

### 3.3 AESTHETICS

The purpose of this section is to evaluate the aesthetic impacts of the proposed project under long-term buildout conditions. The evaluation is based upon an analysis of the site and its surroundings; computer-rendered visual simulations of the proposed project; and reference data from the City of Lafayette *General Plan (General Plan)*, Hillside Development Ordinance, *Residential Design Review Guidelines* and the *Burton Valley Ridge Development Guidelines (BVRDG)*.

#### 3.3.1 Environmental Setting

##### 3.3.1.1 Landscape Character

The project site primarily consists of open grasslands used for the grazing of livestock. The dominant vegetation is non-native grasslands; other vegetation includes willow riparian, mesic herbaceous (wetland), and oak woodland. Steep slopes, grass-covered hillsides, scattered native and non-native trees, and several prominent swales and knolls also characterize the 87.9-acre project site. There is one perennial drainage and several seasonal drainages that are tributaries to Grizzly Creek. The project site's landscape character is similar to that of other undeveloped hillsides within the City and surrounding communities.

##### 3.3.1.2 Visibility

The City's Viewing Evaluation Map (VEM) identifies public locations that were used as viewing points to determine the visual impact of proposed structures on the project site within the Hillside Overlay District (Chapter 6-20, Hillside Development, of the City of Lafayette Municipal Code [LMC]). Figure 3.3-1 (Viewing Evaluation Sites) illustrates the possible streets, trails, and other locations from which the project site might be visible. Table 3.3-1 (Viewing Evaluation Streets, Sites and Trails) identifies whether the project site and any homesites within the site are visible from the viewing locations. If so, the table provides an annotation about the type of view and degree of visual exposure of the project's development area. Refer to Figure 3.3-2 (Visual Radius Map) for project visibility.

Using the viewpoints identified on Figure 3.3-1, it was determined that the project site is readily visible from the playing fields at the Burton Valley School, Buckeye Fields and Sweet Drive. The site is less visible along several public roads, including Burton Drive, Lucas Drive, Rohrer Drive, Silverado Drive, and St. Mary's Road, except in certain locations as noted in Table 3.3-1. Other views of the project site are relatively insignificant because the site is at too great a distance, obscured by vegetation or not in a direct line of sight (obscured by topography).

##### 3.3.1.3 Scenic Routes

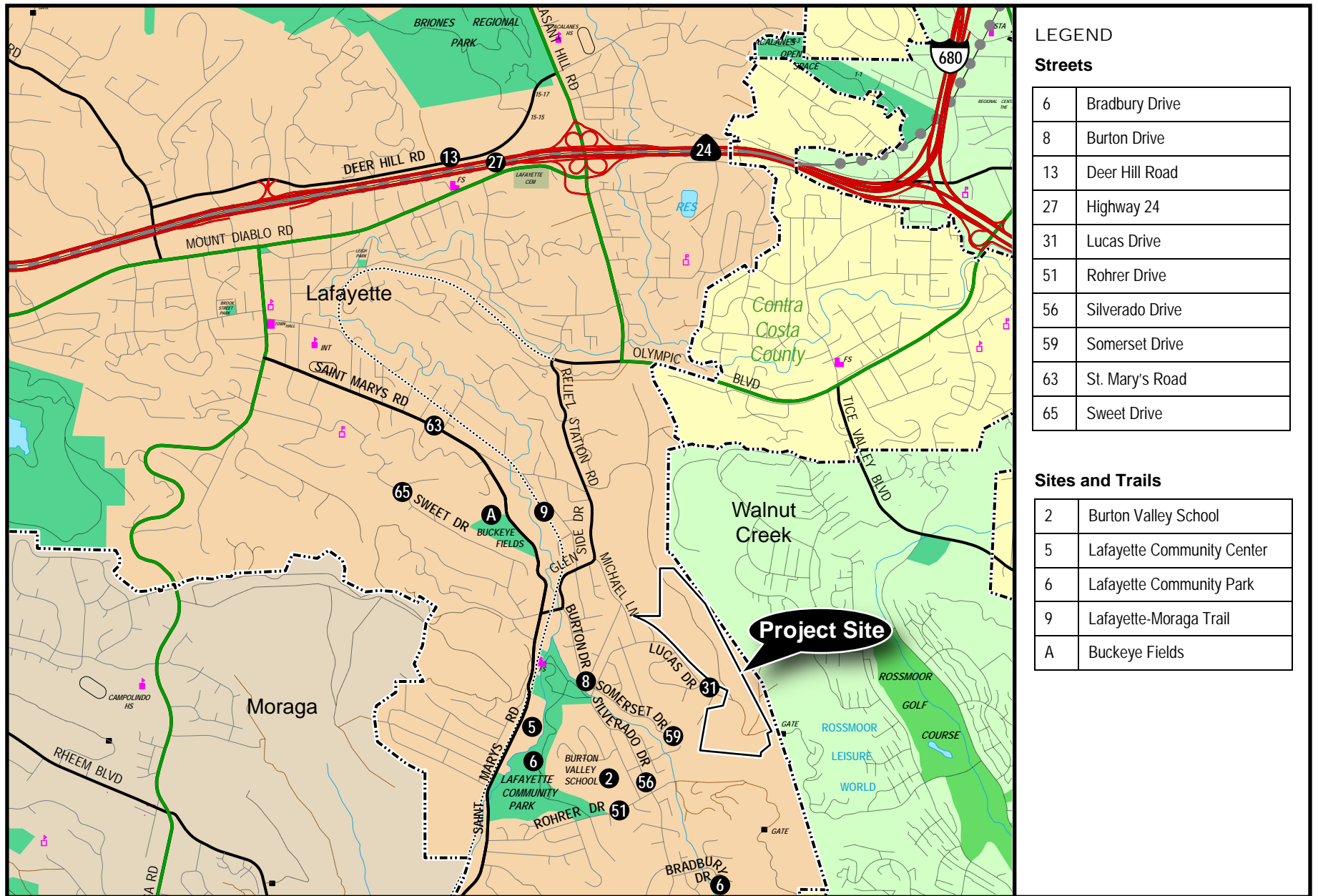
Highway 24 is an officially designated State Scenic Highway from the Alameda/Contra Costa County line to Interstate 680 in Walnut Creek. The standards for official scenic highways (California Streets and Highways Code, Section 26) require that local governmental agencies take actions as may be necessary to identify, define, and protect the scenic appearance of the scenic corridor, which is the band of land generally adjacent to the highway right-of-way (ROW).

The *General Plan* designates several streets as Special Study Priority Routes; however none was considered a viewing evaluation site for the project site. The *General Plan* also designates High Study-

Priority Routes, which includes the Lafayette-Moraga Regional Trail. Additionally, St. Mary's Road is listed as a scenic route in the *Contra Costa County General Plan*.

Table 3.3-1. Viewing Evaluation Streets, Sites and Trails

No. <sup>1</sup>	Viewing Location	Project Site Visibility			Comments
		None	Some	Open	
Streets					
6	Bradbury Drive	X			Views are blocked by topography.
8	Burton Drive		X		Project site can be seen from corner of Burton Drive and Lucas Drive (over the roof of 592 Lucas Drive); otherwise, views are obscured by topography and vegetation.
13	Deer Hill Road	X			Distance from site is too great to view potential homesites.
27	Highway 24	X			Distance from site is too great to view potential homesites.
31	Lucas Drive		X		Several areas along road can view site; at most other locations, view is obscured by vegetation or blocked by topography.
51	Rohrer Drive (public portion)		X		Several areas along road can view site; at most other locations, view is obscured by vegetation or blocked by topography; private portion of road has greatest view of site.
56	Silverado Drive		X		A few areas along road can view site; at most other locations, view is obscured by vegetation or blocked by topography.
59	Somerset Drive	X			Views of the site are blocked by topography.
63	St. Mary's Road		X		Several areas along road can view site; at most other locations, view is obscured by vegetation or blocked by topography.
65	Sweet Drive			X	Several areas along road have open view of site; at most other locations, view is obscured by vegetation or blocked by topography.
Sites and Trails					
2	Burton Valley School			X	View of site is blocked by topography at school location; playing fields have open view of site.
5	Lafayette Community Center	X			View of site is obscured by vegetation.
6	Lafayette Community Park	X			Site cannot be seen from improved portions of park.
9	Lafayette/Moraga Trail		X		View of site is mostly blocked by topography and/or obscured by vegetation.
A	Buckeye Fields <sup>2</sup>			X	View of site is greatest from foul ball post; most of site is obscured by vegetation.
<p>1. Numbers correspond with VEM  2. City of Lafayette, Christine Sinnette, conversation on May 12, 2005.  Source: City of Lafayette Municipal Code, Chapter 6-20, Hillside Development Viewing Evaluation Map (VEM) (October 2003).</p>					



**LEGEND**

**Streets**

6	Bradbury Drive
8	Burton Drive
13	Deer Hill Road
27	Highway 24
31	Lucas Drive
51	Rohrer Drive
56	Silverado Drive
59	Somerset Drive
63	St. Mary's Road
65	Sweet Drive

**Sites and Trails**

2	Burton Valley School
5	Lafayette Community Center
6	Lafayette Community Park
9	Lafayette-Moraga Trail
A	Buckeye Fields

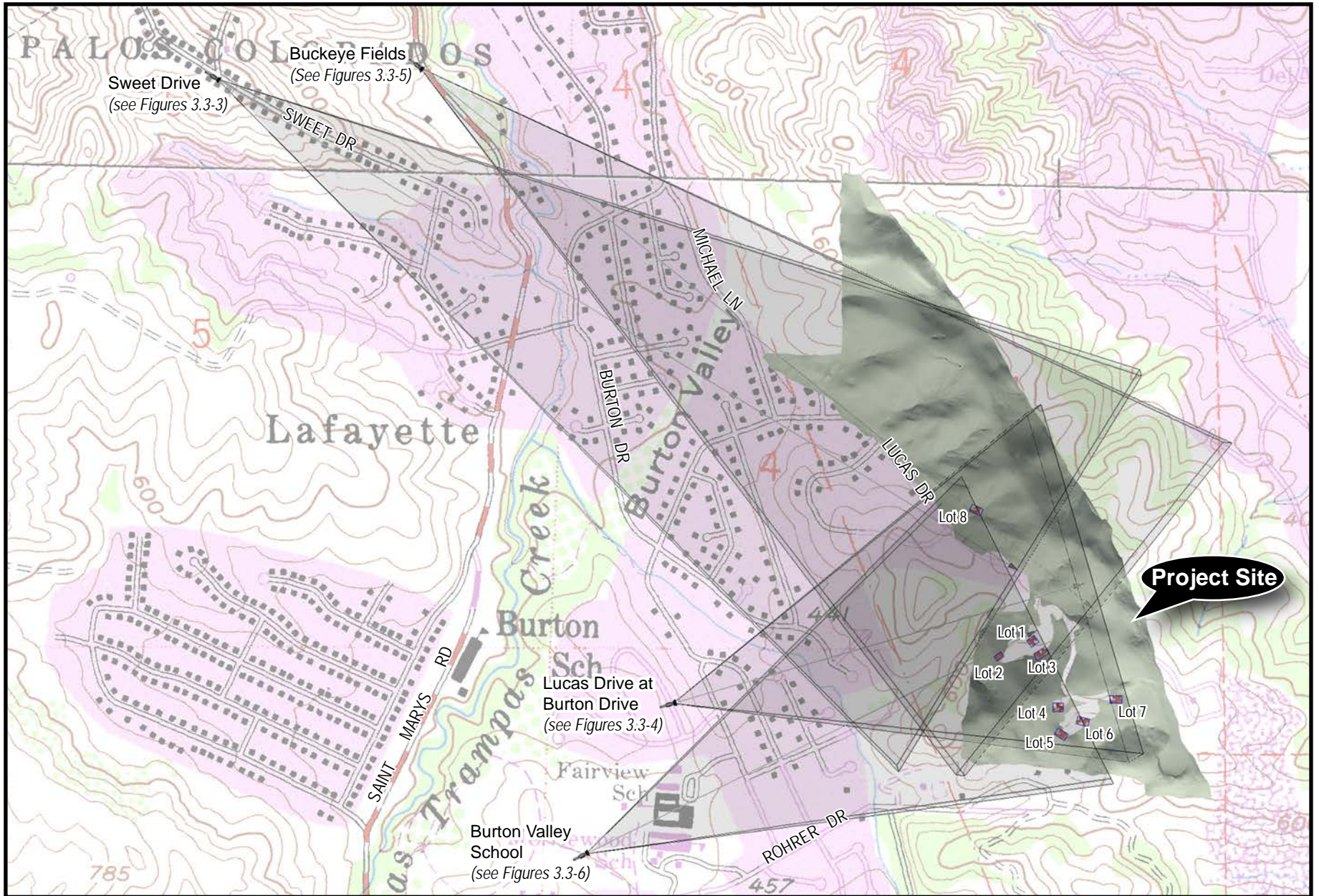
Source: Thomas Brothers Maps (2002) and City of Lafayette Municipal Code, Chapter 6-20, Hillside Development Viewing Evaluation Map (2003)



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**Viewing Evaluation Sites**

**Figure 3.3-1**





Source: Viz f/x (2005)

### 3.3.2 Regulatory Setting

#### 3.3.2.1 City of Lafayette General Plan

The management of scenic resources is addressed in the Land Use and Open Space Elements of the *General Plan*, which contain goals, policies and programs designed to preserve and strengthen the City's distinctive community identity and small-town character. The goals and policies include preserving scenic views of the surrounding hillsides and ridgelines, shaping development such that it is harmonious with the immediate natural and built environment, and preserving areas with environmental, scenic, or recreational significance as open space. Section 3.2 (Land Use and Planning) of this EIR provides a complete discussion of project consistency with the *General Plan*, including those policies applicable to the management of visual and scenic resources.

The project site is located on Burton Ridge, which is designated a Class I Ridge in the *General Plan*. This designation requires a 400-foot setback for all development, including roads, grading, fencing and introduced vegetation (other than native vegetation), wherever feasible. The site also contains a Class II Ridge, requiring a 250-foot setback for all development wherever feasible. The height of structures near major ridgelines is limited to a plane sloping downward at a 15-degree declination from the ridge.

#### 3.3.2.2 Hillside Development Ordinance

The project site is located within the Hillside Overlay District, which is regulated by the Hillside Development Ordinance (Chapter 6-20 of the *Lafayette Municipal Code*). Project consistency with the Hillside Development Ordinance is discussed in Section 3.2 of this EIR. With regard to off-site views, Section 6-2048 states:

- Each structure shall be located away from a prominent location such as a ridgeline, hilltop, knoll or open slope and shall be substantially concealed by vegetation or existing terrain when viewed from lower elevations from publicly owned property (including freeways, roadways, open space, parks and trails).
- Within 100 feet of a restricted ridgeline area or where an exception is granted to allow development within a ridgeline setback, each structure shall be substantially concealed by existing vegetation or terrain to the extent feasible when viewed from lower elevations from publicly owned property (including freeways, roadways, open space, parks and trails).

These requirements are intended to protect views of the open and highly visible portions of scenic hillsides and ridgelines so that they appear essentially undeveloped as viewed from below the dwelling. The Viewing Elevation Map is intended as a guide to establish locations from which views are considered. For viewing evaluation sites for the proposed project, refer to Table 3.3-1, above.

When the City considers an application for development in the low-density residential zoning district, it requires that the proposed structures be "substantially concealed" from public view. According to the "Definitions in the Hillside Ordinances Existing Regulations March 2002," approved by the City Council on March 11, 2002, "substantially concealed" is defined by several factors:

- Site topography – rock outcroppings, berms or swales that shield the structure from public view;
- Natural features such as trees, tree groves and other types of screening vegetation;
- The placement of the principal structure and any accessory structures;

- The proposed building design, colors and materials; and
- The viewing angle – whether the structure dominates the view from a viewing location, or whether it can be viewed only in passing when traveling on a road that is listed in the viewing evaluation map.

Both on-site and off-site vegetation and terrain are considered when evaluating the visual impacts of a proposed development. In certain cases, a development may be substantially concealed by vegetation and terrain that are not on the subject property. For example, when a proposed development is viewed from a distance, the vegetation on properties that lie between the development and the viewing location could substantially conceal it. However, when the development is viewed from a closer location, it may have to rely on the natural features on-site to mitigate its visual impacts.

### 3.3.2.3 Zoning Ordinance

The project site is located in the Low Density Residential District – 10 (L-R-10). Section 6-7209 of the LMC limits the height of a single-family residence or other structure to 30 feet or two and one-half stories, whichever is less.

### 3.3.2.4 Residential Design Review Guidelines

The proposed custom homes would require Design Review approval and would be subject to the City's *Residential Design Review Guidelines*. These guidelines include more specific guidelines for hillside and ridgeline areas. The objectives of the *Design Review Guidelines* are to:

1. Minimize the visibility of structures and other improvements and protect views of the hills;
2. Retain natural features of the land; and
3. Protect vulnerable habitat and native vegetation.

The *Design Review Guidelines* require that buildings be sited to preserve trees and natural land features such as creeks and swales. The guidelines also state that proposed development should minimize impacts on the natural visual character of the site when viewed from off-site. In addition, impacts on neighbor's views and privacy should be minimized. The guidelines recommend basing landscaping design on *Trees for Lafayette* (Beatty 1975), and using appropriate native plant species on open hillsides.

Regarding the size and scale of single-family homes, the *Design Review Guidelines* state that buildings should be compatible with surrounding land features and/or other development. Through design, color and materials, the homes should appear to be in scale with the site and neighborhood, and should generally minimize size or mass. Also, buildings in hillside areas should fit existing land contours without the need for expansive flat grading and should provide shadow relief and breakup of massing. On high-visibility sites, low-profile buildings are encouraged; rooflines should emphasize horizontal lines and be related to the site's slope. Additionally, homes should use colors that blend with the environmental backdrop and do not draw attention to the building.

### 3.3.2.5 Burton Valley Ridge Development Guidelines

The *Burton Valley Ridge Development Guidelines* (BVRDG) (City of Lafayette 1987) are a planning tool to give preliminary direction for future development of the area. The BVRDG describe the environmental constraints for development due to visual impact, steep slopes, ridgeline impact, presence of landslides, existence of important vegetation or habitat areas, and incompatibility with surrounding uses. The

BVRDG identifies several pockets of land within the project site that are considered “low or no visibility zones.” Also, the Sketch Master Plan illustrates a portion of the project site adjacent to Lucas Drive as a Residential Development Zone, indicating that the area would “minimize conflicts with public values and maximize private development interests” (Planning Collaborative 1987: pg 12). An updated (2002) constraints analysis, determined more precisely where development could potentially occur on the project site (RBF Consulting 2002).

### 3.3.3 Environmental Analysis

#### 3.3.3.1 Methodology

##### General

The visual impact analysis is based on field observations conducted in May and June 2005, as well on a review of ground-level photographs of the project site from representative viewing locations, and project plans and drawings provided by the project sponsor. The assessment employed a line-of-sight analysis to consider the net visual presence that could result from development as seen from publicly accessible locations along local roads, fields, parks, trails, and other sites. The specific locations that were evaluated are listed in Table 3.3-1. These sites were chosen based on discussions with City staff and on input during a public hearing before the Planning Commission on the scope of this EIR. Because some of the viewpoints are based on the local street system, including a State Scenic Highway (SR 24), this visual impact assessment is based on the criteria identified by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). This environmental analysis also incorporates City plans and policies related to visual and scenic resources that govern land use and provide a guide about viewer concern for the scenic quality of the landscape.

##### Visual Traits

Three visual traits were evaluated: vividness, intactness and unity. 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 man-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements; intactness can be present in well-kept 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; frequently attests to the careful design of individual man-made components in the landscape. These three visual traits describe how the form, line, color and texture of a project would interact with surrounding elements of the natural and built landscapes when added to a view.

According to federal guidelines, “viewer sensitivity” is defined both as the viewer’s concern for scenic quality and the viewer’s response to change in the visual resources that compose the view. “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.

##### Photographic Simulations

A series of post-project photographic simulations were prepared to illustrate the potential project impact in terms of the mass, scale and overall visibility of the project. The following four public viewing evaluation sites were used (based on the VEM) as control points for producing three-dimensional, computer-generated models of the proposed residences:



- Sweet Drive
- Lucas Drive at Burton Drive
- Buckeye Fields
- Burton Valley School

Figure 3.3-2 (Visual Radius Map) illustrates the viewing radius from the above modeling sites. The location and dimensioning accuracy of the buildings shown in the simulations were further refined by conforming the computer-generated models of the proposed homes with surveyed story poles and markers that were erected on the project site between May 12 and 16, 2005. Figures 3.3-3 through 3.3-6 show computer modeling of the proposed project from four locations: Sweet Drive, Lucas Drive at Burton Drive, Buckeye Fields, and Burton Valley School. Each figure has three parts (A, B and C) that show existing conditions (A), view of the project with foreground structures and vegetation unobstructed (B), and a view of proposed project (C). The green areas in the simulations demonstrate proposed grading and the white line delineates the project site boundary. These models describe only the buildings' massing, and not their architectural design or style. Although conceptual, these simulations present a reasonably accurate depiction of project visibility within one year after construction.





Source: Viz f/x (2005)





Source: Viz f/x (2005)





Source: Viz f/x (2005)



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# Simulation Of Project As Seen From Sweet Drive Looking Southeast

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Figure 3.3-3C





Source: Viz f/x (2005)



Source: Viz f/x (2005)





Source: Viz f/x (2005)



Source: Viz f/x (2005)





Source: Viz f/x (2005)



Source: Viz f/x (2005)





Source: Viz f/x (2005)





Source: Viz f/x (2005)



Simulation Of Project Without Vegetation Or Structures As Seen From Burton Valley School Looking Northeast

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Figure 3.3-6B



Source: Viz f/x (2005)

### 3.3.3.2 Thresholds of Significance

The proposed project would result in a significant impact if it would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### 3.3.3.3 Potential Impacts and Mitigation

*Potential Impact 3.3-1: Would the proposed project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? (Potentially Significant Impact)*

Although Burton Ridge and the project site are visible from many public viewing locations identified on the City's Viewing Evaluation Map, the proposed development area would not be visible from most of these locations, as shown in Table 3.3-1. Nevertheless, the introduction of development in an otherwise natural setting could result in a potentially significant impact on a scenic vista.

#### Simulated Views

Figures 3.3-3 through 3.3-6 illustrate the visual simulations of the proposed project from four public viewpoints, as described below.

Sweet Drive: As Figure 3.3-3B illustrates, without off-site vegetation in the foreground, Lots 1, 2, 3 and 8 would be seen from this viewpoint. However, as shown on Figure 3.3-3C, the proposed homes on Lots 1, 2, and 8 would be obscured by vegetation, and only the home on Lot 3 would be seen from this location. This proposed home would be visible from a distance; however, on-site landscaping would minimize their visual impacts. Most of the project site that can be seen from this location would remain open space.

Lucas Drive at Burton Drive: This viewing location looks directly at the project site, and, as Figure 3.3-4B shows, the proposed homes on Lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and 8 could be seen without obstruction by vegetation or other private homes. Figure 3.3-4C shows that only the very peak of the proposed home on Lot 4 would be seen from Lucas Drive at Burton Drive. The proposed home would have a minimal impact due to its relatively minor visual appearance on the hillside. In fact, with the dense vegetation and private homes in the foreground, most of the project site cannot be seen from this location.

Buckeye Fields: From the foul ball post at Buckeye Field, the proposed homes on Lots 1, 3, 6 and 8 could be viewed without obstruction by off-site vegetation. Refer to Figure 3.3-5B. Based on Figure 3.3-5C, however, all of the proposed homes would be visually obscured from this viewing point.

Burton Valley School: The viewing point at Burton Valley School looks east towards the project site and, without off-site vegetation, the proposed homes on Lots 1, 5 and 8 are in the field of vision. Refer to Figure 3.3-6B. However, with the addition of off-site vegetation, only the proposed home on Lot 1 could



be viewed from this location, as shown in Figure 3.3-6C. This proposed home would include landscaping to minimize the visual impact from this perspective.

### Continuity and Visual Character

The presence of the proposed project could create a significant impact on a scenic vista by altering the continuity and visual character of open space views of the project site. However, as the visual simulations illustrate, most of the project site would remain open space and few of the proposed homes would be visible from public viewing points. Therefore, the proposed development would have a minimal impact on the intactness and unity of the hillside. Likewise, the vividness or memorability of the hillside would endure because nearly all of the natural vegetation and features would remain untouched by the proposed development.

### Viewer Exposure

Viewer exposure to the proposed development would be low because much of the project site is obscured by dense off-site vegetation and most of the project site located within the public viewshed would remain open space. In addition, the proposed development area is situated in the southern portion of the project site and can be seen only when viewed from specific locations that are not indicative of the average viewer's perspective (from the foul ball pole at Buckeye Fields and above the roofline of the home at 592 Lucas Drive). Essentially, the homes would be constructed at lower elevations than what can be viewed from street level. Furthermore, the speed of travel and average duration minimizes the view of the project site, and of the proposed development area in particular.

### Viewer Sensitivity

Viewer sensitivity for the project site is high based on the community desire to keep the hillside as undeveloped and natural as possible. As expressed by comment letters during EIR scoping and through the process of adopting the Hillside Development Ordinance, the community agrees that Burton Valley Ridge is a special and unique area that should be protected from encroachment. The proposed project would require minimal grading on the hillside, while the most visible parts of the project site would remain open space. The proposed homes would be built at lower elevations on the project site to protect the public's views of the hillside per the Hillside Development Ordinance, and those homes would conform to the City's *Residential Design Review Guidelines*, as discussed in Section 3.3.2. However, the proposed project's impact on viewer sensitivity would remain high.

### Compliance With City Requirements

The project would be required to submit a master plan and design guidelines specific to the proposed project but consistent with the *Lucas Ranch Master Plan and Design Guidelines Report (Master Plan and Design Guidelines)* prepared by Zimmerman Welschmeyer Architects (December 25, 1999), as discussed in Section 3.2 (Land Use and Planning). In addition, architectural and landscape plans would be submitted to the City for review and approval during the Design Review process for the proposed custom homes. The plans would illustrate the proposed general residential design, structure orientation, massing, color scheme, building materials, and plantings and would conform to the Hillside Development Ordinance, the City's *Residential Design Review Guidelines* and the master plan and design guidelines for the proposed project. Architectural plans would include the color scheme of exterior building surfaces and walls in order to match the hue, lightness, and saturation of colors of the immediately surrounding vegetation and hillside. The color scheme would include several colors to minimize the uniformity of the residences and unify the residential development with the backdrop landscape.

The proposed project would conform to the Hillside Development Ordinance requirement that it be substantially concealed by topography, off-site vegetation, and view angle, as demonstrated by the visual simulations prepared for the project. On-site landscaping would also help substantially conceal the project. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 3.3-1a and 3.3-1b would reduce these impacts to a less than significant level.

The Hillside Development Ordinance restricts development within 400 feet of the centerline of a Class I Ridge, and 250 feet of a centerline of Class II Ridge. Although the proposed homes on Lots 4, 7 and 8, and a portion of the home on Lot 5 would be constructed within these setbacks, the impacts to visual resources would be less than significant as demonstrated by the visual simulations prepared for the project. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 3.3-1a and 3.3-1b would further ensure that the impacts would be less than significant; however, an exception to the Hillside Development Ordinance would still be required for development within the ridgeline setbacks.

Also, the Hillside Development Ordinance limits the height of structures adjacent to a Class I or II Ridgeline with a “declination” restriction. This restriction prohibits any portion of a structure from being built “higher than a plane sloping downward at a declination of 15 degrees from the horizontal intercept of the ridge.” The proposed homes on Lots 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, and portions of the proposed homes on Lots 1 and 2, would be situated within this 15-degree prohibition area. The proposed homes on Lots 4, 5 and 7 would have the greatest incursion into the 15-degree declination area. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.3-1c would reduce impacts to a less than significant level; however, an exception to the Hillside Ordinance would still be required for the declination incursion of seven of the eight homes.

**Mitigation Measure 3.3-1a:** Prior to Final Map approval or issuance of grading permits, whichever occurs first, the project sponsor shall submit landscaping and irrigation plans to the Planning Services Division for review and approval by the Planning Commission. The landscape plan shall utilize the following performance standards:

- a. Native trees shall be used for screening and plant selection shall focus on blending with the existing vegetation. Consideration shall also be given to species with a growth rate such that trees can reach the height of building rooflines as seen from Burton Valley and Buckeye Fields in a ten-year timeframe.
- b. Non-native ornamental plants shall be limited and screened, and shall be minimally visible from Lucas Drive and Rohrer Drive.
- c. Where necessary, screening plants (trees and shrubs) shall be provided with protection from deer browse and other wildlife foraging to assist in establishing plants.
- d. For hillside stabilization areas, vegetative cover or density, and species-richness shall be sufficient to stabilize the surface against effects of long-term erosion and shall be similar to naturally occurring habitats in surrounding areas.
- e. The species listed in Table 3.5-3 shall be prohibited.
- f. Incorporate the fire-prevention provisions of Mitigation Measure 3.10-1a.

**Mitigation Measure 3.3-1b:** Prior to Final Map approval or issuance of grading permits, whichever occurs first, the project sponsor shall submit a Vegetation Maintenance and Monitoring Plan to the Planning Services Division for review and approval by the Planning Commission.



- a. At a minimum, the plan shall be prepared for a ten-year period and require annual reports to the City of Lafayette that include quantitative and qualitative evaluations of plant characteristics relative to their intended functions.
- b. The need for remedial measures for screening plants shall be based on annual inspection and monitoring reports filed with the City for a ten-year period. Any screening plants greater than three inches in diameter at breast height (4.5 feet) that do not survive shall be replaced at a ratio of two 15-gallon replacement trees for each plant lost.
- c. Wildlife foraging protection shall be maintained until the end of the plant monitoring period or until the City's consulting landscape architect recommends removal.
- d. The plan shall include the recommendations contained in Mitigation Measure 3.5-5c.
- e. Vegetative cover shall be capable of self-regeneration without irrigation, soil amendments, or fertilizer. The need for remedial measures shall be based on annual inspection and monitoring reports filed with the City for a five-year period. The following threshold circumstances shall require corrective treatment:
  1. Noticeable soil movement or loss; evident topsoil loss, with some plants on pedestals or in hummocks; evident rill marks with poorly dispersed plant litter and bare spots not protected by plant litter.
  2. Topsoil remnants with vertical sides and exposed plant roots, root frequently exposed, and litter in relatively small amounts and washed into erosion-protected patches.
  3. Advanced erosion; active gullies, steep sidewalls on active gullies.

**Mitigation Measure 3.3-1c:** Plans submitted for Design Review shall propose single-story homes on Lots 4, 5 and 7 with a height of no more than 15 feet.

***Potential Impact 3.3-2: Would the proposed project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway? (Less Than Significant Impact)***

Highway 24 is a designated State Scenic Highway. However, views from Highway 24 to the project site are short in duration, are very limited to motorists traveling east, and are filtered by vegetation at a 45-degree angle to the roadway (looking southeast). The potential visual intrusion of the project into the scenic highway corridor would be minor. All proposed site improvements and all site-disturbing activities would be within an area of the project site that is free of scenic resources, such as mature trees or rock outcroppings. There would be a less than significant impact. No mitigation is required.

***Potential Impact 3.3-3: Would the proposed project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings? (Potentially Significant Impact)***

Discussion of the proposed project's potential to degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and surroundings is integrated with the discussion of the project's impact on a scenic vista (Potential Impact 3.3-1). The proposed project could result in a potentially significant impact on the existing visual character or quality of the site. While the development would not be visible from many public viewing locations, it would be visible from adjacent and nearby private properties. However, over 68 percent of the site would remain open space after project implementation.

The architectural style, massing, orientation, and color scheme of the proposed project as described in Section 2.3.3 (Project Description) would be consistent with the Hillside Development requirements and the City's *Residential Design Review Guidelines*. Also, as stated in Section 3.2 (Land Use and Planning), the proposed project would be consistent with the goals and policies of the *General Plan* in regard to scale, design, privacy and preservation of views.

Development of the proposed custom homes would be integrated into the natural environment to address visibility and design issues, and landscaping would conform to the provisions of *Trees for Lafayette* (Beatty 1975). On-site landscaping would help screen the residences from near and distant views. Implementation of Mitigation Measures 3.3-1a, 3.3-1b and 3.3-1c would further ensure that the impacts are less than significant.

***Potential Impact 3.3-4: Would the proposed project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area? (Less Than Significant Impact)***

The proposed project would introduce minimal new sources of light or glare that could adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area. The proposed homes would be located in a hillside area that is rural in nature, and would be greatly dispersed from each other and the adjacent existing neighborhood. Exterior lighting of decks, garages, and entrances to the proposed homes would be typical of a residential area and unobtrusive. According to the project architect, the exterior building materials would have minimal reflectivity and building-mounted light fixtures would be directed downward to avoid creating glare and light spillover onto adjacent properties.<sup>1</sup> These design elements would be considered during the City's Design Review process; therefore, the potential light and glare impacts would be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

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<sup>1</sup> Timothy Ward, AIA, Principal. Ward Young Architecture & Planning. Personal communication. June 27, 2005.