

5. Environmental Analysis

5.1 AESTHETICS

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) evaluates potential impacts to the visual appearance and character of the Project Area from implementation of the Proposed Project. This section includes a discussion of the qualitative aesthetic characteristics of the existing environment that would be potentially degraded by implementation of the Proposed Project. The following evaluation assesses potential impacts related to visual character, scenic vistas, scenic highways, and light and glare.

5.1.1 Environmental Setting

5.1.1.1 REGULATORY SETTING

State and local laws, regulations, plans, or guidelines that are potentially applicable to the Proposed Project are summarized below. There are no federal regulations related to aesthetics that would apply to the Proposed Project.

State Regulations

California Scenic Highway Program

The California Scenic Highway Program, which is maintained by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), protects scenic state highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to these highways. The program was created in 1963 to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatments. Through the program, Caltrans designates routes that are eligible to become state or county scenic highways, as well as historic parkways. These determinations are based on the scenic value of the lands surrounding these roadways, as well as how readily visible these resources are to those driving on the roadway.

The adopted 1974 Los Angeles County Scenic Highway Plan was created to conform to the California Scenic Highway Program. According to state guidelines, 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 roadways in the Project Area that are designated as state scenic highways are discussed below under the Scenic Highways subsection of Section 5.1.1.2, *Existing Conditions*.

California Building Code

The California Building Code, Part 2 of Title 24 in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), is based on the International Building Code and combines three types of building standards from three different origins:

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- Building standards that have been adopted by State agencies without change from building standards contained in the International Building Code.
- Building standards that have been adopted and adapted from the International Building Code to meet California conditions.
- Building standards, authorized by the California legislature, that constitute extensive additions not covered by the International Building Code that have been adopted to address particular California concerns.

The California Building Code includes standards for outdoor lighting that are intended to improve energy efficiency, and to reduce light pollution and glare by regulating light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls.

Local Regulations

Los Angeles County Code

Several sections of the Los Angeles County Code affect visual resources in the Project Area. The following sections provide a brief overview of the applicable sections.

Title 21 – Subdivisions

Title 21 would apply in the event that new subdivisions are proposed in accordance with the Proposed Project. Chapter 21.24 (Design Standards) of Title 21 contains provisions pertaining to the regulation of the design of highways, local streets, and lots; and special requirements that regulate aspects of potential development, including landscaping.

Title 22 – Planning and Zoning

Title 22 (Zoning Ordinance) describes the development standards that apply to each zone (e.g., height limits, setbacks, etc.). Chapter 22.20 (Residential Zones) contains provisions that regulate the uses that are permitted in residential zones, as well as the development standards that apply in those zones. Chapter 22.24 (Agricultural Zones) contains provisions that regulate the uses that are permitted in agricultural zones, as well as the development standards that apply in those zones. Chapter 22.28 (Commercial Zones) contains provisions that regulate the uses that are permitted in commercial zones, as well as the development standards that apply in those zones. Chapter 22.32 (Industrial Zones) contains provisions that regulate the uses that are permitted in industrial zones, as well as the development standards that apply in those zones. Chapter 22.48 (Yards, Highway Lines and Highways) contains provisions that pertain to the regulation of highways and parkways, including development standards. Part 9 (Rural Outdoor Lighting District) of Chapter 22.44 (Supplemental Districts) allows for the establishment of rural outdoor lighting districts, which promote and maintain dark skies for the health and enjoyment of people and wildlife. The regulations in Chapter 22.44 are in addition to other provisions in the Zoning Ordinance that regulate light and glare. Part 2 (Community Standards Districts) of Chapter 22.44 contains development regulations for a list of communities that form districts for this purpose. The development standards outlined in Part 2, which apply to these districts, supersede the countywide standards in the Zoning Ordinance. Finally, Chapter 22.52 (General Regulations)

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contains a number of general regulations, including Part 10 (Signs), which regulates the design and siting of all signs in the Project Area. Part 10 is discussed further below.

Hillside Management Areas Ordinance

With related provisions contained in Section 22.56.215 of the Zoning Ordinance (Hillside Management and Significant Ecological Areas—Additional Regulations), Hillside Management Areas (HMAs) were established to ensure that development preserves the physical character and scenic value of areas of the Project Area with a natural slope of greater than 25 percent. In order to accomplish this, provisions relating to HMAs encourage protecting scenic hillside views and conserving natural hillside character. The proposed update to the Los Angeles County General Plan—outside the scope of the Proposed Project—is anticipated to include revisions to the HMA Ordinance.

Mills Act Program

Part 26 (Los Angeles County Mills Act Program) of Chapter 22.52 (General Regulations) of the Zoning Ordinance is commonly referred to as the Los Angeles County Mills Act Program. The purpose of the program is to provide an incentive for owners of qualified historical properties within the unincorporated areas of the Project Area to preserve, restore, and rehabilitate the historic character of such properties, thereby providing a historical, architectural, social, artistic, and cultural benefit to the citizens of the Project Area, as authorized by the provisions of Article 12 (commencing with Section 50280) of Chapter 1, Part 1, Division 1 of Title 5 of the California Government Code, the provisions of which are commonly known as the “Mills Act.” Further information on the Mills Act is provided in Chapter 5.5, *Cultural Resources*.

Oak Tree Ordinance

Contained in Part 16 (Oak Tree Permits) of Section 22.56 (Conditional Use Permits, Variances, Nonconforming Uses, Temporary Uses and Director’s Review) of the Zoning Ordinance, the Oak Tree Ordinance was established to recognize oak trees as significant aesthetic, historical and ecological resources. The ordinance establishes permitting requirements for removal of protected oak trees.

Signs

Part 10 (Signs) of Chapter 22.52 (General Provisions) of the Zoning Ordinance regulates the design, siting, and maintenance of signs in the Project Area. These regulations are intended to provide standards for the protection of property values; visual aesthetics; and the public health, safety, and general welfare of citizens, while still providing ample opportunities for businesses and the visual advertising industry to operate successfully and effectively.

Healthy Design Ordinance (Ordinance 2013–0001)

The 2013 Healthy Design Ordinance amended portions of Titles 21 (Subdivisions) and 22 (Planning and Zoning), to establish certain uses, permit requirements, and development standards that encourage healthy lifestyles in the Project Area by promoting walking, biking, and other exercise, and by creating better access to healthy foods. The aspects of this ordinance that would most impact visual resources are the changes to the minimum width of sidewalks, requirements for bike parking, as well as altered permit requirements that

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require more detailed street section designs on tentative plans in order to depict healthy design features such as landscaping, lighting, and street furniture.

Significant Ecological Areas Ordinance

With related provisions contained in Section 22.56.215 (Hillside Management and Significant Ecological Areas: Additional Regulations) of the Zoning Ordinance, the Significant Ecological Areas Ordinance regulates SEAs, which represent a wide range of biotic communities. Their complex ecological relationships are the subject of both aesthetic enjoyment as well as scientific study. The proposed update to the Los Angeles County General Plan—outside the scope of the Proposed Project—is anticipated to include major revisions to the SEA Ordinance.

5.1.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

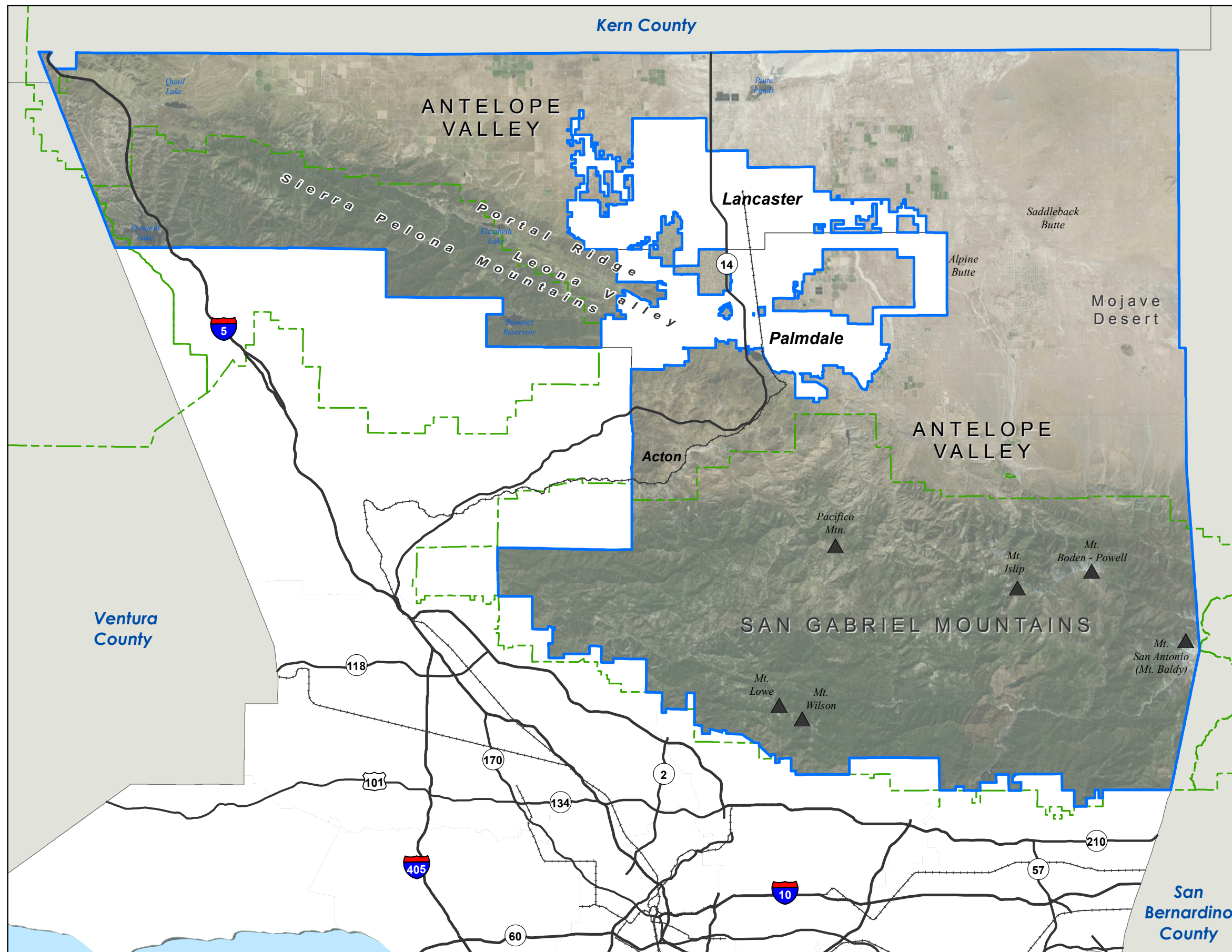
The visual setting of the Project Area consists of the built and natural environments, as well as the interface between the two. Built environments include commercial, office, residential, industrial, institutional, and public uses. Natural environments include valleys, foothills, mountains, ridgelines, forests, lakes, and deserts. The Project Area is a vast and visually diverse area that contains deserts, mountains, and forests. It also contains small rural communities, farmland, and growing suburban-scaled residential areas near Palmdale and Lancaster. The visual setting of the Project Area is further discussed in the text below.

Landforms

Natural landform features in the Project Area include important geologic and scenic landform features, hillsides and ridgelines, canyons, creeks, trees, and watershed areas. The most prominent landforms of the Project Area are the Antelope Valley and Mojave Desert in the north and the San Gabriel Mountains in the south. The dramatic transition between these two regions is the visual backdrop for most of the inhabited portions of the Project Area. Prominent landforms in the Project Area are shown in Figure 5.1-1, *Landforms*.

Valleys

The Antelope Valley is a high plain located on the southwest edge of the Mojave Desert, part of a vast expanse of the United States known as the Great Basin. The Mojave Desert covers much of southern California, southern Nevada (including Death Valley), western Arizona, and a small portion of Utah. The Antelope Valley generally appears flat, but gently slopes upward toward the mountains that surround it on the north, south, and west. It also contains small clusters of hills and buttes, such as those that contain the Antelope Valley California Poppy Preserve, and isolated landforms that include Saddleback Butte east of Lancaster. The westernmost portions of the valley are dominated by grasslands, while the eastern portions transition from grasslands to desert landscapes. The “high desert” areas are notable for their iconic Joshua trees and have elevations between 2,300 and 2,400 feet above sea level. The center of the valley contains the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale, surrounding rural communities, and farming operations. However, most of the valley outside this area is vacant.



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FIGURE 5.1-1

LANDFORMS

 Antelope Valley Project Area

ANTELOPE VALLEY
AREA PLAN UPDATE
DRAFT EIR

COLA-03.0E 8/18/2014 3:35:51 PM
0 2.5 5 Miles

 PLACEWORKS

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The community of Acton is located in a smaller valley southwest of Palmdale and northeast of Santa Clarita (located outside the Project Area). Although some consider it part of the larger Antelope Valley, the valley is largely surrounded by ridges and foothills. It is located at the junction of the Sierra Pelona Mountains to the immediate northwest and the San Gabriel Mountains to the southeast. It features rolling, grassy topography and rural development.

Mountain Ranges

Transverse mountain ranges and intervening land forms comprise a substantial portion of the Project Area. Much of the mountain ranges are rugged and steep. The San Gabriel Mountains cover the southern third of the Project Area. These mountains are largely uninhabited and are traversed by only a few roadways. The range creates a physical and visual barrier between the low-lying Los Angeles Basin and San Gabriel Valley to the south and high desert regions to the north. Mount Baldy (San Antonio Peak) at the eastern boundary of Los Angeles County reaches an elevation of 10,080 feet. This peak and others in the San Gabriel Mountains are some of the tallest in southern California. Much of the San Gabriel Mountains and their southern foothills are covered in forests and woodlands, including those in Angeles National Forest.

The northwest corner of the Project Area contains portions of the Sierra Pelona Mountains. This range separates the Antelope Valley from the Santa Clarita Valley. Its highest point is Burnt Peak, which reaches an elevation of 5,791 feet.

Watersheds

Watersheds are shown in Figure 5.9-1, *Major Watersheds*, and a detailed discussion of the watersheds within the Project Area is provided in Chapter 5.9, *Hydrology and Water Quality*.

Other Landforms

There are numerous lakes and reservoirs distributed throughout the project area. The Big Tujunga, Cogswell, Morris, and San Gabriel reservoirs are located in the southern San Gabriel Mountains. These water bodies are surrounded by steep forested hillsides. The Antelope Valley also contains water bodies. Some of these, including Fairmont Reservoir and the Piute Ponds, are isolated. However, most are located in the seismic rift zone caused by the San Andreas Fault, which runs diagonally through the region from the northwest to the southeast. Such water bodies include Caldwell Lake, Hughes Lake, Jackson Lake, Lake Elizabeth, Lake Palmdale, and Quail Lake. The San Andreas Fault zone also contains one the Project Area and southern California's most unique geologic features, the Devil's Punchbowl. This landform is a deep canyon of tilted sandstone rock formations.

Scenic Vistas

The natural features described above under *Landforms* create a wide variety of scenic vistas in the Project Area. In particular, the San Gabriel Mountains and Sierra Pelona Mountains create striking backdrops to the communities that are nestled within them, such as Acton and Lake Elizabeth, and those that are located near enough to offer views of the mountains, such as Juniper Hills, Littlerock, Palmdale, and Pearblossom.

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Because of its mostly flat topography, the Antelope Valley allows for an assortment of long-range views toward distant mountains, including the San Gabriel Mountains to the south and the Tehachapi Mountains to the northwest. Within the valley's many large expanses of undeveloped land, long-range views of vacant desert and grassland can also be considered scenic vistas, since unobstructed views of natural landscapes are rare in southern California. Flora also create distinctive scenic views in the Project Area. In the San Gabriel Mountains, pine forests create short-range views of hillsides and canyons. In the western Antelope Valley, the seasonal blooms of poppies at the Antelope Valley California Poppy Preserve are well known regionally as a scenic resource. In the eastern Antelope Valley, Joshua trees embody the Mojave Desert and give the wide open spaces of the area an otherworldly atmosphere.

Nighttime Views

In addition to scenic daytime vistas, the remoteness of the higher San Gabriel Mountains and the northern Antelope Valley allow for substantial views of the nighttime sky. The Mojave Desert, in particular, is a well-known destination for stargazers. However, nighttime views of stars are diminished as one gets closer to Lancaster, Palmdale, and adjacent developed areas. Land uses in these areas produce substantial amounts of ambient light during the night.

Scenic Highways

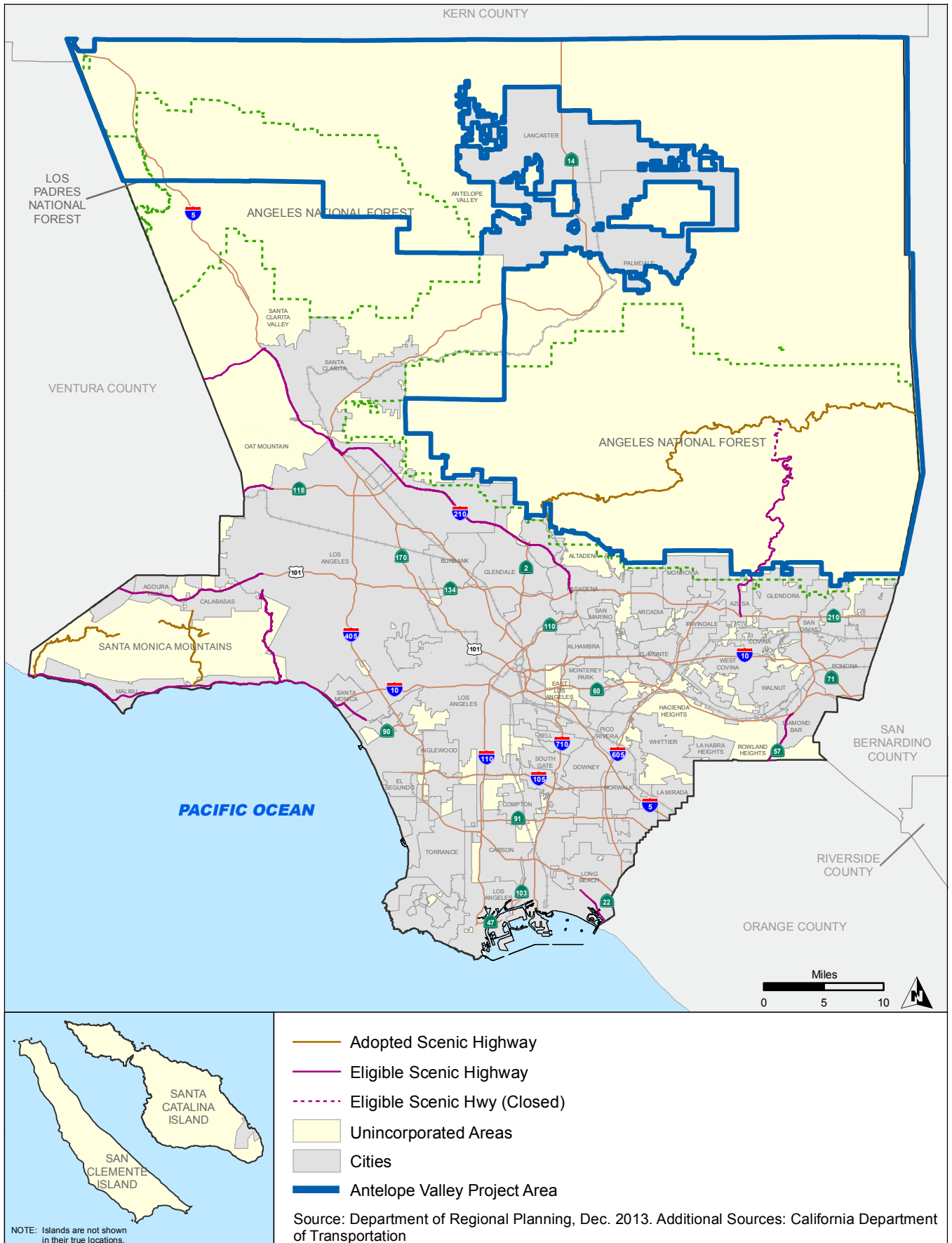
As shown in Figure 5.1-2, *Scenic Highways*, there is only one adopted state scenic highway in the Project Area: the Angeles Crest Highway (SR-2). The designated roadway begins 2.7 miles north of I-210 and climbs eastward through the San Gabriel Mountains to the San Bernardino County line. As shown, there is also one highway in the Project Area identified with an "Eligible for State Scenic Highway" designation: SR-39 between I-210 and the Angeles Crest Highway. The northern portion of this route is no longer open to public use (Caltrans 2014).

Visual Character

Visual character varies widely throughout the Project Area. However, because most of the region is undeveloped, the area is known for its rural character. In the Antelope Valley and Acton, this is a character heavily influenced by the region's history of farming and ranching. That history has resulted in low-density communities where homes are generally located far apart, and roads, fences, and homes are designed to be modest and utilitarian. A different rural character is found in the San Gabriel Mountains, where a rugged, untouched atmosphere is most prevalent.

The most notable exception to the Project Area's rural character is found in the newer residential areas surrounding Lancaster and Palmdale, such as portions of Quartz Hill. Although these areas do not feature the residential densities or variety of uses found in the more urbanized areas of southern California, their land use and circulation patterns are more suburban than rural.

SCENIC HIGHWAYS



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The character of the Project Area's unincorporated communities is summarized below.

- **Acton.** The community of Acton is located in the southwestern portion of the Antelope Valley, south of Palmdale along SR-14. It is adjacent to the Angeles National Forest, and natural hillsides and significant ridgelines separate the community from Palmdale and the remainder of the Antelope Valley. The community of Acton has a rural western theme which can be seen in its homes, commercial buildings, and historical buildings.
- **Antelope Acres.** The community of Antelope Acres is located in the northwestern portion of Antelope Valley, west of Lancaster. Some portions of the community are partially developed with light agricultural uses and single-family homes on large lots, while other portions are largely undeveloped. The lifestyles of persons living in Antelope Acres tend to be rural; many residents own and ride horses. The topography is predominantly flat with an elevation of 2,424 feet above sea level.
- **Crystallaire.** The rural community of Crystallaire is located at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains between Llano and Valyermo east of Valyermo Road. Past subdivision activity has resulted in about 400 half-acre and one-acre lots. Development is centered on the Crystallaire Country Club. Northeast of the community is a small airport that is often used by glider planes. Sporadic residential development has occurred, predominantly on one-acre lots, in the northern part of the community.
- **El Dorado and White Fence Farms.** The communities of El Dorado and White Fence Farms are located in the central portion of the Antelope Valley and are surrounded by the cities of Lancaster and Palmdale. Although these communities are adjacent to urbanized areas, such as the Rancho Vista community and the Antelope Valley Mall, they have a distinctly rural character. The communities are partially developed with light agricultural uses and single-family homes on large, 2- to 3-acre lots.
- **Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes (The Lakes).** Lake Hughes and Elizabeth Lake are two neighboring but related communities located in the narrow rift valley separating Portal Ridge and the San Sierra Pelona Mountains in the western portion of Antelope Valley. The San Andreas Fault Zone traverses the area and is responsible for the formation of the valley and the two lakes from which the communities are named. Some portions of the communities are developed or partially developed with single-family homes, light agricultural uses, and a limited amount of commercial and industrial uses. Other portions are largely undeveloped. In general, residential uses are clustered around the lakes, giving the area mountain resort character.
- **Fairmont.** The community of Fairmont is located in the northwestern portion of the Antelope Valley, west of Antelope Acres and near the Antelope Valley California Poppy Reserve. The community is largely undeveloped and has a rural atmosphere.
- **Gorman.** Gorman is located in the far northwestern portion of Antelope Valley along the Golden State Freeway (Interstate 5 or I-5). A portion of the community is partially developed with commercial uses that serve travelers along I-5, along with some single-family homes and light agricultural uses. Because of

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the community's location among rolling grassy hills, it arguably has a character more similar to areas of California's Central Coast region to the west than to other parts of the Project Area.

- **Green Valley.** The community of Green Valley is located in the southwestern portion of the Antelope Valley, south of Elizabeth Lake, and is completely within the Angeles National Forest. A large portion of the community is developed with single-family homes and commercial uses, while the remaining portion is largely undeveloped and contains scenic hillsides. The community's character is that of a high-altitude, forested, mountain town.
- **Juniper Hills.** Juniper Hills is located in the foothills on the northern slope of the San Gabriel Mountains, south of Littlerock and Pearblossom. It adjoins the Devil's Punchbowl, a County park. The community is largely developed and is generally not served by existing infrastructure and public facilities, but it does contain many single-family homes on large lots and some agricultural uses. The community is adjacent to the Angeles National Forest and includes scenic hillside areas.
- **Lake Los Angeles.** The community of Lake Los Angeles is in the eastern portion of the Antelope Valley. It is a large, spread-out community that has a rural desert character heavily influenced by the community's remote location and lack of tree cover.
- **Lakeview.** The community of Lakeview is located in the southern central portion of the Antelope Valley, adjoining the City of Palmdale to the north and east, and includes Lake Palmdale. Although this community is adjacent to urbanized areas, it has a distinctly rural character.
- **Leona Valley.** Leona Valley is located 10 miles west of the central Palmdale. Elizabeth Lake Road runs through the center of the community. Its environmental setting differs from the desert landscapes of the surrounding Antelope Valley communities, with rolling hills dominating its landscape.
- **Littlerock and Sun Village (Southeast Antelope Valley).** The communities of Littlerock and Sun Village are located in the southeastern portion of the Antelope Valley, east of Palmdale. Both communities are very rural and are dominated by low-density single family homes on large lots.
- **Llano.** The community of Llano is located in the southeastern portion of the Antelope Valley, along Pearblossom Highway (SR-138). Some portions of the community are partially developed with light agricultural uses and single-family homes on large lots, while other portions are largely undeveloped. This community is one of the most remote and lowest density of the communities within the Project Area. For this reason, it offers some of the widest long-range vistas of vacant desert in the region.
- **Neenach.** The community of Neenach is located in the far western portion of the Antelope Valley, along Avenue D (SR-138). Although there are some farms in the area, the community is dominated by single-family homes on estate-sized lots. Neenach has a remote, desert character.
- **Pearblossom.** The community of Pearblossom is located in the southeastern portion of the Antelope Valley, along Pearblossom Highway between Littlerock and Llano. Some portions of the community are

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developed with a wide range of uses and a distinctly rural character, while other portions are undeveloped.

- **Quartz Hill.** Quartz Hill is the densest and one of the most populous of the unincorporated communities in the Project Area, with approximately 10,000 residents. Unlike most other communities in Project Area, Quartz Hill has a substantial commercial corridor, which runs along 50th Street West. The presence of commercial, industrial, and public land uses give the community the appearance of a full-service community. Due to its proximity to Lancaster and Palmdale, the community has seen rapid residential growth in recent years and new subdivisions have given parts of the community a distinctly suburban physical appearance and character. However, other areas are more rural and feature homes that are placed far apart.
- **Roosevelt.** This community is located outside the northeast boundary of the City of Lancaster. However, it has a largely rural desert character.
- **Three Points.** The community of Three Points is located in the far western portion of the Antelope Valley, south of Neenach and northwest of Lake Hughes. It contains some single-family homes on large lots and some agricultural uses. The community is adjacent to the Angeles National Forest, and includes scenic hillsides. The community is largely undeveloped and has a rural, agrarian character. However, unlike other agrarian communities in the Project Area that inhabit wide open spaces, Three Points is nestled within a grove of trees and next to steep hillsides.

5.1.2 Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project would normally have a significant effect on the environment with respect to aesthetics if the project would:

- AE-1 Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- AE-2 Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
- AE-3 Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- AE-4 Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

5.1.3 Relevant Area Plan Goals and Policies

The following are goals and policies contained in the Proposed Area Plan that would reduce adverse effects related to aesthetics.

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Land Use Element

Goals LU 1: A land use pattern that maintains and enhances the rural character of the unincorporated Antelope Valley.

- **Policy LU 1.1:** Direct the majority of the unincorporated Antelope Valley's future growth to rural town center areas, rural town areas, and identified economic opportunity areas.
- **Policy LU 1.2:** Limit the amount of potential development in rural preserve areas, through appropriate land use designations with very low residential densities, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.
- **Policy LU 1.3:** Maintain the majority of the unincorporated Antelope Valley as Rural Land, allowing for agriculture, equestrian and animal-keeping uses, and single-family homes on large lots.

Goal LU 2: A land use pattern that protects environmental resources.

- **Policy LU 2.1:** Limit the amount of potential development in Significant Ecological Areas, including Joshua Tree Woodlands, wildlife corridors, and other sensitive habitat areas, through appropriate land use designations with very low residential densities, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.
- **Policy LU 2.2:** Limit the amount of potential development near and within Scenic Resource Areas, including water features, significant ridgelines and Hillside Management Areas, through appropriate land use designations with very low residential densities, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.
- **Policy LU 2.3:** Limit the amount of potential development in Agricultural Resource Areas, including important farmlands designated by the State of California and historical farmland areas, through appropriate land use designations with very low residential densities, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.
- **Policy LU 2.4:** Limit the amount of potential development in Mineral Resource Areas, through appropriate land use designations with very low residential densities, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.
- **Policy LU 2.5:** Limit the amount of potential development in riparian areas and groundwater recharge basins, through appropriate land use designations with very low residential densities, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.
- **Policy LU 2.6:** Limit the amount of potential development near the National Forests and on private lands within the National Forests, through appropriate land use designations with very low residential densities, as indicated in the Land Use Policy Map (Map 2.1) of this Area Plan.

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Goal LU 6: A land use pattern that makes the Antelope Valley a sustainable and resilient place to live.

- **Policy LU 6.2:** Ensure that the Area Plan is flexible in adapting to new issues and opportunities without compromising the rural character of the unincorporated Antelope Valley.

Mobility Element

Goal M 3: An efficient network of major, secondary, and limited secondary highways to serve the Antelope Valley.

- **Policy M 3.2:** In rural areas, require rural highway standards that minimize the width of paving and placement of curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street lighting, and traffic signals, as adopted by the Department of Public Works.

Goal M 4: A network of local streets that support the rural character of the unincorporated Antelope Valley without compromising public safety.

- **Policy M 4.1:** Require rural local street standards that minimize the width of paving and placement of curbs, gutters, sidewalks, street lighting, and traffic signals, as adopted by the Department of Public Works.

Goal M 11: A continuous, integrated system of safe and attractive pedestrian routes linking residents to rural town center areas, schools, services, transit, parks, and open space areas.

- **Policy M 11.1:** Improve existing pedestrian routes and create new pedestrian routes, where appropriate and feasible. If paving is deemed necessary, require permeable paving consistent with rural community character instead of concrete sidewalks.
- **Policy M 11.2:** Within rural town center areas, require that highways and streets provide pleasant pedestrian environments and implement traffic calming methods to increase public safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrian riders.
- **Policy M 11.3:** Within rural town center areas, promote pedestrian-oriented scale and design features, including public plazas, directional signage, and community bulletin boards.
- **Policy M 11.4:** Within rural town center areas, encourage parking to be located behind or beside structures, with primary building entries facing the street. Encourage also the provision of direct and clearly delineated pedestrian walkways from transit stops and parking areas to building entries.

Conservation and Open Space Element

Goal COS 5: The Antelope Valley's scenic resources, including scenic drives, water features, significant ridgelines, buttes, and Hillside Management Areas, are enjoyed by future generations.

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- **Policy COS 5.1:** Identify and protect natural landforms and vistas with significant visual value by designating them as Scenic Resource Areas.
- **Policy COS 5.2:** Limit the amount of potential development in Scenic Resource Areas through appropriate land use designations with very low densities in order to minimize negative impacts from future development.
- **Policy COS 5.3:** Require new development in Hillside Management Areas to comply with applicable Zoning Code requirements, ensuring that development occurs on the most environmentally suitable portions of the land.
- **Policy COS 5.4:** Require appropriate development standards in Hillside Management Areas that minimize grading and alteration of the land's natural contours, ensure that development pads mimic natural contours, and ensure that individual structures are appropriately designed to minimize visual impacts.
- **Policy COS 5.5:** Require adequate erosion control measures for all development in Hillside Management Areas, both during and after construction.
- **Policy COS 5.6:** Restrict development on buttes and designated significant ridgelines by requiring appropriate buffer zones.
- **Policy COS 5.7:** Ensure that incompatible development is discouraged in designated Scenic Drives by developing and implementing development standards and guidelines for development within identified viewsheds of these routes (Map 4.2: Antelope Valley Scenic Drives).

Goal COS 13: Utility-scale energy production facilities for offsite use that reduce consumption of non-renewable resources while minimizing potential impacts on natural resources and existing communities.

- **Policy COS 13.1:** Direct utility-scale renewable energy production facilities, such as solar facilities and wind facilities, to priority locations on the Renewable Energy Production Priority Map (Zones 1 through 3) where environmental, noise, and visual impacts will be minimized.
- **Policy COS 13.7:** Limit the aesthetic impacts of utility-scale renewable energy production facilities to preserve rural character.

Goal COS 14: Energy infrastructure that is sensitive to the scenic qualities of the Antelope Valley and minimizes potential environmental impacts.

- **Policy COS 14.1:** Require that new transmission lines be placed underground whenever physically feasible.
- **Policy COS 14.2:** If new transmission lines cannot feasibly be placed underground due to physical constraints, require that they be collocated with existing transmission lines, or along existing transmission corridors, whenever physically feasible.

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- **Policy COS 14.3:** If new transmission lines cannot be feasibly be placed underground or feasibly collocated with existing transmission lines or along existing transmission corridors due to physical constraints, direct new transmission lines to locations where environmental and visual impacts will be minimized.
- **Policy COS 14.4:** Discourage the placement of new transmission lines on undisturbed lands containing sensitive biotic communities.
- **Policy COS 14.5:** Discourage the placement of new transmission lines through existing communities or through properties with existing residential uses.
- **Policy COS 14.6:** Review all proposed transmission line projects for conformity with the Goals and Policies of the Area Plan, including those listed above. When the California Public Utilities Commission is the decision-making authority for these projects, provide comments regarding conformity with the Goals and Policies of the Area Plan.
- **Policy COS 14.7:** Require that electrical power lines in new residential developments be placed underground.

Goal COS 15: Humans and wildlife enjoy beautiful dark Antelope Valley skies unimpeded by light pollution.

- **Policy COS 15.1:** Ensure that outdoor lighting, including street lighting, is provided at the lowest possible level while maintaining safety.
- **Policy COS 15.2:** Prohibit continuous all-night outdoor lighting in rural areas, unless required for land uses with unique security concerns, such as fire stations, hospitals, and prisons.
- **Policy COS 15.3:** Replace outdated, obtrusive, and inefficient light fixtures with fixtures that meet dark sky and energy efficiency objectives.
- **Policy COS 15.4:** Require compliance with the provisions of the Rural Outdoor Lighting District throughout the unincorporated Antelope Valley.

Goal COS 16: Native vegetation thrives throughout the Antelope Valley, reducing erosion, flooding, and wind-borne dust and sand.

- **Policy COS 16.1:** Require new development to minimize removal of native vegetation. Discourage the clear-scraping of land and ensure that a large percentage of land is left in its natural state.
- **Policy COS 16.2:** Require that native vegetation be used in all landscaped areas, provided that vegetation meets all applicable requirements of the Fire Department and the Department of Public Works.

Goal COS 18: Permanently preserved open space areas throughout the Antelope Valley.

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- **Policy COS 18.1:** Encourage government agencies and conservancies to acquire lands in the following areas and preserve them as permanent open space:
 - Significant Ecological Areas, including Joshua Tree Woodlands, wildlife corridors, and other sensitive habitat areas;
 - Hillside Management Areas;
 - Scenic Resource Areas, including water features such as the privately owned portion of Elizabeth Lake, significant ridgelines, buttes, and other natural landforms;
 - Land adjoining preserves, sanctuaries, State Parks, and National Forests; and
 - Privately owned lands within the National Forest.
- **Policy COS 18.3:** Maintain permanently preserved open space areas to ensure attractiveness and safety.

Goal COS 19: New development meets open space objectives while maintaining rural character.

- **Policy COS 19.1:** Require new development in Hillside Management Areas and Significant Ecological Areas to comply with applicable Zoning Code requirements for open space preservation.
- **Policy COS 19.2:** When new development is required to preserve open space, require designs with large contiguous open space areas that maximize protection of environmental and scenic resources.
- **Policy COS 19.3:** Allow large contiguous open space areas to be distributed across individual lots so that new development preserves open space while maintaining large lot sizes that are consistent with a rural environment, provided that such open space areas are permanently restricted through deed restrictions.

Economic Development Element

- **Policy ED 1.11:** Encourage the development of utility-scale renewable energy projects at appropriate locations and with appropriate standards to ensure that any negative impacts to local residents are sufficiently mitigated.
- **Policy ED 1.16:** Preserve the scenic resources of the Antelope Valley, including Scenic Drives, Significant Ridgelines and Significant Ecological Areas, in such a way that can contribute to the economic activities in the area.

5.1.4 Environmental Impacts

This section discusses the potential aesthetic impacts to the Project Area that could potentially result from implementation of the Proposed Project.

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The evaluation of aesthetics and aesthetic impacts is highly subjective by nature. It requires the application of a process that objectively identifies the visual features of the environment and their importance. Aesthetic description involves identifying existing visual character, including visual resources and scenic vistas unique to the Project Area. Visual resources are determined by identifying landforms (e.g., topography and graded areas), views (e.g., scenic resources such as natural features or urban characteristics), viewpoints/locations, and existing light and glare (e.g., nighttime illumination). Changes to aesthetic resources due to implementation of the Proposed Project are identified and evaluated based on the proposed modifications to the existing setting and the viewer's sensitivity. Project-related impacts are determined using the threshold criteria listed above in Section 5.1.2, *Thresholds of Significance*. The applicable thresholds are identified in brackets after the impact statement.

Impact 5.1-1: Implementation of the Proposed Project would alter existing views of scenic vistas. [Threshold AE-1]

Impact Analysis: As discussed in Section 5.1.1, *Environmental Setting*, the Project Area contains a variety of unique and important visual resources. The discussion provided herein focuses on scenic vistas and corridors, excluding the Proposed Project's impacts on state and county scenic highways, which are addressed below under Impact 5.1-2.

Buildout of the Proposed Project would involve the construction of 81,411 new dwelling units, 118 million square feet of commercial and industrial land uses, and numerous transportation and infrastructure projects. Although this growth would result in adverse impacts to existing scenic views, potential impacts would be minimized by a number of factors. These include the Proposed Project's expansion of conservation areas, its emphasis on focusing growth in established communities, implementation of the County Code, implementation of Proposed Area Plan goals and policies, and the programmatic nature of the Proposed Project. These factors and their ability to minimize impacts on scenic vistas are described below.

Rural Preservation Strategy in Proposed Area Plan

Prior to buildout of the Proposed Project, the Project Area would experience substantial growth. Existing vacant lots would be replaced by residential, commercial, industrial, and public land uses. Roadway improvements would expand existing roads, and farming operations could begin in areas not currently utilized for agriculture. Structures, fences, vegetation, and trees associated with new residential subdivisions could block existing views of desert landscapes. Especially in the Antelope Valley and Mojave Desert, growth could obstruct or interrupt long-range vistas over the valley's flat terrain.

The Land Use Policy Map in the Proposed Area Plan reduces the aforementioned impacts to scenic vistas by setting aside extensive areas for conservation or very low density development, generally focusing new growth in a handful of established communities. As shown in Figure 3-4(a-c), a vast majority of the Project Area would be designated for open space or as "rural land." Open space designations include areas in the Angeles National Forest and open space administered by the federal Bureau of Land Management (BLM). Rural land designations allow development at the types of very low densities that would not create major interruption of vistas in the Antelope Valley. Also shown in Figure 3-4(a-c) are SEAs, which often overlay rural land and open space designations and subject applicable parcels to additional development restrictions that would

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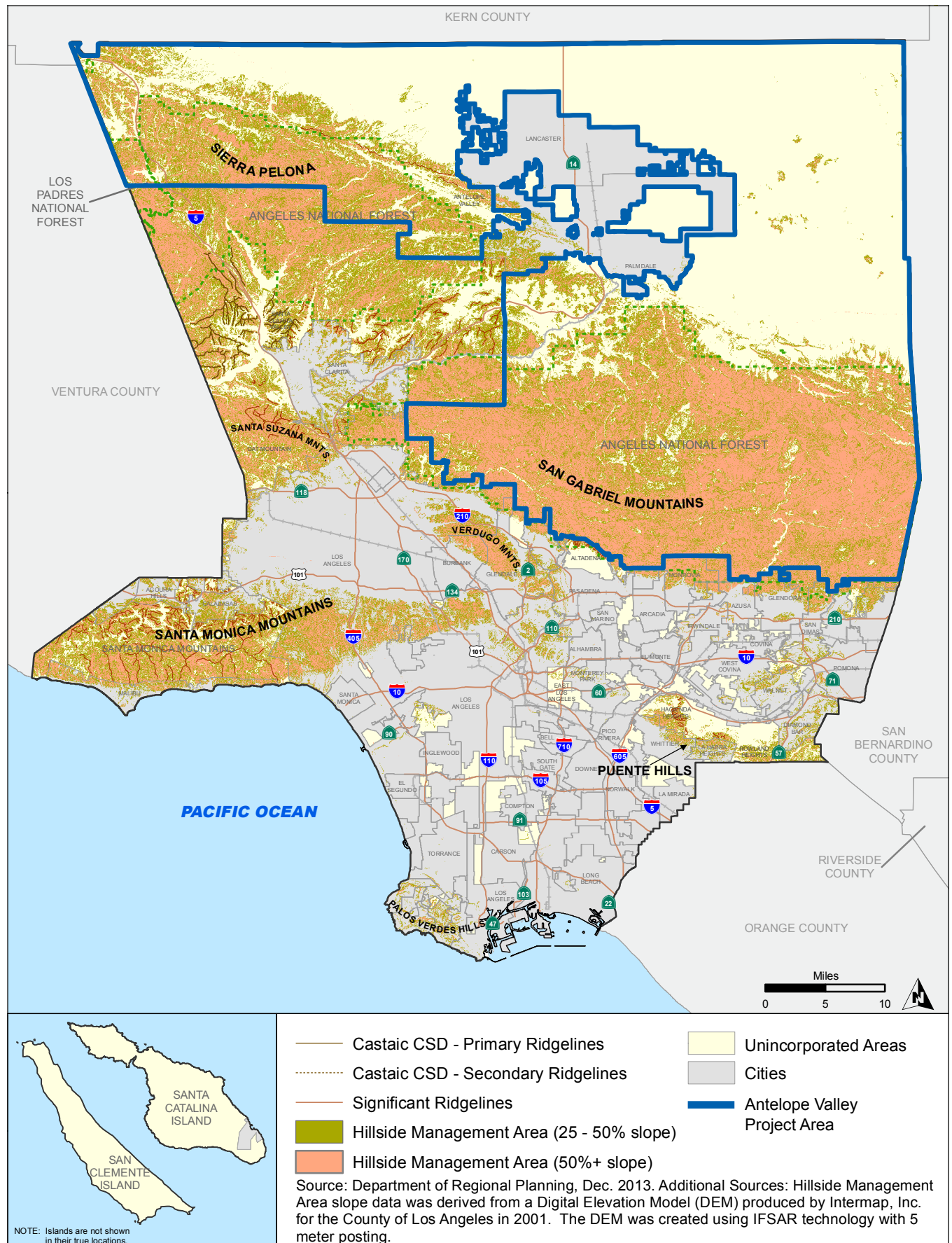
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discourage visually obtrusive land uses. Figure 5.1-3, *Hillside Management Areas and Ridgeline Management Map*, shows additional areas where new development would be limited or restricted under the Proposed Project. As described in Section 5.1.1.1, *Regulatory Setting*, HMAs were established to, among other things, protect scenic hillside views.

The proposed Land Use Policy Map also shows boundaries for the Project Area's three proposed Economic Development Areas (EOAs). Where deemed appropriate by the County, these areas are designated with land use designations that would allow for a balanced mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial uses. Consequently, the EOAs are anticipated to experience the most growth prior to buildout. This growth, in turn, is anticipated to result in the greatest obstructions of existing views. Residential and light industrial development in the West EOA would block existing views of hillsides and rolling hills. Development in the Central and East EOAs would interrupt existing long-range views of vacant desert. However, even the EOAs include open space conservation areas that are designed to limit adverse effects to scenic resources. Despite their identification as areas of potential future investment and growth, the EOAs would be subject to the same regulatory framework discussed elsewhere in this section, which includes the County Code, proposed Area Plan goals and policies, and project-level CEQA review of discretionary projects.

The County's overall approach to managing the Project Area's land use pattern is shown in Figure 5.1-4, *Rural Preservation Strategy Map*. The figure shows that most of the Project Area, including the Sierra Pelona Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains, and large swaths of the Mojave Desert, are designated as rural lands or open space. Growth is targeted in Rural Town Areas and Rural Town Centers (yellow and orange, respectively). These areas include established communities such as Acton, Antelope Acres, Lake Los Angeles, Littlerock, and Pearblossom. Even in these areas, new development would be low-scale and of rural character, as required by policies in the Proposed Area Plan. By geographically targeting growth in these specific areas, the Proposed Project would preserve most existing long-range views across the Antelope Valley and all shorter-range views in the mountainous regions of the Project Area. Specific views related to unique natural areas, including the Antelope Valley California Poppy Preserve and Devil's Punchbowl, would also be preserved due to the fact that they would be surrounded by land designated as open space or rural land.

In summary, localized scenic views could be adversely impacted by new development allowed under the Proposed Project. However, at a programmatic level, the land use patterns proposed by the Proposed Area Plan would geographically limit and substantially reduce potential adverse impacts to scenic vistas.



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County Code

As described above in Section 5.1.1.1, *Regulatory Setting*, several sections of the County Code regulate physical development by controlling not only the appearance of new development, but also by controlling the placement of new development with consideration for surrounding uses. In particular, regulations in the County Code relating to HMAs would ensure that the physical character and scenic value of areas of the County with a natural slope gradient of steeper than 25 percent are protected. Since hillsides and ridgelines are some of the primary resources related to scenic vistas in the Project Area, these provisions of the County Code would substantially reduce impacts to such resources. Additionally, regulations in the County Code that limit the size of and control the siting of signs, particularly outdoor signs including billboards, would also limit the impact of the Proposed Project on scenic vistas. Compliance with these provisions would be ensured through the County's development review and building permit process.

Effect of Proposed Goals and Policies

A number of goals and policies of the Proposed Area Plan, listed under Section 5.1.3, *Relevant Area Plan Goals and Policies*, would also serve to minimize potential impacts by preventing degradation of existing vistas and promoting actions that would make existing scenic vistas more accessible to people. Policies LU 1.1 through LU 1.3 and LU 2.1 through LU 2.6 are related to the County's goal of directing future growth into established communities and limiting development in areas with sensitive resources. These policies implement the Rural Preservation Strategy depicted in the proposed Land Use Policy Map. Implementation of such policies would preserve views by preventing the introduction of urban land uses in SEAs, near scenic hillsides or ridgelines, in agricultural resource areas, and in the Project Area's mountainous regions.

Policies in the Land Use Element of the Proposed Area Plan are complemented by those in the Conservation and Open Space Element. While the former encourages the development of land use patterns that preserve scenic vistas, the latter would ensure protection of unique scenic views. Implementation of Policies COS 5.1, COS 5.2 and COS 5.7 would result in the identification of Scenic Resource Areas and the protection of those resources by requiring compliance with existing hillside management codes (Policies COS 5.3 and COS 5.4) and the creation of buffer zones around scenic landforms (Policy COS 5.6). Implementation of Policies COS 18.1 and COS 18.3 would ensure, where feasible and appropriate, that scenic areas are preserved and maintained as permanent open space.

Programmatic Nature of Proposed Project

Lastly, the programmatic nature of the Proposed Project would also lessen potential impact so scenic vistas, since subsequent discretionary projects accommodated by the Proposed Project would be subject to separate project-level environmental review in accordance with CEQA. The individual project's contribution to the degradation of scenic vistas would be assessed at the time formal development plans/applications are submitted to the County for review and approval. In particular, residents of the Project Area have expressed concern with visual effects of the planned High Desert Corridor freeway project and proposals for high-speed rail to travel through the Project Area. Although these projects may have future effects on scenic vistas in the Antelope Valley, the Proposed Project does not involve approval of those projects. The final alignments and design of the High Desert Corridor and high-speed rail would be subject to project-level CEQA review.

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Conclusion

In summary, buildout of the Proposed Project has the potential to result in adverse impacts to scenic vistas. New development would partially obstruct or interrupt viewsheds that were previously unobstructed. However, the existing regulatory setting, as well as the goals and policies in the Proposed Area Plan, would serve to lessen potential impacts to scenic vistas associated with implementation of the Proposed Project. Additionally, approval of the Proposed Project itself does not authorize construction of development that would affect scenic vistas. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Impact 5.1-2: Implementation of the Proposed Project would not substantially alter scenic resources within a state scenic highway. [Threshold AE-2]

Impact Analysis: As shown in Figure 5.1-2, *Scenic Highways*, there is only one adopted state scenic highway in the Project Area: the Angeles Crest Highway (SR-2). Another highway in the Project Area is identified as being eligible for such a designation in the future: SR-39 between I-210 and the Angeles Crest Highway. Both of these roadways are located in the San Gabriel Mountains in the Angeles National Forest. The Proposed Project does not introduce new development capacity near the Angeles Crest Highway or SR-39, nor does it propose any other changes for the corridors that they traverse. The areas that the roadways travel through would remain protected natural areas at buildout of the Proposed Project. Therefore, implementation of the Proposed Project would not alter scenic resources within a state scenic highway.

The Proposed Project includes a Scenic Drives Map (see Figure 5.1-5) that identifies 53 routes in the region as “scenic drives.” While many of these routes are located entirely within the Project Area, several extend into the cities of Lancaster or Palmdale, or into other areas of Los Angeles County. Most of the scenic drives are located in mountainous areas or at the south edges of the Antelope Valley. Some of the routes are located in areas targeted for growth under the Proposed Project, including Rural Town Centers. However, the Proposed Area Plan includes goals and policies that would protect scenic views along the designated corridors. In particular, implementation of Policy COS 5.7 would ensure that development standards and guidelines are established for development within the viewsheds of scenic drives.

As stated above, implementation of the Proposed Project would not alter scenic resources within a state scenic highway. Impacts would be less than significant.

Impact 5.1-3: Implementation of the Proposed Project would alter the existing visual character of portions of the Project Area and its surroundings. [Threshold AE-3]

Impact Analysis: As discussed in Section 5.1.1, *Environmental Setting*, visual character within the Project Area is greatly varied. The Project Area’s mountain ranges, foothills, valleys, basins, deserts, and built environment all contribute to its visual character. Furthermore, although most of the area’s unincorporated communities have a rural and/or agrarian character, they still vary from each other and each has a unique visual atmosphere.

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FIGURE 5.1-5



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Rural Preservation Strategy in Proposed Area Plan

Prior to buildout of the Proposed Project, substantial growth would occur in the Project Area. This growth would alter the existing visual character and quality of the Project Area, especially in established communities located in the Antelope Valley such as those near Lancaster and Palmdale. Aspects of this character, including agrarian architecture and wide vistas of the high desert, could be impacted by new development.

However, an overarching goal of the Proposed Area Plan is to manage future growth in a way that maintains the character of both individual communities and the Project Area as a whole. The County's overall approach to managing the Project Area's land use pattern is shown in Figure 5.1-4, *Rural Preservation Strategy Map*. The figure shows that most of the Project Area, including the Sierra Pelona Mountains, San Gabriel Mountains, and large swaths of the Mojave Desert, are designated as rural lands or open space. By severely limiting development capacity in these areas, their existing character would be preserved. At buildout, mountainous areas and the eastern Antelope Valley would remain remote and undeveloped. Foothill communities such as Elizabeth Lake, Green Valley, and Leona Valley are not proposed to be expanded in size, nor are they proposed to contain substantial amounts of new land use types or more intensive development at buildout. This intent to preserve existing community character is reflected in the proposed Land Use Policy Map (see Figure 3-4(a-c)).

The Proposed Area Plan primarily targets growth within Rural Town Areas and Rural Town Centers (yellow and orange, respectively, in Figure 5.1-4) in the Antelope Valley. These areas include established communities such as Acton, Antelope Acres, Lake Los Angeles, Littlerock, and Pearblossom. However, even in these areas, new development would be low scale and of rural character, as required by policies in the Proposed Area Plan.

Community-Specific Land Use Concepts

Chapter 7 of the Proposed Area Plan recognizes that the Project Area is a "mosaic of unique small towns" and that these communities vary in "nature, form, and character." The chapter explains in detail how the Proposed Area Plan would be implemented in the 19 communities that would accommodate most of the Project Area's new development at buildout. Chapter 7 describes in detail how growth in all the Project Area's communities would be managed to maintain a rural character. Strategies include modest increases in allowable residential densities, height limits consistent with existing development patterns, street sections and landscaping improvements that reflect rural lifestyles instead of urban infrastructure, and lot size restrictions that discourage further land division. Implementation of the strategies outlined in the Area Plan would ensure that the rural character of the Project Area is preserved.

County Code

Existing regulations, including provisions contained in the County's Zoning Ordinance relating to the regulation of building form, massing, subdivisions, signs, architectural features, CUPs, design, and oak tree preservation would serve to lessen the impact of the Proposed Project on the visual character of the Project Area. For example, future development that would be accommodated by the Proposed Project would continue to be subject to Part 1 (General Design Requirements) of Chapter 22.52 (General Regulations) of the County's Zoning Ordinance as well as any community-specific design standards set forth in Part 2

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(Community Standards Districts) of Chapter 22.44 (Supplemental Districts). The continued application of such regulations would serve to reduce potential impacts related to changes to the visual character associated with implementation of the Proposed Project. Compliance with these provisions would be ensured through the County's development review and building permit process.

Proposed Area Plan Goals and Policies

A number of goals and policies in the Proposed Area Plan, listed above under Section 5.1.3, *Relevant Goals and Policies*, would serve to minimize potential impacts related to the degradation of the Project Area's existing visual character or quality resulting from implementation of the Proposed Project. Policies LU 1.1 through LU 1.3 are explicitly aimed at preservation of the region's rural character and are consistent with the Proposed Land Use Policy Map, which designates most of the Project Area as rural land or open space. Policies LU 2.1 through LU 2.6 in the proposed Land Use Element address the protection of specific environmental resources, which greatly enhances the Project Area's communities. Similar policies are found in the proposed Conservation and Open Space Element, which require that new development be appropriately sited and that excessive nighttime light be minimized. Implementation of Policy COS 13.7 and Policies COS 14.1 through COS 14.7 would ensure that utility infrastructure projects—including solar facilities—are designed and sited to minimize their impacts on community character. Lastly, Policies M 3.2, M 4.1, and M 11.1 through M 11.4 in the proposed Mobility Element require that streets in rural areas be designed and scaled to reflect community character.

Shade and Shadows

The issue of shade and shadow pertains to whether onsite buildings or structures block direct sunlight from adjacent properties. Shading is an important environmental issue because the users or occupants of certain land uses have expectations for direct sunlight and warmth from the sun for function, physical comfort, or conduct of commerce. Factors that influence the extent or range of shading include: season; time of day; weather (i.e., sunny vs. cloudy day); building height, bulk, and scale; topography; spacing between buildings; sensitivity of adjacent land uses; and tree cover. Shadows cast by buildings and structures vary in length and direction throughout the day and from season to season. The longest shadows are cast during the winter months, when the sun is lowest on the horizon, and the shortest shadows are cast during the summer months. Shadows are longer in the early morning and late afternoon. Consequences of shadows upon land uses may be positive, including cooling effects during warm weather, or negative, such as the loss of natural light necessary for solar energy purposes or the loss of warming influences during cool weather. The relative effects of shading from structures are site specific.

Although the Proposed Project would allow substantial growth in the Project Area prior to buildout, that growth is largely limited to low-scale, low-density growth and would primarily consist of single-family detached homes. Due to allowable densities of land use designations identified in the proposed Land Use Policy Map, these homes would not be sited close enough to each other to cast substantial shade or shadows on adjacent properties. Although commercial, industrial, and multifamily uses would be allowed in some areas, these would generally be limited to established built-up areas, such as Rural Town Centers and Rural Town Areas. Furthermore, descriptions for commercial and mixed use designations indicate that nonresidential uses should be "compatible with rural, agricultural, and low-intensity visitor-serving

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recreational activities.” Nonresidential uses and multifamily residential uses are not expected to consist of the type of tall or bulky structures found in heavily urbanized areas. Therefore, the potential for future development in these land use designations to cast shadows on surrounding land uses is expected to be minimal.

Unlike the proposed Land Use Policy Map, the proposed zoning maps for the Project Area (see Figure 3.5(a–c)) contain parcels that are explicitly zoned for heavy manufacturing uses. However, these parcels are generally concentrated near Palmdale Airport and far from what could be considered sensitive receptors to shade and shadow impacts, such as schools or residential areas. Furthermore, CEQA requires that discretionary development projects that would be accommodated by the Proposed Project undergo separate project-level environmental review, wherein the individual project’s impacts related to shade and shadows would be assessed at the time formal development plans/applications are submitted to the County for review and approval. Therefore, impacts regarding shade and shadow are not anticipated to be significant.

Conclusion

Implementation of the Proposed Project would have the potential to result in changes to the visual character of the Project Area, primarily related to the overall magnitude of growth anticipated. However, at a programmatic level, the land use patterns and development types allowed in the Project Area by the Proposed Area Plan are designed to maintain the region’s rural character. Furthermore, the implementation of guidelines and development standards in the existing regulatory framework would serve to lessen the potential impacts of the Proposed Project by providing consistency between existing and future development. Additionally, the goals, policies, and implementation programs contained in the Proposed Area Plan would lessen or mitigate potential impacts of the Proposed Project by providing direction for future decision making, as well as by requiring additional future review of potential impacts of individual development projects that would be accommodated by the Proposed Project. Therefore, while changes to the region’s visual appearance and character would occur, these would not be inherently adverse changes. Impacts related to visual character and quality would be less than significant.

Impact 5.1-4: Implementation of the Proposed Project would generate additional sources of light and glare that could adversely affect day and nighttime views in the Project Area. [Threshold AE-4]

Impact Analysis: Existing levels of lighting and light pollution vary widely in the Project Area. They are relatively high near Lancaster and Palmdale, where scattered, suburban-scaled housing developments spread ambient light and light pollution over a wide area. The Project Area also contains many of the region’s most rural, undeveloped, and remote areas, including the higher elevations of the San Gabriel Mountains and large vacant swaths of the western Mojave Desert. In these areas, existing nighttime light and light pollution is very low. Implementation of the Proposed Project would allow for additional development throughout the Project Area, which would introduce new or additional sources of light into the Project Area and its surroundings, with the potential to affect day and nighttime views. In addition to residential and nonresidential land uses, new sources of light and glare would include energy and utility projects, such as solar facilities.

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The remoteness of the higher San Gabriel Mountains and the northern Antelope Valley allow for substantial views of the nighttime sky. The Mojave Desert, in particular, is a well-known destination for stargazers. The substantial growth expected in the Antelope Valley would diminish these existing nighttime views by introducing new land uses into previously undeveloped areas. However, such impacts would be reduced upon implementation of existing regulations and policies in the Proposed Area Plan, as described below.

The County's Zoning Ordinance (Title 22 of the County Code) contains provisions intended to limit adverse light and glare impacts. For example, Section 22.52.820 (General Regulations) of Part 10 (Signs) requires that no lighted signs be placed or directed so as to permit illumination to be directed or beamed upon a public street, highway, sidewalk, or adjacent premise. Part 9 (Rural Outdoor Lighting District) of Chapter 22.44 (Supplemental Districts) establishes rural outdoor lighting districts. These districts were established as a supplementary district for the rural areas of the Project Area to promote and maintain dark skies for the health and enjoyment of people and wildlife. These provisions are particularly important to mitigating this impact because they protect dark sky resources in the portions of Project Area where additional light pollution would be particularly pronounced, such as flat, undeveloped areas of the Antelope Valley that are anticipated to experience substantial growth. Implementation of the County's Rural Outdoor Lighting District standards would minimize such impacts by requiring outdoor lighting to be scaled appropriately and to be designed in a context-sensitive manner. Compliance with these and other applicable provisions of the County's Zoning Ordinance would be enforced through the County's development review and building permit process.

In addition to applicable provisions of the County Code mentioned above (including the Rural Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, which applies to rural areas throughout Los Angeles County), CEQA requires that development projects requiring discretionary approval be required to undergo separate project-level environmental review, wherein the individual project's contribution to additional sources of light and glare would be assessed at the time formal development plans/applications are submitted to the County for review and approval. Additionally, the California Building Code contains standards for outdoor lighting that are intended to reduce light pollution and glare by regulating light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls. These regulations would serve to mitigate potential impacts of new land uses.

The higher-intensity uses and mixed uses allowed in the Project Area's EOAs could result in new sources of light and glare in those areas. However, as discussed in the Proposed Area Plan, the EOAs have been created with the intention that community plans be prepared for each area. The Proposed Area Plan includes an implementation program for the preparation of such plans. These plans would be required to undergo separate CEQA review, which would disclose potential impacts related to light and glare resulting from new development in the specific plan areas. Lastly, development standards and design guidelines established in each community-level plan would address aesthetic impacts related to light and glare.

Implementation of Proposed Area Plan Goals and Policies

Goals and policies of the Proposed Area Plan, listed above under Section 5.1.3, *Relevant Area Plan Goals and Policies*, would serve to minimize potential impacts related to additional sources of light and glare. Goal COS 15 and Policies COS 15.1 through COS 15.4 are directly aimed at protecting the region from light pollution. These four policies would ensure that outdoor lighting is provided at the lowest levels possible while still

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maintaining safety. Special consideration is given to limiting all-night outdoor lighting in rural areas (Policy COS 15.2) and compliance with the region's Rural Outdoor Lighting District regulations. Implementation of these policies would substantially reduce the potential impacts of future growth and development related to lighting. Furthermore, the Proposed Area Plan includes policies that would minimize glare impacts related to solar projects. These include Policies COS 13.1, COS 13.7, and COS 14.1 through COS 14.7.

Conclusion

Because buildout of the Proposed Project would result in the construction of additional development throughout the Project Area, its implementation would generate additional sources of light and glare that could adversely affect existing day and nighttime views. However, most growth would occur in established communities where existing levels of nighttime illumination are high. Elsewhere, growth would occur at the type of very low densities that would not create excessive light pollution. Under the Proposed Project, solar facilities and other energy projects would be allowed in select parts of the Project Area. These facilities would add glare. However, the Proposed Area Plan specifically addresses visual impacts of energy projects and includes policies to minimize such potential impacts. Furthermore, these and other individual projects that would have potentially significant impacts related to lighting, such as large industrial buildings, would be subject to project-level CEQA review.

Although growth in the Antelope Valley (and other rural areas) could potentially diminish existing nighttime views and/or dark skies, these impacts would be minimized by applicable regulations. Upon implementation of applicable sections of the County Code, provisions of the California Building Code, and goals and policies in the Proposed Area Plan, impacts related to light and glare would be less than significant.

5.1.5 Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impact area for the Proposed Project is SCAG's North Los Angeles County Subregion. Cumulative projects located in Lancaster, Palmdale, and the Santa Clarita Valley would have the potential to result in a cumulative impact to aesthetic resources if in combination they would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of a neighborhood, community, state scenic highway, or localized area. During the planning period of the Proposed Project, the subregion is anticipated to experience substantial growth.

Scenic Vistas and Scenic Resources

Growth anticipated in the subregion could affect scenic vistas and specific scenic resources. However, because development allowed under the Proposed Project would be subject to goals, policies, and regulations that reduce impacts of the Proposed Project on scenic resources to a less than significant level, the Proposed Project's contribution to subregion-wide impacts would not be cumulatively considerable. Cumulative impacts of the Proposed Project related to scenic vistas and scenic resources are therefore considered less than significant.

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Visual Character and Quality

During the planning period of the Proposed Project, growth and development would fundamentally alter visual character and quality in some areas of the region. However, because development allowed under the Proposed Project would be subject to goals, policies, and regulations that reduce impacts of the Proposed Project on visual character and quality to a less than significant level, the Proposed Project's contribution to subregion-wide impacts would not be cumulatively considerable. Cumulative impacts of the Proposed Project related to visual character and quality are therefore considered less than significant.

Light and Glare

The construction and operation of cumulative projects located in the subregion would also have the potential to result in a new source of light and glare from new development or redevelopment that requires night lighting, such as security lighting in commercial areas, or is constructed with materials that would result in glare, such as expanses of glass on office buildings. Glare could also be generated by new solar projects allowed in parts of the region outside the Project Area. However, impacts from light and glare are generally localized and not cumulative in nature. Although a cluster of solar projects straddling the boundaries of the Project Area and an adjacent city—Lancaster or Palmdale—could generate cumulative effects in the form of “shimmer” seen from long distances, implementation of Proposed Area Plan policies would reduce the Project Area's contribution to these impacts to less than significant (see Impact 5.1-4, above). Therefore, the Proposed Project is not anticipated to substantially contribute to a significant adverse cumulative effect related to glare. Furthermore, as in the Project Area, discretionary solar projects in Lancaster and Palmdale would be subject to subsequent environmental review under CEQA. Consistent with CEQA, this environmental review would include, where necessary, analysis of potential aesthetic impacts, including potential cumulative glare-related impacts generated by the proposed project in combination with existing nearby solar facility projects. Therefore a significant cumulative impact related to glare would not occur.

5.1.6 Existing Regulations

State

- California Building Code
- California Scenic Highway Program

Local

- Los Angeles County Code
- Los Angeles County CEQA Guidelines

5.1.7 Level of Significance Before Mitigation

Upon implementation of regulatory requirements, program-level aesthetic impacts, including Impacts 5.1-1 through 5.1-5, would be less than significant.

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5.1.8 Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

5.1.9 Level of Significance After Mitigation

No significant unavoidable adverse impacts related to aesthetics have been identified. Aesthetic impacts would be less than significant.

5.1.10 References

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2014. List of Eligible and Officially Designated State Scenic Routes. <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/cahisys.htm>.

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