

3.1 - Aesthetics

3.1.1 - Introduction

This section describes the existing aesthetics, light, and glare conditions in the project area, as well as the relevant regulatory framework. This section also evaluates the possible impacts related to aesthetics that could result from implementation of the project. Information included in this section is based on-site reconnaissance and photo inventory, visual simulations prepared specifically for the project and included in this section, as well as the Contra Costa County General Plan and the Contra Costa County Ordinance Code. No public comments were received during the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) scoping period related to aesthetics.

3.1.2 - Environmental Setting

Visual Character

Visual character in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) context is an impartial description of the defining physical features, landscape patterns, and distinctive physical qualities within a landscape. Visual character is informed by the composition of land, vegetation, water, and structure and their relationship (or dominance) to one another, and by prominent elements of form, line, color, and texture that combine to define the composition of views. Visual character-defining resources and features within a landscape may derive from notable landforms, vegetation, land uses, building design and façade treatments, transportation facilities, overhead utility structures and lighting, historic structures or districts, or panoramic open space.

Contra Costa County

Contra Costa County includes a variety of topographical features such as the San Francisco Bay, Delta estuary complex, and is within the Central Coast Range Geomorphic Province of California. The County covers a total of 805 square miles of land and water. The elevation of Contra Costa County ranges from 98 feet below sea level to 3,849 above sea level. The topography includes low lying and relatively flat coastal terrain from the San Francisco Bay/Delta estuary complex to major ridgelines along the Diablo Range, a subdivision of the Pacific Coast Ranges, preserved for character including the summit of Mount Diablo, rising to an elevation of 3,849 feet above mean sea level, making it the most prominent topographical feature in the County. The physical environment of the County ranges from urban to rural. The western and central county areas are characterized by urban and suburban development. The eastern County area is characterized primarily by agricultural and open space areas.

Project Site

The project site is located in central Contra Costa County at 3010, 3018, 3050, 3070 Del Hombre Lane and 112 Roble Road on the southeast corner of Del Hombre Lane and Roble Road. The project site is primarily undeveloped within unincorporated Contra Costa County. Mount Diablo forms the eastern backdrop for the County, rising to an elevation of 3,849 above sea level, making it the most prominent topographical feature in the project vicinity.¹ The surrounding area consists of

¹ California Department of Parks and Recreation. 2000. Mount Diablo State Park Brochure. Website: <https://www.parks.ca.gov/pages/517/files/mtDiabloBrochure.pdf>. Accessed November 13, 2018.

residential, commercial, and office development. The Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) Pleasant Hill/Contra Costa Centre Station is also located approximately 400 feet west of the project site.

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources typically involve prominent, unique, and identifiable natural features in the environment (e.g., trees, rock outcroppings, islands, ridgelines, channels of water, and aesthetically appealing open space) and cultural features or resources (e.g., regional or architecturally distinctive buildings, or structures that serve as a focal point of interest).

Contra Costa County

The Open Space Element of the Contra Costa County General Plan identifies the main scenic resources within the County as the scenic ridges, hillsides, and rock outcroppings, such as Shell Ridge and Lime Ridge, as well as the San Francisco Bay/Delta estuary system.²

Project Site

There are no scenic resources, as defined by the Contra Costa County General Plan, located on the project site. The nearest designated scenic resources to the project site are Shell Ridge, located approximately 2.35 to the miles southeast, and Lime Ridge, located approximately 2.70 miles to the northeast.

Views

Views may be generally described as panoramic views of a large geographic area, for which the field of view can be wide and extend into the distance. Associated vantage points provide an orientation from publically accessible locations. Examples of distinctive views include urban skylines, valleys, mountain ranges, or large bodies of water.

Contra Costa County

State Route 24 (SR-24) and the portion of Interstate 680 (I-680), south of the SR-24 junction, are officially designated State Scenic Highways and are identified as such in Figure 5-4 of the Contra Costa County General Plan.^{3,4} Mount Diablo, rising to an elevation of 3,849, is the most prominent topographical feature in the area. There are also Shell Ridge and Lime Ridge, both designated as scenic ridgeways by the Contra Costa County General Plan. Intervening development, vegetation, and the flat topography of the project site obstructs views of Mount Diablo, Shell Ridge, and Lime Ridge from the project site.

Project Site

In May 2018, FirstCarbon Solutions (FCS) conducted field visits to the existing project site to observe and document the existing visual quality and character of the area. Exhibit 3.1-1 identifies and describes specific viewpoint locations near the project site that provide a representative cross section of visual images and information about the existing aesthetic conditions of the immediate

² Contra Costa County. 2005. Contra Costa County General Plan 2005–2020.

³ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). California Scenic Mapping System. Website: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/. Accessed November 14, 2018.

⁴ Contra Costa County. 2005. Contra Costa County General Plan 2005–2020, Transportation and Circulation Element.

surrounding area. These locations represent publically accessible views that may be visible to a variety of observers in the area, ranging from motorists traveling along Coggins Drive, pedestrians walking along the Pleasant Hill BART Station platform, or walkers and cyclists along the Iron Horse Regional Trail. As summarized in Table 3.1-1, there are various publicly accessible locations in the Contra Costa County area with views toward and/or through the project site. Exhibit 3.1-2 through Exhibit 3.1-3 demonstrate the existing views from the identified viewpoints.

Table 3.1-1: Summary of Viewpoint Locations for Existing Views

Viewpoint Number	View Description
1	Existing view from Iron Horse Regional Trail looking northeast toward project site.
2	Existing view from the intersection of Las Juntas Way and Coggins Drive looking southeast toward project site.
3	Existing view from Pleasant Hill/Contra Costa Centre BART Station looking northeast toward project site.

Source: FCS 2019

View 1—Existing View from Iron Horse Regional Trail Looking Northeast toward Project Site

The viewpoint along Iron Horse Regional Trail, a public trail, is located along the western boundary of the project site, shown in Exhibit 3.1-2, Photograph A. The viewpoint is located southwest of the project site and facing toward center of the project site. Existing views of the project site consist primarily of vegetation, trees, and a fence running through the project site. Del Hombre Lane and Honey Trail are visible.

View 2—Existing View from the intersection of Las Juntas Way and Coggins Drive Looking Southeast toward Project Site

The viewpoint at the intersection of Las Juntas Way and Coggins Drive is located northwest of the project site, adjacent to a residential apartment area, as shown in Exhibit 3.1-2, Photograph B. The existing view of the project site is partially obstructed by the overhead BART rail structure, but primarily consists of open Las Juntas Way and vegetation in the project site.

View 3—Existing View from Pleasant Hill/Contra Costa Centre BART Station Looking Northeast toward Project Site

This viewpoint is located from the elevated BART station platform adjacent to Coggins Drive, shown in Exhibit 3.1-3. Existing northeastward view of the project site is partially obstructed by trees and the development of Block C project of the Specific Plan, which consists of 200 apartment units, is currently under construction. Views of these ridgelines are not currently available through the existing multi-family residential development recently constructed between the Pleasant Hill BART Station and the view of Mount Diablo. The view primarily consists of the intersection of Coggins Drive and Jones Road, and vegetation.

Other General Existing Views from Public Streets, Parks, and Open Space Areas

Jones Road, Coggins Drive, and Del Hombre Lane are publicly accessible roads located west of the project site. The project site is visible for pedestrians and motorists travelling along these roadways. Several trees along the Iron Horse Regional Trail and trees along the eastern boundary of the project site partially obstruct existing western views of the site. There are no public streets, parks, or open space areas with existing views of the site to the north, east, or south of the project site.

Light and Glare

In the context of CEQA Guidelines, light is nighttime illumination that stimulates sight and makes things visible, and glare is difficulty seeing in the presence of bright light such as direct or reflected sunlight.

Project Site Vicinity

The primary sources of nighttime light in the surrounding area are from vehicle headlights traveling along Del Hombre Lane and other surrounding roadways as well as exterior lighting associated with the Pleasant Hill BART Station. There are also streetlights and buildings with outdoor security lighting in the project area.

There are some large reflective surfaces associated with buildings in the project area that contribute daytime glare to within the project area.

Project Site

The two single-family residences on the project site may include exterior nighttime lighting; however, such lighting is likely minimal or nonexistent. There are no streetlights currently on the project site or on the Del Hombre Lane. There are some outdoor lighting fixtures on adjacent multi-family apartment sites. There is no lighting along the adjacent Iron Horse Trail. No other features on the project site produce light or glare.

3.1.3 - Regulatory Framework

Federal

No federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws related to aesthetics are applicable to the project.

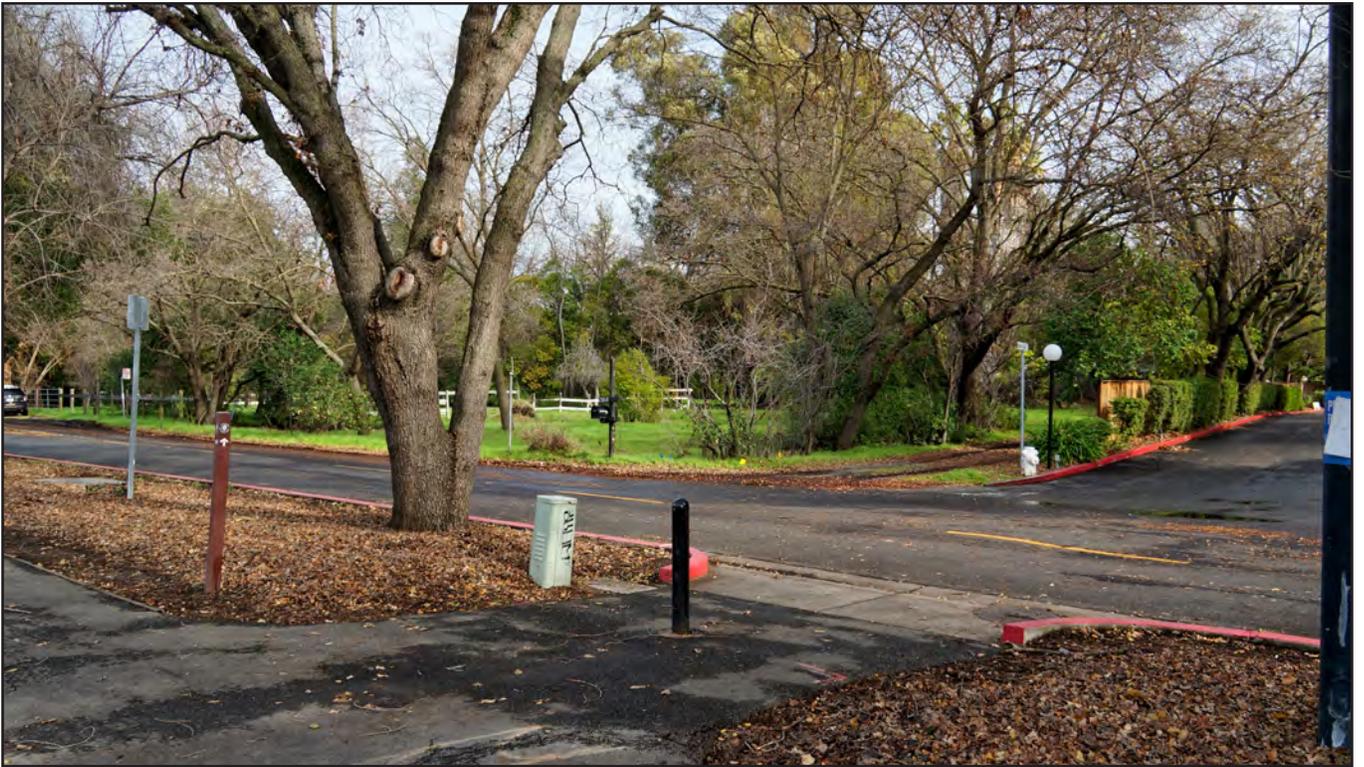
State

California Scenic Highway Program

The State Legislature created the California Scenic Highway Program, maintained by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), in 1963. The purpose of the State Scenic Highway Program is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors, through special conservation treatment. The State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Sections 260 through 263. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been officially designated. The status of a proposed State Scenic Highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the local governing body applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a Scenic Highway.



THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



A: View 1 Existing - View from Iron Horse Regional Trail Looking East toward the Project Site.



B: View 2 Existing - View from Coggins Drive/Las Juntas Way Looking Southeast toward the Project Site.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



View 3 Existing - View from Pleasant Hill/Contra Costa Center BART Station Platform Looking Northeast toward the Project Site.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Local

Contra Costa County General Plan

Land Use Element

The Contra Costa County General Plan Land Use Element establishes the following goals and policies related to aesthetics:

- **Goal 3-C:** To encourage aesthetically and functionally compatible which reinforces the physical character and desired images of the County.
- **Goal 3-J:** To encourage a development pattern that promotes the individuality and unique character of each community in the County.
- **Policy 3-18:** Flexibility in the design of projects shall be encouraged in order to enhance scenic qualities and provide for a varied development pattern.
- **Policy 3-24:** Housing opportunities shall be improved through encouragement of distinct styles, desirable amenities, attractive design and enhancement of neighborhood identity.
- **Policy 3-25:** Innovation in site planning and design of housing developments shall be encouraged in order to upgrade quality and efficiency of residential living arrangements and to protect the surrounding environment.

Transportation and Circulation Element

The Contra Costa County General Plan Transportation and Circulation Element establishes the following goals and policies related to aesthetics:

- **Policy 5-49:** Scenic views observable from scenic routes shall be conserved, enhanced, and protected to the extent possible.
- **Policy 5-50:** The existing system of scenic routes shall be enhanced to increase the enjoyment and opportunities for scenic pleasure driving to major recreational and cultural centers throughout this and adjacent counties.
- **Policy 5-53:** Design flexibility shall be encouraged as one of the governing elements for aesthetic purposes in the construction of roads within the scenic corridor.
- **Policy 5-54:** For lands designated for urban use along scenic routes, planned unit developments shall be encouraged in covenant with land development projects.

Open Space Element

The Contra Costa County General Plan Open Space Element establishes the following goals and policies related to aesthetics:

- **Policy 9-4:** Where feasible and desirable, major open space components shall be combined and linked to form a visual and physical system in the County.
- **Policy 9-5:** The visual identities of urban communities shall be preserved through the maintenance of existing open space areas between cities and/or communities.
- **Goal 9-D:** To preserve and protect areas of identified high scenic value, where practical, and in accordance with the Land Use Element map.
- **Goal 9-E:** To protect major scenic ridges, to the extent practical, from structures, roadways, or other activities which would harm their scenic qualities.

- **Policy 9-10:** In areas designated for urban development, the principles outlined below shall be applied in the review of development proposals.⁵
- **Policy 9-12:** In order to conserve the scenic beauty of the County, developers shall generally be required to restore the natural contours and vegetation of the land after grading and other land disturbances. Public and private projects shall be designed to minimize damages to significant trees and other visual landmarks.
- **Policy 9-13:** Providing public facilities for outdoor recreation should remain an important land use objective in the County, as a method of promoting high scenic quality, for air quality maintenance, and to enhance outdoor recreation opportunities of all residents.
- **Policy 9-27:** Physical and visual public access to established scenic routes shall be protected.

Contra Costa County Ordinance Code

The Contra Costa County Zoning Map zones the site Planned Unit District (P-1) and Single-Family Residential (R-15).

Planned Unit District (P-1)

As stated in Chapter 84-66.204, the intent of the P-1 district is to allow “diversification in the relationship of various uses, buildings, structures, lot sizes and open space while insuring (sic) substantial compliance with the general plan and the intent of the county code in requiring adequate standards necessary to satisfy the requirements of the public health, safety and general welfare. These standards shall be observed without unduly inhibiting the advantages of large-scale or special area planning.”⁶

As summarized in Table 3.1-2, Article 84-66.602 establishes requirements for new and alterations to existing land uses, structures, and site development within the P-1 zoning district.

Table 3.1-2: P-1 District Development Standards

Development Feature	Requirement
Area (Minimums)	
Residential	5 acres for residential uses except that a mobile home subdivision shall have a minimum of 10 acres.
Nonresidential	10 acres for nonresidential uses.
Mixed	15 acres for mixed residential and nonresidential uses.
Office	No minimum for office uses which do not require heavy vehicular delivery or have easy automobile site access including some ancillary retail, service and residential uses when consistent with the Contra Costa County General Plan.

⁵ In Policy 9-10, “principles outlined below” refers to Policy 9-14 through Policy 9-27.

⁶ Contra Costa County. 2018. Contra Costa County Ordinance Code, Chapter 84-66.204-Intent and Purpose. Website: https://library.municode.com/ca/contra_costa_county/codes/ordinance_code?nodeId=TIT8ZO_DIV84LAUSDI_CH84-66PLUNDI. Accessed November 15, 2018.

Table 3.1-2 (cont.): P-1 District Development Standards

Development Feature	Requirement
Density	
Residential	In computing the net development area to set residential densities, use the general plan as a guide and exclude areas set aside for churches, schools, streets, commercial use or other nonresidential use, but include areas set aside for common open space, outdoor recreation or parks.
Source: Contra Costa County Ordinance Code, Articles 84-66.6 and 84-66.8 (2018).	

Chapter 816-6—Tree Protection and Preservation

The Tree Protection and Preservation Ordinance of Contra Costa County (Chapter 816-6) provides for the preservation of protected trees and requires a permit for activities such as trenching, grading or fill within the drip line of any protected tree, or the removal, destruction, trimming or topping of any protected tree. Heritage trees are defined as a tree 72 inches (approximately 6.5 inches in diameter) or more in circumference measured 4.5 feet above natural grade, or any tree or group of trees particularly worthy of protection and specifically designated as such by the Board of Supervisors. No replacement ratio for removed or affected trees is identified in the ordinance.

3.1.4 - Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Significance Criteria

According to 2019 CEQA Guidelines Appendix G, to determine whether impacts related to aesthetics are significant environmental effects, the following questions are analyzed and evaluated. Would the project:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a State scenic highway?
- c) In a non-urbanized area, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? If in an urbanized area, conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?
- d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Approach to Analysis

This analysis provides a discussion of the visual impacts associated with the project and the area surrounding the project site. Several variables affect the degree of visibility, visual contrast, and ultimately project impacts: (1) scale and size of facilities, (2) viewer types and activities, (3) distance and viewing angle, and (4) influences of adjacent scenery or land uses. Viewer response and sensitivity

vary depending on viewer attitudes and expectations. Viewer sensitivity is distinguished among project viewers in identified scenic corridors and from publically accessible recreational and plaza areas. Recreational areas and scenic corridors are considered to have relatively high sensitivity.

As part of this analysis, various areas in the project site vicinity and central Contra Costa County area were screened as potential viewpoint locations, based on whether the existing project site is visible from these locations and the degree to which viewers at those locations would be sensitive to proposed physical changes at the project site during the proposed construction and operational periods. A set of locations that constitute a representative cross-section of views experienced by a representative cross section of observers was chosen for the analysis. Views from these locations were photographed and are included in this EIR to illustrate existing conditions. Consequently, visual change discussions were provided for these same views to facilitate project impact determinations. Project design drawings and information about height and massing were also relied upon to identify whether or when the proposed structures would result in visual impacts. The Contra Costa County General Plan and Contra Costa County Ordinance Code were also evaluated to determine applicable policies and design requirements for the project.

Light and Glare

The analysis of light and glare impacts in this section focuses on the nature and magnitude of changes in light and glare conditions of the project site and surrounding area. If the light and glare conditions of the project and the existing environment are similar, then the visual compatibility would be high. If the light and glare conditions of the project strongly contrast with the existing light and glare or applicable policies and guidelines, then light and glare compatibility would be low and significant impacts may result. Relevant urban design policies and guidelines are used to provide conclusions with regard to the significance of project- and cumulative-level light and glare impacts.

Specific Thresholds of Significance

The County does not have quantitative thresholds for evaluation of aesthetics; however, the following qualitative thresholds are used to evaluate the significance of aesthetics impacts resulting from implementation of the project.

- Block existing views from a County-designated scenic roadway toward a County-designated scenic resource (e.g., ridgeline).
- Be inconsistent with the character of the plan area or existing development in the surrounding area or would substantially alter existing natural topography.
- Increase existing nighttime light or daytime glare sources in the plan area or vicinity in a manner that would substantially affect nighttime or daytime views.
- Reduce sunlight or introduce shadows to public parks and plazas, routinely usable outdoor spaces associated with recreational land uses, pedestrian-oriented commercial spaces such as outdoor eating areas, and existing solar facilities.

Impact Evaluation

Scenic Vistas

Impact AES-1: The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

Construction

A significant impact would occur if the project construction would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista⁷ as defined and identified in the Contra Costa County General Plan. Scenic vistas as identified in the Contra Costa County General Plan are discussed below. The on-site vegetation that would be removed as a part project construction is not designated as a scenic vista. Thus, the removal of the existing vegetation would not adversely impact existing views of scenic vistas within the project vicinity. Therefore, no temporary construction impact related to scenic vistas would occur.

Operation

A significant impact would occur if the project operation would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista as defined and identified in the Contra Costa County General Plan. The Contra Costa County General Plan, in lieu of identifying scenic vistas, identifies scenic roads as they also afford publicly available views. A scenic road is defined as having a highway, road, drive, or street that, in addition to its transportation function, provides opportunities for the enjoyment of natural and human-made scenic resources. Scenic roads direct views to areas of exceptional beauty, natural resources or landmarks, or historic or cultural interest. In the Contra Costa County General Plan, the nearest scenic route is SR-242, a protected road located approximately 2.06 miles north. In addition, SR-24 is a designated scenic route in the Contra Costa County General Plan and is located 2.57 miles to the southwest. Due to the distance, the project would not be visible from these scenic routes.⁸

The Contra Costa County General Plan's Open Space Element includes provisions to prohibit development on scenic ridges, hillsides and rock outcroppings where structures would interrupt the skyline and alteration of slopes greater than 26 percent. There are no scenic ridges, hillsides and rock outcroppings on the project site.

The nearest designated scenic ridgelines to the project site are Shell Ridge, located approximately 2.35 to the miles southeast, and Lime Ridge, located approximately 2.70 miles to the northeast. Intervening development obstructs existing views of these scenic ridges from the project site or immediate surrounding area. Views from the Pleasant Hill BART Station towards Mount Diablo is already obstructed by the recently constructed multi-family developments at the station area; therefore, the roofline of the project would not impede views of these scenic ridgelines (see existing view shown in Exhibit 3.1-3 and proposed view shown in Exhibit 3.1-5). Thus, the project would not significantly impact designated scenic resources, including views of and views from scenic ridgelines located in the project vicinity. Therefore, impacts related to scenic vistas would be less than significant.

⁷ A scenic vista is defined as a view point that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the benefit of the general public.

⁸ Contra Costa County. 2005. Contra Costa County General Plan, Transportation and Circulation Element. Website: <http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/30915/Ch5-Transportation-and-Circulation-Element?bidId=>. Accessed February 28, 2019.

Level of Significance

Less Than Significant

Scenic Highways

Impact AES-2: **The project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a State scenic highway.**

Construction

A significant impact would occur if project construction would substantially damage scenic resources as seen from a designated scenic highway. The project site is located approximately 0.36 mile east of I-680 and is not visible from that highway. In addition, I-680 is not designated as a State Scenic Highway, as further discussed below.⁹ In addition, there are no scenic resources, as defined by the Contra Costa County General Plan, located on the project site. Thus, demolition, grading, and tree removal during construction could not result in adverse impacts to scenic resources. Therefore, no temporary construction impact related to scenic resources within a State scenic highway would occur.

Operation

A significant impact would occur if project operation would substantially damage scenic resources as seen from a designated scenic highway.

The project site is located approximately 0.36 mile east of I-680. This portion of I-680 is not an officially designated as a State Scenic Highway. There are no other officially designated State Scenic Highway or County scenic roadways in or adjacent to the project site. The nearest officially designated State Scenic Highway is SR-24, located approximately 2.65 miles southwest, and the portion I-680 south of SR-24, located approximately 2.57 miles south of the project site.¹⁰ The nearest County-designated scenic route is SR-242, a protected road located approximately 2.06 miles north.¹¹ There are also no scenic resources, as defined by the Contra Costa County General Plan, located on the project site, of which a view would be available from a scenic highway or roadway. In addition, the project site is surrounded by suburban, transit-oriented development. Given the absence of scenic highways proximate to the project site, the lack of designated scenic resources (i.e., ridgelines, hillsides, rock outcroppings) on the project site, and the presence of intervening development between the project site and the nearest scenic highways, the project would not adversely affect views from a State Scenic Highway. Thus, a less than significant impact would occur related to scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway.

Level of Significance

Less Than Significant

⁹ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). California Scenic Highway Mapping System—Contra Costa County. Website: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/16_livability/scenic_highways/. Accessed February 27, 2019.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ Contra Costa County. 2005. Contra Costa County General Plan, Transportation and Circulation Element. Website: <http://www.co.contra-costa.ca.us/DocumentCenter/View/30915/Ch5-Transportation-and-Circulation-Element?bidId=>. Accessed February 28, 2019.

Visual Character

Impact AES-3: **The project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings or conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.**

Construction

Construction of the project would include demolition of the existing residential buildings, the removal of several trees and potential impacts to trees to be preserved (described in greater detail in Section 3.3, Biological Resources), and grading of approximately 29,000 cubic yards. Thus, the construction could temporarily affect existing visual character or quality of the project site and area. However, the area surrounding the project site has a transit-oriented residential character with multi-family apartments located to the north (on Las Juntas Way and Santos Lane), east (on Roble Road and Santos Lane), and south (on Honey Trail) as well as on Block C of the Pleasant Hill BART Specific Plan, which is under construction, to the southwest. The construction of the project would similarly temporarily affect visual character and quality of the area, given that local views from the Pleasant Hill BART Station, the Iron Horse Regional Trail, and proximate public sidewalks would include on-going construction of multi-family land uses in this transit-oriented residential neighborhood. Construction-related impacts related to degradation of existing visual character or quality of the project site and area would be temporary and less than significant.

Operation

The analysis of operational impacts addresses both consistency with zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality, as well as changes to the existing visual character and quality.

The area surrounding the project site has a suburban, transit-oriented residential character. Multi-family apartments are located to the north (on Las Juntas Way and Santos Lane), east (on Roble Road and Santos Lane), and south (on Honey Trail) and on Block C of the Specific Plan, which is being developed, to the southwest. The Pleasant Hill BART Station is located 0.12 mile west of the project site.

The project would construct a six-story podium apartment building in a uniform architectural style that would employ materials that are currently utilized in the surrounding development. The building would be six stories tall with a maximum height of 77 feet. Exterior building materials would consist of cement plaster, wood, vinyl (windows), metal, and foam trim, and the roof would employ a Monaco roof tile design.

The project includes construction of two courtyard areas on Floor 2. The courtyard areas would include outdoor seating, a bocce ball court, private patios connected to the apartment units, a fireplace and fire pits. A pool would be provided in the center of the southern portion of the project site with outdoor beds and lounges. Porcelain tile paving would be used in the outdoor courtyard area as well as the pool area. An assortment of trees would be interspersed throughout the courtyard areas and would include palm trees, shade trees, and other decorative trees. A roof deck with capacity for 39 tenants would also be provided as well as palm trees. A small dog run would be constructed along the eastern boundary of the project site at the southeastern corner, and a large dog run would be constructed just north of the small dog run. Bioretention swales would also be installed north of the large dog run.

Contra Costa County General Plan and Contra Costa County Ordinance Code

The area around the project site has a suburban, transit-oriented residential character. The Contra Costa County General Plan designates the project site as Multiple-Family Residential-Very High Density (MV). Pursuant to the General Plan Land Use Element, the MV designation allows between 30.0 and 44.9 multiple-family units per net acre, and site can range up to 1,451 square feet. Primary land uses consist of multiple-family residences including apartments and condominiums as well as accessory buildings and structures ancillary to the primary uses. The project is requesting an amendment to the Contra Costa County General Plan to re-designate the project site from MV to Multiple-Family Residential-Very Special High (MS) that would allow between 45.0 and 99.9 multiple-family units per acre.

In addition, the project site is currently zoned Residential (R-15) and Planned Unit District (P-1) by the Contra Costa County Zoning Ordinance. The project would rezone the entire site to P-1. The P-1 zoning would allow flexibility with respect to use, building types, lot size, and open space while ensuring the project complies with the Contra Costa County General Plan and requirements as set forth in the Contra Costa County Ordinance Code.

The project site has been planned for higher density residential uses since the 1980s when the adjacent Pleasant Hill BART Station Area Specific Plan (Specific Plan) was originally adopted by Contra Costa County. Block C of the Specific Plan, consisting of 200 apartment units, is currently under construction southwest of the project site across Del Hombre Lane. The Pleasant Hill/Contra Costa Centre BART station is located to the west of the project site, approximately 0.12 mile. The Iron Horse Regional Trail runs parallel to and immediately west of Del Hombre Lane. . The project includes removal of trees as part of site preparation, and planting of new trees along Honey Trail, Del Hombre Lane, and Roble Road on the project site. As the construction of the project requires the removal of a tree(s) subject to the Contra Costa County Tree Protection and Preservation Ordinance, Chapter 816-6, tree permits would be required prior to the removal or any impacts of such protected trees and is further discussed Section 3.3, Biological Resources. Screening bushes would also be planted along Honey Trail on the project site.

View 1—View from Iron Horse Regional Trail Looking Northeast toward Project Site

Exhibit 3.1-4, Photograph A depicts a publicly accessible view of the project, as seen by pedestrians travelling north along the Iron Horse Regional Trail. The proposed six-story apartment building would replace the existing views of vegetation on the project site. As depicted, a sidewalk with new London plane trees would be installed along Del Hombre Lane and screening bushes would be planted along Honey Trail. Impacts to this view would be less than significant, as the project would not substantially degrade the existing residential character of the surrounding area.

View 2—View from Intersection of Las Juntas Way and Coggins Drive Looking Southeast toward Project Site

Exhibit 3.1-4, Photograph B depicts a publicly accessible view of the project, as seen by pedestrians and motorists looking southeast from the intersection of Las Juntas Way and Coggins Drive. The proposed six-story apartment building would replace the existing views of vegetation on the project site. The view of the project would be partially obstructed by the existing overhead BART rail structure. Although the project would be slightly taller than the immediate surrounding apartment buildings, it would be consistent with the multi-family residential character of the surrounding area.



A: View 1 Proposed - View from Iron Horse Regional Trail Looking East toward the Project Site.



B: View 2 Proposed - View from Coggins Drive/Las Juntas Way Looking Southeast toward the Project Site.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



View 3 Proposed - View from Pleasant Hill/Contra Costa Center BART Station Platform Looking Northeast toward the Project Site.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK

Impacts to this view would be less than significant, as the project would not substantially degrade the existing residential character of the surrounding area.

View 3—View from Pleasant Hill/Contra Costa Centre BART Station Looking Northeast toward Project Site
Exhibit 3.1-5 depicts a publicly accessible view of the project the elevated Pleasant Hill BART Station platform adjacent to Coggins Drive. The proposed six-story apartment building would replace the existing views of vegetation on the project site. The building would not obstruct views of any ridgelines or foothills, as the existing view toward Mount Diablo and adjacent ridgelines is already blocked by the existing residential multi-family residential development recently constructed in between the Pleasant Hill BART Station and the view of Mount Diablo. Impacts to this view would be less than significant, as the project would not substantially degrade the existing residential character of the surrounding area.

Other General Existing Views from Public Streets, Parks, and Open Space Areas

Jones Road, Coggins Drive, and Del Hombre Lane are publicly accessible roads located west of the project site. The project site is visible for pedestrians and motorists travelling along these roadways. Several trees along the Iron Horse Regional Trail and trees along the eastern boundary of the project site partially obstruct existing western views of the site. There are no public streets, parks, or open space areas with existing views of the site to the north, east, or south of the project site. Although the project would be slightly taller than the immediate surrounding apartment buildings, it would be consistent with the multi-family residential character of the surrounding area. Impacts to this view would be less than significant, as the project would not substantially degrade the existing urbanized residential character of the surrounding area. Therefore, impacts to other general views would be less than significant and the project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Summary

The project would result in a continuation of higher density multi-family development around the Pleasant Hill BART station that would be consistent with scenic quality regulations and also reinforce the visual character of the area as a transit-oriented residential neighborhood. Therefore, impacts related to consistency with applicable scenic quality regulations and visual quality and character would be less than significant.

Level of Significance

Less Than Significant

Light and Glare

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

Construction

Impacts related to degradation of existing visual character or quality of the project site and area are limited to operational impacts. No respective construction impacts would occur.

Operation

The project would have a significant impact if substantial light or glare would adversely affect nighttime or daytime views, respectively, in the area. Potential sources of light associated with the project would consist of typical sources of lighting associated with a residential development including lighting from the apartment building and from vehicles traveling to and from the project site. Exterior lighting would be located around and within the project site. Lampposts would be evenly dispersed within the project site, with safety lighting, as needed throughout the site. A 14-foot pole light would be used for the proposed development. The 14-foot pole lights would primarily be located within the bocce ball courtyard, which would be enclosed on all four sides, and the swimming pool courtyard, which would be enclosed by three sides of the building. Light spillage from these locations would be limited by existing trees along the adjacent properties, the proposed screening bushes along Honey Trail, and the proposed London plane trees along Del Hombre Lane and Roble Road. Furthermore, this lighting would be consistent with that of adjoining residential areas. In addition, per MM AES-4, exterior lighting would be directed downward and away from adjacent properties and public/private right-of-way to prevent excessive light spillover. Therefore, with implementation of MM AES-4, lighting impacts would be less than significant.

Glare resulting from the proposed residences' windows would be minimal and would be partially obscured by landscaping, depending on the time of day and the location of the reflecting light source. Furthermore, residential glass typically has a low reflectivity rate. Glare may also occur from on-site vehicles; however, such glare would be transient, depending upon the time of day and location of the vehicle. In addition, MM AES-4 requires exterior lighting be directed downward and away from adjacent properties and public/private right-of-way to prevent glare. As such, glare impacts would be less than significant with mitigation.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Potentially Significant

Mitigation Measures

MM AES-4 Exterior Lighting

Proposed exterior lighting shall be directed downward and away from adjacent properties and public/private right-of-way to prevent glare or excessive light spillover.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Less Than Significant with Mitigation

3.1.5 - Cumulative Impacts

The geographic scope of the cumulative aesthetics analysis is the visible area surrounding the project site. The analysis also considers the foreseeable development projects listed in Table 3-1 (See Chapter 3.0: Environmental Setting) in the unincorporated Contra Costa County area in addition to the project.

Visual Character and Views

The development projects listed in Table 3-1 are mostly residential and commercial in nature. The project and the projects listed in Table 3-1 propose urban development, but only Cumulative Projects 1 and 9 would be located within the same visible area. Project 1 is located approximately 0.11 mile southwest of the project site and Project 9 is located approximately 0.10 mile north of the project site. The project and cumulative projects 1 and 9 would develop multi-family residential residences. Both of these projects are adjacent to the Pleasant Hill BART Station and surrounded by residential developments. The area surrounding projects 1 and 9 consists of residential, commercial, and office development. Projects 1 and 9 would be consistent with the suburban, transit-oriented character of the surrounding area.

The project and Cumulative Project 1 would be subject to the same County codes and guidelines related to building heights, setbacks, undergrounding of utilities, landscaping, signage, and permitted land uses. Cumulative Project 9 would be subject to the codes and guidelines associated with the City of Walnut Creek related to building heights, setbacks, undergrounding of utilities, landscaping, signage, and permitted land uses. As such, the project, in conjunction with other planned and approved projects, would result in a less than significant cumulative impact with respect to visual character and views.

Light and Glare

The development projects listed in Table 3-1 are mostly residential and commercial in nature. The project and the projects listed in Table 3-1 propose urban development, but only Cumulative Projects 1 and 9 would be located within the same visible area. Cumulative Project 1 is located approximately 0.11 mile southwest of the project site and Cumulative Project 9 is located approximately 0.10 mile north of the project site. The project and Cumulative Projects 1 and 9 would include streetlights and exterior and interior residential lighting. Cumulative Project 1 is currently being constructed in compliance with County requirements for exterior lighting. Exterior lighting associated with Cumulative Project 9 would be subject to the City of Walnut Creek Municipal Code 10-2.3.407(L), which requires lighting to be designed in a manner such that the light source is shielded from view.¹² Cumulative Project 9 would also be required to comply with the City of Walnut Creek's Design Review process, which would consider glare impacts and ensure that they are addressed by site planning and design.¹³ As such, the project, in conjunction with other planned and approved projects, would result in a less than significant cumulative impact with respect to light and glare.

Level of Cumulative Significance

Less Than Significant

¹² City of Walnut Creek. Revised 2019. Walnut Creek Municipal Code. Website: <https://www.codepublishing.com/CA/WalnutCreek/#!/WalnutCreek10/WalnutCreek1002C.html#10-2.3.407>. Accessed April 25, 2019.

¹³ City of Walnut Creek. 1996. Design Review Guidelines. Website: <http://www.walnut-creek.org/home/showdocument?id=4968>. Accessed April 25, 2019.

THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK