing Site marked by the tan-colored soils of graded hillsides, lots, and roadway alignments. A longer view duration would provide opportunity for residents to scan the Site and construction visual effects with detail and due to the longer viewer duration and elevated vantage point, the visual effects of construction activities as experienced by receptors at ridgeline residences would be more severe than experienced by passing motorists in the surrounding area.

Along Deer Springs Road, existing vegetation located within the right-of-way and widened corridor would be removed. These areas would also be graded and leveled for the expansion of the roadway and the inclusion of associated improvements including curb and gutter, bike lanes, landscaped parkways and a pedestrian trail. Under the two-lane road scenario, the curb-to-curb width of the widened roadway would be approximately 52 feet and include a 12-foot-wide

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striped, unraised median, 12-foot-wide east- and west-bound travel lanes, and 8-foot-wide striped areas to accommodate bike lanes and shoulders. An approximate 10-foot-wide landscape parkway would be provided south of the eastbound travel lane and a 4-foot-wide landscape parkway and an 8-foot-wide pathway would be provided north of the westbound travel lane. The pathway and landscape parkway installed north of the westbound travel lane would be separated by a post and rail fence.

Under the four-lane road scenario, the south-facing slope located north of Deer Springs Road would appear slightly steeper than the slope under the two-lane road scenario. Deer Spring Road would be regraded, widened and repaved. As proposed, the curb-to-curb width of the widened roadway would be approximately 76 feet and include a 12-foot-wide striped, unraised median, two 12-foot-wide east- and westbound travel lanes, and 8-foot-wide striped areas to accommodate bike lanes and shoulders. In addition, an approximate 8-foot-wide landscape parkway would be provided south of the eastbound travel lanes and a 4-foot-wide landscape parkway and an 8-foot-wide pathway would be provided north of the westbound travel lanes. A post and rail fence would also be installed under the four-lane scenario to separate the pathway and landscape parkway installed north of the westbound travel lanes. Under the two-lane and four-lane road scenario, existing overhead utility lines located along the north side of Deer Springs Road would be placed underground by the project.

Under both the two-lane and four-lane options, adjacent terrain would be graded and otherwise modified where necessary to accommodate proposed improvements. Where grading would be necessary, existing vegetation would be removed and the angle of slopes would be steepened. Under both the two- and four lane options, Deer Springs Road would display a continuous asphalt surface from curb-to-curb and an unraised, 12-foot wide striped median would separate east and westbound travel lanes. Construction activities would result in the removal of existing vegetation in the right-of-way to accommodate the widened roadway alignment (and other proposed amenities) and modification of existing terrain near the eastern extent of proposed improvements. Several pepper trees installed north of the Deer Springs Road and Sycamore Road intersection would be removed to accommodate the new alignment of the road; however, these trees are ornamental and are not considered dominant features that contribute the valued visual character of the landscape.

Several oak trees located south of the roadway and chaparral vegetation occurring on a south-facing slope located north of the roadway near Mesa Rock Road would also be removed and would create noticeable visual contrast. Furthermore, removal of mature oak trees along a segment of Deer Spring Road regularly lined with dense oak trees and other vegetation would result in a substantial adverse change to the rural visual character of the corridor, which is defined, in part, by narrow travel lanes and dense oak and chaparral vegetation located north and

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south of travel lanes. As such, construction activities would significantly alter the current visual character of the Deer Springs Road corridor.

Significance of Impact

Proposed project changes to existing visual character of the Site would be difficult to detect and would be relatively subtle as viewed from locations in the project viewshed located south and west of the project (i.e., at Key Views 6 (see Figures 20a and 20b), 7 (see Figure 21), 8 (see Figure 22), 9 (see Figure 23), and 10 (see Figure 24)). In addition, approximately 1,209 acres of the 1,985-acre project Site would remain undeveloped and designated Open Space – Conservation. However, the project would introduce features (i.e., residences, vineyards, and paved roadways) that would contrast with the existing visual character of the primarily natural-appearing Site and surrounding rural community along Deer Springs Road. While scaled master-planned residential development occurs outside of the immediate area in the Twin Oaks area and in the City of San Marcos, both the proposed coverage and orderly style of residential development associated with the proposed project would contrast with the existing rural development pattern visible in the immediate area. As discussed in Section 3.3, existing development along the Deer Springs Road corridor generally consists of 10- to 20-acre lots featuring primarily single-story residences, dense to sparse landscaping, accessory structures, and maintained to unimproved yards. The visual change associated with removal of existing vegetation and alteration of existing terrain to accommodate proposed residential, commercial, and education land uses and associated infrastructure would be most evident as viewed from locations in the viewshed located east of project such as Key Views 1, 2, and 3 (see Figures 15, 15a, 16, and 17). As viewed from these locations, the introduction of project elements would result in an adverse change to the primarily undisturbed chaparral-covered hill and valley terrain of the project Site, resulting in changes in the visual character of the project Site from undeveloped to open space/developed. As such, the proposed project would significantly alter the current visual character of the project Site and impacts are considered to be **potentially significant**.

Mitigation Measures

Several project design features including balanced grading, focusing project development to lower elevation valley areas on the proposed project, conservation of open space, landscaping, and grade-adaptive architecture would help to reduce the visual impacts created by the proposed project. These features would generally reduce visual impacts by minimizing grading (to the extent feasible) and reducing associated color and line contrasts, avoiding particularly prominent terrain, retaining the natural characteristics of portions of the Site, partially screening structures through the installation of plantings, and incorporating natural terrain and vegetation in the proposed project design. Planning for the proposed project took into account existing landforms

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and topography by concentrating development between and away from ridgelines. Prominent ridges and landforms were mapped, and each neighborhood was designed to minimize disturbance to prominent peaks and landforms on the proposed project. Also, as proposed, two large continuous blocks of open space habitat have been incorporated into the design of the proposed project and would work as a buffer to reduce the project's visibility from I-15 and residential properties to the east. The landscape character of the proposed project would also be informed by the natural terrain. For example, overall landscape theme would include preservation and re-use of natural Site boulders paired with oak trees and native and adapted low-water-use plants and planned roadside swales would mimic the natural Site hydrology. Also, vineyards are proposed in the Sierra Terraces planning area and would establish a visual connection to the region's agrarian history.

Mitigation measures that would further reduce the anticipated visual contrast associated with implementation of the proposed project were considered but determined to be infeasible. For example, temporary screening of construction sites and storage areas through with opaque fencing would largely be ineffective due to the viewing angle to the proposed project Site afforded to viewers on I-15 and North Centre City Road. Also, the installation of additional landscape trees and shrubs would not be consistent with the proposed landscape theme and could create potential fire hazards in new residential and commercial areas and along interior roadways. Additional landscaping to further screen proposed development from view at off-site locations may conflict with applicable fire requirements and the establishment and maintenance of horizontal and vertical clearances and defensible space.

Incorporation of grading, open space, landscaping, and architectural design features would not mask or substantially reduce the anticipated project visual with the existing Site and rural visual character of the immediate area as viewed from I-15, Deer Springs Road at I-15, North Centre City Parkway and Mountain Meadow Road. Because there are no mitigation measures available that would further reduce the anticipated level of contrast associated with development of the proposed project and implementation of roadway improvements along the identified segment of Deer Springs Road, impacts would be **significant and unmitigable**.

Guideline 3

The project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from:

- a public road,
- a trail within an adopted County or State trail system,
- a scenic vista or highway, or
- a recreational area.

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Impact Analysis

Public Roads

Although there are no designated valued focal vistas along regional and surface roads in the project area, the local ridge and valley landscape creates opportunities for focal and panoramic vistas from public roads. For purposes of this report, focal vistas are views where the eye is lead to a focal point in the landscape due to converging features or the visual prominence of a particular object/group of objects. A “valued” focal point contains these characteristics and elements but is also officially designated or identified in a local planning document such as a community plan and or general plan. On the other hand, panoramic vistas are long and broad views with little or no sense of boundary restriction in the landscape. In addition, panoramic vistas are distinct because of the apparent lack of view limitations, foreground or middleground objects do not substantially block views of background objects.

Prominent roadways in the surrounding area including I-15, Deer Springs Road, Twin Oaks Valley Road, and Mountain Meadow Road are analyzed below. Due to a similar alignment and viewing conditions, the analysis presented for I-15 is also applicable to North Centre City Parkway. The majority of long views available from these roadways are framed by terrain and/or vegetation. For example, near Deer Springs Road northerly views from I-15 extending to the silhouettes of distant and hazy mountainous terrain are framed by ascending chaparral and boulder covered slopes located west and east of the interstate. Similar viewing conditions are available to northbound North Centre City Parkway motorists; however, vegetation adjacent to the northbound travel lane occasionally limits the width of available views. Furthermore, as westbound Mountain Meadow Road descends higher elevation terrain and approaches Deer Springs Road and I-15, rising, vegetated terrain to the north and mature eucalyptus and other tree species to the south of the roadway frame the westerly view toward the proposed project and the distant horizon. Therefore, while framed viewing conditions suggest the availability of focal vistas, these viewing conditions also suggests the presence of limitations and boundary restrictions such that the view is no longer considered to display a particularly broad composition. As such, the analysis presented below is focused on potential project-related effects to focal vistas from prominent public roads in the surrounding area.

To determine the visibility of project development from prominent roadways in the surrounding area, Dudek performed a viewshed analysis. The viewshed analysis approximates the height of proposed development on finished grade within the various planning areas and approximates visibility from specific points in the landscape. The viewshed analysis is based solely terrain. Vegetation and structures are not considered in the viewshed analysis models and therefore, the potential screening effect of these features from identified public roads is not represented in figures prepared for the viewshed analysis. The result of the viewshed analysis is a composite of

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project visibility from roadways located in the project viewshed. Graphic representation of the viewshed analysis is included as Appendix A and is composed of 24 figures.

I-15

The viewshed analysis for I-15 is included in Appendix A in Figures 1 through 10. As depicted in Appendix A, proposed development on the proposed project Site would be most apparent to northbound I-15 motorists near Deer Spring Road (see Figure 2, Public Point 2). At this location, development within the Town Center and Terraces planning areas, associated fuel modification, and unmodified open space would be visible to passing motorists. More specifically, of the project components (i.e., development, fuel modification, and open space) visible to motorists at public point 2, development would comprise 34 percent of visible project components, open space would comprise 37 percent, and fuel modification would comprise 29 percent. Public point 2 represents the greatest exposure to project components that would be experienced by interstate motorists and as shown in Figure 2 of Appendix A, proposed development would primarily be located within a foreground viewing distance and a small percentage of overall development would occupy the views of motorists. Farther to the south (see Figure 1, Public Point 1, of Appendix A), the proposed project would be screened from view by intervening, vegetated terrain. Farther to the north beyond Deer Springs Road (see Figures 3 through 10, Public Point 3 through 10, of Appendix A), the steep, rising terrain at the eastern extent of the proposed project Site would partially screen views of the proposed project for north and southbound motorists.

Although project development would alter the character of the Site as viewed from I-15, development and fuel modification would not screen the silhouettes of distant mountainous terrain to the north from view and would not substantially alter the line displayed by prominent terrain on the Site that may draw attention from passing motorists. In addition, views of proposed development along I-15 near the project would be experienced briefly at the posted speed limit (i.e., 70 mph). More specifically, project development would be visible from discontinuous segments or pockets of I-15 over an approximate 5-mile stretch (along northbound I-15) and an approximate 4.25 mile stretch (along southbound I-15). According to the viewshed analysis and assuming vehicle travel at 70 miles per hour, the majority of views would be available for between 1 to 5 seconds. However, along a limited number of longer interstate segments (i.e., four segments of northbound I-15 and five segments of southbound I-15 include in the project viewshed – see Figure 12, Project Viewshed), views may be available for between 5 and 24 seconds. Although discontinuous and relatively short-duration views of the project would be available to motorists along an approximate 5-mile long segment of northbound I-15 and 4.25-mile long segment of southbound I-15, unaltered open space and perimeter fuel modification would comprise the majority of visible project components. For example, at public points 6 and 7 (see Figures 6 and 7 of Appendix A), unaltered open space would comprise between 70 to nearly 100 percent of project components visible from I-15. Because project development would

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not substantially screen distant background elements from view and due to the discontinuous nature and relatively short-duration of available views, impacts to valued focal and/or panoramic vistas from I-15 would be less than significant.

Mountain Meadow Road

The viewshed analysis for Mountain Meadow Road is included in Appendix A in Figures 11 and 12. As shown in Appendix A, project development, fuel modification, and open space would be visible from various locations along Mountain Meadow Road.

At public point 11, a relatively narrow viewing window to the east-facing slopes located along the western extent of the Terraces planning area is available. Available views at public point 11 include prominent terrain on the Site, distant mountainous terrain in the background and the hazy, horizontal line of the Pacific Ocean. Project development and fuel modification would comprise 29 percent and 51 percent, respectively, of visible project components at public point 11. Furthermore, as stated in Section 5.2.2, the distinct visual pattern of dense chaparral and occasional boulder covered terrain on the Site would be noticeably altered by construction and operation of the proposed project. Still, due to the elevated vantage point offered at public point 11, proposed residences and fuel modification activities in the Terraces planning area would not block views of prominent background terrain. At public point 12, views to the project Site would be similar to those at Key View 2 (see Section 5.2.2 for Key View 2 analysis). As viewed from public point 12, implementation of the proposed project would create substantial line, color, and texture contrast with existing on-site visual resources; however, the available view is primarily confined to the middleground terrain of the Merriam Mountains (see Figure 16, Key View 2, for approximation of view at public point 12). As a result, background elements tend to be hazy and difficult to see clearly. The existing hilly terrain in the foreground converges to form a wide, v-shaped viewing window that focuses viewers' attention on the project and away from distant and hazy background elements, however, the view to the proposed project is brief (available for approximately 1 to 3 seconds at public point 12) and is made in passing by motorists at approximately 50 miles per hour. While development and fuel modification would comprise 48 percent and 32 percent of visible project components at public point 13, these activities would tend to be located north of the point of terrain convergence (i.e., the point where terrain seemingly comes together). As a result, development and fuel modification would tend to be located in the peripheral view of motorists as they pass the project.

The visual effects of development and fuel modification would attract the attention of westbound motorists on Mountain Meadow Road; however, the availability of views would be brief. According to the viewshed analysis, project components (i.e., development, access roads, fuel modification, and open space) would be visible from discontinuous segments/pockets of Mountain Meadow Road over an approximate 0.80-mile stretch from Stickley Ranch Road west

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to Champagne Boulevard/North Centre City Parkway. Assuming travel at the posted speed limit of 50 miles per hour, the majority of views would be available for 1 to 3 seconds. The viewshed analysis also indicates that project views would be available along one 930-foot segment of the road (view exposure duration would be approximately 13 seconds) and that the cumulative view exposure duration from the westbound travel lanes of Mountain Meadow Road would be approximately 28 seconds. It should, however, be noted that the viewshed maps prepared for Mountain Meadow Road (see Appendix A Figures 10, 11, and 12) do not consider the screening effect of existing vegetation (such as tall eucalyptus trees installed sporadically along the roadway) that would conceivably reduce the cumulative view exposure duration. In addition, the Appendix A viewshed maps do not convey that views would not be continuously available along the road from Stickley Ranch Road west to Champagne Boulevard/North Centre City Parkway. Furthermore, westerly views from Mountain Meadow Road toward the project are not designated as valued focal vistas in applicable planning documents and available views are not particularly panoramic in composition due to nearby mountainous terrain that establish limitations to views. Therefore, impacts to valued focal vistas available from Mountain Meadow Road would be less than significant.

Deer Springs Road

The viewshed analysis for Deer Springs Road is included in Appendix A in Figures 13 through 16. With the exception of the segment of Deer Springs Road that spans I-15 and along the southerly project frontage near the Town Center, views to the proposed development are relatively limited (see Key View 7 and 8, Figure 21 and Figure 22, for examples of available views from Deer Springs Road). Motorists on Deer Springs Road would primarily be afforded views of proposed improvements to the roadway, perimeter fuel modification on the Site, and open space. However, at public point 16 motorists would be afforded quick views of residential development and fuel modification occurring in the southern extent of the Mesa and Knoll planning area in the middleground distance (see Appendix A, Figure 16 and Figure 21). At public point 16, motorists would be negotiating the curving alignment of Deer Springs Road and cyclists and vehicles in the adjacent lane of travel. As a result, motorists may not be focusing on elements in middleground viewing distance at public point 16. Despite the visibility of project components from segments of the roadway, the majority of views from Deer Springs Road lack particularly panoramic characteristics (i.e., long composition, seemingly limitless boundaries, clear and unstructured viewing conditions to background elements) due to rising, mountainous terrain and trees and overhead electrical infrastructure installed within the roadway right-of-way. In addition to chaparral and boulder covered terrain, the presence of rugged ridgelines surrounding the Twin Oaks Valley in the middleground viewing distance creates co-dominant, competing visual features in the landscape that attract the attention of receptors in the area. Thus, this segment of Deer Springs Road is not considered to offer panoramic or valued focal vistas to motorists.

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The segment of Deer Springs Road located south of Sarver Lane travels through a relatively enclosed landscape created by the ascending, chaparral covered slopes located to the north and south of the roadway. Given the limitations of views associated with the presence of densely vegetated terrain located north and south of the roadway, panoramic vistas are not considered to occur along this segment of Deer Springs Road. While north and south converging terrain tends to guide views to a central point in the landscape, views tend to be limited to the foreground distance and lack prominent focal features. No valued focal vistas were identified along this segment of Deer Springs Road in applicable planning documents. Therefore, impacts to panoramic or valued focal vistas available from Deer Springs Road would be less than significant.

Twin Oaks Valley Road

The viewshed analysis for Twin Oaks Valley Road is included in Appendix A in Figures 17 through 24. According to the viewshed analysis, development and fuel modification within the Valley, Knoll, and Mesa planning areas would be visible at a middleground distance from public point 17 and would comprise 66 percent of visible proposed project components, the average visibility of these effects along the segment of the roadway evaluated would be less. Furthermore, with the exception of public point 17, undeveloped open space would comprise the majority (over 82 percent) of visible project components. North of public point 17 and Deer Springs Road, views to the proposed project from Twin Oaks Valley Road would be discontinuous due to intervening terrain and the presence of stands of mature trees installed north and east of the roadway. Also, at public point 17 (located near the Deer Springs and Twin Oaks Valley intersection), views to the north extend to mountainous terrain but are limited in extent to the middleground viewing distance. As a result, the northerly view from public point 17 is not considered a panoramic vista. Similarly, the visible landscape lacks a particularly prominent focal feature or converging terrain or other elements that would suggest the presence of a valued focal vista. In addition, the regular presence of mature trees and electrical infrastructure in the foreground along Twin Oaks Valley Road limits the availability of clear, unobstructed views to the surrounding landscape. Although views from Twin Oaks Valley Road include scenic features, views are not considered panoramic or focal vistas. In addition, focal vistas have not been designated along Twin Oaks Valley Road in the North County Metro Subregional Area Plan. Therefore, impacts to panoramic or valued focal vistas available from Twin Oaks Valley Road would be less than significant.

Trail within an Adopted County or State Trail System

There are no components of a known state trail system within the viewshed of the proposed project. However, community trails and pathway plans have been developed and adopted for Twin Oaks, Hidden Meadows, Valley Center, and Bonsall. Unlike regional trails that are focused on providing long, linear trail experiences, the intent of the community trails and pathways plan

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is to provide local public facilities in proximity to residents that provide a transportation, recreation, access, infrastructure linkages and safe routes throughout a community (County of San Diego 2005a).

Multiple trails and pathways are identified in the Twin Oaks, Hidden Meadows, Valley Center, and Bonsall plans, and components of the proposed project would be visible from those trails and pathways located in the project viewshed, but the majority of trails and pathways are currently identified by the County as proposed facilities at this time. For example, of the 22 trails and pathways listed in the Twin Oaks Valley Community Trails and Pathways Plan, none are identified as “existing” facilities (County of San Diego 2005a, 2009b). However, based on comments received during public scoping, existing right-of-way located north of Deer Springs Road (identified as the proposed Deer Springs Road pathway in the Twin Oaks Valley Community Trails and Pathways Plan) is understood to receive use by equestrians and pedestrians in the area. Under existing conditions, use of the unprotected right-of-way as a trail can be dangerous due to the proximity to the westbound traffic lane and lack of a traffic barrier. Under proposed conditions, Deer Springs Road would be widened and new facilities include curb and gutter, small landscape parkway, and a 8-foot-wide multi-use pathway would be installed along Deer Springs Road. The multi-use path would be separated by roadway travel lanes by curb and gutter facilities, a small landscaped parkway and post and rail fencing. In addition, existing overhead utilities lines installed north of Deer Springs Road would be undergrounded by the project and would be removed from the Deer Springs Road viewshed. As such, the proposed project would improve trail condition along Deer Springs Road.

Similarly to the “proposed facility” designation of trails and pathways in the Twin Oaks Valley Community Trails and Pathways Plan, the 10 trails and pathways listed in the Hidden Meadows Community Trails and Pathways Plan (County of San Diego 2005b) and the 71 trails and pathways listed in the Valley Center Community Trails and Pathways Plan (County of San Diego 2005c) are all identified as “proposed” facilities. One existing trail, the San Luis Rey River North Trail, is listed among the 22 facilities identified in the Bonsall Community Trails and Pathways Plan (County of San Diego 2005d, 2009c). Near the San Luis Rey River Park, the San Luis Rey River North Trail parallels and eventually crosses to the north side of SR-76 and at the confluence of SR-76 and Old River Road, the trail alignment is located approximately 4.1 miles northwest of the western project boundary. Due to the presence of intervening terrain and vegetation, the availability of views to the proposed project would be severely limited. Furthermore, proposed planning areas and future development would be concentrated in the central and southern portions of the proposed project Site and due to the low viewing angle afforded to trail users and the mountainous terrain comprising the eastern and northern boundary of the project Site, planning areas and development would be largely screened from view of trail users. As such, the project would not substantially obstruct,

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interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from the San Luis Rey River North Trail and impacts would be less than significant.

While components of the proposed project including Deer Spring Road improvements would be visible from trails and pathways identified in the Twin Oaks, Hidden Meadows, Valley Center, and Bonsall, with the exception of the San Luis Rey River North Trail all listed trails and pathways are identified as “proposed.” Several of these proposed alignments traverse private property and others either parallel or are located on private or public paved or dirt roadways. For example, within the Twin Oaks Valley Community Trails and Pathways Plan, private roads including a segment of Camino Mayor located on the proposed project Site are identified as proposed community trails (County of San Diego 2005a, 2009b). While several of the alignments such as those aligned on existing utility access roads and private roads may receive use, no public right-of-way has been established for public use of these facilities to date and necessary easements have not been negotiated or acquired. Therefore, as no public right-of-way has been established to date, and public use easements have not been acquired, trails and pathways identified in community trails and pathways plans as “proposed” are not considered established public recreational facilities, and therefore, are not further discussed in this analysis.

Scenic Vistas and Highways

There are no known designated scenic vistas in the immediate project area. Several topographical high points in the surrounding area including San Marcos Mountain, Mountain Meadow Road near High Mountain Road, and the rural residential developed ridgeline located east of the project Site and I-15 could offer scenic vantage points from where particularly long and broad views of the landscape are available. These location are, however, either inaccessible to the public or have been previously addressed within this analysis. For example, San Marcos Mountain (located approximately 1.5 miles west of the proposed Summit planning area) and the rural residential developed ridgeline located east of the project Site and I-15 are not publicly accessible. Thus, these locations are not considered public vantage points. Furthermore, the visual change resulting from development of the proposed project as viewed from the segment of Mountain Meadow Road near High Mountain Road was previously evaluated within the Guideline analysis above (see Section 5.2, Key Views, and, more specifically, Key View 2). Furthermore, project effects to existing views from Mountain Meadow Road are also discussed above within the Guideline 3 Public Road analysis.

In addition to the elevated vantage points discussed above, topographical high points located outside of the immediate surrounding area such as Double Peak Park in the City of San Marcos were also considered. While Double Peak Park offers panoramic views of the surrounding landscape including the Pacific Ocean and Palomar Mountain and is indeed a scenic vantage point/vista, the park is located approximately 6.5 miles southwest of the southwestern project

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boundary. Views to the project Site are likely available to viewers at Double Peak Park, however, given the availability of long and particularly wide panoramic views that seemingly have few limitations, project development concentrated within the lower, valley portions of mountainous terrain located approximately 6.5 miles away would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from existing views. Furthermore, Double Peak Park (approximate elevation 1,620 feet) and the high point on the proposed project Site (approximate elevation 1,590 feet) are located at a similar elevation. Proposed planning areas are sited at elevations less than the topographical high point on Site and higher elevation development within the Terraces and Town Center planning areas would be obscured by the mountainous terrain located west of these planning areas. In addition, because of the availability of long, broad, and seemingly limitless views to the northeast, viewers at Double Peak Park are likely to be drawn toward prominent mountainous terrain located in the background distance (i.e., Palomar Mountain and surrounding peaks). Visible project development located more than 6.5 miles away at a similar or lower elevation as Double Peak Park would not obstruct, interrupt, or detract from available views to these rugged and bold features and therefore, project effects to views from Double Peak Park would be less than significant.

Although there are no designated or eligible state scenic highways in the immediate project vicinity (the nearest state scenic highway, SR-76, is an eligible state scenic highway and is located more than 4 miles from the northern and western project boundary), regional and local roads in the project viewshed are included in the County of San Diego Scenic Highway System. A list of the roads within the unincorporated County included in the Scenic Highway system is included in the County of San Diego General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element (County of San Diego 2011a). Two County Scenic Highway System roads I-15 (from the Escondido city limits north to Riverside County line) and Twin Oaks Valley Road (Gopher Canyon Road south to San Marcos city limits) are located in the immediate project vicinity and views to proposed development and roadway improvements would be available from these roads. The anticipated changes to the existing visual experience afforded to motorists travelling on I-15 and Twin Oaks Road were previously discussed and evaluated for significance within the Public Roads (i.e., Guideline 3) analysis provided above. As stated previously, project impacts pertaining to obstruction, interruption, or detracting of panoramic or valued focal vistas from I-15 and Twin Oaks Valley Road would be less than significant.

Recreation Areas

As previously stated above, the proposed project would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from the San Luis Rey River North Trail. In addition, “proposed” trails and pathways identified in the trails and pathways plans for the communities of Twin Oaks, Hidden Meadows, Valley Center, and Bonsall are not considered established public recreational facilities. No public right-of-way has been established along these

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proposed alignment to date and public use easements have not been acquired. Furthermore, the trails and pathways depicted on the maps for the communities of Hidden Meadows, Twin Oaks Valley, and Bonsall are 1/4 mile wide designated corridors that reflect a general trail or pathway alignment. Therefore, given the “proposed” conditions of these general trail and pathway alignments, proposed trails are not considered established public recreational facilities and are not evaluated for potential visual impacts resulting from construction and operation of the proposed project.

The visual effects of the proposed project as viewed from the City of San Marcos’s Walnut Grove Park were previously evaluated in Section 5.2, Key Views (see Subsection 5.2.9, Key View 9). At Walnut Grove Park, the visual effects of the proposed project would be largely obscured from the view of park goers. Visible project features would be limited to areas of thinned chaparral vegetation that would comprise perimeter fuel modification located on the middleground ridgeline some 1.4 miles to the northeast (see Figure 23). Although thinning of existing vegetation create line and color contrasts when viewed against areas of existing vegetation that would not be disturbed, the visual change would be subtle to viewers at Walnut Grove Park. Both distance between the park and modified vegetation on the middleground ridgeline and the thin and relatively narrow area of fuel modification visible to viewers would reduce the visual prominence of project effects such that they may not be noticeable to the casual viewer. Furthermore, anticipated project effects to the vividness, intactness, and unity of the existing landscape visible from Walnut Grove Park would be minor and due to the small area of visible alteration on the prominent ridgeline to the northeast, the characteristic visual pattern displayed by ridgelines would largely remain. Recreationists (primarily equestrian riders, pedestrians and runners) on a relatively small network of trails lining the perimeter of Walnut Grove Park and extending to the south and east along Sycamore Drive, Cox Road, East La Cienega Road, and North Twin Oaks Valley Road would generally be afforded similar views to proposed fuel modification activities along the southwestern perimeter of the proposed project. The presence of intervening vertical features such as residences and other structures, mature trees along Sycamore Drive and East Cienega Drive, and the linear movement of trail-based recreationists could however result in reduced viewing opportunities, partially screened views, and reduced exposure to project activities. As discussed above for recreationists at Walnut Grove Park, anticipated project effects to the vividness, intactness, and unity of the existing landscape as viewed from local City of San Marcos trails identified in the *San Marcos Parks & Trails Pocket Guide* (City of San Marcos 2007) would be weak due to distance and the small area of visible disturbance on the proposed project Site. Proposed project elements would not obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from these local trails and as such, impacts would be less than significant.

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Significance of Impact

Project effects to a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from a public road, a trail within an adopted County or State trail system, scenic vista or highway or a recreation area would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

Impacts would be less than significant and therefore, no mitigation measures are required.

Guideline 4

The project would not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning.

Impact Analysis

A consistency analysis was prepared for the proposed project and applicable visual resources policies from the North County Metro Subregional Plan (including the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines) and the Bonsall Community Plan and is included as Appendix B to this report. As demonstrated in Appendix B, the proposed project would be consistent with the identified visual resource policies of the North County Metro Subregional Plan (including the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines) and the Bonsall Community Plan.

Significance of Impact

As demonstrated in Appendix B, the proposed project would be consistent with the identified visual resource policies of the North County Metro Subregional Plan (including the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines) and the Bonsall Community Plan.

Mitigation Measures

Impacts would be less than significant and no mitigation measures would be required.

Dark Skies and Glare

Guideline 1

The project would install outdoor light fixtures that do not conform to the lamp type and shielding requirements described in Section 59.105 (Requirements for Lamp Source and Shielding) and are not otherwise exempted pursuant Section 59.108 or Section 59.109 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code.

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Guideline 2

The project would operate Class I or Class III outdoor lighting between 11:00 p.m. and sunrise that is not otherwise exempted pursuant Section 59.108 or Section 59.109 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code.

Guideline 3

The project would generate light trespass that exceeds 0.2-foot-candles measured five feet onto the adjacent property.

Impact Analysis

Residential lighting, streetlights, and neighborhood commercial lights would be installed within planning areas and would operate during evening and nighttime hours. The types of outdoor lighting associated with the proposed project is generally defined by Section 59.104 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code as Class II lighting; however, outdoor lighting installed for decorative effects (i.e., Class III lighting) may also operate permanently (such as within private landscape areas) or periodically (i.e., holiday lighting) within proposed planning areas. It should, however, be noted that lights used for holiday decorations are exempt from the Light Pollution Code. The proposed project Site is located in Zone B as designated by the San Diego County Light Pollution Code. Accordingly, all outdoor lighting installed within proposed planning areas at the Site and along project roads would conform to the lamp type and shielding requirements described in Section 59.105 (Requirements for Lamp Source and Shielding) for Class II and Class III lighting. Also, due to the inclusion of commercial uses in the Town Center and the likely possibility that the existing AM/PM gas station freeway sign would be removed and replaced with a sign of similar bulk and scale advertising the commercial uses of the project, Class I lighting may also be installed. If Class I lighting is installed, all fixtures would be fully shielded per Section 59.105 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code. Furthermore, all new street lighting installed along private roadways would consist of fully shielded low-pressure sodium lamps or other lamp types of 4,550 lumens and below. In addition, while the requirements of the San Diego Light Pollution Code are not specifically applicable to public street lighting (see Section 59.104), new outdoor lighting installed along Deer Springs Road would comply with the shielding and lamp type requirements of the code to the extent that doing so would not jeopardize the safety of motorists and other users.

All Class I and Class III lighting installed within the proposed planning areas would comply with the hours of operations limitation established by Section 59.107 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code. However, as noted above, Class III decorative lighting including illumination of the United States or State of California flag (and flagpole) and holiday decorations that future

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residents or businesses may elect to install on their property may operate beyond the hours established by Section 59.107 (these sources are permanently exempt from the requirements of Section 59.107). All decorative landscape lighting would be subject to the requirements of Section 59.107 and therefore, landscape lighting installed on private residences, within the Town Center, and other locations would be shut off between 11 p.m. and sunrise. The San Diego Light Pollution Code does not regulate the operation of roadway lighting along Deer Springs Road and internal project roads, and parking lot lighting, residential entrance and pathway lighting, or commercial pathway lighting. Therefore, the operation of these lighting sources along Deer Springs Road and throughout the proposed planning areas between 11 p.m. and sunrise would not conflict with the San Diego Light Pollution Code.

The proposed project Site is currently undeveloped and consists of dense chaparral and occasional boulder covered mountainous terrain. With the exception of lighting installed at the AM/PM gas station and along Mesa Rock Road, no outdoor lighting is currently installed within the boundaries of the proposed planning areas. Furthermore, with the exception of several streetlights installed near the intersection of Deer Springs Road and Sarver Lane, streetlights are not installed along the segment of Deer Springs Road where improvements are proposed. While new sources of lighting within the proposed planning areas would illuminate portions of the project Site during nighttime hours, the potential for light trespass onto adjacent properties would be reduced through compliance with the shielding requirements of the San Diego Light Pollution Code. As previously stated, all non-exempted outdoor lighting within the proposed planning areas would conform to the Zone B lamp type and shielding requirements for Class I, II, and III lighting. More specifically, all non-exempted outdoor lighting would be fully shielded and mounted such that light would not be emitted above the horizontal plane/angle of the lighting fixture. By installing shielded lamps, the potential light trespass would be reduced, as light would be primarily projected directly onto the ground under the fixture as opposed to a wider distribution to adjacent lands and/or the sky.

Although streetlights are not currently installed along the majority of the Deer Springs Road segment proposed to be improved, interior and exterior lighting installed at private homes adjacent to the roadway, generate visible nighttime lighting. Passing vehicles are also an existing source of occasional nighttime lighting along the roadway during evening and nighttime hours. In addition to widened travel lanes and the installation of bike lanes, curbs, gutters, and other improvements, lighting would be installed along Deer Springs Road from Mesa Rock Road to Twin Oaks Valley Road for the safety of motorists and other users. Lighting may be installed on North Twin Oaks Valley Road, Sarver Lane, and Camino Mayor as project traffic would also use these roadways. Although Section 59.104(c) of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code identifies roadway lights as Class II lighting, Section 59.104(a) does not specify that public street lighting is subject to the requirements of the Light Pollution Code. Although newly installed

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street lights would produce light levels brighter than those that currently exist along the roadway, new outdoor lighting installed along Deer Springs Road would comply with the shielding and lamp type requirements of the code to the extent that doing so would not jeopardize the safety of motorists and other users. At this stage of planning it is anticipated that new lighting installed along the improved segment of Deer Springs Road would be fully shielded to minimize light trespass onto adjacent habitat and properties.

Significance of Impact

All Class I, II, and III lighting installed within proposed planning areas would comply with the applicable requirements of County of San Diego Light Pollution Code Section 59.101 et al. All new street lighting along the improved segment of Deer Springs Road would be fully shielded and would comply with the applicable lamp type requirements of County of San Diego Light Pollution Code Section 59.101 et al. to the extent that doing so would not jeopardize the safety of motorists and other users. Therefore, potential lighting impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

Potential lighting impacts would be less than significant; therefore, no mitigation would be required.

Guideline 4

The project would install highly reflective building materials, including but not limited to reflective glass and high-gloss surface color that would create daytime glare and be visible from roadways, pedestrian pathways or areas frequently used for outdoor activities on adjacent properties.

Guideline 5

The project does not conform to applicable Federal, State or local statute or regulation related to dark skies or glare, including but not limited to the San Diego County Light Pollution Code.

Impact Analysis

With the exception of glass windows, the proposed project would not install highly reflective building materials or other elements capable of creating daytime glare that would substantially affect views from nearby roadways or adjacent properties. As currently proposed, structures within the Town Center planning areas and residences within the remaining planning areas would be constructed with wood or potentially metal frames and would feature stucco exteriors finished with warm color and gently sloped, tan colored roofs. In addition, potential glare generated by glass windows installed within the proposed residential planning areas would not

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be located in line with local roadways such as I-15, Deer Springs Road, North Centre City Parkway, Twin Oaks Valley Road, or Mountain Meadow Parkway. Rather, project-generated glare would be located in the peripheral view of motorists or other users of these roadways and existing landscaping, structures, and terrain located adjacent to these roads would partially screen or obscure project generated glare from view. In addition, from these roadways, peripheral project-generated glare would be experienced temporarily as mobile viewers travel through the project viewshed. The interior clearance/headspace of vehicles would further limit the duration of peripheral glare exposure along local area roadways.

As proposed, solar panels would be included on all residential units (both attached and detached) including the residential portions of the Town Center. Solar panels would not be installed atop buildings in the commercial area of the Town Center. Installed panels would be highly absorptive and designed to capture as much light energy as possible. Although off-site receptors at elevated viewpoints (such as at a limited number of ridgeline residences located east of the project Site) would be afforded views to these features, solar PV panels are designed to be highly absorptive of incoming sunlight and are not anticipated to create glare that would be received by receptors in the surrounding area.

Also, consistent with the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines, excessive building or project Site lighting for decorative purposes is not proposed in any of the planning areas and newly installed Site lighting would be limited to that necessary for security, safety and identification. Although the installation of mirrored glass on project structures is not anticipated at this time, if mirrored glass is considered its use would be prohibited on structures visible from I-15. With regard to potential nonconformance with the requirements of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code, please refer to the analysis presented above on Guidelines 1, 2, and 3.

Significance of Impact

Potential impacts associated with highly reflective building materials (Guideline 4) and conflicts with Federal, State or local statutes or regulations related to dark skies or glare (including the San Diego County Light Pollution) (Guideline 5) would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

Potential project-generated glare would be less than significant and therefore, no mitigation would be required.

5.6 Cumulative Impact Analysis

According to CEQA Guidelines Section 15355 “cumulative impacts” refers to two or more individual effects that, when considered together, are considerable or that compound or increase

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other environmental impacts. Therefore, for purposes of this study, the individual impacts of the proposed project and the impacts associated with select projects in the cumulative study area are considered in this cumulative impacts analysis. Regarding the consideration of time, the CEQA Guidelines (specifically, Section 15355(b)) require that the cumulative impacts analysis consider the change in the environment resulting from the proposed project in conjunction with other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable probable future projects. Therefore, the cumulative impacts analysis presented below considers the potential incremental effects of the project when added to similar impacts from other actions in the vicinity.

Methodology

The character elements of cumulative development occurring within the project viewshed contribute to the overall visual character of the viewshed and would affect, either negatively or positively, the quality of existing views of the landscape. Including the proposed project, projects contributing to cumulative visual effects include those within the project viewshed. The viewshed encompasses the area where the viewer is most likely to observe both the project and surrounding community uses. The project viewshed is generally confined to the areas located within the ridgelines that surround the I-15 corridor and the project Site; however, due to the inclusion of proposed improvements to Deer Springs Road, the project viewshed also encompasses the improved segment of the roadway and extends into the Twin Oaks Valley area. Therefore, for purposes of this report, the project viewshed is the geographic extent for the analysis of cumulative impacts to visual resources.

Reasonably Foreseeable Projects

There are approximately 11 development projects located within the project viewshed. Development projects within the project viewshed are depicted in Figure 25, Cumulative Projects Map, and are listed in Table 1. Ranging from a 147 residential lot subdivision (Mountain Gate Rezone for Tentative Map Time Extension, Map ID #123) on Mountain Meadow Road to a 108 residential unit and 10,000-square-foot development near Cal State San Marcos (Campus Point II, Map ID#191) to a two single-family residential lot subdivision (Rimsa TPM, Two Lots, Map ID#157), implementation of the identified cumulative projects would result in the construction of approximately 455 additional residences/residential units (and associated infrastructure) and 10,000 square feet of new retail space.

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**Table 1
Cumulative Projects Lists**

Map ID #	Project Name	Description
64	Tesla Gray TPM	Minor residential subdivision. Four single-family residential lots plus one remainder lot. Future development of five single-family residential.
102	Fallbrook - FB 21,22,23	7 Single-Family Rural Residential.
117	Casa de Amparo MUP minor deviation p 03-	Foster Care Facility for Casa de Amparo - 4-Bldgs for a total sq. footage of 28353.
119	Crossroads Church, MUP mod for pre-school	The modification proposes to install and operate relocatable pre-school classrooms. The pre-school classrooms will have a maximum of 100 students and will operate from 6am to 6:30pm Monday through Friday.
123	Mountain Gate Rezone for TM timex	Tentative Map Time Extension and Rezone to make sure that only those uses consistent with the Specific Plan are permitted. Tentative Map authorized a total of 147 single-family lots.
129	Canyon Villas Welk TM, Rezone and STP	Rezone and Tentative Map (TM 5313) to subdivide 20.89 acres into 177 time-share units.
148	Hefner/brown 4 lot and remainder TPM: TP	Subdivide a +/-57.9 acre parcel into four lots plus a remainder (lots range from 7.4 to 13.1 net acres).
151	Matheson, TPM 21173	12.83 acres into 2 residential lots of 4.013 and 8.259 net acres.
157	Rimsa TPM 2 lots	2 Single-Family Residential lots
164	Turner, TPM	4 Single-Family Residential lots
191	Kaiser Medical Office Building	Three-story, 70,667-square-foot outpatient medical office building and 335 parking stalls

If the proposed project, along with projects located within the cumulative study area (i.e., the proposed project viewshed), would result in a substantial overall change in the visual character of the viewshed, then a cumulative aesthetic impact would occur. Of the projects analyzed, six are “minor” residential subdivisions (i.e., less than seven lots), proposing two to seven new single-family residences or lots. These residential subdivisions would be located to the north, south, southwest, and west of the proposed project within established agricultural/rural residential areas and as a result, development of these projects would not substantially change the existing character of the viewshed. The construction of a foster care facility (Map ID#117) and a portable classroom pre-school (Map ID#119) in the Twin Oaks Valley area would not substantially alter the existing character of the area as the facilities would be relatively small and would look similar to existing housing and school facilities in the area. The Campus Point II (Map ID#191) is located south of SR-78 near SR-78 and would blend in with the existing assortment of apartment buildings and retail business located in and around the Cal State San Marcos campus. Two of the projects within the cumulative study area (Mountain Gate Rezone, Map ID # 123; and Canyon Villas Welk TM, Rezone and STP, Map ID # 129) involve rezones

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and if approved, could entail the development of approximately 147 single-family lots and 177 time-share units in the viewshed.

Despite the presence of existing agricultural/rural residential development in the project viewshed and resulting alterations to the landscape, the cumulative projects identified in Table 1 would combine with the proposed project to change the existing composition of the visual environment. With implementation of the identified projects and the proposed project, the area would transition from primarily agriculture and rural residential land use development pattern to a more urban pattern of development. Physical changes associated with vegetation removal, grading, and the addition of residential development would adversely affect the viewshed.

5.7 Summary of Project Impacts and Conclusions

Visual Character or Quality

Construction and operation of the proposed project would introduce features that would contrast with the existing visual character of the project Site and would result in the removal of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character of the Site. The project as viewed from I-15, Deer Springs Road near I-15, North Centre City Parkway, Mountain Meadow Road and Deer Springs Road near Mesa Rock Road would reduce the vividness, intactness and unity of existing views and would appear inconsistent with the existing visual character of the Site and immediate surroundings. As a result, visual impacts associated with changes to existing visual character and quality (Guidelines 1 and 2) would be significant. Several project features including balanced grading, focusing project development to lower elevation valley areas on the project Site, conservation of open space, landscaping, and grade-adaptive architecture would help to reduce the visual impacts created by the proposed project by minimizing grading (to the extent feasible), avoiding particularly prominent development locations, retaining the natural characteristics of portions of the Site, partially screening structures, and incorporating natural terrain in project design. These features would not however mask or otherwise obscure the physical changes to the existing visual environment of the propose project Site as viewed from certain public roadways in the area, including I-15, Deer Springs Road at I-15, North Centre City Parkway and Mountain Meadow Road. Because there are no mitigation measures available that would further reduce the anticipated level of contrast associated with development of the project, and implementation of roadway improvements along the identified segment of Deer Springs Road, impacts would be **significant and unavoidable**.

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Scenic Vistas

Construction and operation of the proposed project including improvements to Deer Springs Road would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from a public road, a trail within an adopted County or State trail system, a scenic vista or highway or a recreational area. Therefore, project impacts associated with Guideline No. 3 would be less than significant.

Consistency with County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning

As demonstrated in Appendix B, the project would be consistent with applicable visual resource related policies from the North County Metro Subregional Plan (including the I-15 Corridor Scenic Preservation Guidelines) and the Bonsall Community Plan. As such, project impacts associated with Guideline 4 would be less than significant.

Light or Glare

All applicable outdoor lighting would conform to the San Diego Light Pollution Code and highly reflective building materials are not proposed for installation as part of the proposed project. Project lighting would be designed to adhere to the regulations of the County Light Pollution Code. Solar panels would be included on all residential units (both attached and detached), including the residential portions of the Town Center. Although off-site receptors at elevated viewpoints (such as at a limited number of ridgeline residences located east of the project Site) would be afforded views to these features, solar PV panels are designed to be highly absorptive of incoming sunlight and are not anticipated to create glare that would be received by receptors in the surrounding area. Therefore, potential lighting and glare impacts associated with development of the project would be less than significant.

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6 VISUAL MITIGATION AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Refer to Section 5.5, above, for consideration of visual mitigation and design features. Impact conclusions are also discussed in Section 5.5.

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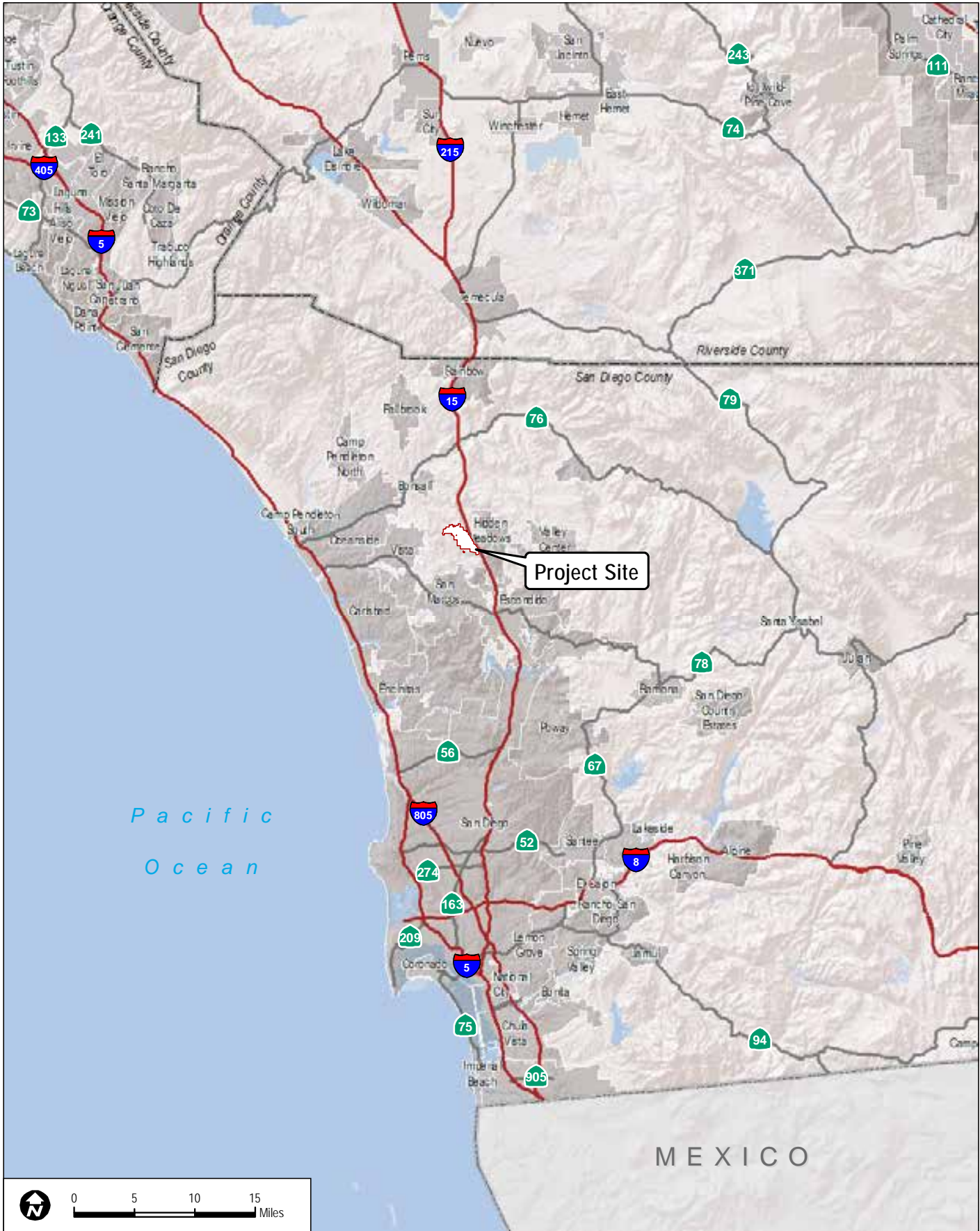
8 REPORT PREPARERS

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- BA, Urban Studies and Planning, UC San Diego, 2006
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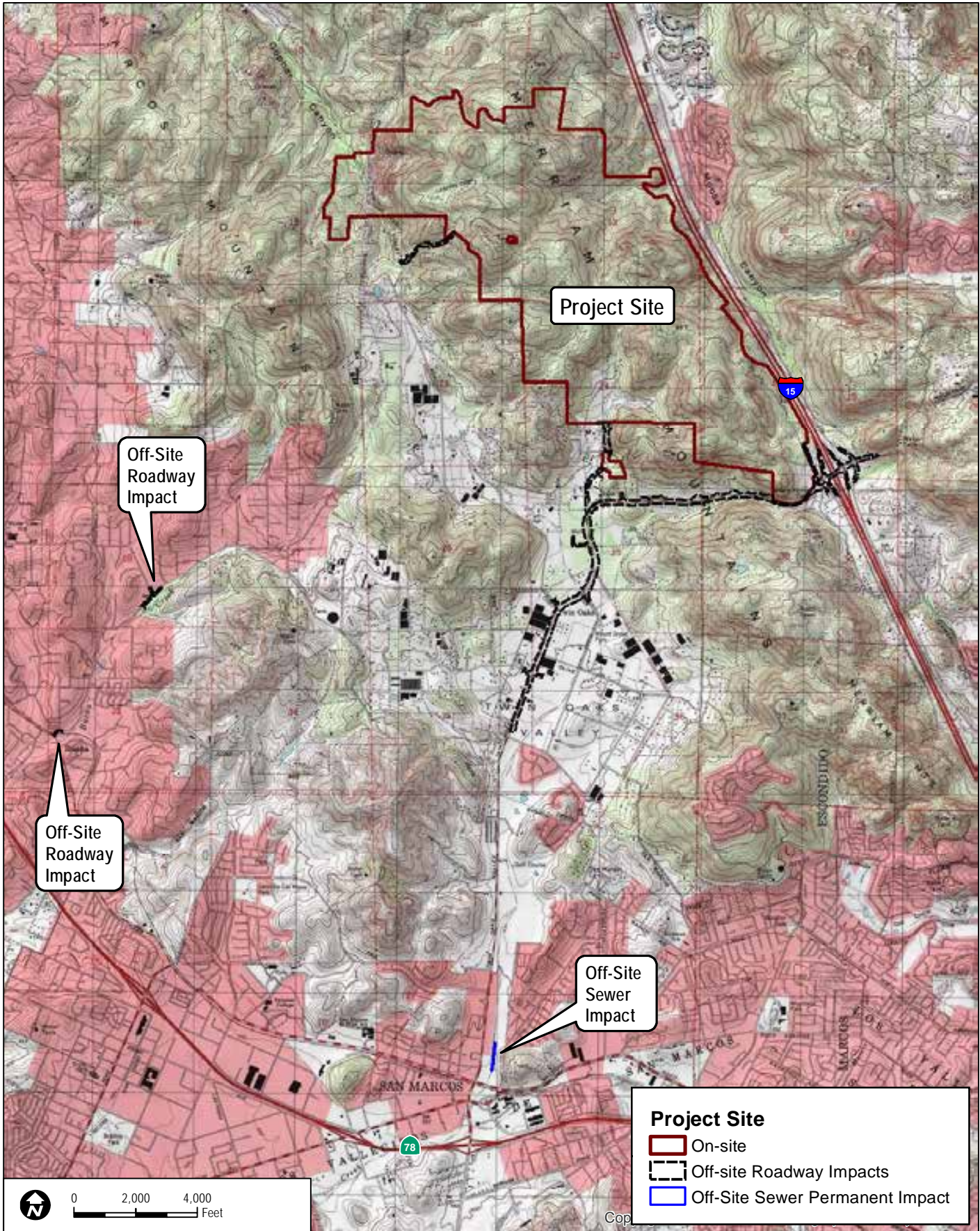
0 5 10 15 Miles

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**FIGURE 1
Regional Map**

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SOURCE: USGS 7.5-Minute Series San Marcos Quadrangle.

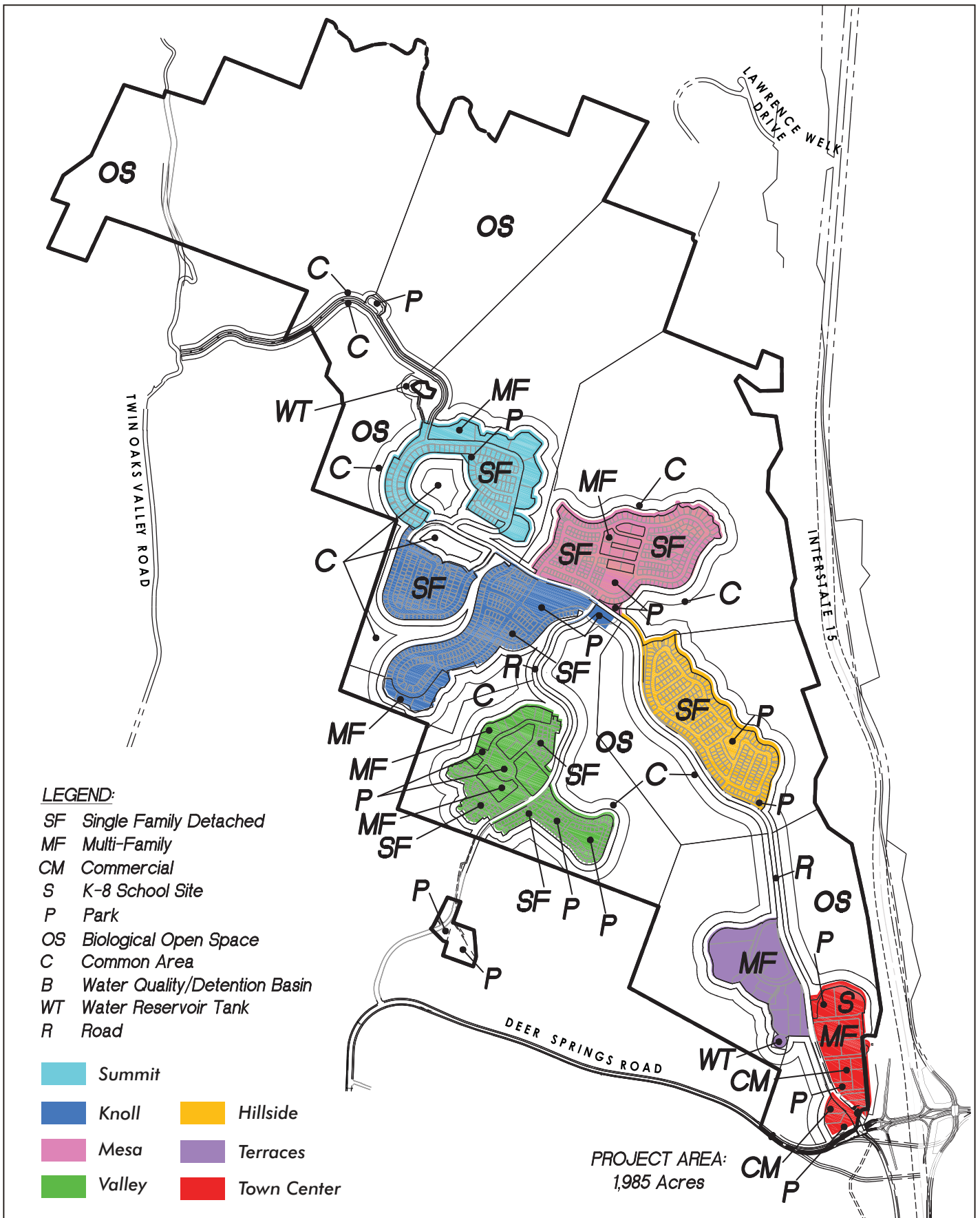
FIGURE 2
Vicinity Map

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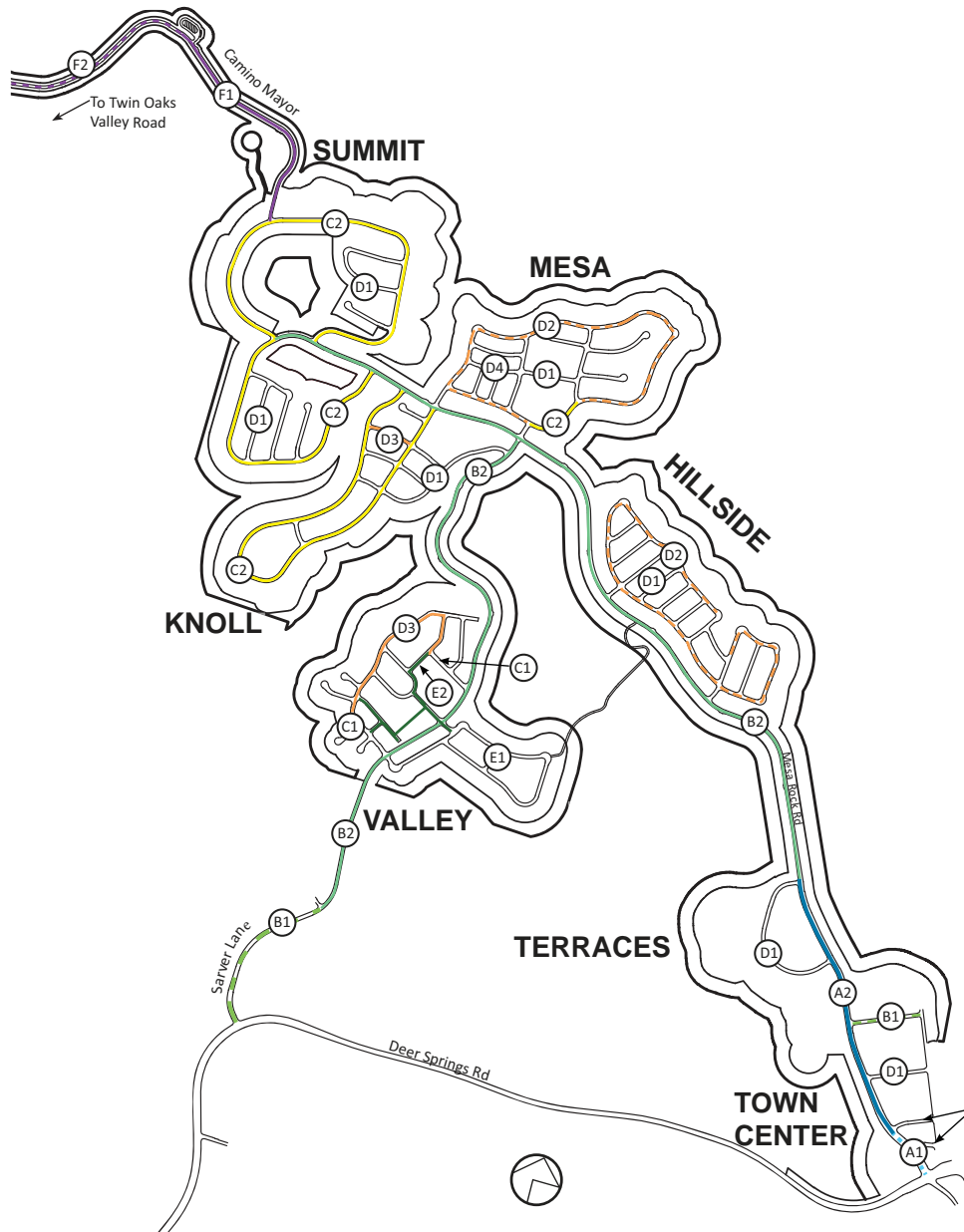
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Road Section	Road Classification	Public/ Private	Proposed	
			# Lanes / Lane Width	ROW
A1	Modified Boulevard w/ Raised Median	Public	6/varies	102'
A2	Modified Boulevard w/ Intermittent Turn Lane	Public	4/12'	89'
B1	Modified Light Collector w/ No Median	Public	2/12'	60'
B2	Modified Light Collector w/ Reduced Shoulder	Public	2/12'	66'
C1	Residential Collector	Public	2/12'	60'
C2	Modified Residential Collector	Public	2/12'	65'-71'
D1	Residential Road	Public	2/12'	56'
D2	Modified Residential Road	Public	2/12'	65'
D3	Modified Residential Road w/ Parkway	Public	2/12'	61'
D4	Residential Loop	Public	2/12'	52'
E1	Modified Residential Road	Public	2/12'	46'
E2	Modified Residential Road w/ Parkway	Public	2/12'	56'
F1	Camino Mayor - Modified Hillside Residential Street w/ Parkway	Public	2/14'	44'
F2	Camino Mayor - Modified Hillside Residential Street	Private	2/14'	40'

SOURCE: Newland Sierra LLC 2016

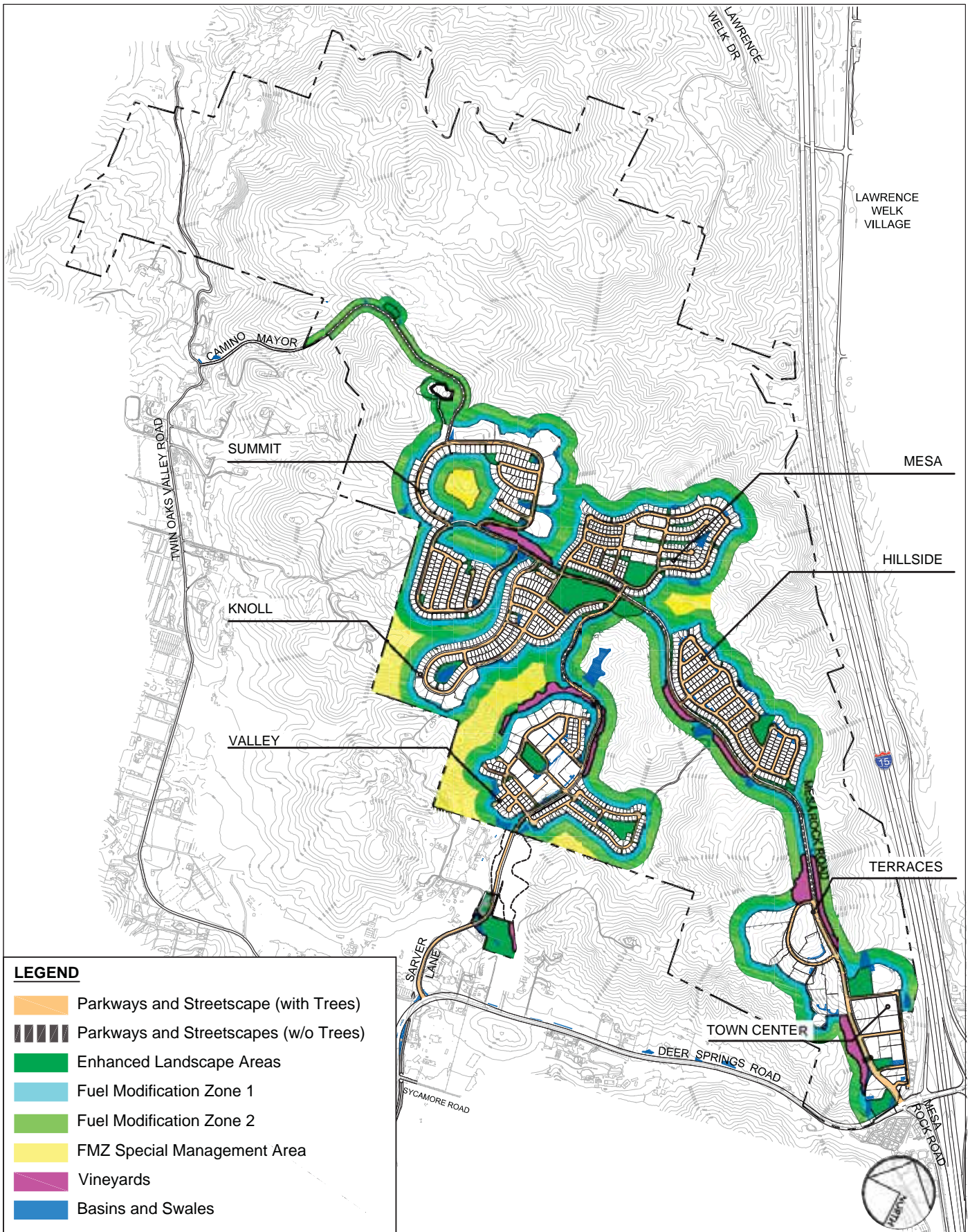
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FIGURE 4
Access Driveways and Internal Roadways

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SOURCE: FUSCOE 2017

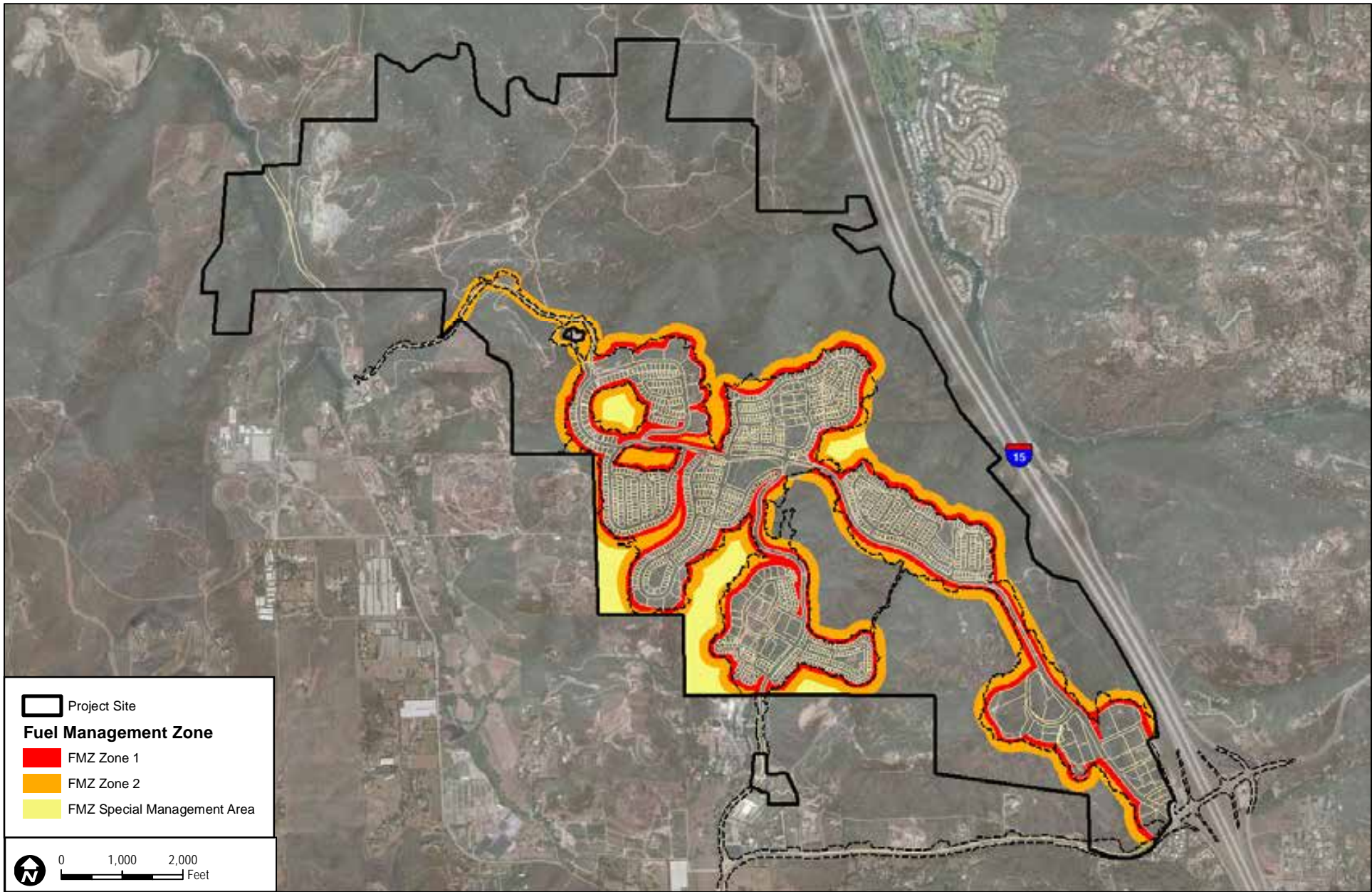
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FIGURE 5
Landscape Concept Plan

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- Project Site
- Fuel Management Zone**
- FMZ Zone 1
- FMZ Zone 2
- FMZ Special Management Area

0 1,000 2,000
Feet

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SOURCE: Bing Maps 2014; Fusco 2016

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FIGURE 6
Fuel Modification Zone Map

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