

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

This section describes the existing aesthetic character of the Specific Plan Area and evaluates the potential aesthetic impacts associated with the Project, both at the individual and cumulative levels.

### *A. Regulatory Framework*

This section summarizes existing laws, policies, and regulations relevant to a review of aesthetic impacts in Tracy. For the most part, the aesthetic quality of the Project would be subject to the state and local laws, policies, and regulations, as there are no recent federal regulations pertaining to aesthetics.

#### **1. California Scenic Highway Program**

State scenic highways are designated by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) to promote the protection and enhancement of the natural scenic beauty of California's highways and adjacent corridors. California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963.<sup>1</sup> The State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 *et seq.* Interstate 580 in San Joaquin County is designated as a scenic highway. The Specific Plan Area is not adjacent to Interstate 580, although it is intermittently visible from some portions of the highway. There are also existing industrial facilities and other urban development located along and visible from some portions of Interstate 580 in this area.

In order to acquire an "officially designated scenic highway" label, the State and Caltrans require local jurisdictions to adopt a scenic corridor protection program to protect and enhance the adjacent scenic resources. In the Tracy area, San Joaquin County is the responsible local agency.

Corridor protection programs are required to contain the following five elements which have been included in San Joaquin County's policies, as noted below in section A.2.:

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<sup>1</sup> Scenic Highways Program website, Frequently Asked Questions, <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/faq.htm>, accessed on October 4, 2011.

- “ Regulations of land use and density of development.
- “ Detailed land and site planning.
- “ Control of outdoor advertising.
- “ Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping.
- “ The design and appearance of structures and equipment.<sup>2</sup>

Caltrans monitors state-designated scenic routes in order to ensure each local jurisdiction's consistency with State guidelines.<sup>3</sup> Specifically, the Caltrans District Scenic Highway Coordinator (DSHC) will review a scenic highway for compliance every five years, but can recommend the revocation of scenic designation at any time.<sup>4</sup> In terms of enforcement, first, the DSHC will periodically contact the Local Governing Body (LGB), in this case, San Joaquin County. The LGB must either respond by submitting its current Corridor Protection Program or a letter of intent to request revocation of scenic designation. The DHSC reviews the submittal and takes corrective action to resolve any issues of non-compliance, certifies compliance, or recommends revocation of scenic designation.

## **2. San Joaquin County Policies**

San Joaquin County is responsible for enforcing the protection of State-designated scenic routes within its borders.

The County General Plan identifies Interstate 580 and Interstate 5 as scenic routes near Tracy. While the Specific Plan Area is not traversed by nor located adjacent to a scenic route, portions of the Specific Plan Area are intermittently viewable from Interstate 580, although predominantly obscured by existing industrial facilities located near the highway.

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<sup>2</sup> Caltrans, Scenic Highway Guidelines, [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/guidelines/scenic\\_hwy\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/guidelines/scenic_hwy_guidelines.pdf), accessed on October 4, 2011.

<sup>3</sup> Scenic Highways Program website, Frequently Asked Questions, <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/faq.htm>, accessed on October 4, 2011.

<sup>4</sup> Caltrans, Scenic Highway Guidelines, [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/guidelines/scenic\\_hwy\\_guidelines.pdf](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/guidelines/scenic_hwy_guidelines.pdf), accessed on October 4, 2011.

### 3. Local Regulations and Policies

#### a. Tracy General Plan

The Tracy General Plan includes several policies that are relevant to an evaluation of the visual quality of the Specific Plan Area. Key policies from the General Plan are listed in Table 4.1-1. A full listing of all General Plan goals, objectives, and policies is included in Appendix C.

#### b. Tracy Municipal Code

The City's Municipal Code contains standards for tree planting and removal, as well as provisions that address tree maintenance on public and private property, and address issues relating to removal and replacement of trees. The standards address issues of trees on private property and those on public easements through private property, especially for resident-requested removals and replacement requirements.

#### c. Standard Plans

The City of Tracy Standard Plan #140 establishes standards for street lights, requiring high pressure sodium lamps. Standard Plan #154 establishes standards for lighting parking areas, requiring that illuminated parking facilities provide a minimum 1-foot candle.<sup>5</sup> The City's Standard Plan for streetscapes and parks (#D10.0) establishes that all lights shall be designed and oriented to shield neighboring residences to the extent possible.<sup>6</sup> The City's Standard Plans, however, do not have regulations limiting glare.

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<sup>5</sup> City of Tracy, Standard Plans (Streets and Utilities), [http://www.ci.tracy.ca.us/modules/dms/file\\_retrieve.php?function=view&obj\\_id=625](http://www.ci.tracy.ca.us/modules/dms/file_retrieve.php?function=view&obj_id=625), accessed on October 5, 2011.

<sup>6</sup> City of Tracy, Standard Plans (Parks & Streetscape), [http://www.ci.tracy.ca.us/modules/dms/file\\_retrieve.php?function=view&obj\\_id=785](http://www.ci.tracy.ca.us/modules/dms/file_retrieve.php?function=view&obj_id=785), accessed on October 5, 2011.

TABLE 4.1-1 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AESTHETICS

<b>Goal/ Policy No.</b>	<b>Goal/Policy Content</b>
<b>Land Use Element</b>	
<i>Urban Reserve 6</i>	
Policy 6d	Development proposals should include land for public facilities, parks and/or open spaces to ensure consistency with the standards established in the Community Character Element of this General Plan.
Policy 6e	Appropriate setbacks and landscaping along I-205 should be provided to create an aesthetically pleasing visual entryway to the city.
Policy 6f	Industrial uses on the eastern side of this Urban Reserve should be designed with adequate buffers from residential uses.
Policy 6g	Consistent with the goals, objectives, policies and actions in the Community Character and Economic Development Elements, areas along I-205 should be developed with office-flex or higher-quality space, rather than warehousing and distribution uses, to capitalize upon their proximity to entryways of the city.
<b>Community Character Element</b>	
<b>Goal CC-1</b>	<b>Superior design quality throughout Tracy.</b>
<i>Objective CC-1.1</i>	<i>Preserve and enhance Tracy's unique character and "hometown feel" through high-quality urban design.</i>
Policy P3	All new development and redevelopment shall adhere to the basic principles of high-quality urban design, architecture, and landscape architecture including, but not limited to, human-scaled design, pedestrian-orientation, interconnectivity of street layout, siting buildings to hold corners, entryways, focal points and landmarks.
Policy P4	To the extent possible, site layout and building design should take into account Tracy's warm, dry climate, such as through the inclusion of trees and landscaping or other architectural elements to provide shade.
Policy P5	Lighting on private and public property should be designed to provide safe and adequate lighting, while minimizing light spillage to adjacent properties.

TABLE 4.1-1 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AESTHETICS

<b>Goal/ Policy No.</b>	<b>Goal/Policy Content</b>
<i>Objective CC-1.2</i>	<i>Balance the need for growth with the preservation of Tracy's "hometown feel."</i>
Policy P1	New development projects shall be approved only if they meet the design principles set forth in the Community Character Element and in detailed design guidelines approved by the City Council.
<i>Objective CC-1.3</i>	<i>Enhance the unique quality of the city through the use of art and entryway treatments.</i>
Policy P1	Entryways should be designed for the access points into the city. Entryways shall incorporate landscaping, trees, and/or architectural elements, to enhance a sense of arrival to the city.
Policy P2	Public art and other design features such as fountains and monuments should be used to enliven the public realm.
<i>Objective CC-1.5</i>	<i>Provide underground utilities throughout Tracy.</i>
Policy P1	New development shall locate and construct utilities underground.
<b>Goal CC-11</b>	<b>Well-designed Employment Areas that are integrated with other parts of Tracy.</b>
<i>Objective CC-11.1</i>	<i>Ensure that Employment Areas are developed with a recognizable identity and structure.</i>
Policy P1	Employment Areas should contain one or more Focal Points such as a retail use, park, or plaza.
Policy P2	Focal Points in Employment Areas may be located on private or public property and are encouraged to be publicly accessible.
Policy P3	Development within an Employment Areas should occur such that a majority of business parks or office parks are within a reasonable walking or biking distance, generally ½ mile, of one or more Focal Points.
Policy P4	Future Specific Plans for Employment Areas should identify Focal Points.
<i>Objective CC-11.2</i>	<i>Encourage attractive design in Employment Areas.</i>
Policy P1	Development in Employment Areas should adhere to high-quality design standards.

TABLE 4.1-1 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AESTHETICS

Policy P2	New office and flex-office developments are encouraged to provide private open spaces as an amenity for their employees. Where possible, the location and design of these private open spaces should be coordinated with adjacent developments or parcels.
Policy P3	Buildings in commercial and retail developments should be oriented to the street, not away from it.
Policy P4	Building setbacks for office buildings or office portions of industrial buildings should be minimized to ensure that buildings define the edges of the street.
Policy P5	Building facades in Employment Areas should provide visual interest.

Source: City of Tracy General Plan, 2011.

Rather, the City addresses light and glare issues on a case-by-case basis during project approval, which typically involve the addition of requirements as a condition of project approval to shield and protect against light splashing from one development to adjacent properties.<sup>7</sup>

***B. Existing Conditions***

**1. Visual Character of the Specific Plan Area**

The Specific Plan Area is currently undeveloped for the most part, and is used for Caltrans purposes, as well as used for farming and grazing lands. Figures 4.1-1 through 4.1-3 show photographs of the Specific Plan Area and surrounding areas. There are no unique or distinguishing visual or aesthetic characteristics of the Specific Plan Area, aside from the open space nature of these lands themselves, which offers a vast expanse of grassland. Much of the Specific Plan Area’s aesthetic value can be attributed to its openness and undeveloped character, which contrasts with nearby commercial, residential and industrial uses in the vicinity. As shown in Figures 4.1-1a and 4.1-1d, the open

<sup>7</sup> Dean, Bill. Assistant Director of Development Services, City of Tracy. Personal communication with Steve Noack, The Planning Center | DC&E, January 31, 2013.



4.1-1a: View from Mountain House Parkway



4.1-1b: View Looking to the Northeast from Old Schulte Road



4.1-1c: View of Delta Mendota Canal and the Mountains



4.1-1d: View from Hansen Road



4.1-1e: View of the Mountains from Hansen Road

FIGURE 4.1-1  
VIEWS ACROSS THE SPECIFIC PLAN AREA



4.1-2a: View of the Residence at 24383 Mountain House Parkway



4.1-2b: View of the Cell Tower Installation Facilities from Mountain House Parkway



4.1-2c: View of the Residential Properties along Hansen Road



4.1-2d: View of the Pacific Gas & Electric Facility from the Off-Ramp of Interstate 205



4.1-2e: View of the Agriculture-Related Structures at 25111 Hansen Road





4.1-3a: View of South County Fire Authority Station 94/California Department of Fire Station 26



4.1-3b: View of the Tracy Biomass Plant

character of the Specific Plan Area is only occasionally interrupted by shrubbery and mature trees (primarily located in residential properties), or by telephone poles (located along Old Schulte Road and Hansen Road) and electricity poles (located along the existing overhead transmission lines traversing the Specific Plan Area in a northeasterly direction from Mountain House Parkway (at the Delta Mendota Canal) to Hansen Road (just south of Interstate 205).

There are a number of existing buildings and structures within the Specific Plan Area. These structures consist of twelve existing residences and associated structures; a PG&E gas facility; two public roadways (i.e. Mountain House Parkway and Hansen Road); and a cell tower installation and related equipment building.

Of the twelve residences in the Specific Plan Area, eleven single-family homes are located along South Patterson Pass Road/Mountain House Parkway and Hansen Road. Two of them are ranch style homes over 60 years old. The oldest residence, located at 24383 Mountain House Parkway (seen in Figure 4.1-2a), was built in 1940. This home features a brown roof, a wooden-structured storage shed in its front yard, and an unpaved driveway which connects Mountain House Parkway to the home. The unpaved driveway continues approximately 500 feet behind and to the southwest of the residence where it loops around a mobile home and several barns. Mature trees surround the west side of this residence. The second oldest residence was built in 1949, which stands in the southeastern corner of the intersection of Hansen Road and State Highway 205. In the vicinity, four other homes, one also built in 1949 and the remainder built between 1973 and 1989, follow Hansen Road. These ranch-style homes feature red and brown roofs, and are set back from the road and surrounded by agricultural land. Trees in the front yard screen the houses from the street, as shown in Figure 4.1-2c.

Further down, along the west side of Hansen Road, there is a single-family residence, built in 1978, screened by a stand of trees from Hansen Road, with an agricultural outbuilding/storage facility which is visible from the road,

located alongside the trees. Across from the oldest residence on Mountain House Parkway, there is another grouping of three single-family residential homes, built between 1978 and 1987. The fences and trees in the front area sparsely screen two of these homes alongside Mountain House Parkway. These two homes block the view of the third home, which is located to the east.

In addition to these 12 residences, several non-residential structures appear in the Specific Plan Area. A Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) facility exists on the west side of South Patterson Pass Road immediately south of Interstate 205. This facility consists of several one-story structures and parking areas, as shown in Figure 4.1-2d. A cell tower installation and related equipment building share the southwest side of the aforementioned oldest residential property (i.e. near the mobile home). As shown in Figure 4.1-2b, the tall cylinder-shaped tower and associated one-story structures of the cell tower installation stand out from the surrounding agricultural land and can be seen from Mountain House Parkway.

Agriculture-related structures are scattered on an approximately 59-acre property at 25111 Hansen Road. These structures include a one-story ranch-style house and storage buildings. As shown in Figure 4.1-2e, mature trees follow an unpaved driveway in the northern part of this area and surround the northwestern corner of the Specific Plan Area.

Additionally, two water distribution canals run through the Specific Plan Area. The Delta Mendota Canal enters at the southern Specific Plan Area boundary, extending northwest and then exiting at Mountain House Parkway before paralleling the western Specific Plan Area boundary. The West Side Irrigation District (WSID) Canal enters at the mid-portion of the eastern Specific Plan Area boundary and extends northwest, exiting at the proposed Commerce Drive while paralleling the Specific Plan Area boundary. Although these water distribution canals are not natural waterways, they provide aesthetic value as open channels within the Specific Plan Area and its borders, as illustrated in Figure 4.1-1c.

## **2. Visual Character of the Surrounding Area**

As more fully described below, the Specific Plan Area is generally surrounded by agricultural land to the east, commercial and industrial structures to the south, and a residential neighborhood to the north as discussed more fully below.

To the north, residential neighborhood extends along Hansen Road across Interstate 205, consisting of single-family homes on large parcels in a cul-de-sac layout (i.e. the 421-acre Lammersville community). To the immediate southwest, between Delta Mendota Canal and Interstate 580, an auto dealer shop and storage facilities stand on a large site (as illustrated in Figure 4.1-1b). Besides these shops and storage structures, this large site is predominantly covered with parking lots. Trees are planted along paved internal roads and in the parking lots. The Mountain House community, a large (i.e. approximately 2,260-acre) mixed use, partially built-out development, is located approximately one mile to the north of the Specific Plan Area.

To the south, along Old Schulte Road, there are several distribution centers which consist of large buildings and parking lots for trucks (i.e. the 610-acre Patterson Pass Business Park). Trees along Old Schulte Road partially screen these buildings, most of which face toward the parking lot.

In the southwestern corner of the intersection of Old Schulte Road and Hansen Road, a one-story building with a gray roof, the South County Fire Authority Station 94/California Department of Fire Station 26, is set back from the road with grass in the front yard and a front parking lot, as shown in Figure 4.1-3a.

Near the southeastern corner of the Specific Plan Area, the Tracy Biomass Plant is located on the south side of Old Schulte Road. Figure 4.1-3b shows this tall industrial structure and associated equipment.

In addition to the above-mentioned existing uses, there are a number of urban projects that have been planned for and/or already approved by the local jurisdiction(s). While not technically part of the existing environmental setting,

this information is useful in providing context about surrounding uses. These planned uses are shown in Figure 4.1-4.

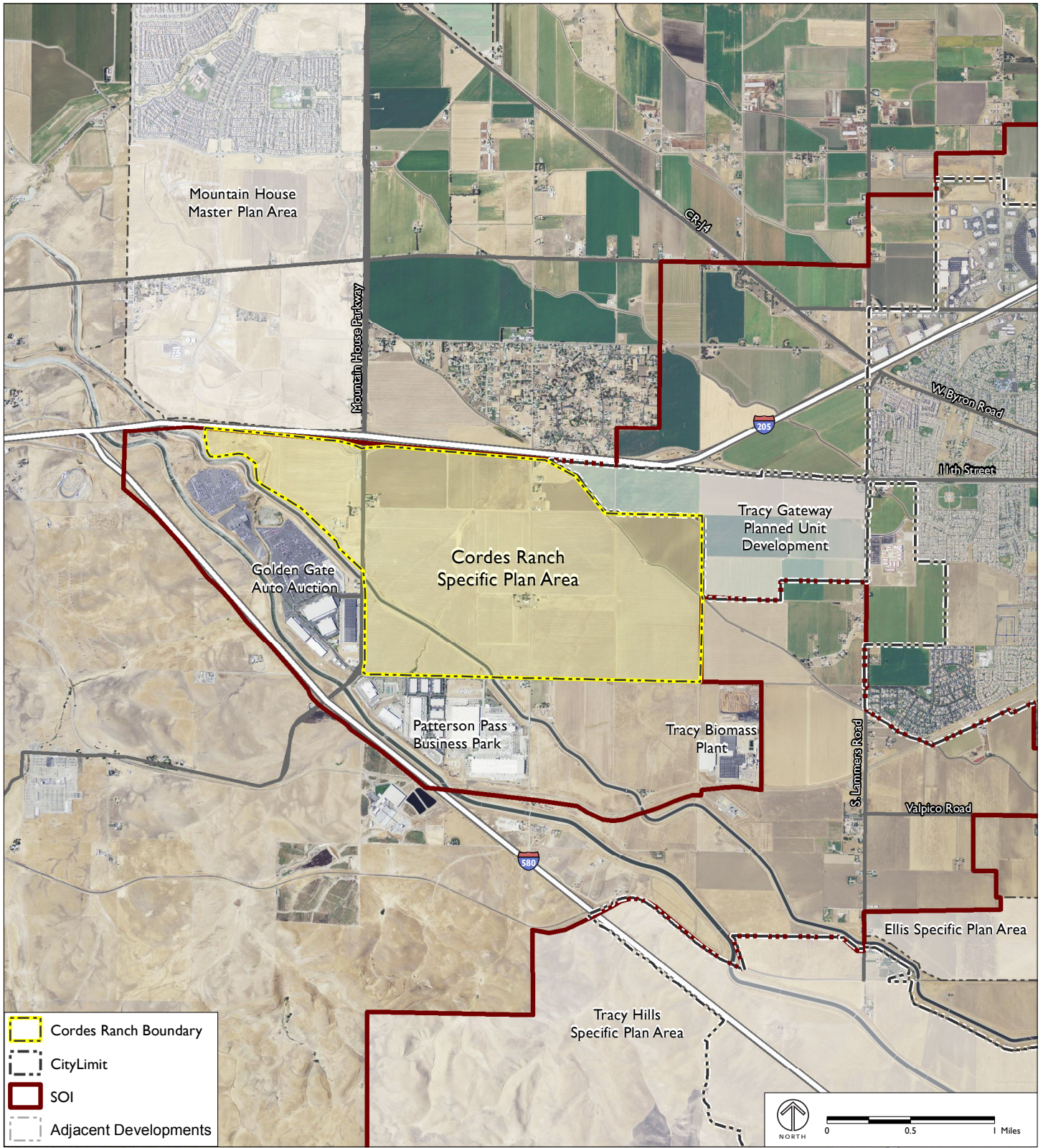
### 3. Scenic Highway

The Specific Plan Area is visible intermittently from Interstate 580, a State-designated scenic highway, although views along this roadway of the Specific Plan Area are obscured by small hills and commercial and industrial buildings.

### 4. Scenic Vistas within and across the Specific Plan Area

The City's General Plan does not identify protected scenic vistas across the Specific Plan Area. Instead, most of Tracy's scenic vistas and corridors are associated with the open space and agricultural resources surrounding the City and are a valued local asset. Scenic vistas and corridors in the SOI consist of the following:

- “ **Views of the Diablo Range.** Rising from the southwest portion of the lands within the Tracy SOI, this range extends from near sea level to 1,652 feet and provides a visual barrier between the Central Valley and the San Francisco Bay Area. Generally, the eastern slopes visible from Tracy have not been developed and contain sporadic tree groupings. The Specific Plan Area is on the opposite side of Interstate 580 and does not lie within this view plane.
- “ **Natural landscapes surrounding the Paradise Cut, Old River, and Tom Paine Sloughs.** Located on the north side of the Tracy SOI, these landscapes contain streamside vegetation, which provide visual relief as they run through the relatively flat agricultural lands.
- “ **Expansive Agricultural Lands.** Land within the City and in its SOI contains agricultural lands used for row crops and grazing.
- “ **Electricity-generating Windfarms.** Located on the ridgetops west of the City and close to the Altamont Pass, the windfarms are visible from Tracy on clear days.



Source: The Planning Center | DC&E, 2013.

FIGURE 4.1-4  
 NEIGHBORING DEVELOPMENT AND FACILITIES

The Specific Plan Area's relatively flat topography and undeveloped state allow for largely unimpeded views across the site and outward. Expansive views of agricultural land and distant mountains can be seen to the south from various locations within and around the Specific Plan Area. However, along Mountain House Parkway and Hansen Road, views of the mountains are somewhat obstructed by small homes, electric transmission lines, and mature vegetation in the foreground, as shown in Figure 4.1-1e.

### *C. Standards of Significance*

The Project would have a significant impact with regard to aesthetics if it 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.
- “ Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### *D. Impact Discussion*

#### **1. Project Impacts**

##### a. Substantial Adverse Effect on a Scenic Vista

The Project would result in a significant environmental impact if it would substantially and negatively affect scenic vistas in the area.

A scenic vista is generally described as a clear, expansive public view of significant regional features possessing visual and aesthetic qualities of value to the community. The City's General Plan does not designate any scenic vistas in the Specific Plan Area and vicinity as such, but the City's General Plan EIR

listed the City's scenic resources and vistas considered to be local assets. Of those listed resources, the following are relevant to this analysis:

- Public views of the expansive agricultural lands from within and immediately adjacent to the existing Specific Plan Area.
- Public views of the Diablo Range from the highway.

The above-referenced public views are primarily available to motorists traveling along the major transportation corridors at highway speed. In addition, these public views of foothills and mountains are characteristic of San Joaquin County, and exist throughout the region. Further, the scenic quality of these views is already compromised by a number of factors, including the highly limited duration that views are available to motorists due to the high speed of travel in the transportation corridors, limited travel along the Project frontage, and the existing urban development in the area, including the approximately 610-acre Patterson Pass Business Park located south of the Specific Plan Area. As evidenced by the photographs in Figures 4.1-1 and 4.1-2, there are no distinguishing visual features in the Specific Plan Area, aside from its open space nature that is framed by a visual backdrop of the Diablo Range.

As described previously, the Specific Plan Area contains generally flat grasslands that allow expansive views of distant mountains south of Tracy. The public views of these agricultural lands would be changed by development of the Project. In addition, the public views of the nearby Diablo Range in the background of the Specific Plan Area, with the relatively flat, rural topography in the foreground, would also be affected by the Project.

The Project would install two freeway signs visible from Interstate 205 (eastbound and westbound), three City gateway signs near the northwest corner of the Specific Plan Area, and three Project entry signs. The freeway signage, described in Chapter 3 of the Specific Plan, would consist of double-sided 70-foot-tall pylons. City gateway signs, depicted in Chapter 5 of the Specific Plan, would be a grouping of three c-shaped, 40-foot signs. Project entry signs would include a 20-foot c-shaped sign placed on either side of the street, ac-



accompanied by a smaller 6-foot sign in the median, as shown in Chapter 5 of the Specific Plan.

The Specific Plan contains development standards and design guidelines, which require wide setbacks along Mountain House Parkway, Hansen Road, Capital Parks Drive (new road), and Pavilion Parkway (new road) that would help preserve views to the mountains to a greater degree. Additionally, a range of parks, trails, and open space in the Specific Plan Area, including the Central Green, Eastside Park, and other recreational and open space features, would provide continuous landscaped view corridors.

Furthermore, while the undeveloped nature of the Specific Plan Area would be altered as a result of the Project, a number of additional development standards, design guidelines and policies within the Specific Plan have been included to ensure the public views from the transportation corridors would be of high quality. These include provisions such as:

- “ Providing landscaping in three tiers adjacent to Interstate 205 consisting of: (1) a 30-foot minimum landscape area from the Specific Plan Area boundary paralleling the highway, (2) landscaping within the parking field that meets the minimum parking shading requirements for the City of Tracy, and (3) a 3.5-foot foundation planting adjacent to the buildings. (Specific Plan Section 4.7, I-205 Overlay Guidelines).
- “ Designing publicly visible sides of commercial buildings with a complementary level of detailing and quality so that there is equal visual interest on all sides. (Specific Plan Section 4.10, General Commercial Architectural Guidelines).
- “ Establishing sign design standards which regulate the size, height, lighting, location, and appearance. (Specific Plan Section 3.8, Sign Standards; Section 5.3, City Gateways; and Section 5.4, Project Entries).
- “ Utilizing ample landscaping to screen views of the truck trailer parking, service doors, and loading docks from public streets. (Specific Plan Section 4.3, General Design Guidelines).

- “ Maintaining design consistency with the overall contemporary agrarian character of the Project. (Specific Plan Section 4.4, On-Site Landscape Guidelines.)

In addition, the Project developers would be required to implement signage and landscaping plans as part of the application process for individual developments within the Specific Plan Area in accordance with the applicable standards and other requirements set forth in the Specific Plan. In addition to the signage development standards and design guidelines in the Specific Plan, the Project would be required to comply with all applicable Caltrans requirements (e.g. height, setback, and separation).

Despite the above factors, development of the Project would involve an overall change to the visual aspect of and views from, to, and across the approximately 1,780-acre Specific Plan Area. These public views — while of features and vistas not identified in the City’s General Plan as significant scenic vistas — are treated by the City generally as important assets. Therefore, given the scope and nature of the Project, there would be a *significant* impact.

b. Substantial Damage to Scenic Resources, Including, but Not Limited to, Trees, Rock Outcroppings, and Historic Buildings within a State Scenic Highway

As described in Subsection B, Existing Conditions, some of the Specific Plan Area is within the viewsheds of Interstate 580, a State-designated scenic highway. The views from Interstate 580 to the Specific Plan Area are limited because of small hills and commercial buildings along Interstate 580 and given high speeds of travel; for these reasons, impacts in this regard would be limited. Nevertheless, new development proposed by the Project in the viewsheds would have the potential to adversely affect a State-designated route.

The land in the southwestern corner of the Specific Plan Area is the closest area that can be seen from Interstate 580. However, as described above, this area is already surrounded by several large single-story industrial/warehouse

style buildings, located immediately outside the Specific Plan Area. Therefore, while the views may change as a result of the Project, it is not anticipated that these changes would constitute a significant impact, even with respect to the area closest to I-580. First, as noted above, the proposed development would be consistent in scale and type as compared to existing nearby uses. Second, as discussed in Section D.1.c below, the development standards and design guidelines as well as other relevant policies and objectives of the Specific Plan would ensure these new buildings are appropriately set back and screened with landscaping to reduce impacts on views. Further, the existing views from Interstate 580 southwest of Tracy are obscured by existing development, structures, and other features, several large, single story warehouses and buildings (i.e. Safeway, Costco); an auto auction lot; utility and power lines; and in some places, the berm (i.e. cut slope) along the side of the freeway.

Notwithstanding the existing urban development in the vicinity and the development standards and design guidelines that would be imposed on the Project, impacts on Interstate 580 as a result of the Project would be *significant*.

c. Substantial Degradation of the Existing Visual Character or Quality of the Site and its Surroundings

As described above, the Specific Plan Area's character is generally rural and agricultural in nature. The Project would bring urban development (including buildings ranging from 30 feet to 100 feet high, with office, commercial, and business park industrial uses) to the Specific Plan Area, as described in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this Draft EIR, changing the existing rural and agricultural character to urban in nature. Among other things, the Tracy General Plan goals, objectives, and policies would ensure that the Project would create an aesthetically pleasing visual entryway to the City (Policy 6e); be designed with adequate buffers from residential uses (Policy 6f); preserve and enhance Tracy's unique character and "hometown feel" through high-quality urban design (Objective CC-1.1); and enhance the unique quality of the City through the use of art and entryway treatments (Objective CC-1.3). Additionally, Policy P1 would insure that the Project's design principles set

forth in the Community Character Element are adhered to, as design guidelines, approved by the City Council.

Chapters 4 and 5 of the Specific Plan also include design goals and guidelines to ensure the design quality of future development, including:

- “ Establish a sense of place for Cordes Ranch through quality architecture and well-designed buildings;
- “ Guide the site planning and building orientation to capitalize on the location and unique opportunities each location within the Specific Plan presents;
- “ Establish a consistent landscape theme that provides a gateway to the Project and to the City of Tracy, and creates a unifying design element for Cordes Ranch;
- “ Provide flexibility to allow for a variety of development options and opportunities to generate jobs in the City of Tracy.
- “ Create a gateway to the City consisting of well-designed buildings and enhanced landscaping design along the I-205 freeway edge.

Additionally, the Specific Plan designates the “I-205 Overlay,” to ensure that a visually interesting entry/gateway to the City and the Specific Plan Area is created. Development within the overlay would be required to include heightened architectural details and greater setbacks and landscaped areas to create attractive views from Interstate 205, while reducing impacts from massing. The Specific Plan also contains development standards and design guidelines that would regulate Project development, which would apply to the I-205 Overlay as well as the remainder of the Specific Plan Area. These standards and guidelines would ensure that Project development appropriately conceals views of parking lots, loading docks, and outdoor storage; enhances building facades, architectural styles, and streetscapes; and otherwise encourages thoughtful, cohesive building development. Furthermore, there are significant park, recreational and open space features proposed throughout

the Specific Plan Area, as well as significant pedestrian/bicycle amenities, which would be built that would further enhance the Project's visual appeal.

Overall, with implementation of the Specific Plan's development standards, design guidelines and other design-related goals, policies and objectives, as well as adherence to relevant Tracy General Plan goals, objectives, and policies, the impacts associated with new development in the Specific Plan Area would be reduced. Consideration of the existing urban development in the vicinity with which the Project would be comparable, is also relevant in further reducing impacts. Nevertheless, impacts on visual character or quality as a result would be *significant*.

d. Creation of a New Source of Substantial Light or Glare Which Would Adversely Affect Day or Nighttime Views in the Area

The Specific Plan Area's existing sources of light and glare include glare from vehicle windshields, a number of single-family homes and the Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) facility on South Patterson Pass Road. Other sources of light and glare within the Specific Plan Area include accessory buildings and the billboard located adjacent to Interstate 205. The Project would introduce new sources of light coming out from new commercial, office, and business park industrial uses and new surface parking lots, streets, pedestrian paths and recreational and open space facilities. In addition, the Project would create new sources of glare from windows and walls on new commercial, office, and business park industrial buildings, windshields of vehicles on new roads and on new surface parking lots. Accordingly, the Project has the potential to result in light and glare impacts to nearby existing residences, and other uses.

However, the Specific Plan includes standards, guidelines and policies that require shielding of lighting to minimize uplighting and to prevent light splay from shining directly onto adjacent properties, and also require that streetlights be subdued and focused to reduce light pollution. Specifically, as detailed below, the Specific Plan contains the following standards to prevent significant light and glare impacts:

- “ High efficiency lighting and lighting control systems are encouraged and light should not significantly trespass onto adjacent properties.
- “ Site lighting should be dark-sky compliant and prevent significant light trespass onto adjacent properties.
- “ Lighting should be architecturally compatible with the building and site design. Lighting should be low profile and in scale with the setting and can include post lights and light bollards.
- “ All projects shall include lighting for safety and security purposes. All lighting fixtures shall be fully shielded with cut-off fixtures so that there is no glare emitted onto adjacent properties or above the lowest part of the fixture.
- “ Accent lighting shall be used to enhance the appearance of a structure, draw attention to points of interest, and define open spaces and pathways.
- “ Accent lighting will only be permitted when it does not impact adjacent development, roadways, or residences.

Additionally, as described in Section A.3.b and c above, the Tracy General Plan Policy P5 and the City’s Standard Plans for streetscapes and parks also calls for minimizing light spillage to adjacent properties.

All new development under the Specific Plan would be required to comply with these policies and standards. In addition, the City addresses light and glare issues on a case-by-case basis during project approval, typically adding requirements as a condition of approval to shield and protect against light splashing from one development to adjacent properties. These requirements notwithstanding, the Project would still have a *significant* impact regarding light and glare given its scope.

## **2. Cumulative Impacts**

For the purposes of the aesthetic analysis, the cumulative review includes the viewshed corridor from Interstate 580 and Interstate 205. As discussed more

fully in Chapter 4.10 (Land Use), the City's General Plan has envisioned this corridor for industrial, office, and commercial development. The City evaluated impacts of implementing this General Plan vision in the General Plan EIR and concluded that such impacts would be significant and unavoidable. As discussed above, the Project would have a substantial adverse effect on aesthetics. Thus, development under the Specific Plan as proposed, with commercial, office and business park industrial uses, would *contribute considerably* to the significant and unavoidable impact previously identified by the City.

However, with respect to light and glare impacts, while the Project may create a new source of substantial light or glare, mitigation is proposed to reduce Project impacts in the regard to a less than significant level. These same or similar measures are anticipated to be imposed on other cumulative projects within the viewshed corridor, and thus it is reasonable to conclude that with imposition of such measures, light and glare impacts from other cumulative developments would also be reduced to a less than significant level. Accordingly, it is not anticipated that there would be a cumulative significant impact with respect to light and glare impacts.

#### ***E. Impacts and Mitigation Measures***

**Impact AES-1:** The Project would change the visual aspect of and views from, to, and across the Specific Plan Area, resulting in a *significant* impact to scenic vistas.

Mitigation Measure AES-1: The Specific Plan contains numerous design and landscaping requirements intended to beautify the Project, which shall be imposed on individual, site-specific developments under the Specific Plan. Beyond these measures, there is no feasible mitigation.

Significance After Mitigation: *Significant and Unavoidable.*

**Impact AES-2:** The Project would add new development to the viewsheds, with the potential to adversely affect a State-designated route, which would be a *significant* impact.

Mitigation Measure AES-2: The Specific Plan contains numerous design and landscaping requirements intended to beautify the Project, which shall be imposed on individual, site-specific developments under the Specific Plan. Beyond these measures, there is no feasible mitigation.

Significance After Mitigation: *Significant and Unavoidable.*

**Impact AES-3:** The Project would bring urban development to a rural and an agricultural area, thereby changing its character and resulting in a *significant* impact.

Mitigation Measure AES-3: The Specific Plan contains numerous design and landscaping requirements intended to beautify the Project, which shall be imposed on individual, site-specific developments under the Specific Plan. Beyond these measures, there is no feasible mitigation.

Significance After Mitigation: *Significant and Unavoidable.*

**Impact AES-4:** The Project would create new sources of light and glare, which, despite existing regulations, may result in a *significant* impact.

Mitigation Measure AES-4: To decrease light spillage and glare to the maximum extent practicable, all individual developments under the Specific Plan shall be required to:

- Prior to final inspection or certificate of occupancy, all exterior and parking area lighting shall be directed downward or shielded, to prevent glare or spray of light on to public rights-of-way or adjacent residential property, consistent with City standards.

Significance After Mitigation: *Less Than Significant.*



**Impact AES-CUM-1:** The Project would change the visual aspect of and views from, to, and across the Specific Plan Area, add new development to viewsheds, bring urban development to a rural and agricultural area, resulting in cumulatively considerable contributions to *significant* impacts on scenic vistas, scenic resources within a State scenic highway, and visual character.

Mitigation Measure AES-CUM-1: The Specific Plan contains numerous design and landscaping requirements intended to beautify the Project, which shall be imposed on individual, site-specific developments under the Specific Plan. Beyond these measures, there is no feasible mitigation.

Significance After Mitigation: *Significant and Unavoidable.*

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