

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This section describes those resources that define the visual character and quality of the City's Planning Area. The City's Planning Area consists of its incorporated boundaries and adopted Sphere of Influence (SOI). The County's Planning Area consists of unincorporated land within the One Valley One Vision (OVOV) Planning Area boundaries that is outside the City's boundaries and adopted SOI. Together the City and the County Planning Areas comprise the OVOV Planning Area. Resources within the City's Planning Area as well as the surrounding County's Planning Area include a variety of natural and man-made elements and the viewsheds to those elements that serve as visual landmarks and contribute to the unique character of the City's Planning Area. Although specific visual resources in the City's Planning Area are identified in this section, it is not intended to provide an exhaustive inventory, as the nature of these resources is somewhat subjective and not easily quantified. Implementation of the proposed General Plan would increase development within the Santa Clarita Valley, which, if unregulated, would contribute to the obstruction of views, damage scenic resources, conflict with the community's rural character, and generate substantial levels of light and glare. However, some of the proposed General Plan policies that would ensure the protection of scenic resources and corridors, promote quality construction that enhances the City's urban form, increase open space, and landscaping, and limit light overspill. For these reasons, implementation of the City's General Plan on aesthetics would be less than significant.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

The OVOV Planning Area is dominated by a physical setting that offers residents and visitors a variety of scenic experiences due to the mixture of topography, flora and fauna, and a rich historical and cultural heritage. Memorable and distinctive scenery provides residents with a sense of place and identity, heightening the feeling of belonging and instilling a sense of uniqueness and civic pride. The OVOV Planning Area contains the Santa Clara River Valley, visually framed by the eastern Santa Susana Mountains, western portions of the San Gabriel Mountains, and southern slopes of the Sierra Pelona (**Figure 3.6-1, Scenic Resources within the OVOV Planning Area**). In addition to the major ridgelines forming the boundaries of the Valley, prominent scenic resources include river and creeks, canyons, and forestlands.

Angeles National Forest land, most of which is undeveloped and protected, surrounds much of the City's Planning Area. The natural topography of the Santa Clara River and its many tributary canyons, in conjunction with the National Forest holdings, has focused growth in the Santa Clarita Valley on the

more central, level areas between the Valley's two major freeways. Most of the development has occurred adjacent to the Golden State (Interstate 5) and Antelope Valley (State Route 14) freeways, concentrating urbanization within a "V"-shaped area formed by these two major transportation routes.

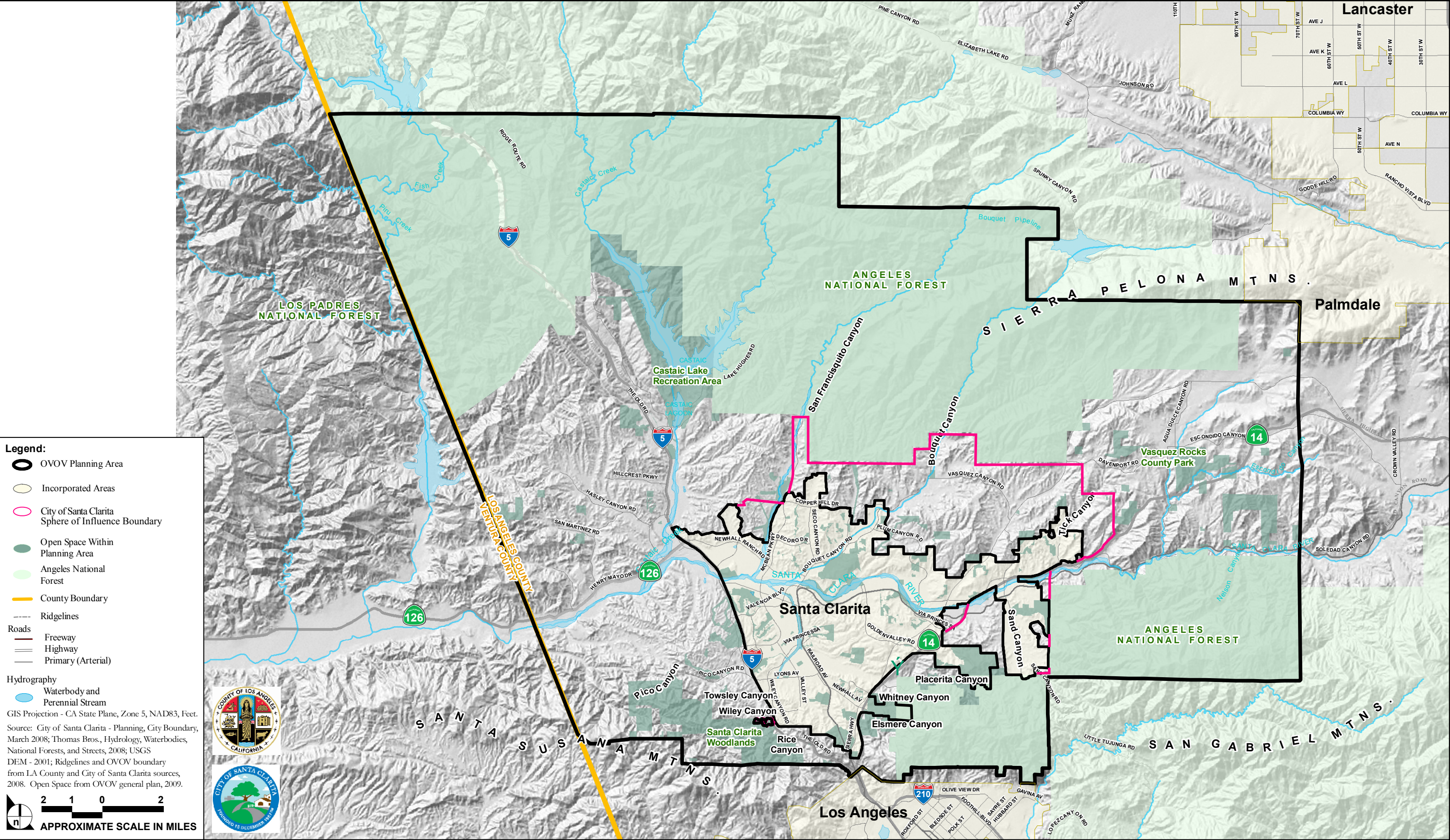
Overview of Visual Resources

The following discussion on scenic resources (i.e., major topographic features, woodlands, water bodies, open space, recreational areas, undeveloped land, urban form, historical resources and landmarks) includes text extracted from the Technical Background Report for the Santa Clarita Valley General Plan (February 2004). Text is also used from the Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan (October 2009).

A community's scenic resources contribute to one's experience of "place" and influence the quality of life in that community. "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 visual quality that distinguishes an area. Most communities identify scenic resources as an important asset, although what is considered "scenic" may differ based on the environmental setting. Scenic resources that define a valley community differ from those that define a coastal or mountain community.

"Scenic resources" can include natural open spaces, topographic formations, and landscapes that contribute to a high level of visual quality. These are significant resources that can be maintained and enhanced to promote a desired aesthetic value in the future. Many people associate natural landforms and landscapes with scenic resources, such as oak woodlands, lakes, rivers, streams, and some historical areas. Developed open spaces and the built environment constitute scenic resources and include parks, trails and pathways, nature centers, archaeological, and architectural features.

"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.



SOURCE: City of Santa Clarita, County of Los Angeles, Valleywide General Plan - March 2009

FIGURE 3.6-1

Scenic Resources within the OVOV Planning Area

Scenic Resources

The physical characteristics of the City's Planning Area, in conjunction with the large amount of undeveloped land, offer Valley residents and visitors a vast array of open space that provides plentiful scenic opportunities. The visual elements exhibited within these open spaces include major topographic features, woodlands, and rivers and other water bodies as well as green and urban parkways. Historical resources and landmarks may also be included within the open space inventory. Woodlands and floodplain areas are prime examples of scenic resources that derive much of their majesty from quantity; although the health of the resource also substantially affects visual quality, as unhealthy trees and polluted watercourses can substantially diminish the quality of these resources.

Major Topographic Features

Major topographic features within and surrounding the City's Planning Area represent a significant visual resource since they provide visual relief from the otherwise flat urban horizon. The San Gabriel, Sierra Pelona and Santa Susana Mountains are the most prominent visual resources (see **Figure 3.6-1**). These mountains contain well-defined ridgelines and canyons, as described below.

Ridgelines

Ridgelines project from the lower foothills of the San Gabriel and Sierra Pelona mountain ranges to the Valley floor. The City's Unified Development Code¹ requires preservation of natural topographic features, designated ridgelines, maintenance of off-site and on-site views, and landform grading.

Canyons

Sloping from the ridgelines are numerous foothill and canyon zones, which are important scenic resources that have remained undeveloped and in a natural state due to slope constraints. The canyons are characterized by variable terrain that supports a variety of native biota. The following describes major scenic canyon areas in the OVOV Planning Area. Although some are located outside the City boundary, these canyons serve as local scenic resources to the City (see **Figure 3.6-1**).

- Placerita Canyon, running east and west in the southerly portion of the OVOV Planning Area, is characterized by shaded oak groves, a seasonal stream lined with cottonwoods, willows and sycamores, sandstone formations, and many other plant and animal communities. Its historic "Oak of the Golden Dream" is the site of California's first gold discovery in 1842, and is a designated State Historic Landmark. The Canyon contains a seasonal waterfall and hiking trails, including a trail

¹ City of Santa Clarita, *Municipal Code*, Chapter 17.80, "Hillside Development Ordinance."

leading to the top of the Santa Clara Divide in the San Gabriel Mountains. From this vantage point, one can view the entire Santa Clarita Valley to the north and the San Fernando Valley to the south, with long-range views beyond. The Placerita State Park and Nature Center is located within the canyon.

- Whitney Canyon is located at the intersection of Sierra Highway and Newhall Avenue, just east of State Route 14 in the OVOV Planning Area, and serves as the gateway to Angeles National Forest and the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor. Due to its location between Elsmere and Placerita Canyons, Whitney Canyon is the middle link for the continuation of the Rim of the Valley Trail Corridor and the natural wildlife corridor through these canyons into Towsley Canyon and the Santa Clarita Woodlands. The canyon area contains oak forests, waterfalls, chaparral, coastal sage scrub, and a riparian watershed area; 442 acres are publicly owned for preservation as natural open space, through a partnership between the City and a conservation authority.
- Elsmere Canyon lies partially within the Angeles National Forest, near the intersection of Sierra Highway and Newhall Avenue, east of State Route 14 in the OVOV Planning Area. Encompassing 2,700 acres, about half the canyon area is within the National Forest. Like other canyons in the OVOV Planning Area, Elsmere Canyon has served as a popular film site for western movies. A proposal to locate a landfill in the Canyon was withdrawn in 2004 based on public concerns about environmental quality, and in 2007 the property owner donated 400 acres of Elsmere Canyon to the Mountains and Recreation and Conservation Authority for use as an open space preserve. Elsmere Canyon contains abundant wildlife, riparian habitat, coastal sage, and oak woodlands, and provides a wildlife corridor from the Santa Susana Mountains to the San Gabriel range.
- Bouquet Canyon, in the northerly portion of the OVOV Planning Area, follows the course of Bouquet Creek, generally from Bouquet Reservoir south to the junction of Bouquet Canyon Road and Soledad Canyon Road. The canyon contains oak, willow, and sycamore groves, and the development character north of Saugus is rural. Most of Bouquet Canyon within the OVOV Planning Area lies within the boundary of Angeles National Forest.
- San Francisquito Canyon runs north and south from Saugus to Green Valley in the OVOV Planning Area, and is a rural environment supporting numerous equestrian ranches. The Canyon also contains sites of historic significance, such as the Harry Carey Historic Ranch. Most of San Francisquito Canyon within the OVOV Planning Area lies within the boundary of Angeles National Forest.
- Sand Canyon, located in the eastern portion of the City's Planning Area, runs northward from the steep slopes in the Angeles National Forest to the Santa Clara River floodplain. The character of the canyon ranges from heavy woodland to large, rustic rural estates with abundant trees. Views from the upper reaches of the canyon include the valley floor.
- Pico Canyon, located in the northern portion of the Santa Clarita Woodlands Park in the western portion of the OVOV Planning Area, has been used extensively for oil extraction. The canyon was once occupied by Mentryville, an oil boomtown, and now contains valley and coast live oaks and views of the valley floor. The Mentryville historic site is contained within a state park.
- Towsley Canyon, located in the central portion of the Santa Clarita Woodlands Park in the OVOV Planning Area, offers visitors a diverse natural area. Evidence of Native American heritage and early

California oil interests are visible, along with unique geologic formations in “The Narrows.” The Canyon contains numerous hiking trails along with Ed Davis Park.

- Tick Canyon lies in the Soledad Basin and is a tributary of the Santa Clara River channel, between Mint Canyon to the west and Tapia and Spring Canyons to the east, in the OVOV Planning Area. The Canyon was mined for various minerals during early settlement of the Valley.
- Wiley Canyon forms a portion of the pass through which Interstate 5 passes as it enters the OVOV Planning Area from the south. The upper reaches of the canyon provide a sense of enclosure and include views of scrub-filled hillsides and stands of oak trees, while the northerly portion of the canyon offers expansive views of the Santa Clarita Valley.
- Rice Canyon is located south of Wiley Canyon in the southwestern portion of the OVOV Planning Area, and offers views of rugged topography, coastal sage scrub, and stands of oak trees.

Woodlands

The Angeles National Forest and Los Padres National Forest are large undeveloped and protected tracts of land surrounding the City’s Planning Area. Oak woodlands within these forests also extend into rural portions of the City’s Planning Area, contributing to its rural and scenic character. Oak woodlands occur in scattered locations, primarily in the southerly portions of the City’s Planning Area, and contain a diverse habitat including six species of oak. Cottonwood-willow riparian forests are found primarily along the Santa Clara River and its tributaries.

Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) are identified in the unincorporated areas of the OVOV Planning Area by the County of Los Angeles as ecologically fragile or important land, or as providing habitat for sensitive animal and plant communities such as oak woodland and cottonwood-willow riparian forest areas. These SEAs, which encompass land and scenic resources that are visible from the City’s Planning Area, support a variety of woodland habitat, including oak and riparian woodlands. The woodlands include Interior Live Oak Woodland, Valley Oak Woodland, Coast Live Oak Woodland, and Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest. Interior Live Oak Woodland is located at the southern boundary of the OVOV Planning Area, abutting the Angeles National Forest and the Santa Susanna Mountains ridgeline. Valley Oak Woodland is concentrated in a single location south of State Route 126 and west of Interstate 5. Coast Live Oak Woodland exists in a limited number of pockets in the southern portions of the OVOV Planning Area. The oak woodland habitat is extremely diverse, containing six species of oak. Southern Cottonwood-Willow Riparian Forest borders the Santa Clara River and its tributaries.

Water Bodies

Rivers and streams located in canyon bottoms provide scenic visual relief from urbanization as well as habitat for wildlife. A river or streambed is a significant visual feature that influences the character of an area by providing (1) visual relief from the urbanized area, (2) a habitat for migrating birds, and (3) the topographic low point to which all land drains. The following are major water bodies of scenic value in the City's Planning Area (see **Figure 3.6-1**).

- The Santa Clara River flows approximately 100 miles from its headwaters near Acton to the Pacific Ocean, and is one of only two natural river systems remaining in Southern California, providing the City's Planning Area with a unique scenic resource. The Santa Clara River flows east to west through a valley formed between the Santa Susana Mountains and the Transverse Ranges. Over 4,000 acres of high quality riparian habitat have been preserved in a natural state along the length of the River. Some of the major tributaries to the Upper Santa Clara River watershed include Castaic Creek, San Francisquito Canyon, Bouquet Canyon, Sand Canyon, Mint Canyon, Oak Springs Canyon and the South Fork of the Santa Clara River. Newhall Creek, Placerita Creek, and Towsley Creek are tributaries to the South Fork.
- Castaic Lake is a major water body within the northern portion of the OVOV Planning Area, and consists of two separate lakes: the main Reservoir and the Lagoon. The main Reservoir is a V-shaped body of water with approximately 34 miles of shoreline. The west side of the lake is surrounded by parkland and sandy beaches. The Lagoon feeds Castaic Creek, a significant tributary to the Santa Clara River.
- Bouquet Creek and San Francisquito Creek are major tributaries to the Santa Clara River, and are two of the few perennial creeks in the City's Planning Area. Bouquet Creek is unchannelized from the city limits to Bouquet Reservoir, where it has neither levees nor any concrete bottoms.
- Newhall Creek, Placerita Creek, and Towsley Creek are tributaries to the South Fork of the Santa Clara River, which in turn is a tributary to the main Santa Clara River. Newhall Creek enters the South Fork near 16th Street.
- Sand Canyon and Oak Springs Canyon flow south to north into the Santa Clara River.

Open Space and Recreational Areas

Open space in the OVOV Planning Area includes portions of the Angeles National Forest, agricultural uses, public and private recreational uses such as parks, trails, golf courses, and other areas reserved for passive recreation, and land zoned as open space. Open space also includes vacant lands (i.e., lands that are abandoned farmland) and undeveloped lands. Bodies of water, such as the Santa Clara River, and water storage facilities are also considered to be open space areas. The City of Santa Clarita's Unified Development Code (UDC) defines open space as areas that (1) promote the retention of open space for

recreational use and for the protection of natural resources; and (2) promote preservation of open spaces and natural features that offer views to residents.

Park and recreational facilities are significant visual resources dispersed throughout the OVOV Planning Area. The City of Santa Clarita Parks, Recreation and Community Services Department operates 20 City parks totaling 245.9 acres and ranging in area from about 0.5 to 80 acres, which provide a wide range of recreational facilities. Additionally, it has 4,091.9 acres of open space within the City and the adopted SOI. Open space and parks are discussed in greater detail in the Draft Conservation and Open Space Element of the City's General Plan and the Parks and Recreation section of this environmental impact report (EIR) (**Section 3.16**).

Additionally, although many of these facilities are located outside the City boundaries, they serve as scenic resources to the City. Specifically, there are two state parks located within the OVOV Planning Area, which are operated by the County (see **Figure 3.6-1**).

- The Castaic Lake Recreation Area is a major recreational and scenic resource in the northwest section of the OVOV Planning Area. The Castaic Lake Recreation Area includes 8,800 acres and consists of two separate lakes.² The main Reservoir has approximately 34 miles of shoreline. On the south side of the dam is the Afterbay, or Lagoon. Parkland and sandy beaches surround the west side.
- Placerita Canyon State Park and Nature Center is situated in the transition zone between the San Gabriel Mountains and the Mojave Desert, located approximately 5 miles east of Newhall, in the unincorporated portion of the OVOV Planning Area. Designated as a State Historic Landmark, the purpose of Placerita Canyon State Park is to preserve and protect the site of the first discovery of gold in California in 1842. This area contains sandstone formations, seasonal streams and riparian oak woodlands, as well as stands of cottonwood and native sycamore trees. In addition, the location provides significant linkages between the Angeles National Forest, the Santa Susana Mountains, the Simi Hills, and the Santa Monica Mountains.

Other open spaces that can be considered scenic resources include undeveloped lands, floodways, and specialized facilities such as golf courses that provide amenities to visitors and residents. Cemeteries, schoolyards, and landscaped developments are also considered scenic resources since they provide contrast from adjacent uses based on landscaping quality, size, and configuration of open space.

Many open space areas that have remained undeveloped or that have been "naturalized" provide important habitat. Natural open space linkages may include open space dedications, easements, or greenbelts. Open space elements can also be found within large-scale development projects including but not limited to public plazas, entry courts, and planned development common areas.

² State of California, Department of Parks and Recreation 2003

Undeveloped Lands

Much of the land in the northern, eastern, and western portions of the OVOV Planning Area remains undeveloped. East of Canyon Country, large tracts of undeveloped property border State Route 14, extending to the boundaries of the Angeles National Forest. Similarly, much of the area to the west of Interstate 5 and along State Route 126 remains as open space or agricultural land. Open space and agricultural lands throughout the OVOV Planning Area provide a buffer to the City's built environment and convey a sense of rural character.

Urban Form

"Urban form" refers to the combination of individual elements in the built environment which together make up the cities and neighborhoods. Elements include houses, schools, parking lots, shopping centers, streets, parks, business centers, offices, and public buildings. The physical setting and history of the Santa Clarita Valley have combined to create several distinctive communities, each with its own special character, development patterns, and lifestyles. Communities within the City limits include Newhall, Valencia, Saugus, and Canyon Country. Subcommunities include Sand Canyon and Placerita Canyon. Topographically, many neighborhoods are separated from adjacent development by ridgelines or canyons. The location of the Santa Clara River and Interstate 5, both of which transect the OVOV Planning Area, also act as barriers that separate communities.

Residential Neighborhoods

The City's residential neighborhoods can be characterized as either Traditional Residential, Suburban Subdivision, Rural Large Lot Homes, or Mixed Density. These categories are defined below.

Traditional Residential. This urban form typifies much of the older residential developments in the City. Streets are laid out in an interconnected grid with houses set back at generally consistent distances from the street, often with extensive front yard landscaping and parkways. Houses are designed to open to the street, with garages located to the side or rear. These neighborhoods were typically built during the 1930-50s, and exhibit a diversity of architectural styles. Portions of Newhall and Saugus exemplify this urban form.

Suburban Subdivision. This type of neighborhood locates residences on lots along a curvilinear street pattern, often with cul-de-sacs. Houses generally exhibit a single architectural type with limited variety. Many of these homes are fronted by the garage with the housing unit oriented away from the street.

Portions of Canyon Country, Stevenson Ranch, Newhall and Saugus, and older neighborhoods of Valencia typify these urban forms.

Rural Large Lot Homes. This type of neighborhood is often separated from commercial and urban centers. Homes are often custom built by individuals, rather than produced in tracts by a single developer. Building sizes vary and architectural styles tend to reflect the rural character of the City. Placerita and Sand Canyon contain examples of these neighborhoods.

Mixed Density. This type of neighborhood incorporates a variety of housing types including single-family detached and attached units, low-rise townhomes, and garden apartments. Only a few mixed-density neighborhoods, which are primarily newer developments, exist in the City. Newer neighborhoods in Valencia exhibit the mixed-density form.

Commercial Districts

The City's commercial districts can be characterized as either a Commercial Corridor, Commercial Corridor Strip Center, Main Street Corridor, Regional Shopping Center Mall, Regional Center, or Community Center. These categories are defined below.

Commercial Corridor. Typical of older retail areas, mixed commercial districts contain small retail shops, located on comparatively small lots (typically 10,000 to 18,000 square feet), with no or limited parking to the rear of shops. Storefronts are generally located along the sidewalk and are architecturally similar. Large windows open to the sidewalk allowing passersby to view retail goods. Building mass is homogenous and typically limited to one-or two-story structures. Old Town Newhall typifies this form.

Commercial Corridor (Auto-oriented, independent buildings). In this particular type of commercial corridor, parcels are usually developed as a single building, set back from all property lines on a single parcel. These one-story buildings typically have simple box-like massing and lack a unique or distinguishing architectural style. Paved surface parking is located in front of or to the sides of buildings with minimal landscaping. Much of this construction was occurred between the 1950s and 1980s. Portions of Lyons Avenue and Soledad Canyon Road exhibit auto-oriented retail centers.

Commercial Corridor Strip Center. Similar to the preceding category, the strip center locates shops and businesses to the rear of parcels along the street corridor with expanses of parking lots along the frontage. The strip center is often developed on large lots, (typically 20,000 to 100,000 square feet), versus the smaller scale auto-oriented blocks. Multiple driveways provide access to the center. There is little variation in the building design, and distinct massing of elements is not evident. Strip centers may be one

to two stories tall. Examples of commercial strip centers are located along Soledad Canyon Road and Bouquet Canyon Road.

Main Street Corridor (Town Center). Similar to a traditional “Main Street,” retail shops are arranged in a pedestrian-oriented development in this district type. Buildings are adjacent to the sidewalk and close to the street, but far enough to facilitate enhanced streetscape and pedestrian amenities. Parking is angled or directly accessible to the front of shops. Buildings are medium to low scale, of varying mass, with elevations that are modulated, articulated, and visually transparent to provide a sense of comfort and safety for pedestrians. Town Center Drive in Valencia is developed with this Main Street concept.

Regional Shopping Center Mall. The regional shopping mall is typically situated on sites exceeding 40 acres and contains multiple tenants in an integrated complex surrounded by parking. The shopping mall is characterized by large massing and scale, and is often two to three stories. Shopping malls are typically more architecturally appealing than “big box” retail centers and usually exhibit greater façade articulation. The original Valencia Town Center is a prime example of the shopping mall.

Regional Centers (Retail Big Box). These are large, “superblock” developments with extensive parking lots. Buildings are bulky, box-like structures with little variation in massing. These structures also exhibit little building modulation or articulation, focusing on function rather than form. Costco is an example of this type of center.

Community Centers (Supermarket, or Super-Drug). Similar to large, regional centers, these contain buildings with multiple tenants abutted by large parking areas and are developed at a smaller scale (typically on 10- to 14-acre parcels). Buildings exhibit greater modulation and articulation, and generally differentiate massing. Grocery stores, drug stores and other retail uses and community services are located in these centers. Granary Square and Bouquet Center are examples of these centers.

Industrial Districts

The City’s industrial districts can be characterized as either Campus Business Park or Traditional Heavy Industrial. These two categories are defined below.

Campus Business Park. The business park is typically a collection of medium- to large-scale buildings developed within a landscaped, campus-like setting. Landscaped parking lots surround each building or group of buildings. Valencia Commerce Center and the Valencia, Rye Canyon, and Centre Pointe Business Park are examples of this form.

Traditional Heavy Industrial. Traditional industrial areas are typically independently developed sites containing industrial buildings that have continuous, unarticulated facades and homogenous massing. Parking areas with limited landscaping surround the buildings. Older portions of Soledad Canyon Road and Railroad Avenue industrial uses exhibit this form.

Architectural Styles

Each neighborhood or community within the City defines the community characteristics that are considered appropriate for that area. For example, residents in Canyon Country have endorsed rustic and natural building styles with emphasis on materials such as wood, stone, and enhanced paving. Because of its historical character, development in Newhall is subject to the Downtown Newhall Specific Plan standards. Saugus, an area that is largely developed but may experience rebuilding over time, is seeking renovation of its older commercial areas with more architectural detailing. Valencia, with the largest commercial and industrial areas in the city, is also the site of more modern multi-story development and contemporary designs. Although Valencia is nearly built out, any new development within the remaining industrial portions of Valencia will be required to follow the City's design guidelines.

Walkable Communities

The City seeks to create an attractive outdoor urban environment that promotes walkability, and has incorporated urban parkways to achieve this goal. Urban parkways are streets in which the presence of high-quality landscaping lends a positive visual character. Major urban parkways usually have landscaped medians that add green space to the streetscape. Secondary urban parkways include locations where mature trees, perhaps originally planted as windrows, dominate the streetscape.

Paths, such as bike and equestrian trails, link and interconnect land uses and areas of activity. Numerous paths traverse the parks and other hillside areas within and surrounding the City's Planning Area, and provide views of woodlands and topography as well as a place of relative seclusion from the urban environment. A path may also be a formal "paseo" or informal passage route such as a road that serves to provide a quality open space network that is spatially distributed throughout an area. Recent planned developments, such as those in Valencia, have incorporated paseos to provide links between residential areas and other uses.

Historical Resources

The Santa Clarita Valley has an extensive history representing the early settlement of California, the initial development of California's resources, and historic filming sites for Hollywood westerns. This heritage has been extensively preserved in the numerous historical sites throughout the OVOV Planning Area. Not only are these sites historical and cultural resources, but many are also considered scenic resources, as they are representative of and provide glimpses into the Valley's rich past. 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.

Historic resources within the City limits considered to have scenic value include, but are not limited to the William S. Hart Park and its Spanish Colonial Mansion;; Heritage Junction, which contains several historic structures, such as the Newhall Ranch House, built in 1861 as the headquarters of Rancho San Francisco; Mitchell Adobe School House, built in the 1860s and relocated to its current site in 1986; Saugus Depot, built in 1887 by Southern Pacific Railroad; Lyons Station/Eternal Valley Cemetery; Beale's Cut, near the junction of Interstate 5 and State Route 14, a State Point of Historic Interest; Downtown Newhall area, a City point of Historic interest; and Melody Ranch, which consists of authentic Western buildings and remains today the site of television and movie filming. Additional historic resources are located within the unincorporated portion of the OVOV Planning Area and include the Oak of the Golden Dream, where gold was first discovered in California in 1842, and Mentryville, which was established in 1876 as California's pioneer oil town.

Landmarks

A landmark is a significant reference point, often identified by a structure, landscape feature, or freestanding element. Landmarks commonly have singularity, allowing them to be distinguished from features surrounding them. They also provide visual and functional points of reference for residents and visitors within the community, contributing to a distinct sense of place. Landmarks often have architectural, historical, archeological, and/or cultural significance, and many of the historic places and features described above would be considered landmarks. Examples of landmarks both within and surrounding the City include the St. Francis Dam Disaster Site, Beale's Cut, the Oak of the Golden Dream and Vasquez Rocks.

Viewsheds

The following discussion of regional, local, and dark sky viewsheds includes text extracted from the Technical Background Report for the Santa Clarita Valley General Plan (February 2004).

A viewshed is a view corridor from a vantage point to landscapes or features that exhibit high visual quality. The City of Santa Clarita recognizes three primary types of viewshed:

- **Significant Regional Viewshed**—A viewshed where a significant number of prominent visual features unique to the Santa Clarita Valley can be identified.
- **Significant Local Viewshed**—A viewshed where a significant number of prominent visual features unique to the Santa Clarita Valley or the City of Santa Clarita can be identified, but that are secondary in quantity or nature to a Significant Regional Viewshed.
- **Dark Sky Viewshed**—A location away from artificial or urban light sources, which preserves the nighttime view of stars, planets, constellations, and other celestial bodies.

Viewsheds can be adversely affected by the urbanization of natural areas such as prominent slopes or woodlands. Viewsheds are also sensitive to adverse changes in air quality since smog obscures long-range visibility.

Regional Viewsheds

The Angeles National Forest, the Los Padres National Forest and their ridgelines provide an important visual backdrop for much of the City. The forestlands provide long-distance viewsheds from numerous locations in the City including the Valley floor, hillsides, and ridgeline locations. Furthermore, since the City is surrounded by mountain ranges, one may obtain panoramic views of the surrounding mountains from primary roadways and numerous locations on the Valley floor.

Scenic drives provide mobile views of a wide variety of topographic and biological features. Extensive, uninterrupted views of wide expanses of land, as well as more intimate vistas along shorter, secluded road segments, are often available. These drives not only provide an important scenic resource for residents, but are often the only aesthetic experience for visitors or passersby of the City.

Scenic vistas are available along Interstate 5, State Route 14, and State Route 126. These vistas are surrounded by undisturbed mountains, ridgelines, and national forest as well as new development, and provide picturesque views. Of these roadways, Interstate 5 and State Route 14, which run through the pass between the Los Angeles Basin and the Santa Clarita Valley, also serve as natural gateways to the Santa Clarita Valley, providing the first views from the south of the City's Planning Area from the south, its topography and vegetation. As development increases, encroachment into hillside areas and high-density development in close proximity to these gateways, particularly where mass grading is required, could adversely affect the visual quality of the entries into the City's Planning Area. Similarly, development in close proximity to roadways that provide scenic views for motorists could degrade the

natural, sweeping quality of the views provided, particularly if such development occurs in high densities or involves tall structures that could obscure long-range views.

In addition to the major highways, scenic views and vistas of various canyons can be found along roads through the City's Planning Area, including Soledad Canyon Road, Bouquet Canyon Road, Sand Canyon Road, Placerita Canyon Road, Sierra Highway and Golden Valley Road. Additionally, Lake Hughes Road and Vasquez Canyon Road provide scenic views outside the City boundary. Many of these scenic drives traverse oak- and sycamore-studded canyons along winding streambeds.

The following describes the roadways that offer scenic viewsheds within and outside the City's Planning Area (see **Figure 3.6-1**).

- State Route 14 traverses the OVOV Planning Area southwest to northeast, and reaches an elevation over 3,000 feet above sea level at Escondido Summit in Acton at the eastern boundary of the Planning Area.
- Interstate 5 crosses the OVOV Planning Area south to north. The segment of Interstate 5 between Interstate 210 near Tunnel Station and State Route 126 near Castaic has been studied for nomination to the California Scenic Highway program.
- State Route 126 between Santa Paula (outside of the OVOV Planning Area) and Interstate 5 near Castaic offers views of mostly undeveloped and/or agricultural lands and occasional vistas of the Santa Clara River. This segment of State Route 126 has also been studied for nomination to the California Scenic Highway program.
- Soledad Canyon Road runs east/west along the Santa Clara River through a mostly undeveloped and scenic river canyon. Soledad Canyon is a major migration corridor for birds and other wildlife.
- Bouquet Canyon Road runs north/south from Saugus in Santa Clarita to Leona Valley, including the Bouquet Canyon Reservoir. In Saugus, the road is a four- to six-lane thoroughfare with a bike lane along part of its journey. Approximately 1 mile from the Santa Clarita city limits, ranches and open space replace the residential development.
- Placerita Canyon Road, south of State Route 14, winds past the Disney Movie Ranch through an oak- and chaparral-studded canyon, past the Placerita Nature Center, and loops north to connect with Sand Canyon Road.
- San Francisquito Canyon Road runs north/south from Saugus in Santa Clarita to Elizabeth Lake.
- Lake Hughes Road runs north/south from Castaic to Lake Hughes. It was built by the California Conservation Corps in 1936; a portion of the original highway runs underneath Castaic Lake.
- Sierra Highway parallels State Route 14 from the southwestern portion of the OVOV Planning Area, turning north approximately 4 miles east of its junction with Interstate 5. Sierra Highway then travels

through the rural community and ranches of Agua Dulce, turning south once again to cross State Route 14 in Acton. The area surrounding this highway is mostly rural, especially in the eastern portion of the OVOV Planning Area.

- Sand Canyon Road exists as a predominately two lane undivided roadway that provides for north/south travel between Sierra Highway and Placerita Canyon Road. From its southern terminus near Placerita Canyon Road, access to the San Fernando Valley communities of Sunland and Tujunga is possible via a connection with Little Tujunga Road Canyon through the Angeles National Forest.
- Golden Valley Road/Newhall Ranch Road which are collectively know as the Cross Valley Connector, exists as a four lane to eight-lane roadway that provides for a seamless connection between the I-5/SR-126 junction and the SR-14/Golden Valley Road interchange. It is designated on the proposed Highway Plan as a Major Highway.

Local Viewsheds

The significant topographic and natural resources in the OVOV Planning Area provide local viewsheds to neighborhoods in the City. Examples of local viewsheds include views of hillsides and ridgelines from residential developments. Another type of local viewshed includes views contained within a single canyon. For example, Pico Canyon Road provides local views of the canyon and slopes as it ascends to canyon headwaters.

Dark Sky Viewsheds

Dark sky viewsheds are generally available in less urbanized areas, such as in the canyons and canyon roads that surround the City. Dark sky viewsheds are more widespread in the eastern portion of the City, where urbanization has been limited.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

City of Santa Clarita

Existing General Plan

The City adopted its first Open Space and Conservation Element in 1991, and updated the element in 1999. The element addressed the issues of open space, biological resources, soil resources, mineral resources, water resources, energy conservation, and cultural and historical resources. Policies in the element addressed preservation of natural features and ridgelines, sensitive habitats, recreation, the designation of open space as a buffer from natural hazards, protection of mineral resources, groundwater quality and recharge, and preservation of cultural resources. In order to implement the resource

conservation policies of the original General Plan, the City adopted ordinances as part of Title 17 (Zoning) of the Municipal Code to regulate soil erosion and dust prevention, hillside development, ridgeline preservation, stormwater quality, and oak tree preservation. The City updated its Park, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan in August of 2008.³

Hillside Development Ordinance

The provisions of the City's Hillside Development Ordinance (Chapter 17.80 of the Municipal Code) are intended to regulate the development and alteration of hillside areas, to minimize the adverse effects of hillside development and to provide for the safety and welfare of the citizens of the City of Santa Clarita while allowing for the reasonable development of hillside areas through the following methods:

- Provide hillside development standards to maximize the positive impacts of site design, grading, landscape architecture and building architecture, and provide development consistent with the goals and policies of the City of Santa Clarita's General Plan.
- Maintain the essential natural characteristics of the area such as major landforms, vegetation and wildlife communities, hydrologic features, scenic qualities and open space that contribute to a sense of place.
- Retain the integrity of predominant off-site and on-site views in hillside areas in order to maintain the identity, image and environmental quality of the City.

The provisions of the Hillside Development Ordinance apply to parcels of land with average slopes of 10 percent or more. The provisions apply to all projects requiring grading permits, building permits, parcel maps, tentative tract maps, conditional use permits, and plans for development review. Such projects may be subject to specific development standards related to grading design, density, setbacks, building height, architectural treatments, landscaping, and retaining walls.

Open Space and Acquisition Plan

The City of Santa Clarita's Open Space Acquisition Plan (OSAP) was adopted in 2002 to create a systematic and objective mechanism for evaluating and acquiring open space. This plan was intended to assist in the creation of a "greenbelt" surrounding the City of Santa Clarita to improve and expand wildlife habitat and corridors, and to provide a framework for the City to evaluate, acquire, and maintain the most beneficial parcels within and surrounding the City for preservation as open space. The OSAP also identified a goal of acquiring open space to augment the Rim of the Valley open space and trail

³ *City of Santa Clarita Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Master Plan Update* prepared by RJM Design Group, Inc. August 2008. .

system. Since its incorporation in 1987, the City of Santa Clarita has acquired more than 3,000 acres of land for the purpose of preservation of natural habitat and open space. The City Council has focused on preserving a greenbelt of open space around the City's incorporated boundaries, and about 50 percent of that greenbelt was completed as of 2007.⁴

Community Character and Design Guidelines

The City adopted a set of Community Character and Design Guidelines in 2009 to guide the creation of new residential, commercial, mixed-use, and industrial developments and give clear direction for the renovation and redevelopment of built areas. These guidelines supersede the Santa Clarita Architectural Design Guidelines (adopted in 2002). The intent of these guidelines is to retain and encourage architectural variety, promote quality development, and ensure that both existing and new development:

- are compatible in size, scale, and appearance with the character of Santa Clarita.
- are attractive and an asset to the community.
- preserve and enhances natural features of a site.
- incorporate quality articulation, community character features, multiple building forms, desirable building details, and other elements that display excellence in design.
- provide pedestrian-oriented design to enrich the pedestrian experience.
- include pedestrian friendly amenities such as pedestrian connections, plazas, seating, bike racks, fountains, and other similar features, for the enjoyment of the community and visitors.
- promote the use of high quality materials.
- promote well-landscaped parking lots with efficient pedestrian and vehicular circulation.
- provide suggestions for ways to improve the environmental performance of projects through the strategic incorporation of green building components.

More specifically, the guidelines discuss design trends and quality design principles; define the individual character of each community within Santa Clarita and list suggested building materials and identifies specific design considerations; and provide guidelines for the single-family residential, multi-family residential, commercial, mixed-use, and industrial land use categories. No single architectural theme is promoted, but rather the emphasis is to promote variety.

⁴ City of Santa Clarita, "City of Santa Clarita Open Space FAQs," <http://www.santaclaritaopenspace.com/faq.asp>.

Sustainable planning and design concepts were used as a foundation from which the guidelines were drafted. The core principles of smart growth and new urbanism as well the key components of Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), were integrated throughout the guidelines to ensure that proposed developments are planned and designed to reduce impacts on the surrounding environment. Conventional design and construction methods can produce buildings that contribute to excessive resource consumption, generate waste, and are expensive to operate.

Beautification Master Plan

In 2001, the City adopted the Santa Clarita Beautification Master Plan, which contains citywide design guidelines as well as specific guidelines tailored to maintain community character within Canyon Country, Newhall, Saugus, and Valencia. According to the document, “the Beautification Master Plan addresses concepts for streetscape design, landscape enhancement, gateways, and monumentation and signage, on both a regional and a community scale. The Master Plan strives to maintain the identity of individual communities while unifying the entire City through design.”

In its Beautification Plan, the City has identified a goal of providing landscaped medians within major arterial roadways in order to provide aesthetic appeal, control vehicle circulation, calm traffic, and provide area for directional and traffic signs. Specifically, the following arterials are identified for landscape median enhancement:

- Via Princessa
- Santa Clarita Parkway
- Soledad Canyon Road
- Railroad Avenue
- Newhall Ranch Road
- Lyons Avenue
- Sierra Highway

Standardized, drought-tolerant plant palettes along with decorative concrete are desired in the medians, which will help to enhance and unify the community.

Another area in which the City and County can coordinate beautification efforts is the provision of unified signs, especially for regional trails, trailheads, open space and preserve areas. In addition,

consistent street furniture such as bus shelters, benches, and trash cans can be used to unify streetscapes throughout the Valley.⁵

Urban Forestry Division

The City of Santa Clarita maintains an Urban Forestry program as part of its Public Works Department. The Urban Forestry Division maintains all of the City's street, park, trail, and facility trees, while planting many more each year. The Division is responsible for the maintenance of 50,000 trees, reforestation, weed abatement, the Neighborhood Leaf Out Program, the Arbor Day celebration, landscape plan review, and tree removal. Through its Neighborhood Leaf Out Program, the Division provides education and public outreach to encourage tree planting throughout the City. The Division also maintains recommended tree planting lists. Through these efforts, the City has been recognized as a Tree City USA award winner for many years. The City has long recognized the value of a healthy urban forest, and will continue to promote this program.⁶

County of Los Angeles

The County regulates scenic open space primarily through its General Plan and Area Plans. Policies and programs of the General Plan directed toward the management and protection of the scenic qualities of these areas constitutes the Open Space Plan of Los Angeles County. Open space lands may be subject to additional controls through special management areas such as National Recreation and Forest areas, SEAs, mineral resource areas, hazard areas, and areas subject to cultural heritage protection.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Significance Thresholds

In order to assist in determining whether a project will have a significant effect on the environment, the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*, Appendix G, identify criteria for conditions that may be deemed to constitute a substantial or potentially substantial adverse change in physical conditions.

⁵ Draft Land Use Element (July 2008).

⁶ Draft Conservation and Open Space Element (July 2008).

Based on the *State CEQA Guidelines*, potentially significant impacts on aesthetics resources would occur if the proposed General Plan would:

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

The City of Santa Clarita *Local CEQA Guidelines* (Resolution 05-38) adopted on April 26, 2005, also serve as the basis for identifying thresholds to determine the significance of the environmental effects of a project on this resource area and have been included for analysis.

Based on the *City of Santa Clarita Local CEQA Guidelines*, potentially significant impacts on aesthetics resources would occur if the proposed General Plan would:

- Result in changes to the topography of a Primary or Secondary Ridgeline.⁷

IMPACT ANALYSIS

This impact analysis section evaluates the potential effects of the proposed General Plan goals, objectives, and policies on aesthetics and scenic resources within the City's Planning Area using the *State CEQA Guidelines* threshold of significance and the City's *CEQA Guidelines*.

Scenic Vistas

Impact 3.6-1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in a potentially significant impact to a scenic vista.

As previously discussed, scenic vistas within the City's Planning Area are both panoramic and focal. The ridgelines of the Sierra Pelona, San Gabriel, and Santa Susana Mountains provide panoramic views of the Santa Clarita Valley. Scenic vistas of these mountains are extensively offered from primary roadways and other vantage points throughout the Valley floor as well as the City's trail system. Scenic drives through the canyons and the highways leading into the Valley offer more focused scenic vistas. The scenic

⁷ Subsequent to the adoption of Resolution 05-38, the City has modified its hillside guidelines to consider any changes to primary ridgelines as significant.

resources that compose scenic vistas include major topographic features such as ridgelines and canyons, woodlands, biological resources, water bodies, open space, parkland, and historic resources.

The proposed General Plan would designate land for urban uses throughout the City's Planning Area. Presently vacant lands could become developed with urban uses. If unregulated, new development under buildout of the proposed General Plan has the potential to degrade the quality of existing scenic vistas. For example, hillside development could result in mass grading of ridgelines and other natural topographic features as well as the removal of vegetation, including native woodlands. Development on the Valley floor could obstruct long-range views of the surrounding mountains if new structures have prohibitive building heights and placement. Development within open space areas could adversely impact the quality of vistas offered along local scenic drives and the major highways leading into the Valley.

In order to reduce these potential impacts resulting from development, several goals, objectives, and policies in the proposed General Plan related to the preservation of topography, open space, woodlands, and other scenic resources would promote the protection of scenic vistas. **Objective CO 6.5** specifically promotes the maintenance of designated routes, gateways, and vista points by considering scenic views at major entry points to the Valley, and establishing scenic routes and adopting guidelines to maintain their character (**Policies CO 6.5.1 and 6.5.2**). Additionally, vistas would be maintained by minimizing smog, restricting the establishment of billboards throughout the Planning Area, and removing those that currently obstruct scenic views, restricting building heights and requiring undergrounding all new utility lines (**Objective CO 6.6; Policies CO 6.6.2–6.6.5**).

While the above objectives and policies are aimed specifically at preserving scenic vistas, most applicable goals, objectives, and policies from the proposed General Plan are designed to enhance and protect scenic resources that contribute to the City's valued views. **Goal CO 1** is to obtain a balance between the City's social and economic needs and protection of the natural environment, which provides scenic resources to the City. In order to minimize adverse impacts to these natural resources, the proposed General Plan would promote infill development such that urban uses are concentrated within the valley center (**Objective CO 1.5; Policy CO 1.5.5**). Similarly, it would allow density transfers and clustering to encourage the retention of open space (**Policy CO 10.2.5**). By concentrating growth near or within the developed portions of the Valley floor, open space would continue to provide a scenic landscape and backdrop to the City's Planning Area.

For development that does occur on open space, **Goal CO 2** would conserve the Santa Clarita Valley's hillsides, canyons, and ridgelines by limiting hillside development. Grading techniques that mimic the

natural topography, revegetation of graded slopes with native drought tolerant plants, setbacks from ridgelines, designating additional open space, erosion control measures, and minimal use of large retaining walls are all ways in which the City would preserve scenic slopes (**Objective CO 2.2; Policies CO 2.2.1–2.2.6**).

Goal CO 3 is to conserve biological resources and ecosystems, which provide scenic relief from the built environment. The proposed General Plan would promote tree planting, habitat restoration, revegetation, increased open space, and the concentration of development into previously developed, urban areas that avoid impacts to wetlands, woodlands, heritage trees, floodplains, water bodies, and threatened habitat (**Objectives CO 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.5, and 3.6; Policies CO 3.1.1–3.1.4, 3.1.6, 3.1.8, 3.1.10, 3.2.1 and 3.2.2, 3.2.4, 3.3.2, 3.3.4, 3.3.5, 3.5.3, and 3.6.5**).

Goal CO 5 is to protect historical and culturally significant resources, which contribute to more localized, focal scenic vistas in the City’s Planning Area. The proposed General Plan would enforce preliminary review of alternations to these resources in the Historical Resources in the Santa Clarita Valley Planning Area (**Objective CO 5.1; Policies CO 5.1.1 and 5.1.2**) and preserve and enhance Downtown Newhall as a scenic historical site (**Objective CO 5.2; Policies CO 5.2.1–5.2.4**).

Goal CO 6 is to use designated parkland or open space to preserve scenic landforms that keep the Santa Clarita Valley beautiful and enhance quality of life, such as the canyons, significant ridgelines as shown on the Scenic Resources Map, and unique geologic formations throughout the Planning Area, like Vasquez Rocks (**Objective CO 6.1; Policies CO 6.1.1–6.1.3**), support the efforts of Los Angeles County to protect shores of scenic water bodies such as Castaic Lake and the Santa Clara River (**Objective 6.3; Policies CO 6.3.1 and 6.3.2**), and scenic habitat including oak woodlands and coastal sage (**Objective CO 6.4, Policies CO 6.4.1 and 6.4.2**).

Goals CO 9 and 10 are to enhance parkland and open space, which, due to their lack of development, form natural components of scenic vistas. These goals would be met through the addition of trails to scenic viewpoints (**Objective CO 9.2; Policy CO 9.2.6**), providing a natural greenbelt buffer surrounding the entire Santa Clarita Valley (**Objective 10.1; Policy CO 10.1.1**), preserving the Santa Clara River corridor as open space (**Policy CO 10.1.2**), maintaining existing open space and obtaining additional open space through dedications and acquisitions (**Policies CO 10.1.3–10.1.5, 10.1.9, and 10.1.14**). The proposed policies would encourage provision of vegetated open space of a development project’s gross site area, which may include shallow wetlands and ponds, drought resistant landscaping, and pedestrian hardscape that includes a vegetated area; that open space provided within development projects be usable and accessible (**Objective CO 10.2; Policies CO 10.2.1, 10.2.2, and 10.2.4**). Where appropriate

density transfers and clustering would be allowed to encourage retention of open space (**Policy CO 10.2.5**).

Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives, and Policies

Goal CO 1: A balance between the social and economic needs of Santa Clarita Valley residents and protection of the natural environment, so that these needs can be met in the present and in the future.

Objective CO 1.5: Manage urban development and human-built systems to minimize harm to ecosystems, watersheds, and other natural systems, such as urban runoff treatment trains that infiltrate, treat and remove direct connections to impervious areas.

Policy CO 1.5.5: Promote concentration of urban uses within the center of the Santa Clarita Valley through incentives for infill development and rebuilding, in order to limit impacts to open space, habitats, watersheds, hillsides, and other components of the Valley's natural ecosystems.

Goal CO 2: Conserve the Santa Clarita Valley's hillsides, canyons, ridgelines, soils, and minerals, which provide the physical setting for the natural and built environments.

Objective CO 2.2: Preserve the Santa Clarita Valley's prominent ridgelines and limit hillside development to protect the valuable aesthetic and visual qualities intrinsic to the Santa Clarita Valley landscape.

Policy CO 2.2.1: Locate development and designate land uses to minimize the impact on the Santa Clarita Valley's topography, minimizing grading and emphasizing the use of development pads that mimic the natural topography in lieu of repetitive flat pads, to the extent feasible.

Policy CO 2.2.2: Ensure that graded slopes in hillside areas are revegetated with native drought tolerant plants or other approved vegetation to

blend manufactured slopes with adjacent natural hillsides, in consideration of fire safety and slope stability requirements.

Policy CO 2.2.3: Preserve designated natural ridgelines from development by ensuring a minimum distance for grading and development from these ridgelines of 50 feet or more if determined appropriate by the reviewing authority based on site conditions, to maintain the Santa Clarita Valley's distinctive community character and preserve the scenic setting.

Policy CO 2.2.4: Identify and preserve significant geological and topographic features through designating these areas as open space or by other means as appropriate.

Policy CO 2.2.5: Promote the use of adequate erosion control measures for all development in hillside areas, including single family homes and infrastructure improvements, both during and after construction.

Policy CO 2.2.6: Encourage building and grading designs that conform to the natural grade, avoiding the use of large retaining walls and build-up walls that are visible from offsite, to the extent feasible and practicable.

Goal CO 3: Conservation of biological resources and ecosystems, including sensitive habitats and species.

Objective CO 3.1: In review of development plans and projects, encourage conservation of existing natural areas and restoration of damaged natural vegetation to provide for habitat and biodiversity.

Policy CO 3.1.1: On the Land Use Map and through the development review process, concentrate development into previously developed or urban areas to promote infill development and prevent sprawl and habitat loss, to the extent feasible.

- Policy CO 3.1.2:** Avoid designating or approving new development that will adversely impact wetlands, floodplains, threatened or endangered species and habitat, and water bodies supporting fish or recreational uses, and establish an adequate buffer area as deemed appropriate through site specific review.
- Policy CO 3.1.3:** On previously undeveloped sites (greenfields) identify biological resources and incorporate habitat preservation measures into the site plan, where appropriate. (This policy will generally not apply to urban infill sites, except as otherwise determined by the reviewing agency).
- Policy CO 3.1.4:** For new development on sites with degraded habitat, include habitat restoration measures as part of the project development plan, where appropriate.
- Policy CO 3.1.6:** On development sites, preserve and enhance natural site elements including existing water bodies, soil conditions, ecosystems, trees, vegetation and habitat, to the extent feasible.
- Policy CO 3.1.8:** On development sites, require tree planting to provide habitat and shade to reduce the heat island effect caused by pavement and buildings.
- Policy CO 3.1.10:** To the extent feasible, encourage the use of open space to promote biodiversity.
- Objective CO 3.2:** Identify and protect areas which have exceptional biological resource value due to a specific type of vegetation, habitat, ecosystem, or location.
- Policy CO 3.2.1:** Protect wetlands from development impacts, with the goal of achieving no net loss (or functional reduction) of jurisdictional wetlands within the planning area.
- Policy CO 3.2.2:** Ensure that development is located and designed to protect oak, and other significant indigenous woodlands.

Policy CO 3.2.4: Protect biological resources in the designated Significant Ecological Areas (SEAs) through the siting and design of development which is highly compatible with the SEA resources. Specific development standards shall be identified to control the types of land use, density, building location and size, roadways and other infrastructure, landscape, drainage, and other elements to assure the protection of the critical and important plant and animal habitats of each SEA. In general, the principle shall be to minimize the intrusion and impacts of development in these areas with sufficient controls to adequately protect the resources.

Objective CO 3.3: Protect significant wildlife corridors from encroachment by development that would hinder or obstruct wildlife movement.

Policy CO 3.3.2: Cooperate with other responsible agencies to protect, enhance, and extend the Rim of the Valley trail system through Elsmere and Whitney Canyons, and other areas as appropriate, to provide both recreational trails and wildlife corridors linking the Santa Susana and San Gabriel Mountains.

Policy CO 3.3.4: Support the maintenance of Santa Clarita Woodlands Park, a critical component of a cross-mountain range wildlife habitat corridor linking the Santa Monica Mountains to the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests.

Policy CO 3.3.5: Encourage connection of natural open space areas in site design, to allow for wildlife movement.

Objective CO 3.5: Maintain, enhance, and manage the urban forest throughout developed portions of the Santa Clarita Valley to provide habitat, reduce energy consumption, and create a more livable environment.

Policy CO 3.5.3: Pursuant to the requirements of the zoning ordinance, protect heritage oak trees that, due to their size and condition, are deemed to have exceptional value to the community.

Objective CO 3.6: Minimize impacts of human activity and the built environment on natural plant and wildlife communities.

Policy CO 3.6.5: Ensure revegetation of graded areas and slopes adjacent to natural open space areas with native plants (consistent with fire prevention requirements).

Goal CO 5: Protection of historical and culturally significant resources that contribute to community identity and a sense of history.

Objective CO 5.1: Protect sites identified as having local, state, or national significance as a cultural or historical resource.

Policy CO 5.1.1: For sites identified on the Cultural and Historical Resources Map, review appropriate documentation prior to issuance of any permits for grading, demolition, alteration, and/or new development, to avoid significant adverse impacts. Such documentation may include cultural resource reports, environmental impact reports, or other information as determined to be adequate by the reviewing authority.

Policy CO 5.1.2: Review any proposed alterations to cultural and historic sites identified in the Cultrual and Historical Resources in the Santa Clarita Valley Planning Area Table or other sites which are so designated, based on the guidelines contained in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Properties (Title 36, Code of Federal Regulations, Chapter 1, Part 68, also known as 36 CFR 68), or other adopted City guidelines.

Objective CO 5.2: Protect and enhance the historic character of Downtown Newhall.

Policy CO 5.2.1: In keeping with the Downtown Newhall Specific Plan policies, ensure that the scale and character of new development is compatible with and does not detract from the context of historic buildings and block patterns.

Policy CO 5.2.2: Support expansion and enhancement of a City of Santa Clarita historical park adjacent to the Pioneer Oil Refinery to illustrate historic oil operations in the Santa Clarita Valley.

Policy CO 5.2.3: Ensure that all aspects of community design in Newhall, including street furniture, lighting, trash collection and storage areas, seating, and other accessory structures, are of a design and scale appropriate for the historic character of the district, while maintaining a sense of authenticity.

Policy CO 5.2.4: Continue to support “Heritage Junction” and the historical museum within William S. Hart Park as historical resources that illustrate the various phases of settlement within the Santa Clarita Valley.

Goal CO 6: Preservation of scenic features that keep the Santa Clarita Valley beautiful and enhance quality of life, community identity, and property values.

Objective CO 6.1: Protect the scenic character of local topographic features.

Policy CO 6.1.1: Protect scenic canyons, as described in Part I of this element, from overdevelopment and environmental degradation.

Policy CO 6.1.2: Preserve significant ridgelines, as shown on the Scenic Resources Map, as a scenic backdrop throughout the community by maintaining natural grades and vegetation.

Policy CO 6.1.3: Protect the scenic quality of unique geologic features throughout the planning area, such as Vasquez Rocks, by including these features within park and open space land, where possible.

Objective CO 6.3: Protect the scenic character of major water bodies.

Policy CO 6.3.1: Support the efforts of Los Angeles County to protect the shores of Castaic Lake to preserve its scenic quality from development.

Policy CO 6.3.2: Protect the banks of the Santa Clara River and its major tributaries through open space designations and property

acquisitions, where feasible, to protect and enhance the scenic character of the river valley.

Objective CO 6.4: Protect the scenic character of oak woodlands, coastal sage, and other habitats unique to the Santa Clarita Valley.

Policy CO 6.4.1: Preserve scenic habitat areas within designated open space or parkland, wherever possible.

Policy CO 6.4.2: Through the development review process, ensure that new development preserves scenic habitat areas to the extent feasible.

Objective CO 6.5: Maintain the scenic character of designated routes, gateways, and vista points along roadways.

Policy CO 6.5.1: In approving new development projects, consider scenic views at major entry points to the Santa Clarita Valley, including gateways located at the Newhall Pass, along Lake Hughes Road, Route 126, Bouquet Canyon Road, Sierra Highway, State Route 14, and other locations as deemed appropriate by the reviewing authority.

Policy CO 6.5.2: Establish scenic routes in appropriate locations as determined by the reviewing agency, and adopt guidelines for these routes to maintain their scenic character.

Objective CO 6.6: Limit adverse impacts by humans on the scenic environment.

Policy CO 6.6.2: Improve views of the Santa Clarita Valley through various policies to minimize air pollution and smog, as contained throughout the General Plan.

Policy CO 6.6.3: Restrict establishment of billboards throughout the planning area, and continue abatement efforts to remove existing billboards that impact scenic views.

Policy CO 6.6.4: Where appropriate, require new development to be sensitive to scenic viewpoints or viewsheds through building design, site layout and building heights.

Policy CO 6.6.5: Encourage undergrounding of all new utility lines, and promote undergrounding of existing lines where feasible and practicable.

Goal CO 9: Equitable distribution of park, recreational, and trail facilities to serve all areas and demographic needs of existing and future residents.

Objective CO 9.2: Recognize that trails are an important recreational asset that, when integrated with transportation systems, contribute to mobility throughout the Santa Clarita Valley.

Policy CO 9.2.6: Provide trails to scenic vistas and viewpoints.

Goal CO 10: Preservation of open space to meet the community's multiple objectives for resource preservation.

Objective CO 10.1: Identify areas throughout the Santa Clarita Valley which should be preserved as open space in order to conserve significant resources for long-term community benefit.

Policy CO 10.1.1: Provide and protect a natural greenbelt buffer area surrounding the entire Santa Clarita Valley, which includes the Angeles National Forest, Santa Susana, San Gabriel, and Sierra Pelona Mountains, as a regional recreational, ecological, and aesthetic resource.

Policy CO 10.1.2: The Santa Clara River corridor and its major tributaries shall be preserved as open space to accommodate storm water flows and protect critical plant and animal species, as follows:

- a. Uses and improvements within the corridor shall be limited to those that benefit the community's use of the river in its natural state.
- b. Development on properties adjacent to, but outside of the defined primary river corridor shall be:

- i. Located and designed to protect the river's water quality, plants, and animal habitats by controlling the type and density of uses, drainage runoff (water treatment) and other relevant elements; and
- ii. Designed to maximize the full range of river amenities, including views and recreational access, while minimizing adverse impacts to the river.

Policy CO 10.1.3: Through dedications and acquisitions, obtain open space needed to preserve and protect wildlife corridors and habitat, which may include land within SEA's, wetlands, woodlands, water bodies, and areas with threatened or endangered flora and fauna.

Policy CO 10.1.4: Maintain and acquire, where appropriate, open space to preserve cultural and historical resources.

Policy CO 10.1.5: Maintain open space corridors along canyons and ridgelines as a way of delineating and defining communities and neighborhoods, providing residents with access to natural areas, and preserving scenic beauty.

Policy CO 10.1.9: Preserve forested areas, agricultural lands, wildlife habitat and corridors, wetlands, watersheds, groundwater recharge areas, and other open space that provides natural carbon sequestration benefits.

Policy CO 10.1.14: Protect open space from human activity that may harm or degrade natural areas, including but not limited to off road motorized vehicles, vandalism, campfires, overuse, pets, noise, excessive lighting, dumping, or other similar activities.

Objective CO 10.2: Ensure the inclusion of adequate open space within development projects.

Policy CO 10.2.1: Encourage provision of vegetated open space on a development project's site, which may include shallow wetlands and ponds, drought tolerant landscaping, and pedestrian hardscape that includes vegetated areas.

- Policy CO 10.2.2:** Encourage that open space provided within development projects be usable and accessible, rather than configured in unusable strips and left-over remnants, and that open space areas are designed to connect to each other and to adjacent open spaces, to the extent reasonable and practical.
- Policy CO 10.2.4:** Seek opportunities to incorporate site features into the open space of a project design, which may include significant trees, vegetation, terrain, or water features, to provide thermal, acoustic, and aesthetic benefits.
- Policy CO 10.2.5:** Where appropriate, allow density transfers and clustering to encourage retention of open space provided all residential lots meet the applicable minimum lot size requirements of the Land Use Element and the Zoning Ordinance.

Effectiveness of Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

The proposed goals, objectives and policies are designed to guide growth near or within the developed portion of the Valley floor in order to preserve the existing rural and open space character of the City; provide for the permanent preservation or restoration of important natural and built scenic resources; incorporate open space within developed areas; conserve view corridors, skylines, and scenic vistas; and impose restrictions on development activities that may adversely affect scenic resources. The primary open space and rural lands are located outside of the City limits in the Valley; however, many of these lands are in the City's SOI or under City ownership. The two main areas within the City limits that have a rural residential quality are Sand Canyon and portions of Placerita Canyon. While buildout of the City's Planning Area would change the existing visual resources within the City's Planning Area the above goals, objectives, and policies would minimize impacts on those features comprising scenic vistas (ridgelines, biological resources, open space, and historic resources). Additionally, impacts on scenic vistas would need to be evaluated on a project-by-project basis during the CEQA process and additional mitigation measures implemented as needed. Impacts on scenic vistas from implementation of the proposed General Plan would be less than significant and no mitigation measures are required.

Plan to Plan Analysis

The proposed General Plan, with its in excess of 3,000 acres of increased open space, would provide for the permanent preservation or restoration of important natural and built scenic resources and conservation of scenic vistas; buildout under the City's proposed General Plan would have fewer aesthetic impacts compared with buildout under the existing Plan.

State Scenic Highway

Impact 3.6-2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan would result in a potentially significant impact to scenic resources within a scenic highway.

There are no designated state scenic highways in the City of Santa Clarita or elsewhere in the Santa Clarita Valley. State Route 126 is designated as an eligible state scenic highway, but is not officially designated. Los Angeles County designates State Route 126 as a "First Priority Scenic Route" which is proposed for further study, but has no regulatory restrictions placed on it.

As there are no state scenic highways in the City's Planning Area, no proposed General Plan goals, objectives, or policies address scenic resources specifically within a state scenic highway. However, several policies address the impact to scenic resources within the City's locally scenic corridors, which are discussed under **Impact 3.6-1** above. For example, **Objective CO 6.5** contains several policies intended to maintain the scenic character of designated routes, gateways, and vista points along roadways. **Policy CO 6.5.1** states that scenic views at major entry points to Santa Clarita Valley should be considered in the approval of new development projects. **Policy CO 6.5.2** states that scenic routes in appropriate locations and guidelines for the maintenance of their scenic character should be established. Implementation of policies would protect existing scenic corridors and better enable the future designation of a state scenic highway within the City's Planning Area.

Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

See **Impact 3.6-1** for goals, objectives, and policies related to the protection of scenic resources including historical sites, ecosystems, landforms, water bodies, and geological formations.

Effectiveness of Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

See **Impact 3.6-1** for a discussion of the effectiveness of goals, objectives, and policies designed to protect scenic resources. However, since no state scenic highways are located within the City's Planning Area, implementation of the proposed General Plan would not affect scenic resources within a state scenic highway. No impact would occur.

Plan to Plan Analysis

Both the proposed General Plan and the existing General Plan contain goals and policies that address scenic highways, even though no state scenic highways are located within the City's Planning Area, and impacts would be similar between both Plans.

Visual Quality and Character

Impact 3.6-3 Implementation of the General Plan would result in a potentially significant impact to the existing visual character or quality of the City's Planning Area.

Buildout of the proposed General Plan would introduce new uses to the City's Planning Area. If unregulated, new development could be inconsistent with the desirable visual character and quality for the City. Visual character refers to architectural design standards, the distribution of open space, streetscape design, and other visual features or amenities that define the community. In order to reduce potential inconsistencies, the proposed General Plan includes several goals, objectives, and policies in the Conservation and Open Space Element and Land Use Element designed to maintain the City's rural character and ensure visual consistency and continuity with the existing natural and built environment.

The proposed General Plan would establish certain design standards and concepts to uphold the aesthetic valued by the community. **Objectives LU 3.4** and **LU 6.5** would encourage the creation of healthy, high quality neighborhoods, which includes requiring architectural design treatment and articulation along all sides of new housing to promote continuity of architectural scale and rhythm and avoid the appearance of blank walls, especially long facades adjacent to major arterial streets (**Policies LU 3.4.8, 6.5.3** and **6.5.4**). The proposed General Plan also encourages the use of high quality, durable, and natural-appearing materials, and designs and architectural styles that incorporate classic and timeless architectural features (**Policies LU 6.5.1** and **6.5.2**).

The visual quality of streetscapes and public spaces is also addressed. The inclusion of plazas, courtyards, seating areas, public art, and water features within commercial centers, business parks, and civic facilities would enhance public space (**Objective LU 6.2; Policy LU 6.2.1**). Trailheads would be enhanced with landscaping, seating, and information kiosks (**Policy LU 6.2.2**). The General Plan also promotes the beautification of streetscapes and gateways to the community, planting of street trees, development of unified landscape plans for major arterials traversing the Valley, undergrounding of utility lines for new development, and prohibition of new billboards (**Objective LU 6.3; Policies LU 6.3.1–6.3.5**). Additionally, planting trees and providing more natural vegetation in lieu of impervious surfaces within parking lots would enhance the City's built environment (**Objectives CO 3.5** and **3.6; Policies CO 3.5.1** and **3.6.2**).

Parkland and open space, which provide visual relief within the urban setting, are also valued visual characteristics of the City's Planning Area. **Goal 9** would ensure that new parkland is developed throughout the City's Planning Area based on a goal of 5 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents applied throughout the Santa Clarita Valley (**Objective CO 9.1; Policy CO 9.1.1**). Furthermore, new residential

development projects would need to provide a fair share towards park facilities to meet the needs of future residents (**Policy CO 9.1.9**). Local and community parks should be within reasonable distance of residential neighborhoods so that they are well integrated, and appropriate segments of the Santa Clara River should continue to be a recreational focal point providing natural ecosystems and a buffer for sensitive habitat (**Policy CO 9.1.2, 9.1.3, 9.1.7, and 9.1.13**). Additionally, the General Plan promotes converting vacant lots to community gardens where appropriate (**Policy CO 10.1.8**).

Furthermore, the proposed General Plan promotes the protection of scenic resources that form the City's natural setting. **Goal LU 6** is to achieve a scenic and beautiful urban environment that builds on the community's history and natural setting. This includes distancing new development from ridgelines at a minimum of 50 feet or more if determined preferable by the reviewing authority based on site conditions, and the Santa Clara River corridor and stream banks, and maintaining the scenic backdrop of foothills and canyons through specialized construction techniques (**Objective LU 6.1; Policy LU 6.1.1–6.1.3**). **Goal CO 3** is to conserve biological resources and forest land, which would be accomplished by discouraging off-road vehicle use, maintaining fuel modification zones, and protecting the urban-forest interface area from overdevelopment (**Objective CO 3.4 and Policy CO 3.4.2**). Additionally, adherence to the goals, policies, and objectives identified under **Impact 3.6-1** would reduce impacts to the scenic resources that contribute to the visual quality and character of the City's Planning Area.

Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

Goal CO 3: Conservation of biological resources and ecosystems, including sensitive habitats and species.

Objective CO 3.4: Ensure that development in the Santa Clarita Valley does not adversely impact habitat within the adjacent National Forest lands.

Policy CO 3.4.2: Consider principles of forest management in land use decisions for projects adjacent to the National Forest, including limiting the use of invasive species, discouraging off-road vehicle use, maintaining fuel modification zones and fire access roads, and other measures as appropriate, in accordance with the goals set forth in the Angeles National Forest Land Management Plan.

Objective CO 3.5: Maintain, enhance, and manage the urban forest throughout developed portions of the Santa Clarita Valley to provide habitat, reduce energy consumption, and create a more livable environment.

Policy CO 3.5.1: Continue to plant and maintain trees on public lands and within the public right-of-way to provide shade and walkable streets, incorporating measures to ensure that roots have access to oxygen at tree maturity, such as use of porous concrete.

Objective CO 3.6: Minimize impacts of human activity and the built environment on natural plant and wildlife communities.

Policy CO 3.6.2: Reduce impervious surfaces and provide more natural vegetation to enhance microclimates and provide habitat. In implementing this policy, consider the following design concepts:

- a. Consideration of reduced parking requirements, where supported by a parking study and/or through shared use of parking areas;
- b. Increased use of vegetated areas around parking lot perimeters; such areas should be designed as bioswales or as otherwise determined appropriate to allow surface water infiltration;
- c. Use of connected open space areas as drainage infiltration areas in lieu of curbed landscape islands, minimizing the separation of natural and landscaped areas into isolated "islands";
- d. Breaking up large expanses of paving with natural landscaped areas planted with shade trees to reduce the heat island effect, along with shrubs and groundcover to provide diverse vegetation for habitat.

Objective CO 9.1: Develop new parklands throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, with priority given to locations that are not now adequately served, and encompassing a diversity of park types and functions (including passive and active areas) in consideration of the recreational needs of residents to be served by each park, based on the following guidelines:

Policy CO 9.1.1: Common park standards shall be developed and applied throughout the Santa Clarita Valley, consistent with community

character objectives, with a goal of five acres of parkland per 1,000 population.

Policy CO 9.1.2: A range of parkland types, sizes, and uses shall be provided to accommodate recreational and leisure activities.

Policy CO 9.1.3: Provide local and community parks within a reasonable distance of residential neighborhoods.

Policy CO 9.1.7: Establish appropriate segments of the Santa Clara River as a recreational focal point, encouraging a beneficial mix of passive and active recreational uses with natural ecosystems by providing buffers for sensitive habitat.

Policy CO 9.1.9: Ensure that new development projects provide a fair share towards park and recreational facilities, phased to meet needs of residents as dwelling units become occupied, pursuant to the Quimby Act (California Government Code Section 66477) and local ordinances as applicable.

Policy CO 9.1.13: Provide passive areas for natural habitat, meditation, bird-watching, and similar activities in parks, where feasible and appropriate, including meditation gardens, wildflower and butterfly gardens, botanic gardens, and similar features.

Policy CO 10.1.8: Encourage the use of vacant lots as community gardens, where appropriate.

Objective LU 3.4: Encourage creation of pleasant neighborhoods that provide a high quality of life for residents.

Policy LU 3.4.8: Require architectural design treatment along all sides of new housing to promote continuity of architectural scale and rhythm and avoid the appearance of blank walls (360 degree enhancement).

Goal LU 6: A scenic and beautiful urban environment that builds on the community's history and natural setting.

Objective LU 6.1: Maintain the natural beauty of the Santa Clarita Valley's hillsides, significant ridgelines, canyons, oak woodlands, rivers, and streams.

Policy LU 6.1.1: Designate ridgelines throughout the planning area, and preserve these ridgelines from development by encouraging a minimum distance for grading and development from these ridgelines of 50 feet, or more, if determined preferable by the reviewing authority based on site conditions.

Policy LU 6.1.2: On the Land Use Map, designate publicly owned portions of the Santa Clara River corridor and its major tributaries, as Open Space.

Policy LU 6.1.3: Ensure that new development in hillside areas is designed to protect the scenic backdrop of foothills and canyons enjoyed by Santa Clarita Valley communities, through requiring compatible hillside management techniques that may include but are not limited to clustering of development; contouring and landform grading; revegetation with native plants; limited site disturbance; avoidance of tall retaining and build-up walls; use of stepped pads; and other techniques as deemed appropriate.

Objective LU 6.2: Provide attractive public and open spaces in places visited by residents and visitors, where feasible and appropriate.

Policy LU 6.2.1: Promote the inclusion of plazas, courtyards, seating areas, public art, and similar features within commercial centers, business parks, and civic facilities visited by the general public.

Policy LU 6.2.2: Provide and enhance trail heads where appropriate with landscaping, seating, trash receptacles and information kiosks.

Objective LU 6.3: Beautify streetscapes and gateways to the community.

Policy LU 6.3.1: Promote planting of street trees throughout urban areas in the Santa Clarita Valley.

Policy LU 6.3.2: Develop compatible landscape plans for major arterials traversing the Santa Clarita Valley, including landscaped medians and parkways, and implement these plans in both City and County areas, where feasible and appropriate based on right of way and other conditions.

Policy LU 6.3.3: Enhance major entrance points to the community, including on and off ramps from Interstate 5 and State Route 14; entrances along State Route 126; and at the northern and southern entrance points on Sierra Highway, where feasible and appropriate.

Policy LU 6.3.4: Require undergrounding of utility lines for new development where feasible, and plan for undergrounding of existing utility lines in conjunction with street improvement projects where economically feasible.

Policy LU 6.3.5: Restrict the establishment of billboards within the planning area.

Objective LU 6.5: Promote high quality development that enhances the urban environment and builds long-term value.

Policy LU 6.5.1: Require use of high quality, durable, and natural-appearing building materials pursuant to applicable ordinances.

Policy LU 6.5.2: Encourage the use of designs and architectural styles that incorporate classic and timeless architectural features.

Policy LU 6.5.3: Require architectural enhancement and articulation on all sides of buildings (360 degree architecture), with special consideration at building entrances and corners, and along facades adjacent to major arterial streets.

Policy LU 6.5.4: Evaluate new development in consideration of its context, to ensure that buildings create a coherent living environment, a cohesive urban fabric, and contribute to a sense of place consistent with the surrounding neighborhoods.

Effectiveness of Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

The above goals, objectives and policies address the preservation of the rural/open space character of the City's Planning Area by regulating the placement of incompatible land uses (i.e., development adjacent to Angeles National Forest), streetscapes, urban landscaping, incorporation of additional parkland and public open space (i.e., plazas and courtyards), architectural standards and signage. Furthermore, new development within the City's Planning Area is required to adhere to the City's Community Character and Design Guidelines and Beautification Master Plan, which also address visual quality and character. The City's Urban Forestry Division would continue to maintain and plant street trees. Based on implementation of the proposed policies and the existing regulatory framework, impacts to visual character, and quality would be less than significant.

Plan to Plan Analysis

Both the proposed General Plan and the existing General Plan contain goals and policies that address the visual character and quality of the City's Planning Area. The proposed General Plan, with its in excess of 3,000 acres of increased open space, would provide for the permanent preservation or restoration of important natural and built scenic resources and conservation of scenic vistas; buildout under the City's proposed General Plan would have fewer impacts to visual character and quality compared with buildout under the existing Plan.

Light and Glare

Impact 3.6-4 Implementation of the General Plan would result in a potentially significant impact to day or nighttime views in the area.

Implementation of the General Plan would introduce new sources of light and glare to the City's Planning Area through additional street lighting, parking lot lighting, commercial signage, residential lighting, and other sources of illumination typically found within urban settings. Excessive levels of nighttime illumination can interfere with views of the night sky and be a nuisance to neighborhoods and other sensitive receptor locations. In order to reduce the potential for these adverse impacts, the proposed General Plan includes several goals, objectives, and policies to reduce the generation of light and glare.

Goal 3 includes a policy that would minimize light trespass, sky-glow and glare to a level needed for security and comfort by reducing unnecessary lighting for landscaping and architecture and encouraging the reduction of light levels during non-business nighttime hours (**Objective CO 3.6;** **Policies CO 3.6.1** and **8.3.9**). In order to protect views of the night sky and reduce glare, the proposed General Plan also promotes the use of light screens, downward directed lights, and minimized reflective paving surfaces (**Policies CO 6.6.1** and **8.2.4**). Furthermore, goals, objectives, and policies designed to protect open space from new development would also limit the creation of new light and glare sources (**Policy CO 10.1.14:** refer to **Impact 3.6-1**).

Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

Policy CO 3.6.1: Minimize light trespass, sky-glow, glare, and other adverse impacts on the nocturnal ecosystem by limiting exterior lighting to the level needed for safety and comfort; reduce unnecessary lighting for landscaping and architectural purposes, and encourage reduction of lighting levels during non-business nighttime hours.

Policy CO 8.2.4: Establish maximum lighting levels for public facilities, and encourage reduction of lighting levels to the level needed for security purposes after business hours, in addition to use of downward-directed lighting and use of low-reflective paving surfaces.

Objective CO 8.3: Encourage the following green building and sustainable development practices on private development projects, to the extent reasonable and feasible.

Policy CO 8.3.9: Limit excessive lighting levels, and encourage a reduction of lighting when businesses are closed to a level required for security.

Effectiveness of Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

The above goals, objectives, and policies would limit light and glare generation by establishing techniques for light screening and shielding, restricting the use of unnecessary light during non-business nighttime hours, restricting the use of decorative lighting, and protecting open space. With incorporation

of these goals, objectives and policies, impacts from new sources of light and glare would be less than significant.

Plan to Plan Analysis

Both the proposed General Plan and the existing General Plan contain goals and policies that address light and glare impacts. The goals and policies between both plans are similar and consequently light and glare impacts would be similar.

Ridgelines

Impact 3.6-5 Implementation of the General Plan would result in a potentially significant impact to Primary Ridgelines.

The proposed General Plan would designate land for urban uses throughout the City's Planning Area. Presently vacant lands could become developed with urban uses. If unregulated, new hillside development under buildout of the proposed General Plan could result in mass grading of ridgelines. In order to reduce these potential impacts resulting from development, several objectives and policies in the proposed General Plan would promote the protection of significant ridgelines, including Primary Ridgelines. Implementation of **Objective CO 2.2** would preserve the Santa Clarita Valley's prominent ridgelines and limit hillside development to protect those ridgelines. **Policies CO 2.2.3** and **CO 6.1.2** preserve designated natural ridgelines from development by requiring a minimum distance for grading and development from these ridgelines of at least a minimum of 50 feet or more if determined preferable by the reviewing authority based on site conditions. Similarly, **Policy LU 6.1.1** designates ridgelines throughout the City's Planning Area, and protects these ridgelines from development for a distance of 50 feet from the top of the ridgelines.

Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

See **Impact 3.6-1** and **Impact 3.6-3** for the objectives and policies cited for the protection of ridgelines.

Effectiveness of Proposed General Plan Goals, Objectives and Policies

The above objectives and policies specifically prohibit alteration to ridgelines by enforcing a development setback of 50 feet from the top of designated ridgelines. With incorporation of these provisions, impacts on significant ridgelines would be less than significant.

Plan to Plan Analysis

Both the proposed General Plan and the existing General Plan contain goals and policies that address impacts to ridgelines. The goals and policies between both plans are similar and consequently the impacts would be similar.

MITIGATION FRAMEWORK

No mitigation measures are required.

SIGNIFICANCE OF IMPACT WITH MITIGATION FRAMEWORK

Potential impacts on aesthetics resources from implementation of the proposed General Plan would be less than significant; no mitigation measures are required.