

4.1 AESTHETICS

4.1.1 Introduction

This section of the EIR analyzes the potential environmental effects on aesthetic and visual impacts from implementation of the General Plan Update. Data for this section were taken from the City of Simi Valley Municipal Code (Municipal Code), City of Simi Valley Draft General Plan (2011), the Simi Valley General Plan Update Technical Background Report, and photographic documentation of the City.

No comment letters addressing aesthetics were received in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) circulated for the General Plan Update. Full bibliographic entries for all reference materials are provided in Section 4.1.6 (References) of this section.

■ Definitions of Visual Resources

“Aesthetic value” refers to the perception of the natural beauty of an area, as well as the elements that create or enhance its visual quality. While aesthetic value is subjective, it is typically included as a criterion for evaluating those elements that contribute to the quality that distinguishes an area. Most communities identify scenic resources as an important asset, although what is considered “scenic” may vary according to its environmental setting.

“Scenic resources” can include natural open spaces, topographic formations, and landscapes. These are resources that can be maintained and enhanced to promote a positive image of an area. Many people associate natural landforms and landscapes with scenic resources, such as oak woodlands, lakes, rivers, streams, and some historical areas. Scenic resources can also include urban open spaces and the built environment. Examples of these would include parks, trails, and pathways, nature centers, cultural resources, and architectural features. Figure 4.1-1 (Visual Resources) illustrates scenic resources in the Planning Area, which consists of the area within the Simi Valley City limits and its Sphere of Influence.

“Viewsheds” constitute the range of vision in which scenic resources may be observed. They are defined by physical features that frame the boundaries or context to one or more scenic resources. A region’s topography can lend aesthetic value through the creation of public view corridors of ridgelines and mountains and through the visual backdrop created by mountains and hillsides. Viewsheds and scenic vistas may include views of a range of resources, whether natural or man-made, and are also considered important scenic resources for preservation.

4.1.2 Environmental Setting

Simi Valley is situated among a series of major and minor hills. These hills constitute a significant natural topographical feature of the community because they are visible to all persons traveling the major highway arteries as well as to citizens residing in and around the City. Simi Valley is visually framed by the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and the Simi Hills and Santa Monica Mountains to the south. Topography ranges from 700 to 1,100 feet above sea level. The visual elements exhibited within the open space areas of the City include the major ridgelines forming the boundaries of the Planning Area,

canyons, woodlands, rolling hillsides and knolls, significant stands of oak and sycamore trees, and urban parkways. Historical resources and landmarks may also be included within the open space inventory. The physical characteristics of the Planning Area, in conjunction with the large amount of undeveloped land, afford residents and visitors a vast array of open space that provides plentiful scenic opportunities.

■ Mountains and Rock Formations

Mountains define the shape of the Planning Area with ridgelines, slopes, and canyons. Big Mountain and the Whiteface escarpment are the prominent landscape elements viewed from the Planning Area floor. The Santa Susana Mountains are a transverse range that runs east/west, separating the San Fernando Valley and Simi Valley from the Santa Clara River Valley and the Santa Clarita Valley. The Santa Susana Pass contains unique rock formations and the Ronald Reagan Freeway (State Route 118 [SR-118]), which connects the Simi and San Fernando valleys while also separating the Santa Susana Mountains from Simi Hills to the south. The Simi Hills are on the western edge of the San Fernando Valley and contain Santa Susana Pass State Historic Park. The Conejo Valley lies to the southwest of the Planning Area and the community of Moorpark is adjacent to the west.

■ Ridgelines and Canyons

The ridgelines surrounding the Planning Area project like fingers into the lower foothills of the adjoining mountain ranges to the Planning Area floor. They are visible from almost any vantage point in the City and provide a natural backdrop to the urban skyline.

Numerous canyons give local identity to the Planning Area, such as Runkle Canyon, Tapo Canyon, Sycamore Canyon, Meier Canyon, Alamos Canyon, Brea Canyon, Las Llajas Canyon, Blind Canyon, Ybarra Canyon, Dry Canyon, and Chivo Canyon. These zones are important scenic resources that are replete with variable terrain that supports a variety of native biota.

■ Woodlands

The oak woodlands in the Simi Hills spill over into many parts of the Planning Area and contribute to its rural atmosphere. These areas support a variety of woodland habitat, such as oak and riparian woodlands, and include Interior Live Oak Woodland, Valley Oak Woodland, Coast Live Oak Woodland, and Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest. The Coast Live Oak is the designated City tree, and rows of eucalyptus and stands of sycamores also exist throughout the Planning Area.

■ Rivers, Streams, and Water Bodies

The Planning Area contains several creeks that serve as drainages from the various canyons surrounding the City. These creeks, including Tapo Canyon Creek and Gillibrand Canyon Creek, are part of the Calleguas Creek Watershed and provide a naturalized setting. The Arroyo Simi, a 12-mile flood control channel, runs from Corriganville Park to Moorpark. A bicycle and pedestrian path runs along central portions of the Arroyo Simi. The City of Simi Valley and the Rancho Simi Recreation and Park District are processing the Arroyo Simi Greenway Specific Plan to develop a plan for the buildout of the

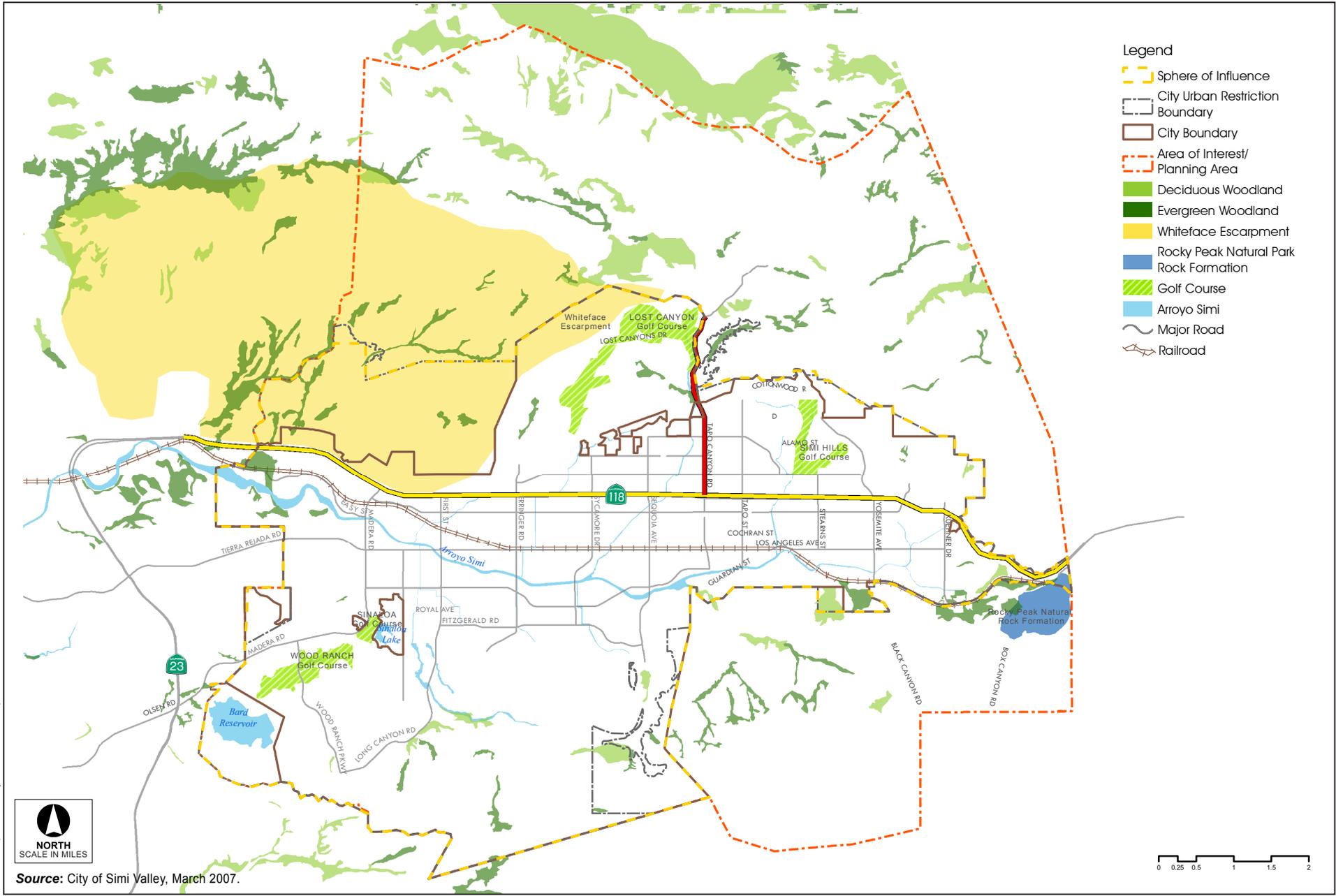


Figure 4.1-1
Visual Resources

Greenway, which will protect and enlarge the creek habitat, create better views and visibility along the Arroyo Simi, and provide better recreational amenities.

Bard Reservoir, also known as the Wood Ranch Reservoir, is located in the southwest portion of the City and can be seen from higher elevations throughout the Planning Area. Sinaloa Lake is a small private water feature in the western portion of the City that provides an attractive naturalized setting. Water features included in parks, residential developments, and golf courses also contribute to the scenic quality of the Planning Area.

■ Open Spaces and Recreational Areas

Open space and broad expanses of parkland provide visual relief from the urban landscape and contribute to the rural character of the Planning Area. Aside from the private recreation facilities associated with certain residential developments, the greatest amount of private open space involves the outlying hillsides and canyons surrounding the Planning Area. Most of this land consists of large, undeveloped, privately held parcels used primarily for dry farming or cattle raising.

The other open spaces that can be considered scenic resources are specialized features like golf courses that provide amenities to visitors and residents. Simi Hills Golf Course, Sinaloa Golf Course, Lost Canyons Golf Club, and Wood Ranch Golf Club are all within the Planning Area and are important contributions to the visual quality of the area due to their integration into the surrounding neighborhoods. Parks, cemeteries, schoolyards, and landscaped developments are also considered scenic resources because of their visual importance to their surrounding districts. Many open space areas that have been “naturalized” provide further visual relief from the urban landscape and are important scenic resources. Natural open space linkages may include open space dedications, easements, greenbelts, public plazas, entry courts, and planned common areas.

Urban Parkways

Urban parkways are streets in which the presence of high-quality landscaping lends a positive visual character to the developed corridor. Major urban parkways usually have planted medians to add distinctive visual character, while secondary urban parkways include mature trees which dominate the streetscape. The City also mandates the establishment of enriched parkways along major thoroughfares, such as Los Angeles Avenue and Alamo Street, which further enhance the aesthetic value of the surrounding districts.

Paths

Paths can also be considered scenic if they exhibit inherent aesthetic quality. Paths link and interconnect land uses and areas of activity as well as serve as primary viewpoints from which people observe their city and form the image of their community. A path may be a “paseo” or informal passage route that serves to provide a quality open space network that is spatially distributed throughout an area. Paseos and paths have even greater value when they connect networks, rather than simply destinations.

Rural Lands

Several residential areas throughout the City and unincorporated areas have a particularly rural visual characteristic, such as a lack of sidewalks, curbs, or other infrastructure improvements and, in some areas, winding, narrow streets next to gullies and creekbeds. These areas include the Kadota Fig area, the Santa Susana Knolls area, and the unincorporated Sinaloa Lake area west of Madera Road.

Historic Resources

Simi Valley's historical background represents the early settlement of California, the initial development of California's resources, and historic filming sites for Hollywood westerns. Numerous historical sites throughout the Planning Area have helped extensively preserve this important heritage. Many of the sites can be considered scenic resources, as they provide glimpses into the Planning Area's rich past. Such historical resources can help to define the visual character of an area by contributing to a sense of place, maintaining a visual link to an area's past, and providing glimpses of historical views.

Landmarks

A "Landmark" is a significant visual object which provides a point of reference in identifying a particular area and helps contribute to a distinct sense of place. Landmarks often have architectural, historical, archeological, and/or cultural significance, and many of the City's historic places and features would be considered landmarks. Examples of man-made and natural landmarks include features such as the Wood Ranch Dam, Whiteface escarpment, Big Mountain, and Rocky Peak.

■ Viewsheds

A viewshed is an area of land, water, and other natural environmental elements that is visible from a fixed vantage point and is of particular scenic or historic value deemed worthy of preservation against development or other change. There are three primary types of viewsheds: regional (unique to Simi Valley), local (unique to Simi Valley but secondary to a regional viewshed), and "dark sky" (preserves nighttime sky views away from artificial light sources). Viewsheds can be affected by all of the factors that may affect their constituent visual features, particularly with urbanization of prominent slopes or woodlands. Viewsheds are also sensitive to adverse changes in air quality, as smog can obscure the views provided by the viewshed, particularly long-range views.

Regional Viewsheds

Major Mountain View Corridors

Skyline topography as seen from lower lying viewsheds is an important consideration when identifying view corridors. A mountain view corridor is a line of sight that frames distant views of the mountains with points of reference based on four criteria (Visual Resources Technical Background Report). The mountain ranges ringing Simi Valley allow for panoramic views from many locations within the Planning Area. Expansive views are held from SR-118 as one travels both east and west entering into Simi Valley. Additional panoramic views may be held from the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, Big Mountain, Whiteface Escarpment, and Rocky Peak recreational areas, Santa Susana State Historic Park, and the numerous hiking and mountain bike trails throughout the surrounding hills and mountains.

Scenic Drives and Vistas

Scenic drives provide extended, sometimes-uninterrupted views of wide expanses of hillsides, ridgelines, woodlands, and other open spaces, and are often the only aesthetic experience for visitors of the Planning Area. Expansive scenic vistas exist all along SR-118, which are surrounded by undisturbed mountains, rolling hills, and ridgelines, as well as new development, which provides picturesque views. Development in close proximity to roadways that provide scenic views for motorists could degrade the natural, sweeping quality of the views provided if such development occurs in high densities or involves tall structures that could obscure long-range views. Scenic views and vistas can be found along roads through various canyons, including Tapo Canyon and Alamos Canyon. Madera Road and Olsen Road afford scenic vistas as well.

Local Viewsheds

The significant topographic and natural resources in the Planning Area provide local viewsheds for residents within their neighborhoods. The mountains, ridgelines, and hillsides surrounding the valley can be viewed from most streets on the valley floor, particularly the major arterials such as Los Angeles Avenue (east/west) and Tapo Canyon Road, Sycamore Drive, or Erringer Road (north/south). Another type of local viewshed includes views that are contained within a single canyon, providing a singular visual experience to the viewer standing within the canyon. Tapo Canyon Road north of Presidio Drive is an example of such a viewshed, as it provides local views of the canyon and slopes as it ascends to canyon headwaters. A view of a neighboring golf course from within a residential neighborhood would also be considered a local viewshed.

Dark Sky Viewsheds

Dark sky viewsheds would generally be available in less urbanized areas, such as in the canyons and canyon roads that ring the Planning Area. These exist in the unincorporated areas that are currently undeveloped and along the hiking and bike trails in the surrounding hills. While some dark sky viewing may be held from these areas today, as development pressures mount, continued urbanization would result in additional nighttime lighting, which would reduce “dark sky” viewing opportunities.

4.1.3 Regulatory Framework

■ Federal

No existing federal regulations pertain to the visual resources within the Planning Area.

■ State

Scenic Highway Program

The state of California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection, works with landowners, local governments, and researchers to conserve open space resources statewide. California’s Scenic Highway Program 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 California Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq. Section 263.6 of the California Streets and Highways Code designates SR-118 as an Eligible State Scenic Highway from Route 23 to De Soto Avenue near Browns Canyon (in the San Fernando Valley). Tapo Canyon Road north of SR-118 has been identified as an eligible County Scenic Highway.

■ Regional

County of Ventura General Plan

Ventura County regulates scenic open space primarily through its General Plan and Area Plans. Open space lands may be subject to additional controls through special management areas such as National Recreation and Forest areas, mineral resource areas, hazard areas, and areas subject to cultural heritage protection. The Ventura County General Plan (last amended December 6, 2005) contains goals in Section 1.7 (Scenic Resources) pertaining to visual and scenic resources Countywide. These are aimed at preserving and protecting the significant open views and visual resources of the County, protecting the visual resources within the viewshed of designated scenic highways, lakes, and other scenic areas, and enhancing and maintaining the visual appearance of building and developments. The County's General Plan encourages the cities of Moorpark and Simi Valley to enter into a greenbelt agreement for the area between the two cities.

Ventura County SOAR (Save Open-Space and Agricultural Resources) Measure

The Ventura County SOAR initiative requires Countywide voter approval of any change to the County General Plan involving the Agricultural, Open Space, or Rural land use map designations, or any change to a General Plan goal or policy related to those land use designations. Any lands annexed to the City would be governed by the Ventura County SOAR.

■ Local

Simi Valley Municipal Code

Title 9 (Development Code) of the Municipal Code carries out the policies of the General Plan by classifying and regulating the uses of land and structures within the City of Simi Valley. This Development Code is adopted to protect and to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of residents and businesses in the City. More specifically, the purposes of this Development Code related to visual resources are to:

- Provide standards for the orderly growth and development of the City that will assist in protecting the community identity of Simi Valley
- Ensure compatibility between open space, agricultural, residential, commercial, and industrial land uses and their development
- Protect the City's hillsides through the implementation of the Hillside Performance Standards and those provisions of the General Plan relating to preservation of hillsides

Article 9-32 (Hillside Performance Standards) implements those provisions of the General Plan as they relate to development in hillside areas to protect the ridgelines, maintain open space, and retain scenic

and recreational resources of the City. The City of Simi Valley also implements a Tree Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 9-38 of the Development Code) that applies to all areas of the City and is designed to insure the protection/preservation of mature trees to the greatest extent possible.

Greenbelt Agreements

The Tierra Rejada greenbelt agreement was signed in 1984 by Ventura County and the cities of Moorpark, Thousand Oaks, and Simi Valley. Each agency agreed not to annex or develop the rural land that separates the three cities. The Tierra Rejada Valley is distinguished from the other greenbelts in the County because it is home to a major sightseeing attraction, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, and also because it borders thriving urban cities with relatively little agricultural lands within their city limits. The greenbelt land between the cities of Moorpark, Simi Valley, and Thousand Oaks also acts as a buffer from urban sprawl. On a regional level, the Tierra Rejada Valley offers an area of critical inter-mountain linkage between the Santa Monica Mountains and the Simi Hills, and on a local level, its culverts under the 23 Freeway are used more than any other freeway wildlife crossing in the area. Efforts are also underway by the National Park Service, the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and the Nature Conservancy for acquisition of easements and key parcels to ensure wildlife connectivity, open space protection, and trail access in the Tierra Rejada Valley.

City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB)

The City of Simi Valley enacted a Save Open-Space and Agricultural Resources (SOAR) initiative on November 3, 1998, establishing a CURB that will remain in force until December 31, 2020. This measure is a General Plan Amendment. It identifies that the preservation of existing agricultural, open space, viewshed, and watershed lands that are of critical importance to the City. The SOAR initiative established CURB lines around the community and requires City voter approval before any land located outside the CURB lines can be developed under the City's jurisdiction for urban purposes.

4.1.4 Project Impacts and Mitigation

■ Analytic Method

A qualitative assessment of visual impacts was prepared by evaluating the nature and magnitude of changes in the visual character of the City and community Study Areas that could occur as a result of the proposed project, including the visual compatibility of future land uses and adjacent uses. It is important to note that an assessment of visual impacts is not a quantitative analysis, but rather qualitative and can be largely subjective.

A significant impact would occur if the proposed project were to introduce land uses, structures, or elements inconsistent with existing patterns of development, thereby degrading the visual character or quality of the site, creating substantial sources of light or glare, or where documented and important scenic resources or scenic vistas would be damaged or destroyed.

Light and glare impacts are considered for the City as a whole, except where noted. The primary sources of new impacts of this type would be exterior lighting associated with new development permitted by the

General Plan Update. A significant impact would occur should the proposed project create a new, substantial source of light or glare, impacting sensitive receptors, such as adjacent residential uses.

■ Thresholds of Significance

For the purposes of this EIR, implementation of the proposed project may result in a potentially significant impact if it would cause any of the following results:

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

As this is a program-level EIR and is to be used as a regulatory tool, site-specific aesthetic analyses have not been completed. As specific development projects are proposed in the future, analysis of aesthetic impacts on a case-by-case basis will be completed.

■ General Plan Policies that Mitigate Potential Impacts on Visual Resources

Policies and goals from the Community Development, Mobility-Infrastructure, Natural Resources, and Community Services Chapters that would mitigate potential impacts on visual resources include the following. All General Plan policies are followed by a set of numbers in parentheses. These numbers reference applicable measures that will be undertaken by the City to implement the policy.

- Policy LU-1.2 Development Location.** Limit development to lands within the Simi Valley City Urban Restriction Boundary (CURB), as shown in Figure LU-1, thereby protecting existing agriculture, open space, viewsheds, wildlife, and watersheds surrounding the City from development impacts and limiting urban sprawl. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-6, LU-10, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-3.1 Primary Contributor to Urban Form.** Locate and design development to respect Simi Valley's environmental setting, concentrating development on the valley floor and configuring development to respect hillside slopes, topographic contours, and drainage corridors, when located in hillside areas. Figure LU-2 (Environmental Setting) depicts the key environmental elements that shape the City. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-5, LU-7, LU-8, LU-11, LU-17, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2, NR-3*)
- Policy LU-3.2 Citywide Development Pattern.** Provide for an overall pattern of land uses that promotes efficient development; minimizes the impact of traffic congestion; reduces transportation distances, energy consumption, air pollution, and greenhouse gas emissions; ensures compatibility between uses; protects the natural hillsides, major watercourses, and trees; enhances community livability and public health; and sustains economic vitality. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-5, LU-6, LU-7, LU-8, LU-9, LU-10, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2, NR-3*)

- Policy LU-3.5** **Development Scale.** Encourage development on the valley floor to retain its low suburban profile. Limit structures taller than two stories to major commercial or industrial areas, mixed-use developments, or very high-density residential uses so as not to adversely impact the primary or daily activities of nearby residents. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-3.7** **Building Relationship to Public Places.** Require buildings in principal commercial and mixed-use districts to be oriented toward the public realm through such features as location, incorporation of windows, avoidance of blank walls, articulation of building elevations fronting sidewalks and public spaces, and location of parking to the rear, side, or underground, as appropriate while minimizing parking in front of buildings. Priority shall be placed on locating parking underground or in structures. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-16, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-4.1** **Preservation of Natural Features.** Maintain significant natural landmarks, such as prominent ridgelines visible from the valley floor, and other natural scenic features in their natural state, to the extent feasible. *(Imp A-1, A-2, A-3, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-8, LU-11, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2, NR-3)*
- Policy LU-4.2** **Incorporation of Natural Features.** Integrate natural scenic features, such as mature trees, rock outcroppings, watercourses, and views into project design, except where infeasible for public safety. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-8, LU-11, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2, NR-3)*
- Policy LU-4.3** **Open Space Character.** Locate and design structures and open space areas to assure that open space qualities of a development are generally apparent from adjoining areas. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-8, LU-11, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2, NR-3)*
- Policy LU-4.4** **Hillside Development.** Locate and design development to maintain the existing visual character of the hillsides as a natural backdrop. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-8, LU-11, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2, NR-3)*
- Policy LU-4.5** **Hillside Grading.** Minimize terrain disruption and design grading using generally accepted principles of civil engineering with the objective to blend the project into the natural topography. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-18, NR-2, NR-3)*
- Policy LU-4.7** **Development Compatibility with Hillside Character.** Ensure the compatibility of proposed structures with the surrounding terrain in hillside areas by using varying setbacks, building heights, building forms, and other applicable features. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-11, LU-18, NR-2, NR-3)*
- Policy LU-4.8** **Architecture and Building Design.** Design buildings to be architecturally integrated into the terrain and blend with the natural environment. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-11, LU-18, NR-2, NR-3)*
- Policy LU-4.9** **Building Colors in Hillsides.** Use earth tones or subdued colors for development in hillside areas with bright hues used only as accents so they will complement the natural setting. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-7, LU-11, LU-18, NR-3)*

- Policy LU-5.1 Development Compatibility.** Locate and design development to assure compatibility among land uses, addressing such elements as building orientation and setbacks, buffering, visibility and privacy, automobile and truck access, impacts of noise and lighting, landscape quality, and aesthetics. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18, NR-2*)
- Policy LU-5.2 Development Transitions.** Incorporate transitions of development mass and building heights where districts with differing permitted densities and intensities are located adjacent to one another. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-5.3 Residential Neighborhood Character.** Respect the scale and character of the land uses and architecture within the neighborhoods when considering new development and renovation of buildings in existing neighborhoods. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-5.4 Integration of Nonresidential Uses in Neighborhoods.** Buffer different land uses within a neighborhood from one another by walls, fences, and landscaped greenbelts. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-5.6 Residential Privacy.** Respect the privacy of existing residents in the design of new development that abuts existing residential neighborhoods. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-5.8 Lighting Impacts.** Design, locate, and direct lighting and signs so that they do not result in excessive spillover, illumination, and glare for adjacent uses. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-18, NR-2*)
- Policy LU-5.10 Roof Equipment.** Screen all roof equipment from view from adjacent parcels and rights-of-way, especially the freeway and elevated overpasses, by means that are architecturally integrated into the structure, where practical. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-11, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-5.11 Signage.** Regulate signs to balance business interests and aesthetic concerns. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-11, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-6.1 Scenic and Natural Areas.** Provide for the preservation of significant scenic areas and corridors, plant and animal habitat, riparian areas, and significant geologic features within the City. (*Imp A-1, A-2, A-3, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-7, LU-8, LU-13, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2, NR-3*)
- Policy LU-6.2 Mature Trees.** Continue to sustain mature trees, which are an integral part of the City's character. (*Imp A-1, A-2, A-3, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-18, NR-2*)
- Policy LU-6.4 Night Sky.** Reduce the impacts of ambient outdoor lighting on the darkness of the night sky. (*Imp A-1, A-2, A-3, LU-2, LU-3, LU-18, NR-2*)
- Policy LU-7.1 City Entries.** Protect open vistas at freeway entrances to the community and along Madera Road and Tierra Rejada Road, by such means as enriched parkways, open space, height limits, and view corridors. The appearance of development along these throughways should be attractive, complement the vista, and not compete for attention. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-8, LU-11, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2*)

- Policy LU-7.2 Development in View Corridors.** Design structures and site improvements constructed in highly visible locations to minimize their impacts on natural vistas. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-11, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-10.1 Neighborhood Conservation.** Maintain the uses, densities, character, amenities, and quality of Simi Valley’s residential neighborhoods, recognizing their contribution to the City’s identity, economic value, and quality of life for residents. *(Imp A-1, A-2, A-3, LU-1, LU-10, LU-11, LU-12, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-10.2 Housing Character and Design.** Locate and design new and renovated housing within existing single- and multi-family neighborhoods to maintain their distinguishing characteristics and qualities of the neighborhoods, including prevailing lot sizes; building form, scale, massing, and relationship to street frontages; architectural design; landscape; property setbacks; and comparable elements. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-11, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-12.1 Contributing Elements for Neighborhood Identity.** Locate and design new development in or abutting existing residential neighborhoods to respect boundaries defined by topography, drainage, landscape, or other natural elements that delineate and contribute to their distinct identity. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-12.2 Identity through Design.** Promote the design of new development to provide a positive sense of uniqueness to aid neighborhood identity and also to be compatible with existing surrounding neighborhoods. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-13.1 Incompatible Uses.** Prohibit the development of uses that are incompatible with and physically divide neighborhoods. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-14.1 Neighborhood Identity.** Maintain distinguishing characteristics, such as topography, parcel size, housing scale and form, and public streetscapes that differentiate Simi Valley’s single-family neighborhoods. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-15.1 Character and Design.** Locate and design new and renovated housing within existing multi-family neighborhoods to achieve a high level of architectural design quality, in consideration of the following principles:
- a. Design elevations of multi-family buildings facing public streets and pedestrian ways to exhibit a high level of visual interest
 - b. Incorporate property setbacks, modulate building mass, and design multi-family buildings and projects in consideration of the development patterns of the surrounding neighborhood *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-15.3 Development Transitions.** Ensure sensitive transitions in building scale between buildings in multi-family residential areas and lower-scale buildings in adjoining residential neighborhoods and commercial districts. *(Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18)*
- Policy LU-15.4 Streetscapes.** Provide ample public spaces and tree-lined sidewalks or pathways furnished with appropriate pedestrian amenities that contribute to comfortable

and attractive settings for pedestrian activity in multi-family neighborhoods. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18, M-13*)

- Policy LU-17.5 Cohesive Development.** Discourage the piecemeal development of commercial sites. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-4, LU-10, LU-11, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-18.1 Enhanced Design Character.** Encourage the renovation, infill, and redevelopment of existing commercial centers and corridors to improve architectural design (e.g., façade improvements), reduce the visual prominence of parking lots, make centers more pedestrian friendly, reduce visual clutter associated with signage, and enhance the definition and character of the street frontage and associated streetscapes. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-4, LU-9, LU-10, LU-11, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-18.2 Architecture and Site Design.** Locate and design new development and existing buildings that are renovated, expanded, or remodeled in existing commercial centers and corridors to complement existing uses, as appropriate, and exhibit a high quality of architecture and site planning in consideration of the following principles:
- Seamless connections and transitions with existing buildings, in terms of building scale, elevations, and materials
 - Incorporation of signage that is integrated with the buildings' architectural character and provides meaningful identification
 - Landscaping contributing to the appearance and quality, and reducing the heat-island effect, of development
 - Clearly delineated pedestrian connections between business areas, parking areas, and to adjoining neighborhoods and districts
 - Incorporation of plazas and expanded sidewalks to accommodate pedestrian, outdoor dining, and other activities (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-18.3 Buffering Adjoining Residential Areas.** Ensure commercial uses adjoining residential neighborhoods or in mixed residential and commercial developments be designed to be compatible with each other. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18, NR-2*)
- Policy LU-18.4 Retail Streetscapes.** Maintain and, where deficient, improve street trees, plantings, furniture (such as benches, trash receptacles, newsracks, and drinking fountains), signage, public art, and other amenities that promote pedestrian activity in retail commercial districts. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-4, LU-9, LU-11, LU-14, LU-18, M-13*)
- Policy LU-18.5 Connectivity to Neighborhoods.** Link commercial districts to adjoining residential neighborhoods and other districts, where appropriate, by well-designed and attractive pedestrian sidewalks and corridors. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-4, LU-9, LU-11, LU-18, M-8, M-13*)
- Policy LU-19.2 Development Scale.** Establish standards to assure that a sufficient scale and footprint of any single use is achieved in mixed-use areas to establish a cohesive environment that minimizes impacts attributable to the adjacency of differing

uses. This may define minimum parcel and building sizes, number of housing units, and/or nonresidential square footage, as well as relationships and setbacks among the uses. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-16, LU-18*)

- Policy LU-19.3 Design.** Design mixed-use development projects to enhance pedestrian activity, including the following elements:
- Expanded sidewalks along building frontages and incorporation of a public plaza containing benches, landscaping, public art, directional signage, pedestrian-scaled lighting, and other amenities
 - Uses with outdoor seating, such as restaurants
 - Pedestrian corridors connecting parking areas with buildings that are clearly defined by paving materials, landscaping, lighting, and well-designed directional signage
 - Site landscaping that contributes to the aesthetic and economic value of the center and provides a tree canopy reducing the heat island effect and greenhouse gas emissions
 - Buildings oriented toward the street with parking located to the rear of the buildings, underground, or in structures (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-4, LU-9, LU-11, LU-16, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-19.4 On-Site Amenities.** Incorporate recreational areas and other pedestrian-scale amenities in mixed-use projects, such as benches, fountains, and landscaping, to support residents or contribute to their development within proximity of the project. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-16, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-19.5 Design Integration.** Integrate residential and nonresidential portions of mixed-use buildings through architectural design, development of pedestrian walkways, and landscaping. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-16, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-20.6 Site Planning and Design.** Require new and renovated multi-tenant business and industrial park development projects to be designed to accommodate safe and convenient access by vehicles, pedestrians, and bicycles and exhibit a high-quality, attractive, and cohesive environment, which may be characterized by the following:
- Location of buildings around common plazas, courtyards, walkways, and open spaces, including amenities for the comfort of employees, such as outdoor seating areas
 - Incorporation of landscape that enhances a park-like setting along property edges, building frontages, and to break the visual continuity of surface parking lots
 - Common signage program for tenant identification and directions
 - Readily observable site access, entrance drives, building entries, and pedestrian paths through parking lots, to create a safe haven and access for pedestrians and minimize conflict between service vehicles, private automobiles, and pedestrians (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-15, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-20.7 Buffering from Adjacent Properties.** Ensure that business and industrial park developments are positive additions to the City's community setting,

incorporating adequate landscaped buffers to minimize any negative impacts to surrounding neighborhoods and development, and controlling on-site lighting, noise, odors, vibrations, toxic materials, truck access, and other elements that may impact adjoining non-business-park and non-industrial uses. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-15, LU-18*)

- Policy LU-21.9 Design of Civic Buildings and Spaces.** Lead by example, demonstrating design excellence in new buildings and properties developed by the City, such as civic facilities and public parking structures, by incorporating sustainable building practices, providing a high level of architectural quality, designing landscape areas that are water efficient, and including other features that demonstrate exceptional standards for development. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-3, LU-9, LU-11, LU-13, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-21.10 Compatibility of Public Buildings and Sites.** Ensure that City-owned buildings, sites, and infrastructure are designed to be compatible in scale, mass, character, architecture, and landscape with the district or neighborhood in which they are located, and minimize potential impacts such as traffic, noise, and lighting. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-2, LU-3, LU-11, LU-18, NR-2*)
- Policy LU-21.11 Design and Integration of Hillside Infrastructure.** Require that major hillside improvements be located and designed to avoid a prominent appearance from urban areas, blend into the natural topography, and utilize attractive, low-maintenance, drought-tolerant materials. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-3, LU-7, LU-11, LU-13, LU-18, NR-3*)
- Policy LU-21.12 Landscaping of Infrastructure.** Work with applicable City departments and external agencies to assure that major valley-floor improvements, such as the railroad, arroyo channels, major roadways and the freeway, are well landscaped. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-11, LU-13, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-21.13 Water Storage Tanks.** Require that the visual impacts of water storage tanks be minimized by berming, landscaping, or other means, pursuant to the requirements of Ventura County Waterworks District #8. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-11, LU-13, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-21.14 Stormwater Facilities.** Require that structures to channel or retain water be designed and constructed of materials and colors so as to blend with the natural environment. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-11, LU-13, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-21.15 Integration of Utilities.** Require utilities that cannot be feasibly placed underground be located and designed to produce the least visual and environmental impact on the community. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-3, LU-11, LU-13, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-23.4 Compatibility with Residential Neighborhoods.** Require that the edges of the mixed-use and commercial properties be designed to minimize noise, lighting, odor, and truck delivery and unloading impacts on adjoining residential neighborhoods. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-18, NR-2*)
- Policy LU-23.5 Streetscape Improvements.** Improve sidewalks and crosswalks with distinctive paving materials and pedestrian-oriented amenities, and develop bikeways, where feasible, to improve the connectivity of the properties with one another and

adjoining residential neighborhoods. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-4, LU-11, LU-18, M-13*)

- Policy LU-24.5 Streetscape Improvements.** Improve sidewalks and crosswalks with distinctive paving materials and pedestrian-oriented amenities, and develop bikeways, where feasible, to improve the connectivity among properties. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-4, LU-9, LU-14, LU-18, M-13*)
- Policy LU-24.6 Planned Development.** Develop a master or specific plan to guide development of the Los Angeles Avenue and First Street corridors as a distinct and cohesive district that integrates a diversity of uses, promotes architectural consistency, and provides for unifying streetscape amenities and improvements. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-4, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-25.2 Relationship to the Arroyo Simi.** Encourage multi-family housing development located along the Arroyo Simi to be oriented to take advantage of views and access to the Arroyo Simi, and to incorporate landscaped open spaces along its length. “Backdoor” uses such as carports and storage areas should be separated and not be oriented toward the Arroyo Simi corridor. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-3, LU-11, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-26.1 Topographic Setting.** Require that buildings, parking, and driveways are designed and located to respect the area’s natural topography and consider viewsheds from the freeway. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-4, LU-15, LU-18*)
- Policy LU-28.3 Compatibility with Single-Family Residential Uses.** Incorporate adequate buffers and transitions between higher density residential uses and existing single-family residential uses for new development. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-3, LU-4, LU-18*)
- Policy M-1.4 Roadway Design Elements.** Incorporate, where practical, complete streets design elements into projects including sidewalks and other measures to improve pedestrian safety, median and intersection curbing treatments, better bus stop placement, traffic-calming measures, bicycle accommodations, and treatments for disabled travelers to improve safety. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, M-2, M-4, M-8, M-10, M-13, M-15*)
- Policy M-3.5 Street Improvements.** As part of the development of vacant land or as part of an expansion of use on developed land, but not including the construction of room additions or other accessory structures appurtenant to an existing single-family dwelling, the property owner or developer shall dedicate, widen, extend, and construct street and parkway improvements, including necessary drainage structures, within and adjacent to that property, and any off-site improvements reasonably related to the project according to standards set forth in Appendix M (Description of Roadways) and City street standards. Where necessary, variations from Figure M-1 (Roadway Cross Sections) may be approved by the City Engineer if their purpose is to save mature trees, reduce ultimate scarring, provide enriched parkways, separate pedestrians, bicycle riders, and equestrians from vehicles, and meet other General Plan policies as long as safe and adequate passage of vehicles is ensured. The spacing of parkway trees may be modified to preserve viewsheds from the hillsides. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-18, M-1, M-2, M-4*)

- Policy M-14.3 Streetscape Enhancements.** Update or prepare Design Guidelines that foster the enhancement of streets, sidewalks, and other public rights-of-way, including the Arroyo Simi Greenway, with amenities such as lighting, street trees, benches, plazas, public art, or other measures to encourage walking. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, M-13*)
- Policy IU-1.9 Facility Design.** Ensure that water utility facilities are designed to be safe, aesthetically pleasing, and compatible with adjacent uses. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, IU-2, IU-12, IU-13*)
- Policy IU-7.4 Design and Siting of Utilities.** Require that the installation of large telecommunications infrastructure, such as cellular towers, be designed to minimize visual impacts on the surrounding environment and to be as unobtrusive as possible. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, IU-12, IU-13*)
- Policy NR-1.4 Tierra Rejada Greenbelt.** Maintain the Tierra Rejada Greenbelt located to the west of the Simi Valley City limits, which serves as an important visual, biological, and open space resource separating and defining a distinct edge for urbanized development. Additionally, support the County of Ventura efforts to reduce development density within the Greenbelt. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-8, LU-18, NR-1, NR-13*)
- Policy NR-1.11 Arroyo Simi.** Enhance and conserve the Arroyo Simi and its tributaries as a natural resource for scenic and passive recreational enjoyment by the community. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-8, LU-18, NR-1, NR-8*)
- Policy NR-2.1 Tree Preservation.** Encourage the preservation of trees and native vegetation in development projects. Require that new development utilize creative land planning techniques to preserve any existing healthy, protected trees to the greatest extent possible. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-7, LU-18, NR-4, NR-5*)
- Policy NR-3.1 Maintenance of Natural Topography.** Preserve hills, ridgelines, canyons, bluffs, significant rock outcroppings, and open space areas surrounding the City as a visual resource, and locate buildings and utility infrastructure to minimize alteration of natural topography. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-2, LU-8, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2*)
- Policy NR-3.2 Trails, Recreation Areas, and Viewing Areas.** Provide public trails, recreation areas, and viewing areas near significant visual resources where appropriate. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-18, NR-5*)
- Policy NR-3.3 Location and Design of Developments.** Require development within visually sensitive areas to minimize impacts to scenic resources and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in hillside areas, through the following:
- Creative site planning
 - Integration of natural features into the project
 - Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape
 - Clustering of development so as to preserve open space vistas and natural features
 - Minimal disturbance of topography

- Creation of contiguous open space networks (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-1, LU-18, NR-5*)

- Policy NR-3.4 Collaboration with Local, State, and Federal Agencies.** Coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions and state and federal agencies to protect designated scenic resources and corridors that extend beyond the City’s land use authority, but are important to the welfare of City residents. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, NR-13*)
- Policy NR-3.5 Development Location on Hillsides.** Require development to preserve and enhance physical features by being located down and away from ridgelines. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, NR-3*)
- Policy PR-1.5 Conservation of Natural and Historical Assets.** Support, encourage, and participate in enhancing community aesthetics by conserving natural assets such as mature trees, fragile animal habitats, endangered species, and historically significant sites, as part of park and facilities development. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, NR-1, NR-2, PR-1*)
- Policy PR-1.13 Arroyo Simi Greenway Recreational Amenities.** Provide for the development of new parks and the expansion of existing parks, including rest areas and other amenities, as part of the Arroyo Simi Greenway system to link these resources to provide recreation, pedestrian, and visual amenities. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, PR-4*)
- Policy PR-1.15 Complementary Design.** Ensure that the design and aesthetics of all parks, recreation, and community centers is compatible with existing adjoining uses. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, PR-2*)
- Policy CS-2.2 Public Art.** Support the donation, installation, and display of public art and the incorporation of display space in new public facilities and key recreational areas such as along the Arroyo Simi Greenway. (*Imp A-1, A-2, LU-18, CS-5*)

■ Effects Not Found to Be Significant

No Effects Not Found to Be Significant have been identified with respect to aesthetics.

■ Less-Than-Significant Impacts

- Impact 4.1-1 Implementation of the General Plan Update could result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; however, this impact would be reduced to less-than-significant levels through the implementation of General Plan policies and compliance with relevant local, state, and federal regulations. This is a *less-than-significant* impact.**

The topographic and natural resources in the City provide local viewsheds for residents within their neighborhoods, as well as persons traveling through the City along SR-118 and other roadway segments. As discussed previously, the highly visible Big Mountain and the Whiteface escarpment are the prominent landscape elements viewed from the Planning Area floor. Other important scenic resources include the views and vistas available along the roads through various canyons, including Tapo Canyon, Alamos Canyon, Madera Road and Olsen Road, as well as manmade landmarks such as views of Wood Ranch Reservoir and Dam and the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library.

For most of the City, the General Plan Update conserves the existing pattern of uses and establishes policies for protection and long-term maintenance of established neighborhoods. New development in accordance with the General Plan Update would result as re-use of economically underperforming properties and obsolete development, conversion of uses in response to market demand (e.g., office and industrial to residential) and more intense use of land in defined areas as shown in Figure 3-2 (Areas of Potential Land Use Change). These portions of the City include areas that are vacant, those that offer opportunities for infill and intensification, and those with economically or physically obsolete development.

Existing City Code requirements and development standards, together with the policies proposed in the General Plan Update, would impose conditions upon new development requiring enhancement of the surrounding streetscape, and limiting adverse visual impacts on adjacent uses. Although future development could result in taller structures than currently exist within the Study Areas it is unlikely that taller structures would block or obscure an existing scenic vista due to the siting requirements of new development. General Plan policies LU-1.2, LU-4.1, LU-4.2, LU-7.1, LU-7.2, LU-26.1, NR-3.1, and NR-3.2 provide for the preservation of significant scenic areas and corridors and preserve vistas of the community from public use areas whenever possible; encourage development to be located and designed to respect the natural environmental setting and preserve public views, including scenic hillside areas; preserve open space lands as an aesthetic visual resource; ensure a quality visual experience along scenic roads through protection and enhancement of views and development of appropriate landscaping; require appropriate buffering and transitions between different uses; and requires development within visually sensitive areas to minimize impacts to scenic resources and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in hillside areas. With the implementation of these General Plan policies, the General Plan Update would not result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista and would result in a *less-than-significant* impact.

Impact 4.1-2 Implementation of the General Plan Update could result in damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees and rock outcroppings; however, this impact would be reduced to less-than-significant levels through the implementation of General Plan policies and compliance with relevant local, state, and federal regulations. This is a *less-than-significant* impact.

Scenic resources within the Planning Area are identified on Figure 4.1-1. This analysis considers whether the proposed project would damage the resources through their removal or obstruction, and also considers the potential to affect views of the resources from a State Scenic Highway. Section 263.6 of the California Streets and Highways Code designates SR-118 as a State Scenic Highway from Route 23 to De Soto Avenue near Browns Canyon (in the San Fernando Valley). Through the Planning Area, due to the relatively low-rise nature of development in Simi Valley, expansive scenic vistas exist all along SR-118, which traverses the Planning Area in an east/west direction. These vistas are surrounded by undisturbed mountains, rolling hills, and ridgelines, as well as new development, and provide picturesque views. SR-118 serves as a natural gateway to Simi Valley as motorists approach from both sides, providing the first views and impression of the Planning Area framed by topography and vegetation. As one crests SR-118 traveling from east to west, a panoramic view of the entire Simi Valley extends to the horizon,

including the mountains ringing the Planning Area, the valley floor, and the rolling grass- and tree-covered hillsides.

Ridgelines are visible from almost any vantage point in the City, including the valley floor, and provide a natural backdrop to the urban skyline. Development standards in the City's Municipal Code are designed to prevent intrusion of development onto the hillsides and ridgelines by restricting development to slopes of 20 percent or less. Article 9-32 (Hillside Performance Standards) implements those provisions of the General Plan as they relate to development in hillside areas to protect the ridgelines, maintain open space, and retain scenic and recreational resources of the City. The City of Simi Valley also implements a Tree Preservation Ordinance (Chapter 9-38 of the Development Code) that applies to all areas of the City and is designed to insure the protection/preservation of mature trees to the greatest extent possible.

The General Plan Update encourages substantial infill development within the existing footprint of the community's built environment, and limited new development in the hillsides and canyons surrounding the City. The General Plan Update recognizes the importance of vistas of the hillsides, valley floor, City entrance areas, recreation areas, major open space areas, and viewsheds from the hills and has included policies to preserve the scenic resources available to the City's residents and visitors. General Plan policies LU-4.1, LU-4.2, LU-4.3, and LU-6.1 would require that new development maintain significant natural features such as ridgelines; require that new development integrate scenic resources such as mature trees and rock outcroppings and views thereof into project design; require that new development preserve mature trees to the extent feasible, recognizing that mature trees are an integral part of the City's character; protect open vistas at freeway entrances to the community as well as along Madera Road and Tierra Rejada Road; and require that hills, ridgelines, canyons, bluffs, significant rock outcroppings, and open space areas surrounding the City are preserved as a visual resource.

The portion of the SR-118, which includes the length of the City, is identified as eligible for the state scenic highway designation. A state scenic highway changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program, applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, receives notification from Caltrans for scenic highway approval, and must also adopt ordinances to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor or document that such regulation already exists in local codes. At the time of this writing, SR-118 has not changed status from "eligible" (Caltrans 2010). If in the future the City decides to pursue these actions, it would also be required to take actions to preserve the views within the corridor. These procedures are beyond the scope of the General Plan Update.

With the implementation of the aforementioned General Plan policies, the General Plan Update would not result in a substantial adverse effect on scenic resources and so would result in a *less-than-significant* impact.

Impact 4.1-3 **Implementation of the General Plan Update could result in substantial degradation of the visual character or quality of the City and its surroundings; however, this impact would be reduced to less-than-significant levels through the implementation of General Plan policies and compliance with relevant local, state, and federal regulations. This is a *less-than-significant* impact.**

The City of Simi Valley is characterized by a mix of natural and built environments, with hillsides and mountains framing the City to the north and south. The General Plan Update would allow an increase in development of existing uses within specific areas of the City. For most of the City, the General Plan Update conserves the existing pattern of uses and establishes policies for protection and long-term maintenance of established neighborhoods. New development in accordance with the General Plan Update would result as re-use of economically underperforming properties and obsolete development, conversion of uses in response to market demand (e.g., office and commercial to residential), and more intense use of land in defined areas.

The increased development intensity (compared to existing conditions) could indirectly impact existing residential neighborhoods by increasing potential building heights adjacent to residential structures and encouraging the redevelopment of underutilized sites that are either vacant or characterized by low-rise development. Redevelopment areas potentially affected by the General Plan Update generally contain structures that are vacant or obsolete, sparse or under-maintained landscaping, dated or incongruent architecture, and buildings that are vacant and obsolete. While new development might alter the existing visual quality, such alteration is more likely to be perceived as an improvement to the site and surrounding neighborhood, rather than as an adverse impact.

The General Plan Update would permit and encourage mixed-use development. Mixed-use developments tend to complement and supplement adjacent uses. Although mixed-use developments could represent a change to the existing visual setting of these areas, the community character and the associated aesthetics of urban infill development could be enhanced by these new uses.

The proposed goals and policies of the General Plan Update would require new development and redevelopment to progress in a manner that creates and preserves a high quality, sustainable and coherent environment. Focusing infill development on underutilized properties would foster architectural quality and variety, as well as ensure landscape/open space buffers on the City fringe, that would preserve the open visual character of the City as a whole.

The General Plan Update includes policies LU-1.2, LU-3.1, LU-3.2, LU-3.5, LU-3.7, LU-4.1, LU-4.2, LU-4.3, LU-4.4, LU-4.5, LU-4.7, LU-4.8, LU-4.9, LU-5.1, LU-5.2, LU-5.3, LU-5.4, LU-5.6, LU-5.8, LU-5.10, LU-5.11, LU-6.1, LU-6.4, LU-7.1, LU-7.2, LU-10.1, LU-10.2, LU-12.1, LU-12.2, LU-13.1, LU-14.1, LU-15.1, LU-15.3, LU-15.4, LU-17.5, LU-18.1, LU-18.2, LU-18.3, LU-18.4, LU-18.5, LU-19.2, LU-19.3, LU-19.4, LU-19.5, LU-20.6, LU-20.7, LU-21.9, LU-21.10, LU-21.11, LU-21.12, LU-21.13, LU-21.14, LU-23.4, LU-23.5, LU-24.5, LU-24.6, LU-25.2, LU-26.1, LU-28.3, M-1.4, M-3.5, M-14.3, IU-1.9, IU-7.4, NR-1.4, NR-1.11, NR-2.1, NR-3.1, NR-3.2, NR-3.3, NR-3.4, NR-3.5, PR-1.5, PR-1.13, PR-1.15, and CS-2.2 that would ensure new developments visually complement and enhance existing uses. These policies: require that infill development incorporate design elements with buffers and transitions in density, scale, and mass to assure compatibility with adjacent uses; development would be

encouraged to be of human scale; ensure compatibility between land uses while protecting visual resources such as natural hillsides and mature trees while providing for building setbacks and buffering to protect adjacent land uses; require that new and renovated housing within existing single- and multi-family neighborhoods be located and designed to maintain their distinguishing characteristics and qualities, including building form, scale, massing, and relationship to street frontages, architectural design, landscape, property setbacks, and comparable elements; encourage the infill and redevelopment of existing commercial centers in such a manner that would reduce visual clutter, improve architectural design and enhance the definition and character of the street frontage and associated streetscapes to complement existing uses; and require development within visually sensitive areas to minimize impacts to scenic resources and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in hillside areas, through creative site planning, integration of natural features into the project, use of appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape, clustering of development so as to preserve open space vistas and natural features, and more.

New and renovated buildings would embody architectural characteristics that maintain the desired human scale, rhythm, and character that are appropriate for each of the Study Areas due to the extensive design review process in the City. With the goal of preserving the considerable amounts of open space within the City, the General Plan Update would consolidate future development within key areas of the City that are presently underperforming or that can accommodate the anticipated increased housing and population density. In general, while portions of the Planning Area would change and intensify, goals and policies of the General Plan Update would ensure that future development includes proper site planning, unique architecture, preservation of important natural resources, and high-quality building materials.

In general, because new development will be required to implement the policies listed above, future development would serve to improve the aesthetic character of the Study Areas and enhance the overall identity of the City. Although future development could result in taller buildings compared to existing uses, the overall changes that are proposed would be designed to create visually attractive and compatible uses. Consequently, future development that would be permitted under the proposed project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the City. Rather, implementation of the proposed goals and policies would ultimately improve the aesthetic image of the City and reduce the existing “visual weaknesses” that are present. In general, the General Plan Update would provide development opportunities that would complement and enhance the City’s existing visual character. Therefore, with incorporation of General Plan Update policies, the proposed project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the City. Therefore, the General Plan Update would result in a *less-than-significant* impact.

Impact 4.1-4 Implementation of the General Plan Update could result in the creation of new sources of substantial light and glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views; however, this impact would be reduced to less-than-significant levels through the implementation of General Plan policies and compliance with relevant local, state, and federal regulations. This is a *less-than-significant* impact.

Implementation of the General Plan Update would allow for organic, infill growth in specified areas. Therefore, most new development or redevelopment would not necessarily create new sources of light;

however, some existing light sources could be amplified depending on the ultimate increase in development on particular sites due to exterior building illumination and parking lots or structures, as well as glare from reflective building surfaces or the headlights of vehicular traffic.

Light and glare effects of new development would have the greatest impact upon undeveloped lands and residential uses. Because implementation of the proposed project would result in the intensification and reuse of existing sites in addition to existing vacant sites, the majority of new development would not be located adjacent to large pieces of undeveloped lands that have not already been considered for development. A majority of the proposed growth is generally separated from existing single-family residential uses.

Interior and exterior lighting, as well as headlights of vehicular traffic associated with proposed commercial uses, could have adverse effects on the adjacent residential uses. However, the majority of the area that may be developed is already developed with existing ambient lighting, and these adjacent uses already coexist. Thus, implementation of development under the General Plan Update would represent a continuation of existing lighting conditions and impacts would be substantially similar to existing conditions.

A majority of the new development made possible by the General Plan Update would be located in areas that commonly experience at least minimal impacts from existing light sources. While adjacent residential areas are already impacted by light and glare from commercial sources, more intense uses, especially if they result in increases in building heights adjacent to residential uses, could intensify existing, potentially adverse light and glare impacts. The Simi Valley Municipal Code regulates lighting, including intensity, fixture heights, and off-site glare. In addition, Policy LU-5.6 (Residential Privacy) and Policy LU-5.8 (Lighting Impacts) would ensure that development of new commercial uses adjoining residential neighborhoods or in mixed residential and commercial developments are designed to be compatible and minimize impacts through techniques such as the use of low intensity directional lighting and screening to minimize light spillover and glare onto residential neighborhoods, preservation of a natural twilight environment at night. In addition, Policy LU-6.4 (Night Sky) would preserve view of the night sky through control of outdoor lighting, which would also help to control potential lighting impacts to adjacent sensitive uses. The proposed project would not create a new source of substantial light and/or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views. The General Plan Update would therefore result in *less-than-significant* impacts.

■ Significant and Unavoidable Impacts

No significant and unavoidable impacts have been identified with respect to aesthetics.

■ Cumulative Impacts

The geographic context for cumulative visual impacts that would occur under the General Plan Update is the City of Simi Valley Planning Area and those areas in the immediate vicinity of the City boundaries which are visible from or have a clear view of the City, including the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and the Simi Hills and Santa Monica Mountains to the south. However, the primary contributor to potential visual changes in and surrounding the City is the proposed project. There are no other

individual projects that are currently planned or in process that would represent such a significant portion of the visual changes that could occur in the immediate vicinity. Cumulative impacts are only addressed for those thresholds that have a project-related impact, whether it is less than significant, significant, or significant and unavoidable. If “no impact” occurs, no cumulative analysis is provided for that threshold.

Currently no significant cumulative impacts exist to scenic vistas or instances where scenic resources are substantially damaged. Due to the physical nature of the vistas and scenic resources in and around the Planning Area (being hills and mountains that are generally visible above urban development), typical development in the Planning Area has little effect on the views and prominence thereof. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update (and the associated policies described above) would not be considered cumulatively considerable with respect to potential impacts on scenic vistas or scenic resources in locations outside of the City. As a result, the General Plan Update’s cumulative impact would be *less than significant*.

The majority of future new land uses within Simi Valley and surrounding areas would take place in already urbanized areas. Implementation of the General Plan Update policies, as discussed under Impact 4.1-3, would minimize the degradation of the visual character or quality of the area. The General Plan Update is intended to enhance the overall appearance of the City through redevelopment of areas that generally contain structures that are vacant or obsolete, sparse or under-maintained landscaping, and dated or incongruent architecture. In addition, proposed new land uses would be subject to design review. Consequently, changes in land use that would substantially degrade the area would generally not be permitted to occur, thereby protecting and enhancing the visual character of these areas. As a result, cumulative impacts would be *less than significant*.

Existing development has already resulted in a cumulative increase in nighttime lighting within Simi Valley and the surrounding area. The cumulative effect of this level of development has resulted in a cumulative loss of available nighttime views (i.e., cityscape or foothills). Future new land uses would occur among existing urban uses, which would already be subject to existing lighting and vehicle headlights. Therefore, and as stated above, ambient nighttime lighting levels in the area would not significantly increase due to the new land uses allowed under the General Plan Update. Any increases in lighting as a result of the General Plan Update would be localized and attributed to specific uses, such as residential and commercial uses. Due to the localized nature of the impacts associated with the General Plan Update and the existing urban environment within and around the City, the proposed project’s contribution to this existing impact would not be considered cumulatively considerable, and the cumulative nighttime lighting impact would be *less than significant*.

4.1.5 References

Answers.com. 2007. *California Streets and Highways Code*. Section 260-284.

www.answers.com/topic/california-streets-and-highways-code-section-260-284.

California. 2007. Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy: Welcome. <http://smmc.ca.gov>.

California Department of Parks and Recreation. 2003. California State Parks.

http://www.parks.ca.gov/default.asp?page_id=628 (accessed March 26, 2007).

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2010. Officially Designated State Scenic Highways and Historic Parkways. http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm (accessed May 26, 2010).

Reference.com. n.d. Viewshed. <http://www.reference.com/browse/wiki/Viewshed> (accessed April 10, 2007).

Simi Valley, City of. 1988. Conservation/Open Space Element. *City of Simi Valley General Plan*.

———. 1992. *Whiteface Specific Plan*, February 10, amended December 18, 2001.

Ventura, County of. 2005. *Ventura County General Plan*, December 6.