



SECTION 5.1

Aesthetics, Light, and Glare



5.1 AESTHETICS, LIGHT, AND GLARE

Visual resources information for this section was compiled from photographs and site surveys conducted by RBF Consulting. The purpose of this section is to describe the existing aesthetic environment and analyze potential project impacts to the aesthetic character upon project implementation. Consideration of public scenic vistas and views, impacts to scenic resources and the introduction of new sources of light and glare are also included in this section. Visual simulations were prepared in order to assist in determining aesthetic impacts.

5.1.1 REGULATORY SETTING

CITY OF SANTA CLARITA

General Plan

The *General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element* includes several goals and policies relevant to aesthetic character and quality.

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 6.2: Protect the scenic character of view corridors.

Policy CO 6.2.1: Where feasible, encourage development proposals to have varied building heights to maintain view corridor sight lines.

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

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 6.6.1: Enhance views of the night sky by reducing light pollution through use of light screens, downward directed lights, minimized reflective paving surfaces, and reduced lighting levels, as deemed appropriate by the reviewing authority.

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.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER AND DESIGN GUIDELINES

The purpose of the *Santa Clarita Community Character and Design Guidelines* document is 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. The *Community Character and Design Guidelines* includes up-to-date planning trends and guidelines written to promote the high quality standards that the City and the community value. The intent of these guidelines is to retain and encourage architectural variety, promote quality development, and ensure that both existing and new development:

- Is compatible in size, scale, and appearance with the character of Santa Clarita.
- Is attractive and an asset to the community.
- Preserves and enhances natural features of a site.
- Incorporates quality articulation, community character features, multiple building forms, desirable building details, and other elements that display excellence in design.
- Provides pedestrian-oriented design to enrich the pedestrian experience.



- Includes pedestrian friendly amenities such as pedestrian connections, plazas, seating, bike racks, fountains, and other similar features, for the enjoyment of the community and visitors.
- Promotes the use of high quality materials.
- Promotes well-landscaped parking lots with efficient pedestrian and vehicular circulation.
- Provides suggestions for ways to improve the environmental performance of projects through the strategic incorporation of green building components.

The *Community Character and Design Guidelines* include design guidelines specific to single-family residential developments. Considerations include site planning and design, site grading, parkways, project entry features, driveways/garages, open space and recreational features, landscaping, lighting, architecture, and utilitarian aspects.

UNIFIED DEVELOPMENT CODE

The *Unified Development Code (UDC)*, Title 16 (Subdivisions), identifies requirements for all subdivisions within the City, as required by the Subdivision Map Act. Title 17 (Zoning), identified permitted land uses according to the zoning category of particular parcels. Additionally, Title 18 (City Building Code) defines specific rules and regulations for construction, alteration, and building for structures within the City.

5.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

EXISTING ON-SITE CONDITIONS

The proposed project is primarily undeveloped in nature, and the majority of the site is occupied by vegetation in the form of grasses, native shrubs, and oak woodland. The site rests at an approximate elevation of 1,600 feet above mean sea level. The site is located on a relatively flat alluvial plain with gentle to level topography (zero to five percent slopes) found over nearly the entire property. The most notable natural features located on-site include the Santa Clara River floodplain along the northern boundary of the project site, and the Oak Spring Canyon Wash that traverses the southwestern portion of the project site.

The most notable and visually evident development on-site consists of an existing elevated Metrolink railroad right-of-way (operated by the Southern California Regional Rail Authority [SCRRA] and Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority [Metro]) that traverses the northern portion of the site in an east/west orientation. In addition, a 100-foot wide Southern California Gas Company underground gas transmission pipeline easement and an elevated abandoned Southern Pacific Railroad Company (SPRC) railroad alignment is located within the central portion of the site, also oriented in an east/west direction. Several dirt roads and trails also traverse the site. On-site, there are knolls in the central portion of the site, both north and south of the Metrolink railroad right-of-way, as well as in the southeastern portion of the site.

Photos of the project site and surrounding areas from various locations are shown in *Exhibit 5.1-2* through *Exhibit 5.1-5*. A key map denoting view locations is provided as *Exhibit 5.1-1, Project Site View Locations*.





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EXISTING OFF-SITE CONDITIONS

The project site is surrounded by rural residential with equestrian-related uses, open space, the Santa Clara River, and the Robinson Ranch golf course. Knolls and other higher elevation topography are located just west of the project boundary and along the eastern project boundary; both areas are north and south of the Metrolink railroad right-of-way. A detailed description of surrounding views is provided below.

North

Views to the north are of the Santa Clara River, the State Route 14 (SR-14) freeway, existing low-density residential uses north of the freeway, and upland/ridgeline views associated with the Angeles National Forest in the distant background. Views towards the north from areas south of the existing Metrolink railroad right-of-way are obstructed by the rise in topography along the elevated Metrolink railroad grade. Refer to Photos 1 and 2 within Exhibit 5.1-2, Views to the North.

East

Land uses to the east include undeveloped land, much of which is part of the Angeles National Forest. Medium- and long-distance views to the east are of the forest land and associated ridgelines. From locations to the north of the existing Metrolink railroad right-of-way, views of the Santa Clara River, the Metrolink railroad right-of-way, and the San Gabriel Mountains are visible. Refer to Photos 3 and 4 within Exhibit 5.1-3, Views to the East.

South

Views to the south are limited and include golf course and single-family residential uses associated with the adjacent existing Robinson Ranch development, as well as long-range views of the San Gabriel Mountains and Angeles National Forest. These uses are located at higher elevations than the project site. Views to the south from locations north of the existing Metrolink railroad right-of-way are obstructed by this elevated Metrolink railroad grade and existing vegetation, but long-range views of the San Gabriel Mountain ridgelines are still visible. Refer to Photos 5 and 6 within Exhibit 5.1-4, Views to the South.

West

Views to the west of the project site include existing low-density single-family residential/equestrian uses within the Sand Canyon community, as well as views of existing vegetation and topographic features. Views to the west from locations north of the existing Metrolink railroad right-of-way are obstructed by the elevated Metrolink railroad grade, natural topography, and vegetation. Refer to Photos 7 and 8 within Exhibit 5.1-5, Views to the West.

VIEWS ONTO THE PROJECT SITE FROM SURROUNDING USES

Views onto the project site from surrounding land uses are limited due to topography changes in the site vicinity and existing vegetation. Limited views from the south northward onto the site are available from the Robinson Ranch residential properties and the associated golf course to the southwest of the project site. Views of the site from properties to the west are limited to



residential properties at relatively higher local elevations, given the presence of Oak Spring Canyon Wash and existing oak trees and other vegetation. The only views onto the site from the north towards the project site are available from State Route 14 (SR-14) and the residential properties to the north of the freeway, though views are limited to areas north of the active Metrolink railroad right-of-way due to the height of the elevated Metrolink railroad grade through the site. No active land uses exist to the immediate east of the project site, although the site is visible from most of the adjacent ridgelines and hillsides in the Angeles National Forest.

LIGHT AND GLARE

There are two primary sources of light associated with urban areas: 1) light emanating from building interiors passing through windows; and 2) light from exterior sources (i.e., street lighting, building illumination, security lighting, parking lot lighting, and landscape lighting). Light introduction can be a nuisance to adjacent residential areas, diminish the view of the clear night sky, and if uncontrolled, can disturb wildlife in natural habitat areas. Perceived glare is the unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation as observed by a person as they look directly into the light source of a luminaire. Light spill is typically defined as the presence of unwanted light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated.

Due to the primarily undeveloped nature of the project site, the only source of on-site light or glare consists of trains passing through the site along the existing Metrolink railroad right-of-way. There are no street lights on adjacent streets. The project site is also affected by light and glare produced from surrounding uses. The site is subjected to light and glare impacts associated with the vehicle headlights and glare impacts due to the traffic on SR-14 and Oak Spring Canyon Road. SR-14 is located to the north of the project site beyond the Santa Clara River, and Oak Spring Canyon Road is located to the west of the project site across Oak Spring Canyon Wash. These light and glare effects from vehicles are limited, however, due to the distance of these roadways from the project site and intervening topography.

SCENIC RESOURCES AND VISTAS

The *General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element* identifies visual and aesthetic resources within the City. Those resources that are applicable to the project site include:

- Sand Canyon, located in the eastern portion of the 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.
- Protected forest land within the Angeles and Los Padres National Forests surround the City. Oak woodland areas that spill over from the Angeles National Forest into adjacent areas of the Santa Clara Valley. Although the majority of the site is covered by non-native grassland, a small portion of the site (5.39 acres) is occupied by coast live oak woodland (primarily within the central portion of the site, adjacent to the existing Metrolink railroad right-of-way).
- The Santa Clara River, which 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. The river flows east to west through a beautiful 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.

The *General Plan* does not designate any scenic highways or scenic roadways within the City's planning area. In addition, there are no designated or eligible State scenic highways in proximity to the project site.¹

5.1.3 SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLD CRITERIA

The *City of Santa Clarita Local CEQA Guidelines* (Resolution 05-38) adopted on April 26, 2005 and the Initial Study Environmental Checklist form in *CEQA Guidelines* Appendix G serve as the thresholds for determining the significance of impacts relating to aesthetics and visual resources. As such, a project would be considered to have a significant environmental impact if it would result in the following:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, primary/secondary ridgelines, 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.
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Based on these standards, the effects of the proposed project have been categorized as either a "less than significant impact" or a "potentially significant impact." Mitigation measures are recommended for potentially significant impacts. If a potentially significant impact cannot be reduced to a less than significant level through the application of mitigation, it is categorized as a significant unavoidable impact.

5.1.4 PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

SHORT-TERM CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

- **CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT COULD RESULT IN ADVERSE AESTHETIC IMPACTS WITHIN THE SITE VICINITY.**

Level of Significance Before Analysis and Mitigation: Potentially Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: Project construction activities would alter views across portions of the project site from surrounding locations. The proposed project would be implemented in up to nine phases depending on market conditions following project approval. It is anticipated that construction would begin in late 2012 and each phase would be constructed over a period of approximately 12 months.

¹ California Department of Transportation Website, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm, accessed July 1, 2011.



Graded surfaces, construction materials, equipment, and truck traffic would be visible during the construction period. Soil would be stockpiled and equipment for grading activities would be staged at various locations throughout the project site.

These visual impacts can be considered significant unless mitigated. With implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-1 pertaining to equipment staging areas and the use of screening, impacts in this regard are concluded as less than significant. Further, construction-related activities are not considered significant as they are anticipated to be temporary in nature. In addition, construction on the 187.3-acre project site would occur in up to nine phases. Although the site could be mass graded, building activities would likely be limited to smaller portions of the site according to project phasing. Major topographical landforms and ridgelines would not be affected by the proposed project, given the relatively flat topography within project boundaries.

Nighttime construction activities are not anticipated to be required as part of on-site construction. However, short-term light and glare impacts associated with on-site construction activity would likely be limited to nighttime lighting necessary for security purposes. Nighttime security lighting from construction activities may pose an impact to residents surrounding the project site. Although this is considered a short-term impact, Mitigation Measure AES-2 is included to reduce the significance of this impact to a less than significant level.

Nighttime construction would be required for off-site components of the proposed project, including the proposed roundabout at the Lost Canyon Road/Sand Canyon Road intersection, the Lost Canyon Road bridge over Oak Spring Canyon Wash, and the proposed Lost Canyon Road undercrossing of the Metrolink railroad right-of-way. Nighttime construction would be required for these off-site facilities in order to reduce construction-related public safety impacts (traffic and rail safety hazards) and minimize inconveniences to the surrounding community. However, nighttime construction activities could potentially result in impacts to surrounding sensitive receptors, particularly residential uses surrounding the intersection of Lost Canyon Road and Sand Canyon Road. Lighting would be temporary and limited to only what is necessary for construction operations and safety. In order minimize any potential light/glare impacts to sensitive uses, all construction-related lighting would be down-directed toward the work area and oriented away from adjacent uses and would consist of the minimal wattage necessary to provide safety at the construction site (refer to Mitigation Measure AES-3). Impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures:

- AES-1 The construction contractor shall ensure that construction equipment staging and stockpile areas shall be located a minimum of 200 feet from existing residential uses and appropriate screening (i.e., temporary fencing with opaque material) shall be used to buffer views of construction equipment and material, when feasible. The staging and stockpile locations shall be indicated on Grading Plans and shall be subject to verification by the City of Santa Clarita Public Works Department prior to issuance of grading permits.
- AES-2 The construction contractor shall ensure that all construction-related nighttime security lighting shall be located and aimed away from adjacent residential areas. Lighting shall consist of the minimum wattage necessary to provide safety at the



construction site. A construction safety lighting plan shall be submitted to the City of Santa Clarita Public Works Department for review prior to issuance of grading permits.

- AES-3 Lighting associated with nighttime construction for the project shall be directed downward toward the work area, located and oriented away from adjacent uses, and consist of the minimal wattage necessary to provide safety at the construction site. This provision shall be included in the project specifications and enforced in the field by the City of Santa Clarita Public Works Department.

Level of Significance After Analysis and Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

LONG-TERM IMPACTS – SCENIC VISTAS AND RESOURCES

- **LONG-TERM OPERATION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT COULD RESULT IN ADVERSE IMPACTS TO SCENIC VISTAS AND RESOURCES IN THE PROJECT AREA.**

Level of Significance Before Analysis and Mitigation: Potentially Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: Approval of the proposed project would change the existing visual character of the site by converting a primarily vacant site into a residential development. As stated above, although no designated scenic vistas exist within the project site, the *General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element* identifies several primary resources within the City of scenic value that are relevant to the project site.

- **Sand Canyon Subcommunity:** The proposed project could affect the scenic value of the Sand Canyon subcommunity area, which is known for its rural and equestrian character and low-density residential development. Although the proposed project represents the conversion of a primarily undeveloped site, the development would be consistent with the *General Plan, Unified Development Code, and Community Character and Design Guidelines* in regards to intensity and design to maintain the rural and equestrian character of the site vicinity. The proposed project would further enhance equestrian uses in the Sand Canyon area, and would provide connectivity to existing trails within the Angeles National Forest to the east. Thus, impacts related to the Sand Canyon subcommunity would be less than significant.
- **Oak Woodland Areas:** The project site is occupied by a small amount of coast live oak woodland, none of which is contiguous with the Angeles National Forest. The acreage of coast live oak woodland on-site (5.39 acres) equates to approximately three percent of the total project site area.² In addition, the majority of this coast live oak woodland surrounds the existing Metrolink railroad right-of-way, which limits visibility across the project site due to the elevated railroad grade. As such, impacts to 5.39 acres of oak woodland area within the boundaries of the project site would not have a significant effect on the overall scenic value of oak woodland areas within the City of Santa Clarita.

² *Biological Constraints and Focused Survey Results, Oak Springs (TTM 063022) Project Site* (February 2007) and *Biological Resources Update, Mancara-Robinson Ranch (TTM 063022)* (June 2011), Impact Sciences, Inc.



A total of 347 jurisdictional oak trees exist within oak woodland habitat that would be affected by the project. Of these oak trees, 96 would require an Oak Tree Permit under the *City of Santa Clara Oak Tree Preservation Ordinance* (8 for removal, none of Heritage status, and 88 for encroachment).³ Impacts related to the removal of oak trees within coast live oak woodland habitat would be reduced through mitigation measures provided within Section 5.2, Biological Resources. Mitigation Measures BIO-11 through BIO-18 would require the protection, replacement, and/or relocation of numerous oak trees to be affected by project construction activities. In addition, the project applicant would be required to implement numerous measures designed to protect the health of oak trees encroached upon by project construction activities, in addition to measures intended to ensure the continued health of oak trees during long-term operation of the project; refer to Section 5.2, Biological Resources. Upon implementation of recommended oak tree mitigation measures, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

- **Santa Clara River:** The proposed project would create a residential development south of the Santa Clara River. However, as part of the proposed project, access to the Santa Clara River Trail would be maintained and enhanced. The proposed project would include approximately 44.4 acres of park, equestrian, and open space uses that would serve as a buffer between the river and the proposed development, thereby preserving views of the Santa Clara River. The proposed project would not substantially alter the aesthetic character or quality of the Santa Clara River within the City. Thus, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

The proposed project would also require modifications to Oak Spring Canyon Wash, which is tributary to the Santa Clara River. Oak Spring Canyon Wash traverses the southwestern portion of the project site, flowing in a southeasterly to northwesterly direction. As part of the proposed project, embankment protection is proposed along the northeastern bank to prevent bank failure along residential lots proposed along Oak Spring Canyon Wash. The embankment protection would include buried bank stabilization in areas adjacent to and outside of the Oak Spring Canyon Wash floodway. Design options for the embankment protection include: 1) colored concrete; 2) rock riprap; 3) gabions; or 4) soil cement.

Although the embankments would alter the aesthetic appearance of the waterway, these facilities would not result in significant aesthetic impacts. Improvements associated with the embankments would only occur within and immediately surrounding the northwestern bank. Channelization improvements would only occur within a relatively short stretch of Oak Spring Canyon Wash (approximately 1,500 linear feet), and the buried bank stabilization and/or areas adjacent to them would be vegetated with planted backfill to minimize the aesthetic impact of the proposed project. As such, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Based on the analysis provided above, the location and design of the proposed project would prevent the occurrence of significant impacts on scenic resources within the project site vicinity. The proposed project would maintain the rural and equestrian nature of the Sand Canyon subcommunity, and would not substantially affect oak woodland resources, the Santa Clara

³ Oak Tree Survey Report and Tree Appraisal: Oak Springs Project, TTM 063022, Impact Sciences, September 2006 (revised September 2010, April 2011, and July 2011).



River, or views along SR-14 or Sand Canyon Road. In addition, the proposed project would be consistent with the *General Plan* and *UDC* designations for the site, which regulate development in the project area in the context of scenic/aesthetic resources in the community. Thus, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Mitigation Measures BIO-11 through BIO-18. No additional mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Analysis and Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

LONG-TERM IMPACTS – AESTHETICS AND VISUAL CHARACTER

- **LONG-TERM OPERATION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT THE AESTHETIC AND VISUAL CHARACTER AT AND SURROUNDING THE PROJECT SITE.**

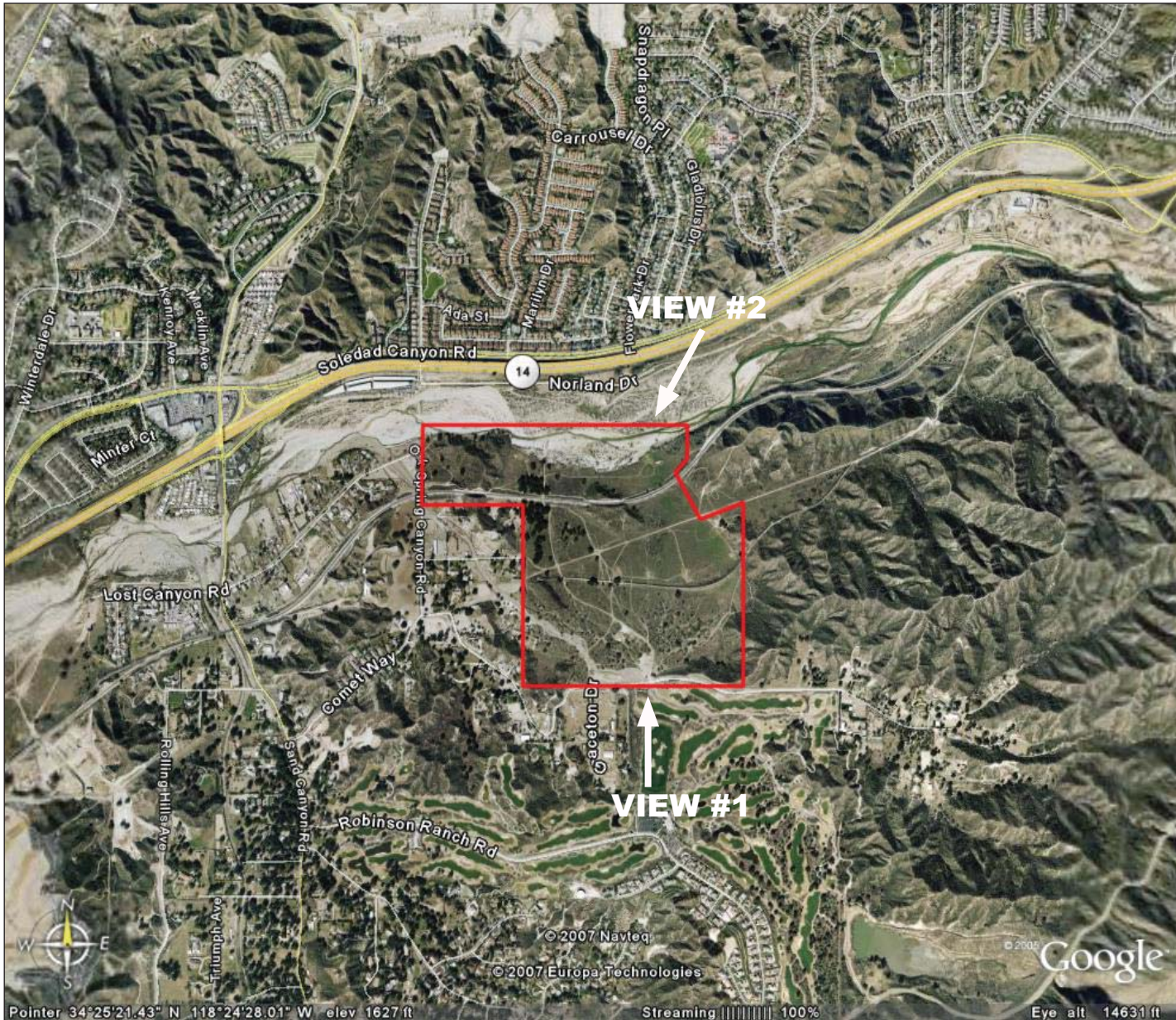
Level of Significance Before Analysis and Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: The proposed project would involve the development of 99 single-family residential lots, associated roadways and infrastructure, and recreational and open space amenities. The architectural style would vary, as the units are proposed to be custom or semi-custom. However, it is assumed they would generally follow a California Ranch, Santa Fe, and/or Mediterranean-style theme, similar to other residential communities in the Santa Clara Valley.

Visual simulations were prepared in order to assist in the assessment of the long-term visual impacts associated with development of the proposed project. Although the ultimate unit-specific architecture may vary, the general bulk and height of proposed structures are depicted in the simulations to provide context. Refer to Exhibit 5.1-6, Visual Simulation View Locations, for the locations from which view simulations are taken. Refer to Exhibit 5.1-7, Visual Simulation #1 – View From the South, and Exhibit 5.1-8, Visual Simulation #2 – View From the North, for visual simulations depicting the proposed project upon buildout. The following discussion describes the view impacts associated with the proposed project from surrounding locations.

Northerly Views onto the Project Site

Views onto the project site from immediately south are generally limited due to the elevated topography at the southern portion of the site east of Oak Spring Canyon Wash. In addition, views of the Santa Clara River from south of the project site are limited due to the elevated nature of the Metrolink railroad right-of-way. Some residences within the Robinson Ranch development to the south of the project site currently have a clear view of, and across, the project site. Upon project completion, the project site would be developed with 99 single-family residential units up to two stories in height. Development of the project site with two-story homes would incrementally obstruct existing views of, and across, the site, but only to a limited extent given the surrounding topography and existing intervening vegetation; refer to Exhibit 5.1-7, Visual Simulation #1 – View From the South. Residential uses south of the project site include single-family residences adjacent to the project boundary to the southwest, and residences located over 2,000 feet away (south of Robinson Ranch Road). Given intervening



NOT TO SCALE



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MANCARA RESIDENTIAL PROJECT
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Visual Simulation View Locations

Exhibit 5.1-6



BEFORE



VIEW SIMULATION



BEFORE



VIEW SIMULATION



topography and the proposed project's compliance with the *UDC* and associated design requirements under the Sand Canyon Special Standards District, impacts to northerly views from locations south of the project site would be less than significant.

Easterly Views onto the Project Site

Easterly views onto the project site from areas to the west are limited due to existing topography and intervening vegetation (stands of mature oak trees). Very few of the residences within the Sand Canyon community to the west of the project site currently have a clear view of and across the project site. Upon project completion, the project site would be developed with 99 single-family residential units up to two stories in height. Development of the project site with two-story homes would incrementally obstruct existing limited views of and across the site. However, given the surrounding topography, existing intervening vegetation, and relative location of surrounding uses, the incremental obstruction of views would not be substantial. Therefore, impacts to views from locations west of the project site would be less than significant.

Southerly Views onto the Project Site

Views of and across the project site from locations north of the Santa Clara River are generally limited due to the existence of SR-14 and its associated sound wall, and the elevated Metrolink railroad right-of-way across the northern portion of the site. However, unobstructed views of the northernmost portion of the site are visible from development on the hillsides north of SR-14; refer to *Exhibit 5.1-8, Visual Simulation #2 – View From the North*. Upon project completion, the project site would be developed with 99 single-family residential units up to two stories in height, only two of which would be located north of the railroad tracks. The area of the project site north of the elevated Metrolink railroad right-of-way would consist of recreational, equestrian, and open space uses. Thus, given the limited development that would be visible north of the Metrolink railroad right-of-way, impacts in regards to aesthetics and visual character would be less than significant.

Westerly Views onto the Project Site

Views onto the project site from immediately east are generally limited due to slightly higher topography at the eastern edge of the site adjacent to the Angeles National Forest. The ridgelines and vacant hillside areas east of the project site currently provide clear views of and across the project site. Development of the project site with two-story homes, however, would not obstruct existing views of and across the site, since the only available views of the site are from surrounding hillsides at considerably higher elevation than the development portion of the site. In addition, although the proposed project would result in the development of a primarily vacant site, this development would occur on a site that is predominantly surrounded by development (residential uses, Robinson Ranch Golf Course, and SR-14). The proposed project would also include approximately 44.4 acres of open space/recreational uses near the Santa Clara River, which would minimize aesthetic impacts to this resource.

Westerly views onto the project site also include Oak Spring Canyon Wash, which is tributary to the Santa Clara River. As part of the proposed project, two roadway crossings over Oak Spring Canyon Wash would require channelization of the waterway: 1) the off-site crossing of Lost Canyon Road near the northwestern boundary of the site; and 2) the on-site crossing of Oak Spring Canyon Road along the southern boundary of the project site. These roadway crossings



would require the construction of embankments adjacent to and outside of the Oak Spring Canyon Wash floodway.

Although the two proposed roadway crossings of Oak Spring Canyon Wash would alter the aesthetic appearance of the waterway, these facilities would not result in significant aesthetic impacts. Improvements associated with the two bridges and embankments would only occur within and immediately surrounding the roadway crossing. Moreover, the two bridge locations are located over 3,500 feet apart, and would not substantially alter the overall appearance of the drainage. In addition, the proposed embankments within and surrounding the two roadway crossings would be vegetated to minimize the aesthetic impacts of the proposed project. As such, impacts in this regard would be less than significant.

IMPACT CONCLUSION

The proposed project would involve the development of 187.3 acres of primarily vacant land with residential, recreational, and open space uses. While the proposed project would result in an increase in urban development within the project area, it would be consistent with the *General Plan, UDC, and Community Character and Design Guidelines* and would be compatible with character of the surrounding Sand Canyon subcommunity.

In addition, the proposed landscaping, pedestrian and equestrian circulation, and open space plans would provide for an aesthetically-pleasing development that would not result in a degradation of the visual character or quality of the project site and would not result in substantial alteration of existing views across the site. Therefore, long-term aesthetics and visual character impacts associated with the proposed project would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Analysis and Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

LONG-TERM IMPACTS – LIGHT AND GLARE

- **LIGHT AND GLARE PRODUCED BY THE PROPOSED PROJECT DURING LONG-TERM OPERATIONS COULD ADVERSELY IMPACT THE AESTHETIC CHARACTER OF THE PROJECT AREA.**

Level of Significance Before Analysis and Mitigation: Potentially Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: Development of the proposed project would result in increased utilization of the property for residential uses. The proposed project would not require components or building materials capable of producing substantial daytime glare. However, various sources of nighttime lighting would be required during long-term operations. Lighting would include outdoor sources such as lighting for entryways, walkways, security lighting surrounding structures, and vehicle headlights. Lighting would also occur within the interior of on-site structures. These nighttime lighting sources could result in impacts related to off-site spill or glare. It is important to note that street lights would not be installed on the project site in compliance with the *UDC* standards for the Sand Canyon Special Standards District.



Impacts to Off-Site Uses

Existing residential uses to the west and south would experience a change in the amount of light spill or glare upon implementation of the proposed project. However, light and glare from the proposed project would not impact the residential uses that are located north of the site since they are located at a higher elevation than the project site, are approximately 1,500 feet away, and are buffered by SR-14 and its associated soundwall (which produces substantial light and glare due to vehicle headlights and nighttime lighting).

In compliance with City standards and to minimize impacts to residential uses to the west and south, the proposed project would include a Lighting Plan that indicates the proposed locations of all outdoor lighting installations. The lighting must comply with *UDC Chapter 17.15, Property Development Standards*, which requires all light sources to be directed downward and shielded from streets or adjoining properties and would prevent light spillage towards adjacent residential uses. Regardless, mitigation measures have been included in order to ensure lighting impacts to off-site uses would be less than significant. Therefore, implementation of the Mitigation Measure AES-4 and compliance with the *UDC* would reduce long-term light and glare impacts to surrounding uses to a less than significant level.

Impacts to Proposed On-Site Uses

Existing development located to the west and south (residential) and north (SR-14) may result in impacts to proposed inhabitants of the proposed 99 residential units on-site. However, given the relatively low density of existing residential development within the site vicinity, distance of such uses to the proposed project, and existing and proposed buffers (i.e., landscaping and natural vegetation), impacts from such light sources on the proposed development would not be substantial. Streetlights and car headlights along SR-14 would not significantly impact the proposed project, since only two of the proposed residential units would be constructed north of the existing Metrolink railroad right-of-way.

In consideration of the existing environment, existing buffers, and implementation of the recommended mitigation measure, proposed project implementation would not result in significant light and glare impacts to on-site uses, resulting in less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measures:

AES-4 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the City of Santa Clarita Planning Division shall ensure that the following elements are included in project plans, as appropriate:

- All exterior lighting shall be designed and located as to avoid intrusive effects on adjacent residential properties and undeveloped areas adjacent to the project site. Low-intensity street lighting and low-intensity exterior lighting shall be used throughout the development to the extent feasible. Lighting fixtures shall use shielding, if necessary to prevent spill lighting on adjacent off-site uses;
- Design and placement of site lighting shall minimize glare affecting adjacent properties, buildings, and roadways;



- Fixtures and standards shall conform to state and local safety and illumination requirements;
- Development projects shall use minimally reflective glass and all other materials used on exterior building and structures shall be selected with attention to minimizing reflective glare; and
- Automatic timers on lighting shall be designed to maximize personal safety during nighttime use while saving energy.

Level of Significance After Analysis and Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

5.1.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

- **DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND OTHER RELATED CUMULATIVE PROJECTS COULD RESULT IN ADVERSE IMPACTS RELATED TO AESTHETICS, LIGHT, AND GLARE.**

Level of Significance Before Analysis and Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: The proposed project, in combination other development projects identified in Section 4.0, Basis of Cumulative Analysis, would contribute to the continued alteration of the aesthetic character of the Santa Clarita Valley. The proposed project and other development in the City of Santa Clarita would transform the character of the area by intensifying land uses and adding urban uses in currently undeveloped areas. The aesthetic, light, and glare impacts of individual development projects can be mitigated through careful site design, avoidance of significant visual features, compliance with the local standards for lighting impacts, and appropriate building and landscape standards. Through the implementation of project-specific mitigation measures and compliance with the *General Plan, UDC, and Community Character and Design Guidelines*, cumulative long-term aesthetic, light, and glare impacts would be reduced to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Analysis and Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

5.1.6 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

All potentially significant impacts are either at less than significant levels or can be reduced to less than significant with implementation of applicable *General Plan* goals and policies, *UDC, or Community Character and Design Guidelines* requirements, and mitigation measures. As such, implementation of the proposed project would not result in any significant unavoidable aesthetics, light, and glare impacts.



5.1.7 SOURCES CITED

Santa Clarita Community Character and Design Guidelines, RRM Design Group, adopted January 2009.

City of Santa Clarita Unified Development Code, updated through May 10, 2011.

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Draft Program Environmental Impact Report for the City of Santa Clarita's Proposed One Valley One Vision General Plan, Impact Sciences, Inc., September 2010.

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Biological Constraints and Focused Survey Results, Oak Springs (TTM 063022) Project Site, Impact Sciences, Inc., February 2007 (Revised September 2008).

Biological Resources Update, Mancara-Robinson Ranch (TTM 063022), Impact Sciences, Inc, June 2011.

Oak Tree Survey Report and Appraisal: Oak Springs Project, Tentative Tract Map 063022, Impact Sciences, Inc., September 2006 (Revised September 2010, April 2011, July 2011 and September 2011).

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