4.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

This section describes the visual resources on the Revised Project site and in the surrounding area, and evaluates the effects that the Revised Project would have on these resources, including effects on visual character, scenic views and vistas, scenic resources, and light and glare. The aesthetics evaluation in this EIR is based on visual simulations prepared by the EIR consultant, PlaceWorks.

4.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.1.1.1 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Federal, State, and local policies, laws, and regulations that are applicable to aesthetics and relevant to the Revised Project will be discussed in this section.

Federal Laws and Regulations

There are no specific federal regulations applicable to aesthetics.

State Laws and Regulations

California's Scenic Highway Program

California's Scenic Highway Program, maintained by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), was created by the Legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq.[1]

A portion of State Highway 24, including the segment running alongside the Revised Project site and extending from the east portal of the Caldecott Tunnel to State Highway 680 near Walnut Creek, is designated as a State Scenic Highway. Caltrans states that "the route passes attractive residential and commercial areas with 3,849 feet of Mount Diablo as the focus while traveling eastward."[2]

[1] California Department of Transportation, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/ LandArch/scenic/faq.htm, accessed on May 23, 2014.

[2] California Department of Transportation, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/ LandArch/ scenic_highways/index.htm, accessed on March 27, 2014.

Local Regulations and Policies

City of Lafayette General Plan

The Lafayette General Plan includes several policies that are relevant to an evaluation of the visual quality of the Revised Project. Key policies from the Lafayette General Plan are listed in Table 4.1-1.

Goal LU-5 describes a number of residential entryways where nearby viewsheds are to be preserved and protected, including one adjacent to the Revised Project site, at Pleasant Hill Road. The Viewing Evaluation Map, as referred to in Policy OS-3.2 and shown in Figure 4.1-1, illustrates areas from which views of scenic hillsides and ridgelines are regulated. The Viewing Elevation Map is intended as a guide to establish locations from which views are considered in the determination of the visual impact of the Revised Project. In addition to the Map, there is an officially adopted Viewing Evaluation Sites list of 73 streets and 22 sites and trails. While the Revised Project site is visible from a variety of locations, the following eight key viewing elevation roads and sites were selected for evaluation in this EIR due to their close proximity to the Revised Project site, where the potential for aesthetic impacts would be greatest:

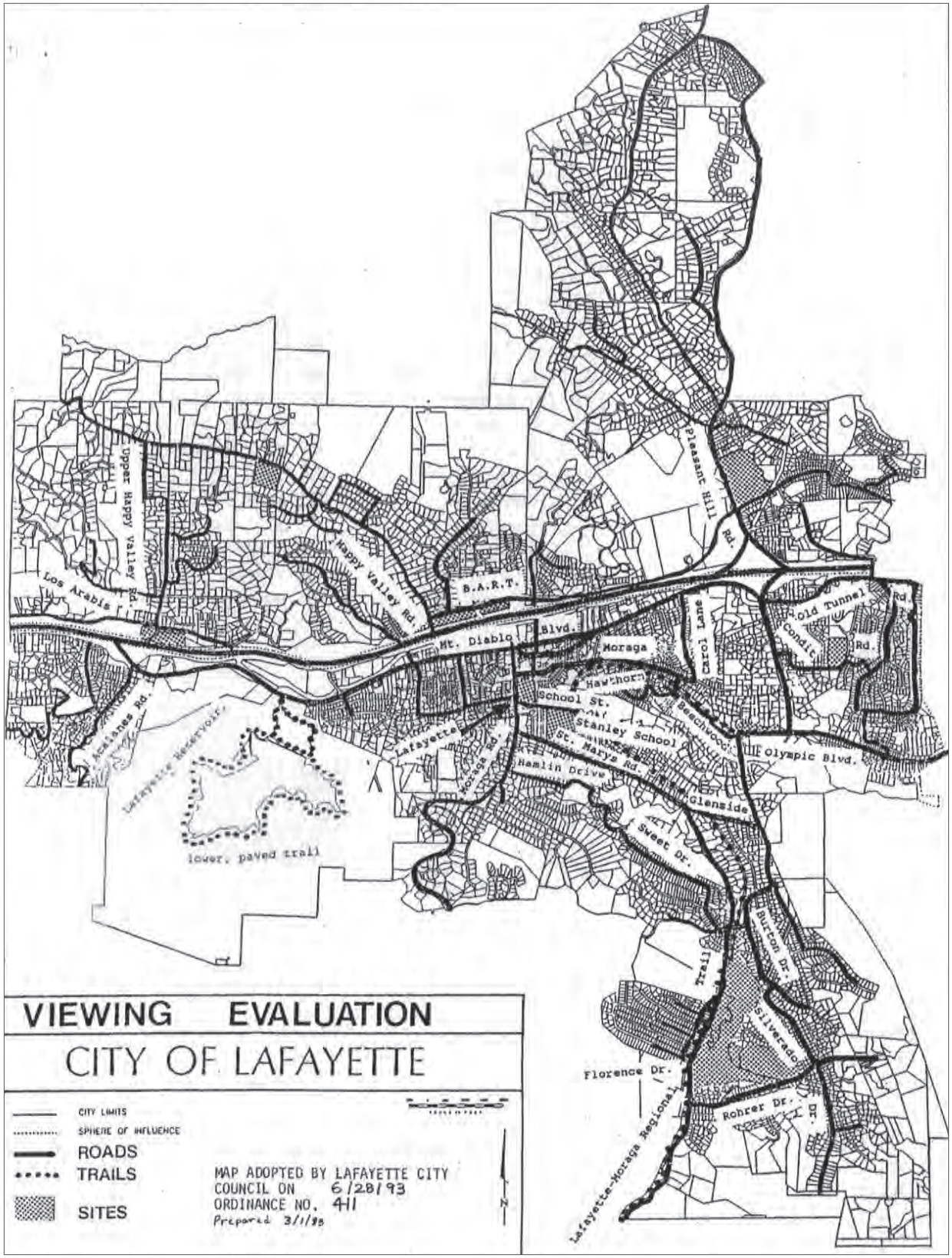
1. Deer Hill Road – the northwest border of the Project site
2. Briones Regional Park – located to the north of the Project site
3. Acalanes High School – located to the northeast of the Project site
4. Pleasant Hill Road/Stanley Boulevard intersection the northeastern border of the Project site
5. Pleasant Hill Road – east of the Project site
6. Mount Diablo Boulevard – across from the Project site to the south
7. Westbound Highway 24 – located east of Exit 14, east of the Project site
8. Pleasant Hill Road – located southeast of the Project site

These viewpoints are shown in Figures 4.1-3 through 4.1-10 in Section 4.1.1.2 of this chapter.

Lafayette Municipal Code

The design review requirements in the Lafayette Municipal Code (LMC) would guide the detailed design process for the Revised Project. The Project site is zoned Administrative/Professional Office (APO), a designation requiring design review for new construction which will be visible from public property.[3] According to the LMC, design review will look at a variety of aesthetics-related aspects of the Project, including, but not limited to, building form, site layout, circulation, and contextual design.[4]

[3] LMC Title 6, Part 3, Chapter 6-10, Article 1, Administrative/Professional Office District.
[4] LMC Title 6, Part 1, Chapter 6-2, Applications and Permits.



Source: City of Lafayette, 1993.

Figure 4.1-1
Viewing Evaluation Map

TABLE 4.1-1 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AESTHETICS

Goal/Policy Number	Goal/Policy Content
Land Use Element	
Goal LU-1	*Protect the character and patterns of development of residential neighborhoods.*
Policy LU-1.1	Scale: Development shall be compatible with the scale and pattern of existing neighborhoods.
Policy LU-1.2	Design: Development should respect the architectural character of the neighborhood.
Goal LU-2	*Ensure that development respects the natural environment of Lafayette. Preserve the scenic quality of ridgelines, hills, creek areas, and trees. Appropriate site planning provides for the preservation of visual and functional open space in conjunction with overall site development. Clustering buildings on a site allows development to occur on the most buildable portions of lots, minimizing grading for building sites and roads. Density remains the same as could be feasibly developed under the zoning regulations which apply to the property at the time an application is made. Refer to the Open Space and Conservation Chapter for additional goals, policies, and programs to preserve ridgelines, hills, creek areas, and trees.*
Policy LU-2.1	Cluster Development: Preserve important visual and functional open space by requiring development to be clustered on the most buildable portions of lots, minimizing grading for building sites and roads.
Policy LU-2.2	Preservation of Views: Structures in the hillside overlay area shall be sited and designed to be substantially concealed when viewed from below from publicly owned property. The hillsides and ridgelines should appear essentially undeveloped, to the maximum extent feasible.
Goal LU-4	*Ensure that the semi-rural character of the community is protected by appropriate infrastructure design.*
Policy LU-4.1	Infrastructure Design: Public and private infrastructure should reinforce the semi-rural qualities of residential neighborhoods.
Goal LU-5	*Preserve and enhance the open space, scenic viewsheds, and semi-rural qualities around the residential entryways to Lafayette. Lafayette's Residential Entryways should be distinctive and attractive, establish a positive image of the community and reflect the semi-rural residential character of the community. These Residential Entryways include: Acalanes Road, Mt. Diablo Boulevard from Acalanes Road to Risa Road, El Nido Ranch Road, Glorietta Boulevard, Happy Valley Road, Moraga Road, Olympic Boulevard, Pleasant Hill Road, Reliez Valley Road, St. Mary's Road, and Taylor Boulevard.*
Policy LU-5.1	Residential Entryways: Residential entryways to the City should be distinctive and attractive features of the City's landscape.
Goal LU-13	*Ensure that the Eastern Deer Hill Road area near the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road is developed, where development is appropriate, in a manner consistent with Lafayette's community identity.*
Policy LU-13.2	Consider options for development south of Deer Hill Road and north of Deer Hill Road where adjacent to Pleasant Hill Road.
Open Space Element	
Goal OS-1	*Preserve areas of visual prominence and special ecological significance as Open Space.*
Policy OS-1.1	Protection of Major Ridgelines: Preserve Major Ridgelines in their natural state as scenic resources and wildlife corridors.
Policy OS-1.2	Ridgeline Protection: Protect all ridgelines consistent with their function as scenic resources for the community and as wildlife corridors.
Policy OS-1.3	Conserve a Variety of Open Space Features: Protect areas of special ecological significance, including ridges, hillsides, woodlands, wildlife corridors, riparian areas, steep slopes, prominent knolls, swales, and rock outcroppings.
Goal OS-3	*Maintain the semi-rural character and beauty of the city by preserving its open and uncluttered natural topographic features.*
Policy OS-3.1	Protect Natural Features of the Lands: The character and natural features of hills, steep slopes, riparian areas, woodlands, and open areas will be preserved in as natural a condition as feasible.

TABLE 4.1-1 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AESTHETICS

Goal/Policy Number	Goal/Policy Content
Policy OS-3.2	Preserve the Predominant Views of the Hill Areas: Require that structures in identified environmentally sensitive areas be substantially concealed by existing vegetation or terrain when viewed from lower elevations, to the maximum extent feasible. The Viewing Evaluation Map, on file at the City offices, illustrates areas within the city from which views will be considered.

Source: Lafayette General Plan, 2002.

The proposed dog park site is zoned as Single Family Residential District-20 (R-20). The proposed public park use would require a Land Use Permit, and review of the design and aesthetics of the park would be part of this review. For a detailed description of the design review findings, please see Section 4.7, Land Use and Planning.

There is also a building regulation in the LMC prohibiting lighting from causing glare to or blinding pedestrians, vehicular traffic, or adjoining property.[5]

Additionally, the Revised Project site lies within the Hillside Development District, as identified in the Lafayette Area Ridge and Hillside Overlay District Map (HODM), included as Figure 3-5 in Section 3, Project Description.

The purpose of the Hillside Overlay District and Ridgeline Protection is to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the city by establishing regulations for the development of ridgeline, hillside, and other rural residential areas.[6] In order to achieve this goal, the City requires findings related to the following when granting approval of a hillside development permit on an existing lot: consistency with General Plan policies and zoning regulations; preservation of open space and physical features; location of structures away from prominent locations, such as ridgelines, hilltops, knolls, and open slopes; site design and location and massing of structures, including a consideration of loss of privacy for surrounding residents and impacts to significant views, significant visual impacts, and interference with ridgeline trail corridors; concealment of the structure when within 100 feet of a restricted ridgeline area, or when a ridgeline setback exception has been granted; grading; emergency vehicle access; landscaping; use of native vegetation; and creation of nuisances, hazards, or enforcement problems.[7]

4.1.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section describes the Revised Project site and its surroundings in terms of existing visual character, scenic resources, scenic highways, and sources of light and glare.

[5] LMC Title 3, Chapter 3-3, Section 3-305, Article 76-4.612, Public nuisance lighting.
[6] LMC Title 6, Part 4, Chapter 6-20, Article 2. Hillside Overlay District.
[7] LMC Title 6, Part 4, Chapter 6-20, Article 2, Section 6-2071, Hillside Overlay District.

City Setting

Primarily, Lafayette is composed of developed land studded with trees, surrounded by panoramic vistas of rolling hills and dramatic ridgelines, including the Lafayette Ridge to the northeast and the East Bay hills to the west. The Project site is surrounded by urbanized areas and developed land, including Acalanes High School to the northeast, a gas station and residential uses to the east and south, a ranch to the northwest, and State Highway 24, which is a State Scenic Highway, to the south. With the exception of the institutional character of the large school complex and the commercial character of the well-lit gas station, the areas adjoining the Project site consist of low-density residential development in a heavily vegetated setting, where the homes are not visible from Pleasant Hill and Deer Hill Roads. Parcels located north of the Project site on the other side of Deer Hill Road are generally undeveloped and abut Briones Regional Park to the north. Uses on these parcels include a ranch with outdoor classes and a summer camp for children directly north of the Project site across Deer Hill Road. Although parcels directly north of the Project site are largely undeveloped, there are several accessory structures and out buildings, as well as a telecommunications facility. The Lafayette Ridge Trail Staging Area into Briones Regional Park is located approximately 500 feet north of the Deer Hill Road/Pleasant Hill Road Intersection. The Project site consists of four manmade terraces, or relatively flat surfaces located on varying elevations (i.e. from 330 to 463 feet) throughout the site. The southern terminus of Lafayette Ridge is located immediately southeast of Deer Hill Road. The original topography of the site has been altered due to grading for Deer Hill Road, Highway 24, and the on-site quarry operations in the late 1960s.

Landscape, Topography, and Visual Character of the Project Site

The Project site has previously been used as a quarry and construction staging area and has been subject to a significant amount of materials removal and grading. As a result, the on-site topography is generally uneven and consists of four relatively flat-lying areas (terraces) ranging in elevation from 330 to 463 feet above mean sea level (msl).

The Project site landscape is typical of a previously disturbed site which has been allowed to re-vegetate. As a result of uncontrolled re-vegetation, the Project site has taken on a semi-rural aesthetic. From neighboring land, streets, and the State Highway, the site largely appears speckled with trees and grassy inclines. At the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Deer Hill Road there is a flat, disturbed area frequently used as an informal parking lot and seasonally used as a Christmas tree sales lot.

Although hidden from surrounding street view, the visual character of the internal terraces of the site vary from somewhat steep slopes to flat terraces and from planted trees to wild grasses. Over 100 trees, which are predominantly oak, stretch across the northern portion of the site. A swath of mature tree screen approximately 27,000 square feet of paved surfaces and approximately 5,000 square feet in various structures, including a vacant single-family residence, two small office buildings, a garage, a cargo storage box, and a construction trailer at the center of the site. A small creek runs roughly parallel to the mature trees. Towards the middle of the Project site is an excavated, gravel-filled area that was formerly part of a

quarry operation. In the southern portion of the site there are scattered trees and shrubs close to State Highway 24.

The proposed dog park site is located across Deer Hill Road, northwest of the Project site. This site contains rolling hills with grasses and scattered trees, as well as a vacant single family residence, a garage, two outbuildings, and a livestock shed. There is a sizeable area north of the garage and the end of the paved driveway that was paved long ago; the pavement in this area has disintegrated to varying degrees and is overgrown with plants. A small canyon and its mouth have a number of trees, including some large trees; there are a few other, smaller trees near the house and garage. The rest of the site is grassland. There are various fences and gates on the property.

Scenic Resources and Vistas

The City of Lafayette values hills and ridges as contributing to its semi-rural character, which helps to define the City's sense of identity. In Lafayette, two basic types of scenic views are protected that are relevant to the Revised Project: residential entryways, and hills and ridgelines.

The Project site is located at the Pleasant Hill Road Residential Entryway as designated in the General Plan. The Plan states, "Lafayette's Residential Entryways should be distinctive and attractive, establish a positive image of the community and reflect the semi-rural residential character of the community."[8]

Existing Viewsheds

Viewsheds refer to the visual qualities of a geographical area that are defined by the horizon, topography, and other natural features that give an area its visual boundary and context, or by development that has become a prominent visual component of the area.

Public views are those which can be seen from vantage points that are publicly accessible, such as streets, freeways, parks, and vista points. These views are generally available to a greater number of persons than are private views. Private views are those views that can be seen from vantage points located on private property. As described in Section 4.1.1, Regulatory Framework, the City considers impacts to private views on a case-by-case basis in hillside areas through the consideration of findings required to provide granting approval of a hillside development permit. Finding d(1) in Section 6-2071 of the Municipal Code is: "Minimize the loss of privacy to surrounding residents and not unduly impact, restrict or block significant views."

Views of the Revised Project site are limited from some areas given the topography surrounding the Project site. The regulated viewsheds to the Project site are documented on the Viewing Evaluation Map and the list of sites and roads discussed previously. The following eight viewpoints were identified because they

[8] City of Lafayette, 2002, Lafayette General Plan, page I-12.

represent views from the sites and roads identified in the Viewing Elevation Map, and have been analyzed to assess the impact of the Revised Project. These viewpoints are discussed in detail below, and the locations of these viewpoints are depicted in Figure 4.1-2. These views are depicted as Viewpoints 1 through 8 in Figures 4.1-3 through 4.1-10.

Viewpoint 1: Looking East from Deer Hill Road

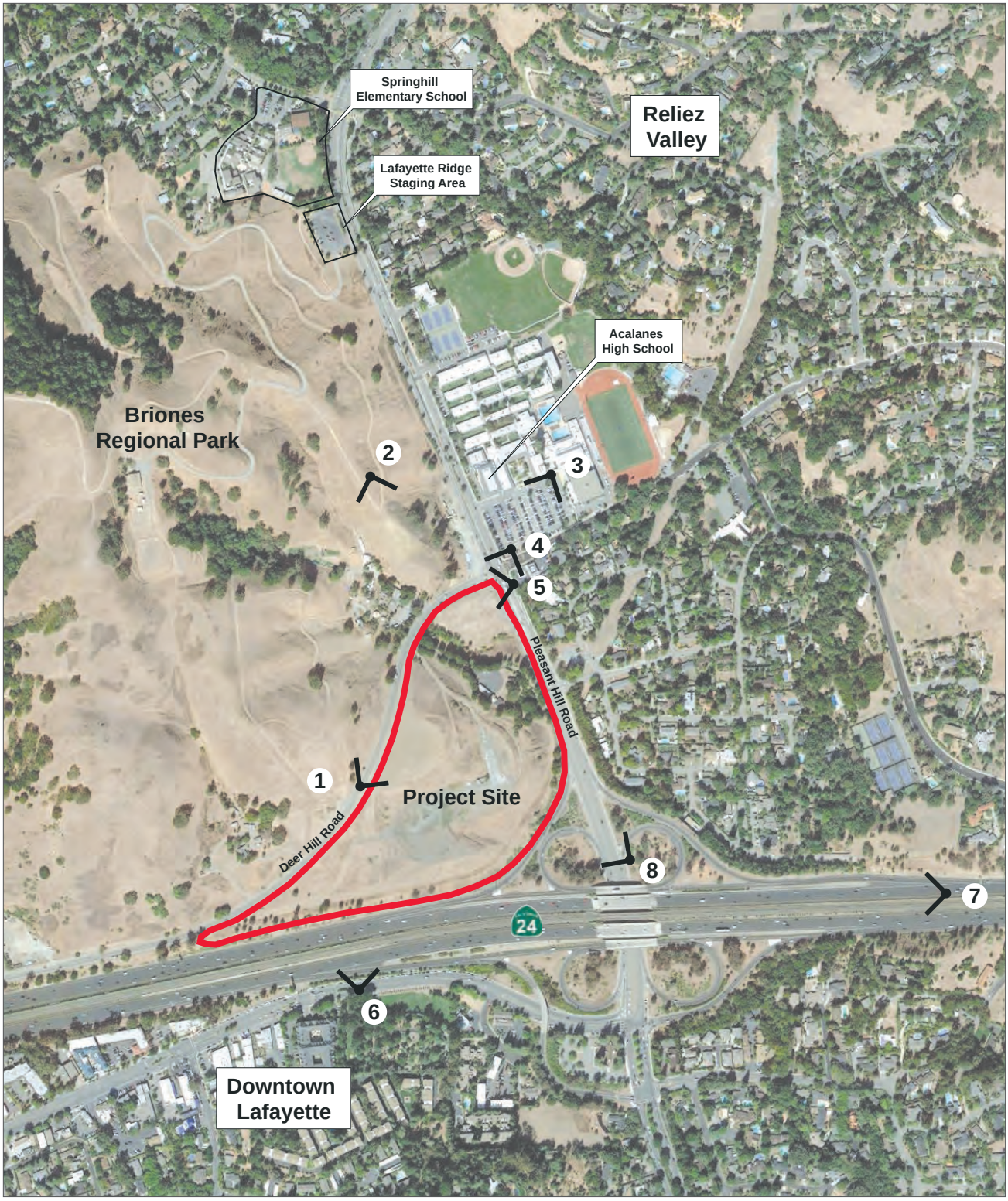
Viewpoint 1 is an easterly view from Deer Hill Road to the Project site, as shown in Figure 4.1-3. The near field view shows the curved slope of Deer Hill Road, which bounds the Project site to the northwest. After the crest of Deer Hill Road, the road is no longer visible from the viewpoint, as it descends at a steep grade. The Project site is visible as a grassy terrace to the right of the roadway. In the far field view, scattered mature trees and houses are visible on the hillsides east of Pleasant Hill Road. Beyond the houses, Acalanes Ridgeline, which is at a higher elevation than the houses, is visible as grassy hilltops in the distance.

Viewpoint 2: Looking South from Lafayette Ridge Trail, Briones Regional Park

As shown in Figure 4.1-4, Viewpoint 2 is a southerly view of the Project site taken from the Lafayette Ridge Trail in Briones Regional Park. The near field view shows the trail looping to the north. Beyond the trail, a fenced grassy hilltop, which is a portion of the Lafayette Ridge, is visible. On the right in the distance, the Sienna Ranch complex, with scattered structures and associated surface parking lots, is visible. The south part of Sienna Ranch is partially screened by mature trees. The mid field view includes a partial view of Deer Hill Road. The Project site, south of Deer Hill Road, is visible as terraced grasslands. The canopies of a swath of mature trees on the Project site are visible just beyond the edge of the grassy hilltop. An on-site unimproved roadway can be observed just above the tree canopies. The far field view is of the East Bay hills, about 7 miles west of the viewpoint.

Viewpoint 3: Looking Southwest from Acalanes High School Parking Lot

Viewpoint 3 is a southwesterly view of the Project site taken from the northeastern portion of the Acalanes High school as shown in Figure 4.1-5. The near field view shows the parking lot with a few scattered cars. The far field view shows the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road/Deer Hill Road/Stanley Boulevard. The gas station building and sign are partially visible from this viewpoint. The Project site is visible as a flat grassy area just beyond the intersection, and in this view it is being used temporarily for Christmas tree sales. Beyond the flat grasslands there is a swath of trees that are growing along the northeast facing slope of the Project site. Beyond the trees, the Project site is visible as a relatively flat and grassy hilltop. Deer Hill Road, which is the northwest boundary of the Project site, is visible as curving sloped roadway. Lafayette Ridge is visible to the north of Deer Hill Road and is covered with wild grasses and scattered mature trees.



Source: Google Earth Pro, 2011.

Figure 4.1-2
Representative Project Viewpoints

Viewpoint 1: Location

View Location

Project Site Boundary

Viewpoint 1: Existing View

Source: PlaceWorks, 2012; Google Earth Pro, 2011.

Figure 4.1-3

Viewpoint 1: Looking East from Deer Hill Road

Viewpoint 2: Location

View Location

Project Site Boundary

Viewpoint 2: Existing View

Source: PlaceWorks, 2012; Google Earth Pro, 2011.

Figure 4.1-4

Viewpoint 2: Looking South from Lafayette Ridge Trail, Briones Regional Park

Viewpoint 3: Location

View Location

Project Site Boundary

Viewpoint 3: Existing View

Source: PlaceWorks, 2012; Google Earth Pro, 2011.

Figure 4.1-5

Viewpoint 3: Looking Southwest from Acalanes High School Parking Lot

Viewpoint 4: Looking Southwest from the Intersection of Pleasant Hill Road & Stanley Boulevard

As shown in Figure 4.1-6, Viewpoint 4 is a southwesterly view of the Project site taken from the northeast corner of the Pleasant Hill Road/Deer Hill Road/Stanley Boulevard intersection. The near field view shows the intersection and the associated roadway improvements, including traffic signals, street lights, and elevated powerlines. The incline of Deer Hill Road, which bounds the Project site to the northwest, is visible. The Project site is visible in the foreground as grassy flatlands of the Project site, which are located adjacent to the intersection, which in this view is being used temporarily for Christmas tree sales. A wide swath of various mature trees is visible behind the flat grasslands. The far field view includes a portion of the upper terrace of the Project site. A portion of Lafayette Ridge, which has a cluster of mature trees on its top, is visible on the northern edge of the view.

Viewpoint 5: Looking West from Pleasant Hill Road

Viewpoint 5 is a view of the Project site facing due west from the east side of Pleasant Hill Road, about 50 feet south of the intersection, as illustrated in Figure 4.1-7. The near field view shows Pleasant Hill Road in the foreground. At this viewpoint, Pleasant Hill Road has two lanes in the southbound direction, and four lanes in the northbound direction consisting of two thru lanes and two dedicated turn lanes. There are elevated powerlines on the west side of the roadway. The mid-field view shows the first terrace of the Project site (utilized temporarily as a Christmas tree lot). Beyond the grassy flatlands, there is a swath of large mature trees running north to south. A small portion of the upper terrace is visible peaking just above the trees. A portion of Lafayette Ridge and the hills of Briones Regional Park are visible in the far field view. The hills are covered with wild grasses and small shrubs, with minimal trees.

Viewpoint 6: Looking North from Mount Diablo Boulevard

Viewpoint 6 is a view from Mount Diablo Boulevard north of the Lafayette Cemetery, looking north to the Project site, as shown in Figure 4.1-8. Mount Diablo Boulevard is visible in the near field view. At the north side of the roadway is a sidewalk, which is adjacent to a landscape strip and a chain link fence, bordering State Highway 24. The landscaping includes a variety of small and medium sized shrubs, which function to partially block the view of State Highway 24, located on the other side of the fence. In the mid-field view, the BART train tracks located in the center of the highway are visible. The far field view is of the Project site, which is visible as two flat terraces with steeply-sloped south-facing hills. The slopes are vegetated with wild grasses, scattered trees of various sizes, and shrubs. The on-site road can be seen on the first terrace that is bordered on the edge by a low-wire fence. A portion of Lafayette Ridge is visible in the background beyond the Project site.

Viewpoint 4: Location

View Location

Project Site Boundary

Viewpoint 4: Existing View

Source: PlaceWorks, 2012; Google Earth Pro, 2011.

Figure 4.1-6

Viewpoint 4: Looking Southwest from the Intersection of Pleasant Hill Road & Stanley Boulevard

Viewpoint 5: Location

View Location

Project Site Boundary

Viewpoint 5: Existing View

Source: PlaceWorks, 2012; Google Earth Pro, 2011.

Figure 4.1-7

Viewpoint 5: Looking West from Pleasant Hill Road

Viewpoint 6: Location

View Location

Project Site Boundary

Viewpoint 6: Existing View

Source: PlaceWorks, 2012; Google Earth Pro, 2011.

Figure 4.1-8

Viewpoint 6: Looking North from Mt. Diablo Boulevard

Viewpoint 7: Looking West from Highway 24

Viewpoint 7 is a view from westbound Highway 24, east of Exit 14, looking west to the Project site, as shown in Figure 4.1-9. The westbound portion of the highway comprises the majority of the near field of view, shown vanishing into the distance from the camera. To the left is the eastbound portion of the highway and BART tracks. Flanking both sides of the highway are rows of Caltrans landscaping, which include 20 to 40 feet tall evergreen trees consistently planted close together, creating a canopy wall that screens views in and out of the highway. Above the westbound landscaping strip of the highway on the right side of view are the Project site and adjacent visible ridges. The top portion of the Project site is visible as a grassy, but disturbed, and terraced hillside with sparse trees. Although the northwest boundary of the site, Deer Hill Road, is not in view, the Project site is visually different from the existing hills and visible ridgeline behind it because of its lower elevation and more gradually sloped topography. The bottom portion of the Project site is partially screened from view by the Caltrans landscaping.

Viewpoint 8: Looking Northwest from Pleasant Hill Road

Viewpoint 8 is a view from Pleasant Hill Road, just north of the Highway 24 Exit 14 interchange, looking northwest to the Project site, as shown in Figure 4.1-10. The Project site is visible as a hill in the left and center of the view. The hill is generally covered with grass and appears disturbed. A westbound Highway 24 off-ramp is visible enter the view from the left and connecting to the six-lane Pleasant Hill Road. Both sides of the off-ramp are landscaped with various shrubs and trees. A landscaped island is visible beyond the off-ramp. A westbound Highway 24 on-ramp is located behind the island out of view and accessible from southbound Pleasant Hill Road. The green shrubs and trees visible in front of the Project site, including the trees along the right-hand side of the Project, along Pleasant Hill Road, are located on a right of way owned by Caltrans. A portion of the oak woodland on the Project site is visible to the right of the crest of the hill, beyond the hill. An easement is visible as a trail part-way up the hill and generally marks the Project site boundary. A small portion of the hills north of the Project site is visible in the left hand side of the view.

Residential Entryways

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, the General Plan protects the scenic viewshed of Pleasant Hill Road as a residential entryway. It does not, however, stipulate a location from which to observe this view. The Land Use goal is to ensure that the Eastern Deer Hill Road area near the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road is developed, where development is appropriate, in a manner consistent with Lafayette's community identity.[9]

Views from the State Scenic Highway

The southern portion of the Project site is protected as landscape viewable from State Highway 24. The highway has four travel lanes in each direction, bisected by the BART rail line, which is located in the

[9] City of Lafayette, 2002, Lafayette General Plan, page I-23.

Viewpoint 7: Location

View Location

Project Site Boundary

Viewpoint 7: Existing View

Source: PlaceWorks, 2012; Google Earth Pro, 2011.

Figure 4.1-9

Viewpoint 7: Looking West from Highway 24

Viewpoint 8: Location

View Location

Project Site Boundary

Viewpoint 8: Existing View

Source: PlaceWorks, 2012; Google Earth Pro, 2011.

Figure 4.1-10

Viewpoint 8: Looking Northwest from Pleasant Hill Road

highway median, and separates the eastbound and westbound portions by approximately 75 feet. The westbound side of the highway is raised as much as 20 feet above the eastbound side of the highway and the BART tracks for portions of the highway east of the BART platform to Pleasant Hill Road. As a result, the northern view for eastbound drivers is dominated by a retaining wall. The northern view for westbound drivers is of low, yet steep, grassy slopes, interspersed with a few trees.

The Revised Project would be visible from the scenic portion of State Highway 24. In the westbound direction, the Project site becomes visible from State Highway 24 at approximately the beginning of the Pleasant Hill Road/Mt Diablo Boulevard exit, approximately 1,500 feet in advance of the Pleasant Hill Road overpass. In the eastbound direction, the Project site becomes visible from State Highway 24 approximately 3,000 feet in advance of the Pleasant Hill Road overpass. Currently, from the highway, the Project site appears as a terraced grassy hill with a number of medium and large scale trees scattered throughout. The Project site is similar in appearance to the hills of Briones Park, which are located to the north of Deer Hill Road, and from the highway the Project site appears as part of the adjacent hills.

Light and Glare

Light pollution refers to all forms of unwanted light in the night sky around and above us, including glare, light trespass, sky glow, and over-lighting. Views of the night sky are an important part of the natural environment, particularly for a community that values its semi-rural character. Excessive light and glare can also be visually disruptive to humans and nocturnal animal species, and often reflects an unnecessarily high level of energy consumption. Light pollution has the potential to become an issue of increasing concern as new development contributes additional outdoor lighting installed for safety and other reasons.

Currently, the principal source of light pollution in the vicinity of the Project site is the nearby residential and commercial development, as well as night lighting at Acalanes High School. Sky glow, a condition where views of the night sky are obscured by excessive or poorly designed lighting, is an issue in the San Francisco Bay Area region. The intensive development of the San Francisco Bay metropolitan area is a major source of sky glow in the region.

Glare is mainly the result of the sun reflecting off surfaces such as glass in building windows or in the windshields of vehicles, or metal roof-tops and other light-colored surfaces. The Project site contains a vacant single-family residence, two small office buildings, a garage, a cargo storage box, and a construction trailer. The buildings are painted and do not create glare. A potential source of glare on the Project site is light reflecting off the windshields of cars parked in the surface lots during daytime hours. Off-site sources of glare include light reflecting off the windshields of vehicles on surrounding roadways.

Existing uses on the proposed dog park site include a vacant single family home, accessory structures, and outbuildings. The area surrounding the vacant single family home is largely in an undeveloped state with grasses and scattered trees. No aspect of the existing uses or features of the site contain significant sources of light or glare.

4.1.2 CHANGES IN THE REVISED PROJECT RELATED TO AESTHETICS

4.1.2.1 BUILDING HEIGHT

The Revised Project would redevelop the Project site with 44 single-family homes, each with a lot size of approximately 4,500 square feet, which is slightly over one-tenth of an acre. The proposed height for single-family homes approximately ranges from 16 feet to 29 feet.

4.1.2.2 GRADING

The Revised Project would include grading and reconfiguration of the topography on the Project site, which would alter the existing views of the Project site from below and adjacent roadways.

4.1.2.3 LANDSCAPING

Of the 117 existing trees on the Project site, the Revised Project would remove 48 trees and preserve 69 trees. One of the trees that would be preserved is the large valley oak tree located near the existing main residential building. A tree protection zone would be created to limit impacts to the root zone within the new tree protection zone around the large valley oak. The Revised Project would also remove 14 trees and preserve 16 trees among 30 regulated trees on the dog park site.

Also, as shown in the Figure 3-9, the Revised Project would plant additional 602 trees throughout the site in order to create a desirable residential environment and screen the Revised Project from surroundings. The landscaping for the Revised Project would include ornamental trees, ornamental shrubs and groundcover, infiltration planting, and habitat and wildflower mix at the existing creek. The areas of landscaping proposed for the Revised Project that would be visible from the analysis viewpoints are simulated and shown in the Figures 4.1-11 to 4.1-26.

4.1.2.4 LIGHTING AND GLARE

The Revised Project introduces new sources of light and glare in the Project area. The Revised Project proposes new lighting around the residential component of the Revised Project, as well as the parking lot east of the proposed community park. The Revised Project, however, does not propose any nighttime lighting in the proposed community park or dog park.

4.1.3 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Revised Project would result in a significant aesthetics impact if it would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

2. Substantially degrade scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway.

3. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

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

An Initial Study was prepared for the Revised Project (see Appendix A of this Draft Supplemental EIR). Based on the analysis contained in the Initial Study, it was determined that development of the Revised Project would not result in significant environmental impacts for the following significance criterion. This impact would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level with implementation of mitigation measures in the Certified EIR. This mitigation measure is listed in Section 4.1.6 below, and in Table 1-1 of this Supplemental EIR. This criterion, therefore, is not discussed in this chapter:

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

4.1.4 IMPACT DISCUSSION

This section analyzes potential impacts to visual resources.

AES-1	**The Revised Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.**

Visual Simulation Analysis

Simulated views of the Revised Project shown from the eight viewpoints are illustrated in Figures 4.1-11 through 4.1-26. The simulated views were prepared using a combination of 3D modeling and CAD software, Geographic Information Systems (GIS), photo-editing software, and site photography. The accurate placement, orientation, scale, and photorealism of proposed buildings and other simulated features are supported and calculated by software and datasets. For the purposes of this EIR, the visual simulations show the proposed Project landscaping at day of completion and five years post completion. The accuracy of the different stages of landscaping is supported by extensive research, consultation with professional landscape architects, and biologists. While new built structures are simulated by computer-generated

renderings, new landscaping is simulated by edited photographs of real –life plant species. Five years post completion simulations also show the reasonable and anticipated five-years growth of existing trees that would remain on site and on adjacent properties.

Viewpoint 1: Looking East from Deer Hill Road

Simulated views of the Revised Project shown from Viewpoint 1 at the crest of Deer Hill Road are illustrated in Figures 4.1-11 and 4.1-12. From this viewpoint, the Revised Project would be visible as a group of one- to two-story buildings heavily screened from view by new landscaping and groundcover. The buildings are single-family and would be design with character that reflects the single-family use, such as sloped roofs and wood siding varied by different color finishes. Garages, internal circulation ways, or other vehicular features are not immediately visible in the simulated view.

The simulated post-construction view illustrates new landscaping at two years after installation, and includes a double row of evergreen shrubs about three feet tall at the perimeter of the Project site adjacent to Deer Hill Road. Behind the shrubs on the slope downwards are rows of evergreen trees such as valley oaks and olive trees approximately 12 to 14 feet tall. In the post-construction view, the new landscaping functions to screen a significant portion of the Project from Deer Hill Road. The five years post construction view illustrates the landscaping at seven years after installation. At this stage, the shrubs are fully grown in at 5 to 6 feet tall and around, while the trees are 18 to 20 feet tall. The landscaping in this view fully screens the Project from Deer Hill Road.

As a result of the grading, the tops of new buildings would be located below the existing ground plane, and would not block far field views of Acalanes Ridge. However, new evergreen trees along the perimeter of the Project site at post-construction and five years post-construction would screen far field views of Acalanes Ridge.

Viewpoint 2: Looking South from Lafayette Ridge Trail, Briones Regional Park

Simulated views of the Revised Project shown from Viewpoint 2 at the edge of the Lafayette Ridge Trail in Briones Regional Park are illustrated in Figures 4.1-13 and 4.1-14. From this viewpoint, the Revised Project would visible in the mid field area as a grouping of one- to two-story single-family buildings with a soccer field in the foreground. The buildings are largely screened from view by new landscaping, but are distinguishable as built structures with a varying rooflines. The buildings are separated from one another at regular intervals of about 10 to 15 feet, providing a break and variation in massing and scaling. The soccer field is built on a lower grade of about 20 feet than the homes. Plantings of oak and paperbark trees line the perimeter of the field in a naturalistic way. The overall Project site appears to be copiously planted with groundcover and there is very little ground hardscape visible, save for a vehicular and pedestrian turnaround in the immediate foreground off of Deer Hill Road. Aside from this, very little evidence of road pavings, garages, or other vehicular features are seen in this view.

Viewpoint 1: Existing View

Viewpoint 1: Revised Project Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-11
Viewpoint 1: Revised Project Post Construction

Viewpoint 1: Existing View

Viewpoint 1: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-12

Viewpoint 1: Revised Project Five Years Post Construction

Viewpoint 2: Existing View

Viewpoint 2: Revised Project Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-13
Viewpoint 2: Revised Project Post Construction

Viewpoint 2: Existing View

Viewpoint 2: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-14

Viewpoint 2: Revised Project Five Years Post Construction

The simulated post-construction view for Viewpoint 2 illustrates new landscaping at two years after installation, consisting of consistent groundcover of shrubs and grasses of varying sizes and species. Paperbark and oak trees, which are approximately 15 feet tall, line the boundary of the soccer field. The field is further separated from the new buildings surrounding it by additional rows of oak trees, which significantly screen the homes from view. The five years-post construction view shows the site's new trees seven years after installation, as well as the simulation of existing trees on-site and on adjacent properties at five-years growth. At this stage the new trees range from 20 to 25 feet in height and substantially screen the buildings from view. Only the top of the buildings and rooflines are partially in view.

As a result of the grading, the tops of new buildings would be located below the existing ground plane. While the Revised Project would be visible from the trail, it would not block far field views of the East Bay Hills from this location and.

Viewpoint 3: Looking Southwest from Acalanes High School Parking Lot

Simulated views of the Revised Project shown from Viewpoint 3, looking southwest from the northeast corner of the Acalanes High School Parking Lot, are illustrated in Figures 4.1-15 and 4.1-16. From this viewpoint, the Revised Project would be visible as two separate levels separated by the preserved row of existing oaks. In the foreground on the corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Deer Hill Road, a new parking lot is visible, although it is heavily screened by landscaping on-site and perimeter landscaping. Driveways are visible from Deer Hill Road as well as Pleasant Hill Road, and a sidewalk with landscaped buffering is visible along Deer Hill Road as it slopes down and wraps around Pleasant Hill Road. The second visible part of the Project site is the upper terraced section where the new residential buildings are constructed. For the most part, the buildings are screened from view by landscaping, and a faint presence of rooflines are viewable through new trees. A single-story home is in view to the left of the simulated view, characterized by sloping roofs, a chimney, and craftsmen style detailing.

The simulated post-construction view illustrates new landscaping two years after installation. In the foreground parking lot area, groundcover consists of a densely planted shrub that provides a buffer between the road and the site. Oak, olive, and other evergreen trees species between 12 and 14 feet tall are densely planted around the perimeter and in the middle of the parking area, creating visual screening. On the upper level, a row of perimeter paperbark trees screen out new development. On the left side of the simulated view, portions of regraded site without development can be seen as open grassland with plantings of oaks. Along the top of the terrace are camphor trees. Additionally, the five years post-construction view shows the existing oak grove as the trees would appear if they had grown naturally for five years, which provides additional screening of buildings behind. At five years post-construction, the trees grow to nearly completely screen the proposed development.

Viewpoint 4: Looking West from the Intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Stanley Boulevard

Simulated views of the Revised Project shown from Viewpoint 4 at the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road and Stanley Boulevard are illustrated in Figures 4.1-17 and 4.1-18. From this viewpoint, the Revised Project would be visible as two levels separated by the preserved existing row of oak trees. In the foreground, the Project consists of a lower level parking lot in front of the existing oaks, surrounded and populated by copious landscaping at the immediate corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Deer Hill Road. A sidewalk is seen visible adjacent to Deer Hill Road and wraps around the corner of Pleasant Hill Road. On the left hand side of the simulated view, a portion of Pleasant Hill Road is shown as a bus pull-out area. This lower level is regraded slightly and the change is imperceptible from existing conditions. There are no buildings or structures visible on the parking lot area of the Project. The major change that is most apparent in the upper level behind the oak grove is the regrading of the existing terrace. It is shown as significantly regraded to a lower elevation and the resulting topography is now out of view behind the oak grove. Furthermore, built structures of the Project in the upper level are only slightly seen in this view, and the vast majority of it is out of view or screened by the existing oaks and proposed landscaping. The soccer field's fence is viewable just on top of the existing oaks, and the Project's proposed row of paperbark trees along the field's perimeter is apparent on top of the oak grove. Significant views of buildings do not exist or are imperceptible.

The simulated post-construction view illustrates new landscaping two years after installation. In the foreground parking lot area, groundcover consists of a densely planted shrub the provides a buffer between the road and the site. Oak, olive, and other evergreen trees species between 12- and 14 feet tall are densely planted around the perimeter and in the middle of the parking area, providing screening. On the second level, a row of perimeter paperbark trees screen out new development. Additionally, the five years post-construction view shows the existing oak grove as they would if they had grown naturally for five years, which provides additional screening of buildings behind. At five years post-construction, the trees grow to fully screen out the Project at the upper level. As a result of the lower grading, the Project would be built at an elevation that is lower than existing topography and views of Lafayette Ridge are preserved.

Viewpoint 5: Looking West from Pleasant Hill Road

Simulated views of the Revised Project from Viewpoint 5, looking west from Pleasant Hill Road just south of the intersection with Deer Hill Road, are illustrated in Figures 4.1-19 and 4.1-20. From this viewpoint, the most predominantly visible portion of the Revised Project would be the parking lot on the lower level of the site, adjacent to Pleasant Hill Road, with a small portion of the upper level slightly visible in the distance. The parking lot is shown as replacing the site of what is the existing "Christmas Tree Lot," changing from a graded, grassy area to a paved and striped area for vehicles that also consists of copious groundcover and tree plantings that soften the impervious nature of the parking lot. There are no buildings or structures in view and Pleasant Hill Road in the foreground is shown as consisting of a sidewalk and bus pull-out. A small portion of the upper level of the Project behind the oak grove is visible on the left hand side of the

Viewpoint 3: Existing View

Viewpoint 3: Revised Project Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-15
Viewpoint 3: Revised Project Post Construction

Viewpoint 3: Existing View

Viewpoint 3: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-16
Viewpoint 3: Revised Project Five Years Post Construction

Viewpoint 4: Existing View

Viewpoint 4: Revised Project Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-17
Viewpoint 4: Revised Project Post Construction

Viewpoint 4: Existing View

Viewpoint 4: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-18

Viewpoint 4: Revised Project Five Years Post Construction

Viewpoint 5: Existing View

Viewpoint 5: Revised Project Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-19
Viewpoint 5: Revised Project Post Construction

Viewpoint 5: Existing View

Viewpoint 5: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-20

Viewpoint 5: Revised Project Five Years Post Construction

simulated view. In the simulation, the upper terrace is graded to a lower elevation, and the paperbark trees surrounding the soccer field can be seen.

The simulated post-construction view illustrates new landscaping two years after installation. In the foreground parking lot area, groundcover consists of a densely planted shrub that provides a buffer between the road and the site. Extensive groundcover is also shown in the interior of the parking area in medians and landscaping strips, providing additional screening and softening of pavement areas. Oak, olive, and other evergreen trees species between 12- and 14-feet tall are densely planted around the perimeter and in the middle of the parking area, which also serve to create a visual buffer. On the second level, a very small portion of the row of perimeter paperbark trees surrounding the soccer field can be seen. Additionally, the five years post-construction view shows the existing oak grove as they would if they had grown naturally for five years, which provides additional screening of the Project. At five years post-construction, the lower level trees grow to between 18 to 20 feet tall and create a visual canopy that provides considerable shade, coverage, and screening.

At this location, the Revised Project would not block the existing view to the Lafayette Ridge, as well as the views of all hillsides to the west.

Viewpoint 6: Looking North from Mount Diablo Boulevard

Simulated views of the Revised Project shown from Viewpoint 6, looking north from Mount Diablo Road, are illustrated in Figures 4.1-21 and 4.1-22. From this viewpoint, the Revised Project would be visible as a single row of one- to two-story single-family buildings on top of the site heavily screened from view with new landscaping. The buildings are characterized by sloping roofs and finished materials, earth tone colors, chimneys, and windows and doors. Some architectural details, such as trimming and molding, can be seen from this viewpoint. Most of the buildings in view are obscured by trees. Overall grading changes are small cut and fills, and changes are not easily perceptible at this view. The only exception is a multi-level retaining wall at the left hand side of the photo, where the site meets Caltrans property. The retaining wall is heavily landscaped with trailing rosemary and groundcover shrubs to reduce their aesthetic impact.

The simulated post-construction view illustrates new landscaping two years after installation. The majority of the site from this view consists of the Creeping Wild Rye grass as the main groundcover, which is distinguished from existing wild grass by its greener, more irrigated quality. Several trees, including oak trees of several species, camphor trees, and arroyo willows, are planted along the hillside, especially at the perimeter of new buildings to provide considerable screening. At two years post-construction, proposed buildings are largely concealed from view and screened by proposed landscaping, with some proposed homes visible as scattered rooflines. At five years post-construction, all of the shrubs and trees grow to a size that effectively screen out the built portions of the Revised Project from view.

As shown in this viewpoint, the existing horizon line, formed at the edge of the existing terrace, would be replaced by a significant amount of trees and other landscaping treatment. As a result, the far field view of Lafayette Ridge visible on the left side of the existing condition would be blocked.

Viewpoint 7: Looking West from Highway 24

Simulated views of the Revised Project shown from Viewpoint 7, looking west from Highway 24, are illustrated in Figures 4.1-23 and 4.1-24. From this viewpoint, the Revised Project is visible in the far distance, with noticeable change depicted mainly by the change of existing grassland to a new, irrigated grassland. New building structures and changes in grading are hard to distinguish in this view due to the distance of the project from the viewpoint. A row of new buildings sits on top of the site, but is screened from view by trees and landscaping. The simulated post-construction view illustrates new landscaping two years after installation. The majority of the site from this view consists of the Creeping Wild Rye grass as the main groundcover, distinguished from existing wild grass by its greener, more irrigated quality. Trees, including oak trees of several species, camphor trees, and arroyo willows, are planted along the hillside, especially at the perimeter of new buildings to provide considerable screening. At two years post-construction, proposed buildings are largely concealed from view and screened by proposed landscaping. At five years post-construction, all of the shrubs and trees grow to a size that effectively screens out the built portions of the project from view. Additionally, the simulation also shows the trees and shrubs that line Highway 24 in the foreground as if they had grown naturally for five years, providing additional screening of the Project.

As shown in this viewpoint, the existing horizon line, formed at the edge of the existing terrace, would be replaced by a significant amount of trees and other landscaping treatment. The far field view of Lafayette Ridge visible beyond and above the existing condition would not be blocked.

Viewpoint 8: Looking Northwest from Pleasant Hill Road

Simulated views of the Revised Project shown from Viewpoint 8, looking northwest from Pleasant Hill Road, are illustrated in Figures 4.1-25 and 4.1-26. From this viewpoint, the elevated grade of the Revised Project is visible, showing new mitigated grassland. A row of buildings sits on top of the now-elevated Project site, but since upon completion, landscaping would have been installed and matured for two years, the buildings are largely screened from view. A new trail part-way up the hill of the Project site is shown with some trees and shrubs planted along the new trail. A retaining wall is located beyond the trail, separating the new trail from the residential portion of the Project site. The simulated post-construction view illustrates new landscaping two years after installation. The majority of the site from this view consists of the Creeping Wild Rye grass as the main groundcover. Trees are planted along the new trail and around the Revised Project to provide considerable screening. At five years post-construction, all of the shrubs and trees grow to a size that substantially screens the Revised Project from view. As shown in this viewpoint, the existing horizon line would line up with the higher hill behind, and the far-field view of Lafayette Ridge would be replaced by the elevated Project site and proposed on-site vegetation.

Viewpoint 6: Existing View

Viewpoint 6: Revised Project Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-21
Viewpoint 6: Revised Project Post Construction

Viewpoint 6: Existing View

Viewpoint 6: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-22

Viewpoint 6: Revised Project Five Years Post Construction

Viewpoint 7: Existing View

Viewpoint 7: Revised Project Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-23
Viewpoint 7: Revised Project Post Construction

Viewpoint 7: Existing View

Viewpoint 7: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-24

Viewpoint 7: Revised Project Five Years Post Construction

Viewpoint 8: Existing View

Viewpoint 8: Revised Project Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-25
Viewpoint 8: Revised Project Post Construction

Viewpoint 8: Existing View

Viewpoint 8: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-26
Viewpoint 8: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction

Mitigated Condition

Mitigation Measures TRAF-8 and TRAF-10 require a new off-street, shared multi-use path for bicycles and pedestrians along the portion of the Project site that fronts Pleasant Hill Road between Deer Hill Road and the westbound Highway 24 on-ramp, as well as an on-street southbound Class II bicycle lane on Pleasant Hill Road. (See Section 4.9, Transportation and Traffic, for more detail on these mitigation measures.) In order to accommodate both the off-street multi-use path and Class II bicycle lane, the southbound portion of Pleasant Hill Road would require a roadway widening and relocation of the curb approximately four to six feet to the west. As a result, a retaining wall would be required along the multi-use path along its entirety in order for it to be on an even grade.

Figure 4.1-27 shows the project simulated at five years post-construction including the mitigation conditions. The new off-street path and retaining wall is show conceptually in the right-hand side of the simulation behind the second existing street light on the sidewalk. Street trees and groundcover along the curb edge is shown to soften the visual impact from installing the retaining wall, provide better pedestrian experience on the sidewalk, and create consistency with plantings further north along the Project site frontage on Pleasant Hill Road. Since the retaining wall is on the bottom of the hill, along the sidewalk, where various signs for automobiles and streetlights already disturb the visual appearance of the bottom of the hill, these mitigation measures would not degrade the visual environment.

Residential Entryways

General Plan Goal LU-5 designates Pleasant Hill Road as a residential gateway and includes policies calling for development in gateway areas to, "be distinctive and attractive, establish a positive image of the community, and reflect the semi-rural residential character of the community." Through the Planned Unit Development and Design Review process, the applicant has the opportunity to work with the City to address the General Plan policy direction in order to design buildings that are distinctive and attractive, and that establish a positive image. As seen in Viewpoints 2, 3, 4, and 5, the combination of single-story buildings utilizing naturalistic finishes and sidings, sloped roofs that reflect Lafayette's ranch-style architectural history, and an emphasis on the planting of native oaks and evergreen trees as shade and screening trees adequately fulfill this policy. The screening provided by the Project aims to preserve the semi-rural character called for in Goal LU-5. In Viewpoints 3, 4, and 5, the buildings are also located in the interior of the site, which helps to preserve the corner as semi-rural and undeveloped. Although the Project proposes a parking lot at the corner of Pleasant Hill Road and Deer Hill Road, it does not propose new built structures, and the parking lot would be heavily planted with native oaks, olive trees, and other plant species that are in keeping with Lafayette's rural character. This enhances the image of this important intersection from an unkempt grass lot to a maintained and landscaped intersection with gateway features that establishes an improved image for the community.

Viewpoint 8: Existing View

Viewpoint 8: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction with Mitigation

Source: PlaceWorks, 2014.

Figure 4.1-27
Viewpoint 8: Revised Project 5 Years Post Construction with Mitigation

Analysis of Impacts to Scenic Vistas

As shown in the photosimulations, scenic views would be obstructed by the Revised Project from Viewpoints 1, 6, and 8 with varying degrees of impact. In Viewpoint 1 (see Figure 4.1-11), although views of the Acalanes Ridgeline would not be blocked by new development, new trees at post-construction and five years post-construction would partially and fully block far views of the ridgeline, respectively, for a brief period as one travels Deer Hill Road. When viewed from Deer Hill Road, as shown in Figure 4.1-11, the tops of the proposed construction on the Revised Project site would be located below the grade of the roadway. Although proposed landscaping may partially block views of ridgelines, this would not be considered an adverse effect because the blocked view would be brief and the landscaping would provide a natural appearance. Therefore, the impact from the exemption to the 15-degree declination and ridgeline setback requirements are minimal.

In Viewpoints 6 and 8, new development and trees would completely block views of Lafayette Ridge in both the post-construction and five years post-construction simulations. Views from Viewpoint 2, 3, 4, 5, and 7 would not be affected by the Revised Project.

Goal LU-2 of the General Plan states, "Ensure that development respects the natural environment of Lafayette. Preserve the scenic quality of ridgelines, hills, creek areas, and trees." Although views of ridgelines would be partially or fully blocked by the Revised Project in Viewpoints 1, 6, and 8, they would be screened by new tree plantings designed to mitigate any potential visual impacts of built materials. The use of tree species that are native to California and prevalent in the community, planted in a natural and un-manicured pattern, is designed to preserve the natural quality and curvilinear contours that are prevalent in the natural aesthetic of Lafayette. Therefore, as proposed, the Revised Project would comply with Goal LU-2, as it would preserve the scenic quality of ridgelines, hills, creek areas, and trees, resulting in a *less-than-significant* impact.

Significance before Mitigation: Less than significant.

AES-2	**The Revised Project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings, within a state scenic highway.**

As a result of the size of the Project site, the varied topography, and the variations in adjoining land uses, the visual character of the 22-acre Project site, dog park site, and surrounding area ranges from suburban to semi-rural. At the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road with Deer Hill Road/Stanley Boulevard, the area east of the Revised Project Site is suburban in character due to the residences, large high school complex, and gas station. Development of the proposed single-family residences and community park uses on the west side of Pleasant Hill Road, which is a Route of Regional Significance, is consistent with the existing suburban uses at the intersection and would not negatively affect the visual character of the immediate area.

The Deer Hill Road frontage is of a semi-rural character, with a small active ranch complex and scattered residential buildings on the north side, and an existing driveway on the Project site on the south side. Along the Deer Hill Road frontage, the proposed residences on the Project Site would be set back from the road (from approximately 50 to 80 feet), screened by vegetation. Additionally, for the majority of the Project site along Deer Hill Road, the tops of roofs of proposed residences adjacent or near to Deer Hill Road would be below the grade of the roadway. As shown on Viewpoint 1, based on the topography, site design, and landscaping, the buildings would not degrade the visual character along Deer Hill Road.

The existing visual character along the Pleasant Hill Road frontage north of Highway 24 is of sloping, terraced hillsides, representing visual open space, distinct from the more urban character of the area on the south side of the freeway. As shown on the photosimulations for Viewpoints 6, 7, and 8, with proposed landscaping treatment and tree planting, construction of the one-story buildings (with portions of some of the buildings along the interior of the parcels at two stories) along this frontage would result in a significant change in the visual character of the Project site but would not degrade the aesthetic quality of these views. The general ridgelines and its semi-rural character of the Project site would remain. Furthermore, as shown in photosimulations for Viewpoint 6, 7, and 8, the planting of new trees which would mature to be between 20 and 30 feet tall and wide between the buildings and Highway 24 would help to screen development and preserve the naturalistic quality and appearance of the site. The view of an undeveloped hillside would not drastically change to a level that exhibits a significant level of development or visual disturbance.

The Revised Project would be subject to design review pursuant to the City's process to ensure that the final development design meets the City's standards. The process would provide oversight of the Revised Project design and evaluate its compatibility with the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. The current visual character of the Project site is primarily open space, either graded (at the northeast corner) or rolling hillsides (as seen from public viewpoints) that many members of the community consider to be a visual resource. Additionally, General Plan Goal LU-13 requires the eastern Deer Hill Road area near the intersection of Pleasant Hill Road be developed in a manner consistent with Lafayette's community identity, which the General Plan Land Use Element defines as semi-rural. As previously discussed and shown on the photosimulation for Viewpoint 6 and 7, the construction of the proposed Project would change the type of vegetation, but would not change the semi-rural character of the site. Therefore, the impact to visual character would be considered *less than significant*.

Significance before Mitigation: Less than significant.

AES-3	**The Revised Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.**

The visual character of the Revised Project site vicinity ranges from suburban to semi-rural. Currently, the Project site has open space, either graded or rolling hillsides, that many residents consider as one of the community's visual resources. The dog park site currently contains a single-family home with associated outbuildings. The remainder of the dog park site is undeveloped.

The Revised Project proposes to redevelop the Project site with 44 single-family homes, a community park, and a parking lot, along with a dog park across from the Project site. Substantial grading would be needed prior to construction.

Goal LU-1 of the City of Lafayette General Plan's Land Use Element calls for protecting the character and pattern of development of residential neighborhoods. The Project site is surrounded by residential uses and residential-supporting uses, including schools and community park. Briones Regional Park is located north of the Project and the dog park sites. The Revised Project proposes to develop the Project site with residential and community uses, which is consistent with the existing surrounding uses. The Revised Project proposes to create a dog park on the north side of Deer Hill Road, which would be left primarily as open space with on-site parking and new fencing. The proposed design of the dog park site does not include any new structures or outdoor lighting that would be inconsistent with the existing character of vicinity. Therefore, the quality and visual character for the Revised Project site and surroundings would not be substantially degraded, but rather continued.

Also, Policy OS-3.2 in the City's General Plan calls for preserving the predominant views of the hill areas. It suggests that structures in identified environmentally sensitive areas be substantially concealed by existing vegetation or terrain when viewed from lower elevations, to the maximum extent feasible. The Viewing Evaluation Map, on file at the City offices, illustrates areas within the city from which views will be considered. As shown in Figures 4.1-11 through 4.1-26, the Revised Project includes landscaping features in order to screen the redeveloped elements from nearby roadways and other representative off-site locations.

Although the Revised Project would alter the existing visual character of the Project site as open space and hillside, proposed development would be consistent with surrounding land uses and applicable General Plan policies. Proposed development would be screened when viewed from primary off-site locations. Therefore, the visual characteristics and quality of the Revised Project site and surroundings would not be degraded, and the impact would be *less than significant*.

Significance before Mitigation: Less than significant.

AES-4	**The Revised Project would not create a new source of substantial light which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.**

The Revised Project introduces new sources of lights with different types of lighting installations: street lights, pedestrian lights, and parking lot lights. Appendix D (Lighting Plan) shows the specific locations and types of light fixtures proposed. The impacts from the proposed installation are included in Appendix E (Lighting Study), which includes the visual simulation of the lights at nighttime.

As shown in the Lighting Plan, new sources of lights are proposed in the residential component of the Revised Project, as well as the parking lot for the proposed community park. The proposed community park and dog park sites would not have any new light sources introduced under the Revised Project.

Although not shown on the Lighting Plan, the proposed roundabout on Deer Hill Road would be lighted to provide adequate roadway illumination for safety purposes.

Light intensity is measured in foot-candles. According to the Lighting Study conducted for this Supplemental EIR, the light from the Revised Project at nighttime would drop to insignificant levels within a short distance from the property line of the Project site. Also, the nighttime light spillover impact at adjacent residential areas also is modeled to be a less than significant level (below 0.5 foot-candle).

Details of street lighting that would be required for the roundabout are not yet known and are not included in the Lighting Study. Lighting would be installed in accordance with applicable lighting standards for local streets and are expected to have an average lighting level of 0.5 foot-candles. New street lighting on Deer Hill Road at the proposed roundabout location would represent a change in the character of the existing setting, which does not include nighttime lighting. Lighting would be shielded and "dark sky" compliant consistent with the City's policy for lighting in the Hillside Overlay District. Therefore, illumination would be localized specifically to the intended target area of the roundabout traffic lanes. In addition, due to the distance and terrain differences between the roundabout and existing and proposed homes, as well as proposed landscaping along the Project site frontage, light spillage would not adversely affect nearby residences.

Nighttime lighting on the Project site and Deer Hill Road would avoid spillover impacts to nearby residences. Therefore, the lighting impact would be *less than significant*.

Significance before Mitigation: Less than significant.

4.1.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

AES-5	**The Revised Project, in combination with past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects, would not result in less than significant cumulative impacts with respect to aesthetics.**

The Certified EIR found that cumulative aesthetic impacts would be less than significant. The Revised Project would not result in any new aesthetic impacts that could affect the cumulative setting, and does not include any new cumulatively considerable components. Therefore, the cumulative impact would be *less than significant*.

Significance Before Mitigation: Less than significant.

4.1.6 SUMMARY OF SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

The Revised Project would not result in any significant project-specific or cumulative impacts to aesthetics and therefore no mitigation measures are required. However, an Initial Study was prepared for the Revised Project (see Appendix A of this Draft Supplemental EIR) that determined the Revised Project would result in the following significant impact. This impact would be mitigated to a less-than-significant level with the implementation of the following mitigation measure included in the Certified EIR. Modifications to the Certified EIR mitigation measure are identified in ~~strikeout text~~ to indicate deletions and underlined text to signify additions.

AES-1	**The Revised Project plans do not propose the installation of photovoltaic panels to generate solar energy. If installed, the panels would have the potential significant impact to become sources of glare, which would be a significant impact.**

Mitigation Measure ~~AES-4~~AES-1: P~~roposed p~~hotovoltaic shall be designed to ensure the following:

- The angle at which panels are installed precludes, or minimizes to the maximum extent practicable, glare observed by viewers on the ground.
- The reflectivity of materials used shall not be greater than the reflectivity of standard materials used in residential and commercial developments.
- Panels shall be sited to minimize their visibility from Mount Diablo Boulevard, Pleasant Hill Road, and Deer Hill Road.

Significance After Mitigation: Less than significant.