Section 4.1
Aesthetics and Visual Resources

4.1.1 Overview

This section describes the visual setting of the ~~proposed~~ Alpine Park and evaluates the potential impacts from the project on scenic vistas, scenic resources, visual character, and light and glare.

4.1.1.1 Concepts and Terminology

The key concepts and terminology used to describe existing aesthetic and visual resource conditions, or the change in existing conditions after implementation of the project, are defined below. Although there may be more than one definition for any of the terms below, these common definitions are used for analytical consistency.

Views refer to visual access and obstruction, or whether it is possible to see a focal point or panoramic scene from an area. Views may be discussed in terms of *foreground*, *middleground*, and *background.* Foreground views are those immediately presented to the viewer and include objects at close range that may tend to dominate the view. Middleground views occupy the center of the viewshed and tend to include objects that are the center of attention if they are sufficiently large or visibly different from adjacent visual features. Background views include distant objects and other ~~features~~objects that make up the horizon. Objects in the background eventually fade to obscurity with increasing distance. In the context of background, the skyline or the ocean can be an important visual feature because objects above this point are highlighted against the background of the sky or water. These *skylined* elements are typically more evident to the viewer because of their inherent contrast.

Visual quality is evaluated based on the relative degree of vividness, intactness, and unity within a landscape, as modified by viewer preference and sensitivity. *Vividness* is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns. *Intactness* is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements; this factor can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, and in natural settings. *Unity* is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole; it frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the landscape. High-quality views are highly vivid and relatively intact, and exhibit a high degree of visual unity. Low-quality views lack vividness, are not visually intact, and possess a low degree of visual unity (FHWA 1981).

The following additional definitions pertain to terminology used in visual analysis.

- *Aesthetics* generally refers to the identification of visual resources and the quality of what can be seen, or the overall visual perception of the environment.
- *Viewer sensitivity*, or viewer concern about noticeable changes to views, is based on the visibility of a scenic resource, proximity of viewers to the resource, relative elevation of viewers to the resource, frequency and duration of views, number of viewers, and types and expectations of the viewers. This term is defined in greater detail in Section 4.1.4.1, *Methodology*.

- *Viewshed* is all of the surface area visible from a particular location or sequence of locations (e.g., roadway or trail).

4.1.2 Existing Conditions

This section discusses the existing visual character and quality of the project site and the surrounding vicinity. It also identifies the existing designated visual resources, including designated scenic views and scenic highways, if applicable, that are visible from within the project site, as well as existing sources of light and glare in the project site and the vicinity.

4.1.2.1 Visual Character and Quality

The project site is composed of ~~approximately~~ 96.6 acres of undeveloped, vegetated rural land. The land is covered with low vegetation including grasses and shrubs, and slopes slightly from north to south. There are a series of overgrown dirt footpaths that cross the project site. There are some larger trees (Engelmann ~~O~~oaks) and shrubs along the northern boundary of the project. No structures are present, except for the electric utility poles that carry electric lines along the eastern and southeastern boundaries, where the project borders South Grade Road. Overall, the visual character is open, rural, and undisturbed natural features. The quality of the visual character is high because it is an undisturbed rural view that complements the semi-rural residential vicinity and provides an uninterrupted view of open space.

The surrounding vicinity is composed of semi-rural residential development to the north, east, and south. The residential development consists of single-family homes and accessory structures (such as barns, sheds, etc.), situated on large, ~~open~~spread-out lots set back from the roadways. The residential properties are bordered by landscaping or fencing, or are surrounded by natural vegetation. To the west of the project site is ~~Backcountry~~Back Country Land Trust's (BCLT's) Wright's Field Preserve, which consists of undeveloped conservation land with natural habitat and dirt footpaths crisscrossing the property.

4.1.2.2 Designated Scenic Views

The Alpine Community Plan designates Resource Conservation Areas (RCAs), which are localities identified as worthy of special efforts to protect important natural resources. RCAs are intended to inform future planning decisions and development. The criteria for selecting areas to be designated as RCAs includes "areas which provide the scenic mountainous backdrop to development within the community" (County of San Diego 2011). Fourteen RCAs are identified in the Alpine Community Plan area. The project site is located within the RCA identified as *Puetz Valley – Flinn Springs – Oak Riparian Woodland – Harbison Canyon* (see Figure 4.1-1~~).~~). The center of this RCA is located at the intersection of Arnold Way, South Grade Road, and Harbison Canyon Road, with fingers that extend to the west south of Interstate(I-) 8; to the southwest along Harbison Canyon Road; to the southeast generally along Arnold Way, South Grade Road, Tavern Road, and including a portion of the project site; and to the northeast generally following P~~e~~uetz Valley Road. This RCA is described in the Alpine Community Plan as including oak woodland and riparian vegetation in the canyon bottom, and a gorge area at the southern end of Galloway Valley that is a highly visible landmark. Valuable resources in this RCA include habitat for the threatened Lakeside wild lilac (*Ceanothus cyaneus*) and steep rocky massive granitic outcrops that provide wildlife habitat. Additionally, the Viejas Creek

RCA is located approximately 0.38 mile to the east of the project site (see Figure 4.1-1). This RCA contains the resources of Viejas Creek and oak riparian woodlands along the streambed.

4.1.2.3 Scenic Highways

State Scenic Highways are designated by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), and usually include a freeway, highway, or roadway with distinctive natural landscape views and high aesthetic value. There are no designated State Scenic Highways in the Alpine community. The nearest designated or eligible State Scenic Highway is State Route (SR-) 125 located approximately 14 miles to the southwest of the project site. The length of I-8 that traverses through Alpine approximately 1 mile north of the project site is considered part of an eligible State Scenic Highway. This portion of I-8 is also identified as a County Designated Scenic Highway, identified as such by the County of San Diego General Plan.

The Alpine Community Plan identifies the following view corridors within the policies and goals of Chapter 5, Scenic Highways, that should be protected:

- From I-8 toward El Capitan Reservoir.
- East and west views of Viejas Mountain from I-8.
- From I-8 south along Sweetwater River.

None of the views along any of these view corridors would capture the project site.

4.1.2.4 Other Public Views to the Project Site

Public Roadways and Rights-of-Way

Public views of the project site would be available from South Grade Road; the principal public viewer groups would be motorists and pedestrians within the public road right-of-way. Motorists would be able to view the project site to the west of South Grade Road for approximately 0.38 mile along the roadway. Pedestrians could also see the project site from South Grade Road; however, there currently are no sidewalks or other pedestrian facilities along the road. ~~Private views would be available from existing residential prpperties located to the east and southeast of the project site.~~

Recreational Land Uses

Adjacently west of the project site is Wright's Field Preserve, a public hiking venue. Visitors to Wright's Field Preserve would be able to see the project site from the southern trails on the southern portion of the preserve, where it is flat and low vegetation would not block views. The trails in the northern portion of the preserve would not provide views of the project site because of the intervening hills that block easterly views.

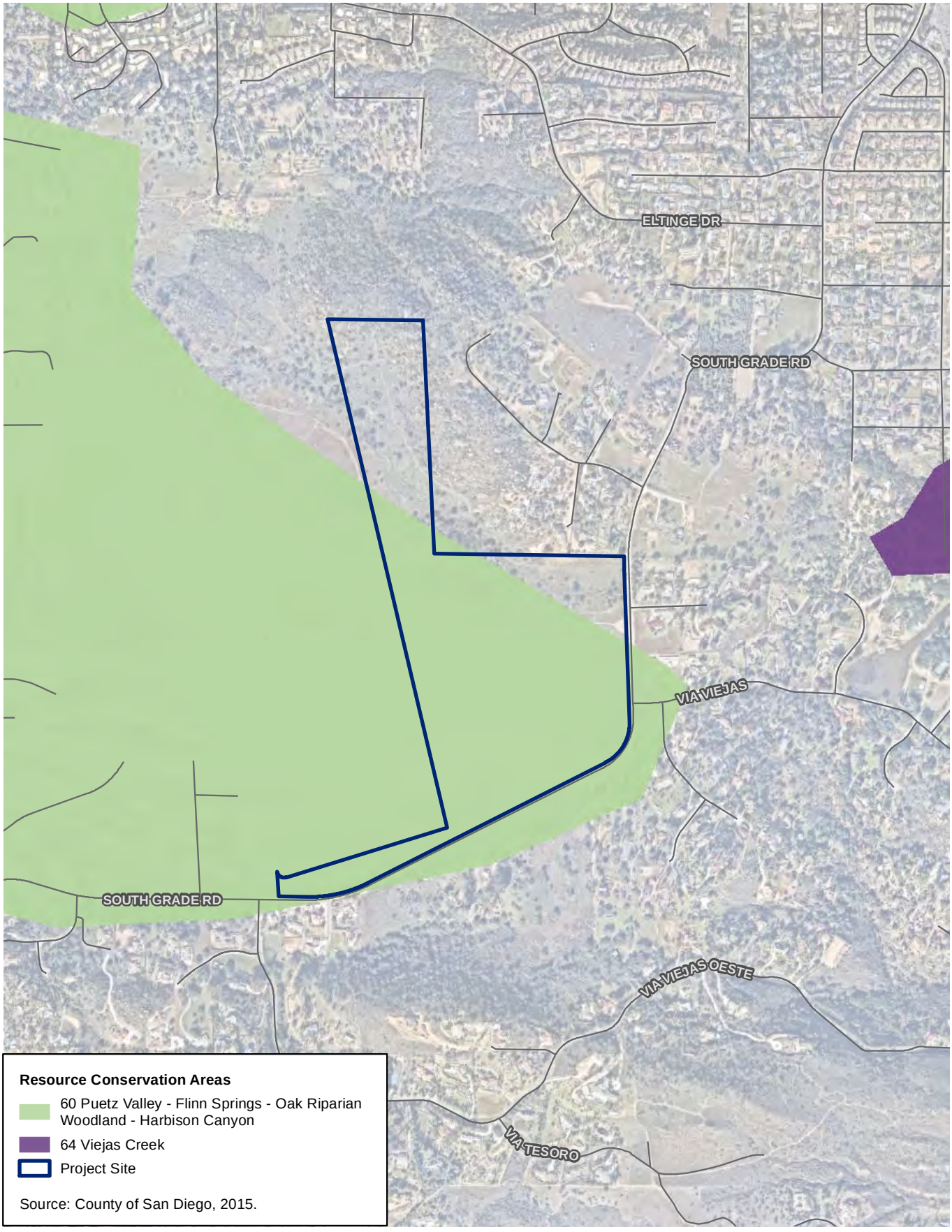

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Figure 4.1-1
Resource Conservation Areas

4.1.2.5 Light and Glare

There are two typical types of light intrusion. First, light emanates from the interior of structures and passes out through windows. Second, light projects from exterior sources, such as street, security, and landscape lighting. *Light spillover* is typically defined as the presence of unwanted or misdirected light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated. Light spillover can be a nuisance to adjacent areas and can diminish views of the clear night sky.

Glare is described as the distraction, discomfort, or impairment of vision caused by extreme contrasts in the field of vision, where light sources such as sunlight, lamps, ~~-~~lumina~~i~~ri~~e~~s, or reflecting surfaces are excessively bright in relation to the general brightness of surroundings. Glare also results from sunlight reflecting off flat building surfaces, with glass typically contributing the highest degree of reflectivity.

On Site

Light

There are no existing sources of light on the project site.

Glare

There are no existing sources of glare on the project site.

Off Site

Light

The surrounding vicinity is designated rural or semi-rural residential, and there are minimal sources of light. There are no ~~streetlights~~street lights along South Grade Road or any adjacent cross streets. There are four decorative lights approximately 60 feet to the east of the project site that light the signs at the entrance to the Palo Verde Ranch neighborhood at the intersection of South Grade Road and Via Viejas. Other sources of offsite light would be from outdoor lighting at residences between approximately 120 ~~feet east~~ and 200 feet east or southeast of the project site, across South Grade Road.

Glare

There are minimal sources of offsite glare in the project vicinity; the main source of glare would be from the glass or metal materials of parked or passing vehicles, such as cars, trucks, and horse trailers.

4.1.3 Applicable Laws and Regulations

4.1.3.1 State

California Scenic Highway Program

Caltrans manages the California Scenic Highway Program, which was created in 1963 by the California legislature to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. The program includes a list of highways that are eligible for designation as scenic highways or that have been designated as such. A highway may be designated as scenic based on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes on the traveler's enjoyment of the view. State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Sections 260 through 263.

4.1.3.2 Local

County of San Diego Code of Regulatory Ordinances Section 51.201, Light Pollution Code

The Light Pollution Code is intended to provide requirements for types of lighting and permitted hours of operation for outdoor lighting to minimize light pollution~~, so as~~ to allow citizens of the ~~county~~unincorporated area to view and enjoy the night environment and to protect the Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories from the detrimental effect that light pollution has on astronomical research (Section 51.201). The requirements apply to all artificial outdoor light fixtures, and regulate their location, shielding, and hours of operation.

County of San Diego General Plan

The General Plan includes goals and policies intended to protect aesthetics and visual resources within the Land Use, Conservation and Open Space, and Housing elements. These goals and policies are summarized below.

Land Use Element

Goal LU-2: Maintenance of the County's Rural Character. Conservation and enhancement of the unincorporated County's varied communities, rural setting, and character.

Policy LU-2.4: Relationship of Land Uses to Community Character. Ensure that the land uses and densities within any Regional Category or Land Use Designation depicted on the Land Use Map reflect the unique issues, character, and development objectives for a Community Plan area, in addition to the General Plan Guiding Principles.

Policy LU-2.8. Mitigation of Development Impacts. Require measures that minimize significant impacts to surrounding areas from uses or operations that cause excessive noise, vibrations, dust, odor, aesthetic impairment and/or detrimental to human health and safety.

Goal LU-6: Development – Environmental Balance. A built environment in balance with the natural environment, scarce resources, natural hazards, and the unique local character of individual communities.

Policy LU-6.7: Open Space Network. Require projects with open space to design continuous open spaces areas that project wildlife habitat and corridors; preserve scenic vistas and areas; and connect with existing or planned recreational opportunities.

Goal LU-10: Function of Semi-Rural and Rural Lands. Semi-Rural and Rural Lands that buffer communities, protect natural resources, foster agriculture, and accommodate unique rural communities.

Policy LU-10.2: Development – Environmental Resource Relationship. Require development in Semi-Rural and Rural areas to respect and conserve the unique natural features and rural character, and avoid sensitive or intact environmental resources and hazard areas.

Conservation and Open Space Element

Goal COS-11: Preservation of Scenic Resources. Preservation of scenic resources, including vistas of important natural and unique features, where visual impacts of development are minimized.

Policy COS-11.1: Protection of Scenic Resources. Require the protection of scenic highways, corridors, regionally significant scenic vistas, and natural features, including prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, reservoirs, and scenic landscapes.

Policy COS-11.2: Scenic Resource Connections. Promote the connection of regionally significant natural features, designated historic landmarks, and points of regional historic, visual, and cultural interest via designated scenic corridors, such as scenic highways and ~~regional~~ trails.

Policy COS-11.3: Development Siting and Design. Require development within visually sensitive areas to minimize visual impacts and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in rural areas, through the following:

- Creative site planning
- Integration of natural features into the project
- Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape
- -Minimal disturbance of topography
- Clustering of development so as to preserve a balance of open space vistas, natural features, and community character
- Creation of contiguous open space networks

Policy COS-11.4: Collaboration with Agencies and Jurisdictions. Coordinate with adjacent federal and State agencies, local jurisdictions, and tribal governments to protect scenic resources and corridors that extend beyond the County's land use authority, but are important to the welfare of County residents.

Goal COS-12: Preservation of Ridgelines and Hillsides. Ridgelines and steep hillsides that are preserved for their character and scenic value.

Policy COS-12.1: Hillside and Ridgeline Development Density. Protect undeveloped ridgelines and steep hillsides by maintaining semi-rural or rural designations on these areas.

Policy COS-12.2: Development Location on Ridges. Require development to preserve the physical features by being located down and away from ridgelines so that structures are not silhouetted against the sky.

Goal COS-13: Dark Skies. Preserved dark skies that contribute to rural character and are necessary for the local observatories.

Policy COS-13.1: Restrict Light and Glare. Restrict outdoor light and glare from development projects in Semi-Rural and Rural Lands and designated rural communities to retain the quality of night skies by minimizing light pollution.

Housing Element

Goal H-2: Neighborhoods That Respect Local Character. Well-designed residential neighborhoods that respect unique local character and the natural environment while expanding opportunities for affordable housing.

Policy H-2.1: Development that Respects Community Character. Require that development in existing residential neighborhoods be well designed so as not to degrade or detract from the character of surrounding development consistent with the Land Use Element. [See applicable community plan for possible relevant policies.]

San Diego County Scenic Highway Program

The County of San Diego ~~County~~ General Plan established the comprehensive County Scenic Highway Program, which establishes a scenic highway system priority list. Two officially designated ~~state scenic highways~~State Scenic Highways exist in ~~the county~~San Diego County, one of which is in the unincorporated ~~county~~area. The rest of the routes in the ~~c~~County's scenic highway program are listed as First, Second, or Third Priority Scenic Routes. There are 6 First Priority Routes, 16 Second Priority Routes, and 38 Third Priority Routes.

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance

The following is a list of San Diego County Zoning Ordinances governing the management of scenic or aesthetically valuable areas, glare, and outdoor lighting.

Sections 5200–5212, Scenic Area Regulations: The purpose of these provisions is to regulate development in areas of high scenic value to both exclude incompatible uses and structures and to preserve and enhance the scenic resources. These provisions are applied to areas of unique scenic value including but not limited to scenic highway corridors designated by the County of San Diego ~~County~~ General Plan, critical viewshed and prime viewshed areas as designated on the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan, and to areas adjacent to significant recreational, historic, or scenic resources, including but not limited to federal and ~~s~~State parks.

Sections 5750–5758, Community Design Review Area Regulations: The purpose of these provisions is to evaluate site planning, architecture, landscape design, signage, and lighting to ensure that new development is compatible with surrounding development and community goals.

These regulations provide for the maintenance and enhancement of a community's individual character and identity.

Sections 5900–5910, Design Review Area Regulations: The purpose of these provisions is to ensure that future structures and development of a site will complement not only the site to be developed but also the surrounding areas and existing development.

Section 6322, Amended by Ord. No. 7110, Outdoor Lighting: These provisions are intended to control excessive or unnecessary outdoor light emissions, which produce unwanted illumination of adjacent premises within the unincorporated area of the County of San Diego.

Alpine Design Review Guidelines

Adopted in 1987, the purpose of Alpine's Design Review process is to encourage development that contributes to Alpine's special character and identity as a mountain village. Design review is required for all new construction or alteration in commercial, industrial, and public/semi- public development as well as multi-family residential development zoned at a density of 7.3 or more dwellings units per acre occurring within the Alpine Community Plan Area boundaries. The design guidelines cover topics such as site planning principles, natural features, architectural character, visual linkages and landscaping guidelines, lighting guidelines, and signage. The guidelines also establish the design review application process and requirements.

4.1.4 Project Impact Analysis

4.1.4.1 Methodology

Aesthetic experiences can be highly subjective and vary from viewer to viewer. Whenever feasible, it is preferable to evaluate aesthetic resources using a process that strives to objectively identify the particular features of the given area, their importance, and the sensitivity of the associated viewers. The project and the potential aesthetic-related changes associated with the project are identified and qualitatively evaluated based on the extent of modification to the existing physical conditions, as well as based on the viewer sensitivity to the modifications.

Project–related changes are evaluated using the threshold criteria discussed in Section 4.1.4.2, *Thresholds of Significance*, to determine significance. It should be noted that views from private property are not considered a protected resource by the County DPR.

Viewer Groups and Viewer Sensitivity

The principal public viewer groups would be motorists on South Grade Road, visitors to Wright's Field Preserve, and visitors to the project site.

Viewer sensitivity is based on the visibility of a scenic resource, the proximity of viewers to the resource, the relative elevation of viewers to the resource, the frequency and duration of views, the number of viewers, and the types and expectations of the individuals and viewer groups. Generally, visual sensitivity increases as the total number of viewers, frequency, and duration of viewing activities increases.

The degree of visual sensitivity is treated as occurring at one of the following four levels.

- **High Sensitivity** suggests that the majority of the public is likely to react strongly to a ~~substantial change~~threat to visual quality. A highly concerned public is assumed to be more aware of any given level of adverse change and is substantially less tolerant than a public that has little to moderate concern. A small modification of the existing landscape may be visually distracting to a highly sensitive public and represent a substantial reduction in visual quality.
- **Moderate Sensitivity** suggests that the public would probably voice concern over substantial visual impacts. Often, the affected views are secondary in importance or are similar to others commonly available to the public.
- **Low Sensitivity** is considered to prevail where the public is expected generally to have little concern about adverse changes in the landscape, or only a small minority may be expected to voice such concern, even where the adverse change is substantial in intensity and duration.
- **No Sensitivity** occurs when the views are not public, or there are no indications of public concern over, or interest in, scenic/visual resource impacts on the affected area.

Public views were identified and assessed by reviewing street maps, Google Earth, the County of San Diego ~~County~~ General Plan, and the Alpine Community Plan. The quality of the public views was assessed by considering the features, continuity, and range of the view based on electronic photographs and photo simulations produced by AdvanceSims. Consideration was then given to how viewers of the project site would experience the project based on distance, topography of the surrounding area, and intervening vegetation or other obstacles. Because objects within the foreground have more detail, the potential sensitivity of close-in viewers~~, such as adjacent residents,~~ was considered higher than those who have more distant public views of the project site and surrounding area.

4.1.4.2 Thresholds of Significance

Appendix G of the ~~State~~ CEQA Guidelines

The following significance criteria are based on Appendix G of the ~~State~~ CEQA Guidelines and provide the basis for determining the significance of impacts associated with aesthetics and visual quality resulting from the project. The determination of whether an aesthetics and visual quality impact would be significant is based on the thresholds described below and the professional judgment of ~~the~~ County DPR and the recommendations of qualified personnel at ICF, all of which is based on the evidence in the administrative record.

Impacts are considered significant if the project would result in any of the following:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
2. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a ~~state scenic highway~~State Scenic Highway.
3. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character and quality of public views of the site and its surroundings (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points), or in an urbanized area, conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance

The CEQA thresholds provided by the *County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance for Visual Resources and Dark Skies and Glare* (County of San Diego 2009) state that a significant impact would occur if project implementation would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. The *County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance for Visual Resources* (County of San Diego 2007) addresses the following questions (based on the ~~State~~ CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, I. Aesthetics):

1. Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
2. Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway?
3. Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

The *County of San Diego Guidelines for Determining Significance for Dark Skies and Glare* addresses the following question (based on the ~~State~~ CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, I. Aesthetics):

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

4.1.4.3 Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Threshold 1: The project <u>would not</u> have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

County Park and Trails and Open Space~~/Preserve~~

Impact Discussion

The project site does not contain any designated scenic vistas. The project site is part of the RCA *Puetz Valley – Flinn Springs – Oak Riparian Woodland – Harbison Canyon* as identified by the Alpine Community Plan.

Construction

Construction of the project would include the use of tractors, excavators, backhoes, a water truck, a drill rig, a bobcat, a forklift, rollers, a rubber tire loader, wheel tractor scrapers, an air compressor, a generator set, a crane, and a concrete truck. Construction staging activities would occur adjacent to the project site. The presence of construction equipment would alter the views of the project site from publicly accessible areas, such as South Grade Road. The views would change from open fields covered in grass and other vegetation, to a construction site with materials, equipment, vehicles, and structures. The expansive view of the fields would be limited by the intervening equipment and materials. However, there are no designated scenic vistas on the project site, or adjacent to the project site. The project site is within the RCA as noted above; however, the specific visual resource that is identified in this RCA is the gorge at the southern end of the Galloway Valley, over 3 miles away. The view cannot be seen from the project site. Therefore, there are no designated scenic vistas that would be substantially affected by construction of the project.

Operation

The project site does not contain any designated scenic vistas. The project site is part of the RCA *Puetz Valley – Flinn Springs – Oak Riparian Woodland – Harbison Canyon* as identified by the Alpine Community Plan. This RCA covers an expansive area and includes both biological and visual resources. As described in Section 4.1.2.2, *Designated Scenic Views,* the specific resource that has been identified within this RCA related to scenic vistas, the gorge at the southern end of Galloway Valley, is not within the project site, and it is not visible from the project site. Therefore, implementation of the project, including the active park, trails and access roads, and open space~~/preserve~~, would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

Impact Determination

The project would not result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. Impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 2: The project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a ~~state scenic highway~~State Scenic Highway.

County Park and Trails and Open Space~~/Preserve~~

Impact Discussion

Construction and Operation

As described in Section 4.1.2.3, *Scenic Highways*, there are no ~~state scenic highways~~State Scenic Highways within the vicinity of the project site. The nearest designated or eligible State Scenic Highway is SR-125 located approximately 14 miles to the southwest, which is not visible from the project site. The portion of I-8 approximately 1 mile north of the project site is considered an eligible State Scenic Highway, as well as a County Designated Scenic Highway. The project site may be briefly visible in the distance by motorists on I-8; however, due to the intervening vegetation and hilly topography between I-8 and the project site, the project would not be discernable by the viewers. Additionally, given the residential and commercial development visible in the southern view provided by I-8, the project would be cohesive with the surrounding features within the viewshed. Lastly, the development of the project, including the active park, trails, and passive recreation features, would not damage scenic resources, including trees, outcroppings or historic resources within a ~~state scenic highway~~State Scenic Highway because no such resources have been identified on the project site and no such ~~state scenic highway~~State Scenic Highway is within or adjacent to the project site.

Impact Determination

The project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a ~~state scenic highway~~State Scenic Highway because no such resources have been identified on the project site and no such ~~state scenic highway~~State Scenic Highway is within or adjacent to the project site. Impacts would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation is required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Impacts would be less than significant.

Threshold 3: In non-urbanized areas, the project would substantially degrade the existing visual character and quality of public views of the site and its surroundings (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points), or in an urbanized area, conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.

County Park and Trails and Open Space~~/Preserve~~

Impact Discussion

The project site is rural, open land, surrounded by semi-rural residential and rural land. Therefore, the following analysis considers if the project would substantially degrade the existing visual character and quality of public views of the site and its surroundings.

Construction

As mentioned in the analysis for *Threshold 1* above, project construction would require the use of numerous large pieces of equipment and vehicles. Additionally, materials would be delivered and stored on the project site. During construction~~, which is anticipated to last approximately xx months~~, the view of the project site would change drastically, from a wide-open rural field to a cluttered and busy construction site. The expansive views currently available from the ~~adjacent~~adjacently east South Grade Road and the ~~adjacentl~~adjacently west Wright's Field Preserve would be interrupted by equipment, materials, and, depending on construction phase, portions of the structures and facilities as they are being built. Although construction would be temporary, and any given piece of equipment or vehicle would not stay on the project site for the entire duration of the construction phase, the substantial change to the rural character during construction would result in a significant impact (**Impact-AES-1**).

Operation

Implementation of the active park would consist of numerous features that would require new structures and built facilities, including athletic courts and fields, fencing, shade structures, a playground, picnic tables, a bike ~~park~~skills area and all-wheel park, equestrian corral and staging

area, restroom building, and administrative building, and storage structures. The buildings would be designed with a "barn-style" architecture to complement the rural agricultural character of the surrounding area. In addition to the structures, the project would include other development elements, including parking lots, multi-use trail, sidewalks, a decomposed granite pathway, and landscaping. In the northern portion of the project site where the equestrian facilities would be developed, groves of existing oaks would remain in place, and development as well as new landscaping would be built around the existing habitat, to be compatible. The parking lots along the eastern portion of the project site would be built with an earthen berm ~~located~~in between the parking lots and South Grade Road. The 12-foot berm would be of varying height along the boundary with South Grade Road, but would generally build in height from the north to the south in order to obscure direct views of the parking lot by users of South Grade Road and adjacent residents.

All of the proposed elements would ~~contribute~~coalesce to ~~changes that would alter~~ change the visual character of the project site. The visual character would change from ~~an~~ the existing ~~perception of~~ wide-open spaces ~~and large~~of vast rural fields, to a complex ~~image~~ development of several different recreational structures and features large in scale, connected with impervious surfaces in the form of access roads, paths, and parking lots. See Figures 4.1-2 through 4.1-6 for ~~"before-and-after"~~ visual simulations ~~that~~developed to represent the visual ~~changes imposed by~~ impacts of the project. Figure 4.1-2 depicts the location of the viewpoints selected for visual simulations, and Figures 4.1-3 through 4.1-6 show the existing views and proposed views at each viewpoint. The recreational development and the landscaping would be more ordered than the existing natural habitat, which would result in a more urban-like visual character. The public views of the project site, available from South Grade Road and Wright's Field Preserve, would change from expansive rural views to a view of a dispersed recreational development with several different structural features. Figure 4.1-5 depicts the view from the South Grade Road at the primary park entrance, from which the administration/restroom building, garden storage, driveway, and parking lot would be visible. However, the whole project site would not be densely developed; the recreational development and structures would be ~~located~~focused in the center of the project site. With the ~~presence~~development of the proposed berm along South Grade Road, most project features would not be visible from the public viewpoint. As shown on Figure 4.1-4, the simulated view from the intersection of South Grade Road and Via Viejas, the view of the project site would ~~consist~~be entirely ~~of~~ the proposed berm, native vegetation, and trees.

The northern portion of the project site would not be developed with large structures that would cut off visual access to the open fields beyond; the only structures that might be visible from the public right-of-way to the west would be equestrian corrals, which are approximately 4 to 5 feet high and incontiguous structures that would not completely block views through the project site. ~~The~~Additionally, the equestrian area in the northern portion of the project site would be landscaped with native species and existing Engelmann ~~O~~oak trees would be left in place to provide the continuous views of natural open space that currently exist. To the southwest, views of the administration building or other small structures could be available through the intervening landscaping. See Figure 4.1-6 for the proposed view from South Grade Road adjacent to the northern end of the project site, looking southwest. Similar views would be available from approximately 300 feet of South Grade Road at the northern end of the project site.



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Source: AdvanceSims, 2021.

Figure 4.1-2
Visual Simulation View Point Location Map
Alpine Park Project





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Source: AdvanceSims, 2021.

Figure 4.1-3
Visual Simulation View Point No. 1
Alpine Park Project





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Source: AdvanceSims, 2021.

Figure 4.1-4
Visual Simulation View Point No. 2
Alpine Park Project





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Source: AdvanceSims, 2021.

Figure 4.1-5
Visual Simulation View Point No. 3
Alpine Park Project





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Source: AdvanceSims, 2021.

Figure 4.1-6
Visual Simulation View Point No. 4
Alpine Park Project

The southern portion of the project site would also remain open to provide views of open space and of the expansive views beyond the project site to the west and northwest. The southern portion of the project site would be developed with multi-use turf and a bike ~~park~~skills area, surrounded by native landscaping, and would not be developed with structures that would obstruct expansive views. Figure 4.1-3 depicts the proposed view from the southwestern end of the project site, facing northeast, including the secondary park entrance in the foreground and some proposed park structures in the background. Views similar to those shown on Figure 4.1-3 would still be available from approximately 1,200 feet along South Grade Road from the east and south of the southern portion of the project site.

Views of the project site from the southern portion of the trails in Wright's Field Preserve that ~~would be~~are available to ~~its visitors~~ the public would include the proposed bike ~~park~~skills area, all-wheel~~s~~ park, the nature play area, and equestrian staging areas and corrals. These project features would not include large structures that would completely obstruct views. Native landscaping would also be visible surrounding the recreational features. In the background it might be possible to see playing fields, driveways, and parking lots. Landscaping would break up the view of the development and provide a connection between the rural greenspace of the adjacent preserve and the greenspace of the playing fields. However, the view would be substantially different than the existing view of expansive rural fields. Therefore, implementation of the active park would result in a significant impact (**Impact-AES-2**).

Impact Determination

The project would substantially degrade the existing visual character and quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. The impacts are as follows:

Impact-AES-1: Substantially Degrade Rural Views from Public Vantage Points ~~d~~During Construction. Construction of the project would interrupt expansive views with construction equipment and activities, ~~on a temporary basis,~~ substantially degrading the existing rural views available from South Grade Road and Wright's Field Preserve. Impacts would be significant.

Impact-AES-2: Substantially Degrade Rural Views from Public Vantage Points During Operation. Operation of the project would transform rural, undeveloped land to an active park with several different development features, substantially degrading the existing rural views available from South Grade Road and Wright's Field Preserve. Impacts would be significant.

Mitigation Measures

For **Impact-AES-1:**

> **MM-AES-1: Install Screening Fences Along the Active Park Boundary.** County DPR or its contractors shall install temporary construction fence screening that is at minimum 8 feet tall. The construction fencing shall extend around the 25-acre active park boundary. The construction fencing shall be installed in phases to block views of construction equipment, materials, and ongoing construction activities, but would not block existing views that are available on the site. In this way the construction fencing would not block the entire 25-acre site at any given time. The construction fencing shall remain as long as construction activities are occurring on the project site~~.; an expected xx months.~~

For **Impact-AES-2:**

MM-AES-2: Maintain Areas of Native Vegetation Along the Project Boundaries. All boundaries of the Alpine Park shall be planted with areas of native vegetation to provide a transition from existing rural fields and native habitat to the landscaping and development of the County Park. Drought-tolerant and native plants shall be located along the eastern and southern boundaries along South Grade Road, on the western boundary along Wright's Field Preserve, and on the northern boundary.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

MM-AES-1 would reduce impacts (**Impact-AES-1**) on public views by requiring construction fence screen around the entire project site. Construction fencing would be installed in phases on the project site and would be sited only around the areas with active construction activities, equipment, and materials. Therefore, the construction fencing would allow for existing views where construction is not occurring to be visible during construction. Thus, the visual character would not be substantially ~~impaired~~degraded during construction, and the impact would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

MM-AES-2 would reduce impacts (**Impact-AES-2**) on public views of the project site by requiring native vegetation along the boundaries of the site to provide a transition from the surrounding rural areas. The impact would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Threshold 4: The project would create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

County Park and Trails and Open Space~~/Preserve~~

Impact Discussion

Construction

The project site is unlit and does not have any sources of light or glare. Construction of the project would occur over 16 months and would include the following construction equipment: tractors, excavators, backhoes, a water truck, a drill rig, a bobcat, a forklift, rollers, a rubber tire loader, wheel tractor scrapers, an air compressor, a generator set, a crane, and a concrete truck.

Construction of the project would comply with the County of San Diego ~~County~~ Noise Ordinance, which limits construction activities to between the hours of 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Saturday. ~~Therefore, there~~There would not be any nighttime construction between the hours of 7 p.m. and 7 a.m. If construction is ~~determined to be~~ necessary between sunset and 7 p.m., lighting may be required. In this case lighting would be provided in the form of shielded spotlights specifically directed at the work area, which would allow for ~~less~~little light trespass beyond the project site. ~~As stated above,~~ Additionally, this potential light source would be temporary.

Construction equipment and vehicles could result in a source of daytime glare due to sunlight reflecting off of glass or other materials. However, construction equipment would not be static; it would be moving around the construction site and would not be a permanent fixture on the project site. Therefore, potential impacts related to light and glare from construction activities would be less than significant.

Operation

The project would include minimal outdoor lighting for security purposes. Lighting around the administration/restroom building and volunteer pad would be on timers and would be motion-sensor lights, so they would not be on continuously. Approximately five bollards would also be used to gently light certain portions of the project site; some of these would be continuous and some would be motion-sensor lighting. All permanent exterior security lighting would be installed such that lamps and reflectors ~~would~~are not ~~be~~ visible from beyond the project site~~. Also,~~ and directed lighting ~~would~~does not illuminate the nighttime sky. Illumination of the project facility and its immediate vicinity would be minimized with lighting design, location, shielding, and aim. The lighting plan ~~would comply~~complies with local policies and ordinances, including the County of San Diego Light Pollution Code, County of San Diego General Plan, and Alpine Design Review Guidelines. However, because the project would introduce numerous new lighting sources to an area that does not ~~currently~~ have any sources of light, it could result in an adverse effect on nighttime views. Introducing any sources of light could result in a substantial change to the project site because the existing conditions are dark nighttime views with no lighting on site and very little light spillover from adjacent offsite sources (**Impact-AES-3**).

Sources of ~~potential~~ glare from operation of the project would be from parked vehicles in the parking lot, and photovoltaic (PV) panels that would be installed in the parking lot mounted on overhead structures to power the outdoor lighting. Visitor or employee vehicles parked in the parking lots along the eastern portion of the project could result in glare from sunlight reflecting off the glass windshields or metal material. Generally, this phenomenon would only occur at particular times throughout the day when the sun ~~is~~was at a specific angle and would only cause a significant impact if the glare were to cause substantial damage or nuisance to the public, or create a hazard related to limited visibility due to the glare. Because visitor and employee cars would be moving throughout the day and would leave the parking lot each day, the potential glare from vehicles would change throughout the day and would be short-lived; thus, it would not result in a permanent impact.

PV panels would be mounted at the best angle to capture the most sunlight throughout the day to produce sufficient power for the electric equipment. The flat, reflective material of the PV panels could result in glare from the reflection of the sun that could cause a significant nuisance or safety hazard. However, intervening landscaping would block glare reflecting off the PV panels from reaching public viewer groups along South Grade Road. Additionally, County DPR would install PV panels with anti-reflective coatings, which reduces glare by increasing the amount of sunlight absorbed by the panel. As such, potential glare from the PV panels would be minor and would not cause a significant nuisance or safety hazard. Therefore, the project would not result in new sources of glare that would substantially affect daytime views.

Impact Determination

The project would create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. The impact is as follows:

Impact-AES-3: New Source of Light Adversely Affecting Nighttime Views. Operation of the project would result in new sources of lighting at the active park that could illuminate the nighttime sky and adversely affect nighttime views.

Mitigation Measures

For **Impact-AES-3:**

MM-AES-3: Turn Off Outdoor Lighting 1 Hour After Closing. County DPR shall turn off all outdoor lighting at the parking lots, driveways, and recreational facilities in the active park 1 hour after the park closes, or use motion sensors to limit duration of lighting, except for certain lighting for safety. Outdoor lighting shall be turned on when necessary when the park is open.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

With the implementation of **MM-AES-~~3~~43, Impact-AES-3** would be reduced to less-than-significant levels because requiring the outdoor lighting to be turned off 1 hour after closing or requiring motion-sensor lighting would remove the sources of nighttime lighting, and the project would not adversely affect nighttime views.

4.1.5 Summary of Significant Impacts

Table 4.1-1. Summary of Significant Aesthetics and Visual Resources Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Summary of Potentially Significant Impact(s)	Summary of Mitigation Measure(s)	Level of Significance After Mitigation	Rationale for Finding After Mitigation
Impact-AES-1: Substantially Degrade Rural Views from Public Vantage Points during Construction	**MM-AES-1: Install Screening Fences Along the Active Park Boundary**	Less than Significant	**MM-AES-1** would reduce impacts (**Impact-AES-1**) on public views by requiring construction fence screen around the project site in phases. This would remove the views of ongoing construction while also allowing for views of the surrounding rural setting. Thus, the visual character would not be substantially degraded during construction, and the impact would be less than significant.
Impact-AES-2: Substantially Degrade Rural Views from Public Vantage Points During Operation	**MM-AES-2: Maintain Areas of Native Vegetation Along the Project Boundaries**	Less than Significant	**MM-AES-2** would reduce impacts (**Impact-AES-2**) on public views of the project site by requiring native vegetation along the boundaries of the site to provide a transition from the surrounding rural areas as well as clear sightlines through the project site to the expansive views to

Summary of Potentially Significant Impact(s)	Summary of Mitigation Measure(s)	Level of Significance After Mitigation	Rationale for Finding After Mitigation
			the west. Therefore, the project would not substantially degrade the existing public views of the rural character and the impact would be less than significant.
Impact-AES-3: New Source of Light Adversely Affecting Nighttime Views	**MM-AES-3: Turn Off Outdoor Lighting 1 Hour After Closing**	Less than Significant	With the implementation of **MM-AES-43, Impact-AES-3** would be reduced to less-than-significant levels because it will require the outdoor lighting to be turned off 1 hour after closing so that it will not adversely affect nighttime views.