

CHAPTER 2.0 – SIGNIFICANT ENVIRONMENTAL EFFECTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT

This chapter of the EIR provides a detailed discussion of those subject areas for which Project implementation would result in either: (1) significant impacts that cannot be avoided and/or (2) significant impacts that can be avoided, reduced or minimized through mitigation measures required to be implemented as part of the Proposed Project.

In order to assist the reader in tracking between impacts and related mitigation measures, individual impacts and the associated mitigation measures have been given correlating numbers and letters. For example, for the issue of aesthetics, the first significant impact is identified in text in the analysis portion of the discussion as AE-1, representing aesthetics impact number 1. The measure designed to attenuate that impact is identified as M-AE-1 (i.e., mitigation for aesthetics impact number 1).

Significant and unmitigable impacts have been identified for three technical issues addressed in this chapter: Aesthetics, Transportation/Traffic and Air Quality.

2.1 Aesthetics

The following sections address aesthetics evaluation summarized from the Visual Impact Analysis (VIA) and Resource Protection Study Steep Slope Waiver prepared by HELIX (2017e and 2015, respectively), and presented in their entirety in Appendices B and C of this EIR. The VIA was prepared in conformance with the County Requirements for Format and Content for Visual Analysis (2007i) and the County Requirements for Format and Content for Dark Skies and Glare (2009a). The reader is referred to text below for evaluation of all issues related to aesthetics for the Project.

2.1.1 Existing Conditions

The following sections address the current conditions at the Project site, including the existing environmental setting, viewer sensitivity with regard to visibility of the Project site, and the regulatory framework currently in place. The reader is referred to Figure 1-3 in Chapter 1.0 for an overview of the site location related to cultural and natural features discussed below.

2.1.1.1 Existing Setting

Project Site

As noted above, the Project site is located in an unincorporated area of San Diego County, west of the City of Escondido and south of the City of San Marcos (see Figures 1-1 through 1-3 of this EIR). The primary route from Escondido accesses the site via Harmony Grove Road, a County Scenic Highway, additionally addressed below.

Vegetation on site (particularly within the northern half of the Project) is generally disturbed and includes non-native grassland edged by isolated Diegan coastal sage scrub stands bordered by coastal sage-chaparral transition and chaparral habitats. The majority of the Project is mapped as chaparral habitat (approximately 47 acres); with the next largest category being non-native

grassland (42 acres). Smaller areas of coast live oak woodland, eucalyptus, non-native and disturbed vegetation, etc., are also located onsite.

As a whole, the site rises in elevation to the south, and contains valley floor, as well as visible on-site small hillocks and knobs, on top of the generally inclining topography. The northern portion of the Project site contains topography generally sloping down to the north-northwest corner of the property, as well as disturbed biological habitat. Looking only at the northwest portion of the site, the western half is a gently sloping valley bottom, sloping down from both the south and east, toward the Project low point and (off-site) Escondido Creek. Non-native grassland/disturbed habitats are the predominant vegetation, with a stand of non-native trees (eucalyptus, California pepper), clustered near the westward turn in Country Club Drive at the western edge of the property. The eastern portion of the northern part of the site rises into small scrub-covered hills.

An east-west trending bench extends across the roughly center point in the site, separating the Project parcels visually into north and south portions. The southern portion of the Project contains less disturbed habitat and, after a downward slope on the south side of the central bench, is located on increasingly steep and higher on-site hills. This area drains even higher off-site hills to the south, with incised north-south trending ravines entering the Project and draining to the northwest on the south side of the relatively level and east-west trending bench slope noted above. This southern area includes the largest stand of coast live oak woodland, as well as substantial chaparral acreage, which merges into off-site permanent open space acreage.

The site has an elevational range of approximately 350 feet. On-site elevations range from approximately 570 feet amsl in the northern portion of the Project near Country Club Drive, to 938 feet amsl at the southernmost property boundary. The low point of the drainage exit from the site south of the central bench is approximately 630 amsl. Approximately 66.7 acres (60 percent) of the site contain slopes with a gradient of zero to 25 percent, approximately 39.7 acres (35.8 percent) of the site have slopes with a gradient between 25 and 50 percent, and approximately 4.6 acres (4.1 percent) of the site have slopes with a gradient greater than 50 percent. County-protected steep slopes, i.e., natural slopes exceeding 25 percent slope with a vertical rise of 50 feet or more in elevation, are located in the northeast hills of the Project site, on the central slope rising above the valley floor, and in the southern third of the Project (identified for permanent set-aside). See discussion in Section 2.1.2.2, *Removal or Substantial Adverse Change of a Valued Feature*, below, for a description of existing steep slopes on site.

The Project site is currently vacant. Some remnants of prior structures (concrete slab portions, an excavation associated with the structure cellar, and a portion of a chimney) remain on site. Other developed uses include cistern elements, an old stockpond, a small electrical line that bisects the Project site in an east-west direction, and several unpaved roads that are either internal to the site, or provide access to residential uses east of the property. The Project site has no existing night-lighting.

Figure 2.1-1, *Photo Locations*, is an aerial photograph of the Project site and the surrounding area, and shows the location from which each photograph was taken. On-site visual elements are illustrated in Figures 2.1-2a through 2.1-2d, *On-site Photographs*. Information is provided regarding what is seen in each photo.

Figure 2.1-2a, Photo A was taken from the northwestern-most corner of the property looking south-southeast. The northern parcel boundary is seen (north of which is land owned by the Escondido Creek Conservancy). The small scrub-covered knolls in the northeastern portion of the parcel provide a backdrop to the non-native grassland in the foreground. Somewhat higher and off-site scrub-covered hills are seen beyond the Project boundary, with intermittent residences visible. Country Club Drive, which forms the western property boundary in this area, is located on the right-hand side of the photo, with an active construction staging area for the HGV buildout located just to the west. On site, the photo shows the continuation of the non-native grassland into the heart of the site; beyond the visual terminus of the roadway in the distance. Behind the small stand of trees in that area, the Project parcels extend to the west, and remain visible as a low, extended, non-native grassland-covered slope.

Figure 2.1-2a, Photo B depicts the heart of the site from the northern scrub-covered hills. The photograph looks southerly over the site, with a small portion of the paved road leading to homes off site to the east (left of and behind the viewer) in the right-hand lower corner. The on-site trees in the vicinity of the on-site standing chimney, and the off-site abutting portion of Country Club Drive curving away from the site and to the west are also on the right-hand side of the photograph. The lower center of the photo shows the on-site scrub habitat on the knolls in the northeastern portion of the site. The non-native grassland covered slopes, as well as some of the on-site dirt roads, the on-site transmission line, and (just seen in the distance) the higher southern knolls of the Project property are visible. Behind the site, the higher chaparral-covered slopes of the hills in the DDHP are visible, along with the fire break road, which cuts a non-vegetated ribbon up the side of the hill. The transmission line that bisects the site is visible in roughly the center of the site, and continues off site to the east.

Figure 2.1-2b, Photo A looks to the west. This photo was taken just north of the same paved road that provides access to the off-site homes noted above. It provides some detail relative to the disturbed nature of the scrub habitat in this area, and also shows the paved road extending to intersect Country Club Drive in approximately the center of the photograph. The white structures on the right-hand side of the photo are off site on the HGV Equestrian Ranch property, which is being used as a staging area for the HGV construction north of Harmony Grove Road. The trees associated with the remains of the earlier residential uses are present on the left-hand side of the photo, and behind those trees, to the left, is the central bench slope of the property, covered with non-native grasslands. Beyond site boundaries, this photo also provides topographic information about the setting—the small hills associated with the valley floor (including that within the May 2014 burned area of the HGV equestrian ranch), as well as the much higher hills to the west. The dark colored riparian vegetation associated with Escondido Creek west of the Project provides a strong line of demarcation, and the lighter colored area to the north of that line is part of the grading being completed for the HGV project. The transmission line that trends southerly along Country Club Drive to serve homes to the south is just visible in this photo, as is a pole associated with the line that crosses the Project site to off-site homes to the east (see the very left-hand side of the photo). The curve to the west of Country Club Drive is visible. The greenery associated with the homes along Cordrey Drive, and along the western boundary of the Project are also more visible. Hilltop development associated with homes west of Eden Valley is also just visible on the upper right-hand side of the photo.

Figure 2.1-2b, Photo B provides a view to the east from this paved road. It depicts the road leading to the off-site homes, as well as the change from non-native grassland to scrub habitat on the Project's northeastern knoll, which is a near-view dominant feature in this photograph.

Figure 2.1-2c, Photo A provides an on-site view from the vicinity of the paved road that bisects the northern portion of the property to access the off-site homes, and was taken just easterly of Country Club Drive. This view looks south; toward the topographic bench feature that crosses the site. The standing chimney indicates a portion of the site where remnants of the old residential uses are visible, with the slope behind extending into the more southern portion of the site. A dirt road trends to the top of the bench. The notable chaparral-covered hilltop in the DDHP is visible to the south.

Figure 2.1-2c, Photo B is taken from the top of the central topographic bench near the west side of the Project. This view looks easterly along the bench, toward the eastern boundary of the site, and includes two of the "peak" elements prevalent in the topographic features that rim Harmony Grove Valley. The sloping nature of the property (downward to both the south and north) from this bench is depicted in this photo. Also clearly shown is the amount of on-site road disturbance and the boundary between the non-native grassland and the start of the on-site chaparral. Eucalyptus is visible near the Project boundary.

Figure 2.1-2d, Photo A also is taken from the top of the central topographic bench near the west side of the Project. The photo depicts the expansive nature of views to the north, and illustrates the nature of the non-native grassland on site. Again, on the right-hand side of the photo, the transition from non-native grassland to scrub habitat on the northeastern Project knoll is shown. Most of the off-site portion (from the burned hilltop in the Equestrian Ranch to Country Club Drive) is part of HGV. The north-south section of Country Club Drive is visible trending toward the intersection with Harmony Grove Road. North of the distinct line of Escondido Creek riparian vegetation trending east-west across the photo, the extent of the HGV grading associated with the residential, commercial and WRF facility is clear, and some construction equipment is visible. Palomar Hospital can be seen in the background as a small rectangular feature on the right-hand side of the photo. A portion of the Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association (HGSA) (burned out in May 2014) is visible to the west of the HGV Equestrian Ranch on the left-hand side of the photo. In the far left-hand side of the photo, the corral associated with a residence located at the intersection of Cordrey Drive and Country Club Drive (abutting the Project western boundary) is visible.

Figure 2.1-2d, Photo B provides a view from the site south-southwesterly along the western Project boundary south of the intersection of Country Club Drive and Cordrey Road as well as to the southern boundary that meets the DDHP. Residences abutting the Project boundary are visible in the center and right-hand side of the photo, as are off-site scattered estate residences located on hillsides and knoll tops in the area and the firebreak on the highest peak in DDHP, the Del Dios Highlands Trail (toward the left-hand side of the photo).

Surrounding Area

The visual character of the Project locale encompasses diverse forms, including numerous hills and hillsides, ravines, and the open flatter valley area (now under construction as part of HGV). Overall, the area consists of sloping and rolling valley floor with some hill features being locally

notable. Prominent hilltops and ridgelines are located south and southwest of the Project site, and are associated with the higher hills located in the DDHP and EFRR, respectively. These areas are in permanent open space. Undeveloped land is also associated with Mt. Whitney, a major visual resource in the Project area, located westerly of the Project, beyond HGV north of Harmony Grove Road. Mt. Whitney and the western ridgelines provide a strong topographic background to the west. The Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove portion of the San Dieguito Community Plan notes that these are sometimes identified as the “Lady of the Valley,” with the highest point being the shoulder, lower slopes suggesting the lady’s hair extending to the north, and the adjacent slopes to the south showing her hip and legs as she reclines on her side. The Community Plan identifies this off-site ridgeline as a locally important historic visual resource. Escondido Creek is also a primary visual element in the southern extent of the valley (just north of the Project), as it bisects the valley in an east-west direction before turning south. Although portions of the drainage are disturbed, a fairly consistent line of riparian vegetation edges the creek along its length, providing a line of green across the valley. Figure 2.1-3a, *Escondido Creek, East and West*, Photos A and B depict east and west views along the creek at its crossing by Country Club Drive.

Settlement in Harmony Grove Valley has long been a part of creating the visual character in the area. Early activities included ranching, as well as the notable HGSA. Although severely affected by the regional fires in May 2014, the HGSA is rebuilding. Located on 13 acres approximately 0.25 mile west of the Project, the HGSA was formed and incorporated in 1896 to further the teaching of spiritualism as a religion, philosophy and science. By the mid-1920s, individuals were coming to camp events at the HGSA from as far away as San Diego and Los Angeles. The presence of the HGSA is an important built and cultural element within Harmony Grove.

Currently, estate, rural and semi-rural single-family homes are located northwest, west, southwest, east of the Project (Figures 1-3 and 1-4). Residential uses include scattered single-family homes on the ridgelines to the west-northwest that overlook the valley and the Project. Additional ridgeline and hillside residential development exists south and southwest of the Proposed Project along Harmony Grove Road and Escondido Creek. As noted above, the HGSA, with a compound consisting of a church, cottages and associated buildings (approximately 30 structures, overall), was present until May, and is expected to fully rebuild.

Surrounding residences range from custom-built homes to tract developments. Larger lots in the Harmony Grove area sometimes include large animal uses (e.g., horse-keeping). Although individual homes are landscaped according to personal preference, some landscaped yards provide verdant settings, including (primarily non-native) trees such as palm, pepper, pine, and eucalyptus that provide a dominant element in the visual character of the area due to their age, size, and quantity. Some natural, dense vegetation exists, including riparian and oak vegetation.

In 2007, the County designated an approximately 500-acre area of land in the center of Harmony Grove Valley to become a new village. HGV is located in a large portion (approximately 450 acres) of Harmony Grove Valley and straddles three sides of the area’s “crossroads” at Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive. HGV is located contiguous to the Project site, with the Village Core within 2,100 feet (less than 0.5 mile) of the Project. The Project is located in the southern portion of the same valley, and is part of the same drainage basin, as well as the viewshed. The ridgelines that surround the valley, and unite all valley areas, including HGV and HGV South, are shown on Figure 1-5 of this EIR. The prominent ridgelines surrounding and defining the valley

in which both HGV and the Project are found form a natural dramatic definition of the valley. HGV also was sited near the intersection of the main north-south and east-west roadways in Harmony Grove (Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road) which have been upgraded as a part of the development of the HGV site where they abut portions of the village that are building out.

The entire buildable portions of the HGV site have been graded, which results in a large expanse of raw soil. The amount of visible raw soil is changing, however, as vertical construction is underway. Home sales began in 2015. Homes are present on both east and west sides of Country Club Drive, and vertical construction is ongoing, with increasing rates of occupancy as additional homes are completed. The HGV WRF grading and base construction is complete, with preliminarily landscaped slopes and structures in place. Because the development is so far along, the presence of that project is included as a baseline environmental condition (an existing condition) in this EIR (see Section 3.1.6). Once completed, HGV will include more than 700 homes, some commercial uses, utility uses and additional recreational uses.

Other dense housing and subdivisions also exist within approximately 0.5 to 0.75 mile to the east of the Project site (Figures 1-3 and 1-4). Lot sizes in this area are much smaller; generally there are approximately eight houses to an acre. Mobile home parks and apartments are also present to the east, and continue along Hale Avenue to 9th Avenue and Valley Parkway. Landscaped yards and large street trees are present, but the dense housing tends to dominate the visual landscape.

As noted above, the Project is adjacent to the Equestrian Ranch at HGV. Residential, commercial and industrial elements of that project are actively building out, with mass grading already completed, north of the Project and Escondido Creek/Harmony Grove Road. The HGV WRF is being built just north of Harmony Grove Road, north of Escondido Creek and within approximately 550 feet of the Project.

This juxtaposition of the natural and the engineered (man-made) environment in the Project vicinity is notable. Roadways wind along the hillsides in response to the topography. In general, area grading reflects the natural topography, in that it steps up and down the original gradient, following increases and decreases in elevation. Area ridgelines (which draw the eye from lower elevations) are often developed with structures that are skylined to viewers from below, or at, similar elevations. Hilltop development is generally relatively small in scale and somewhat intermittent, but very noticeable, with geometric and rectilinear structures skylined for viewers. This is particularly so in some of the areas west of Harmony Grove and Eden valleys (Figure 2.1-3b, *Typical Ridgeline Development*), and in areas to the north of the Project, where residential development in the City of San Marcos is visible to the naked eye, sky-lined at distance. The off-site but visually prominent Palomar Hospital provides a dominant geometric, hard edged element to views in the general area. It is a (varyingly) distant, but seen element from the throughout valley, including the central slopes of the Project.

No street lights exist along Country Club Drive south of Harmony Grove Road. Some lighting is associated with existing residential uses west and east of the Project.

Depending on the season, the non-irrigated, non-native grass fields of the Project and abutting parcels may be tan to a light to emerald green. Darker greens associated with on-site eucalyptus

and California peppers (near Country Club Drive) and oaks along a riparian corridor in the southern portion of the Project are also visible for local viewers. The greens to muted brown-greens of sage/chaparral habitats predominate on the Project hillsides. Overall, the colors are visually “soft,” with topographic ridgelines and hilltops providing harder edged and dominant forms at the skyline.

Roads and residential structures, which are smaller in scale, provide some variety of form and line. Shrubs and trees can also provide bulbous or vertical elements in a valley floor viewscape when they are isolated from more dense vegetation. When vegetation is more dense, and particularly at a distance, it merges into a softer image. All of these visual elements, however, are visually overpowered by the dominant scale of hills that border Harmony Grove and Eden Valleys to the north, west and south.

The closest listed scenic corridor to the Project site is a segment of Elfin Forest Road/Harmony Grove Road. It is identified as a scenic corridor in the COS Element and is included as part of the County Scenic Highway System between the San Marcos city limits and the Escondido city limits. At its closest point, the Harmony Grove Road segment is located just north of Escondido Creek, which is located just north of the Project site.

Public park or recreation facilities within the Project viewshed (additionally addressed in Section 2.1.1.2, *Project Site Visibility/Viewshed and Landscape Unit*, below) include the DDHP and the EFRR, noted above. The DDHP abuts the southern, as well as the southeastern boundaries of the Project. The DDHP has a 1.5-mile long firebreak/trail, located at its closest point approximately 0.1 mile south of the Project boundary and 0.3 mile south of proposed development footprint, that extends from Del Dios Highway to intersect with the “Way Up” Trail in the EFRR. The EFRR maintains approximately 11 miles of trails transecting 750 acres overlaying portions of the ridgeline separating the Escondido Creek valley and the area surrounding Lake Hodges. At its closest point, the EFRR is located just over 0.3 mile to the south-southwest. Portions of the Way Up Trail with views to the Project are approximately 0.5 mile from the Project boundary and 0.6 mile from the proposed development footprint.

The County has identified a number of proposed community trails located along public rights-of-way and over private property in the vicinity of the project, and consistent with the County Trails Program Community Trails Master Plan (2005). These facilities are designed to be located in close proximity to residents, and to provide transportation, recreation, access, infrastructure, linkages and safe routes throughout a community. In the immediate vicinity of the Project, the County has identified four proposed trails, three of which are identified as “first priority,” as indicated by asterisks below:

1. **Country Club Drive Trail (04), extending along that roadway from roughly the northern extent of HGV, southerly to cross Harmony Grove Road and enter the Project where Country Club Drive begins to trend toward the west;
2. **Lake Hodges Trail (11), extending across the Project approximately 0.5 mile from Country Club Drive east to the County/Escondido line;

3. **Summit Trail (12), extending southerly approximately 0.2 mile from the Lake Hodges Trail into the heart of the Project; and routed along the southern Project boundary within landscaped area north of Project BOS, connecting to Trail 11 on the north, and Trail 13 on the west; and
4. Elfin Forest Trail (13), trending west and then south from the Summit Trail along the western Project boundary to the County/Escondido line.

Each of the trails connecting into Escondido continues into that jurisdiction, and on to the trail destination point or to another connection. In addition, the County Trails Master Plan identifies the Escondido Creek Trail (14), just north of the Project, trending along the Escondido Creek drainage. This trail is identified as approximately 2.2 miles long; no priority is identified.

Mixed-use trails (pedestrian, bike and equestrian) are under construction by HGV, located north and west of the Project. HGV has constructed multi-use fenced trails along Country Club Drive to Harmony Grove Road (part of Trail 04, to the vicinity of Mt. Whitney Road on the north), along new Harmony Grove Village Parkway, and along Harmony Grove Road project footage, north of Escondido Creek. HGV is also conditioned to build the portion of Trail 04 extending southerly along Country Club Drive from Harmony Grove Road to the Equestrian Ranch sited just west (across the street) from the Proposed Project.

As noted above, Figure 2.1-1 depicts the location from which each off-site photograph was taken (Figures 2.1-3c through 2.1-3m, *Surrounding Public Viewpoints*). Information is provided below regarding what is seen in each photo, as well as why the location was chosen. The following criteria were considered during determination of off-site photograph locations:

- Type of viewers/viewpoint (public views are considered more sensitive than private views)
- Typicality and/or uniqueness of the view in that area
- Breadth of the view (views taking in a number of elements rely less on any one element than those focusing on a specific view element)
- Depth of the view (increased distance from the observed element makes it appear smaller, less detail is registered, and visibility may be affected by atmospheric conditions such as fog, smog, etc.)
- Amount of time (and/or number of times) each observer is exposed to the view
- Number of viewers exposed to the view (a greater number of viewers makes the view more sensitive)
- Identification of designated scenic viewpoints and scenic highways

On-site visual elements are illustrated in Figures 2.1-2a through 2.1-2d. Off-site vantage points surround the Project property, and provide the basis for a number of photographs (Figures 2.1-3a, 2.1-3b, and 2.1-3c through 2.1-3-m). The primary vantage points include roadways (including those adjacent to or abutting the site) and public trails. These roadways and trails, as well as views

from the vantage photographs are described below. Photographs providing additional context for development in the valley are provided in Figures 2.1-4a through 2.1-4d, *Built Elements Near Harmony Grove Village South*.

Harmony Grove Road

As noted, the closest listed scenic corridor to the Project site is the segment of Elfin Forest Road/ Harmony Grove Road between the San Marcos city limits and the Escondido city limits. Figures 2.1-3c through 2.1-3f depict views to the Project from Harmony Grove Road.

For travelers moving south and west, the Project is first visible from this scenic corridor just after passing an intervening hill to the south as the road curves westerly around a large topographical feature south of the Avenida del Diablo bridge (a hill containing an old mining area and current location of the HGV WRF). From this east-west trending section, the viewer can look southerly (left) over Escondido Creek vegetation to the site (Figure 2.1-3c). As shown in the photo, views of the northernmost portion of the site are largely obscured by riparian vegetation. Where available, views are most open to the east-west trending bench feature that bisects the site. As shown, the non-native grassland-covered slope is visible, and one of the dirt roads trending southerly across the site is notable. The higher hills of the DDHP provide a backdrop to the site, and include the firebreak (Del Dios Highlands Trail). In the immediate vicinity of the junction with Country Club Drive, the Escondido Creek vegetation increases in height and density, shielding views to the Project from this specific area. Once past the intersection, the site is located generally behind the viewer, and is not considered to comprise a notable part of the view.

For travelers heading east on Harmony Grove, the vicinity of the site could be included in views of varying openness from the general location of Wilgen Road on to the east, past the intersection with Country Club Drive noted above, or for just over 0.5 mile overall. Some intervening vegetation (Escondido Creek) and structures (the house on the HGV equestrian ranch, the HGV pump station south of Harmony Grove Road) intervene, but generally speaking views to large portions of the site are visible to easterly-bound travelers (see Figure 2.1-3d). As shown in this photo, beyond the Escondido Creek vegetation, intermittent views of the northern portion of the site are visible, and a large portion of the southern bench feature is visible. Because the HGV planned uses for this area consist of horse arena and park uses, it is possible that some visibility would continue, although it may also be screened by the trees proposed as part of that development along Harmony Grove Road (California pepper, interspersed with small stands of oak, sycamore, and Brisbane box). On the north side of Harmony Grove Road, an HGV multi-purpose trail supports users moving at more pedestrian rates of travel. At this point, visibility is conservatively assumed from both the road and the trail (although the latter would also be looking over Harmony Grove Road vehicular lane traffic). Past the intersection with Country Club Drive, the site is again open to view (as described above) until obscured by intervening landforms south of Escondido Creek.

After Harmony Grove Road turns south at the intersection with Wilgen Road, views to the Project parcels are generally obscured by Escondido Creek vegetation; which is wide, often dense, and located to the east of the Creek. The only “peep” views to the east noted by the Project team were in a location where the structure on the HGV equestrian ranch was clearly (although extremely briefly) visible (see Figure 2.1-3e). The photo shows that, in addition to the vegetation, the hill on

that parcel blocks views to the Project from this location. This is true for travelers moving south or north from this turn to the EFRR entry and visitor center to the south, where intervening and increasingly higher hills associated with the EFRR rise on the east side of the road.

Country Club Drive

Both north and southbound travelers on Country Club Drive would have direct views into the Project from the abutting roadway.

Figure 2.1-3f depicts the view to the site from the junction of Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive. As shown, southbound travelers have a direct view to portions of the site when approaching or stopped at the intersection with Harmony Grove Road. This would occur from the point at which Country Club Drive rounds the hill just north of Harmony Grove Road, with views becoming increasingly open as Escondido Creek is crossed. The tops of the trees just east of Country Club Drive in the valley portion of the site contrast with the disturbed non-native grassland slopes rising to the south, which in turn contrast with the chaparral habitats located to the south (both on site and as part of DDHP). The central part of the Project site remains visible along the sight line provided during the crossing of Escondido Creek (Figure 2.1-3g).

After crossing the creek, the views become more expansive to both the east and west (Figure 2.1-3h). These travelers would parallel the northern portion of the Project for approximately 1,580 feet (0.3 mile), until Country Club Drive turns west just north of the junction with Cordrey Drive. More detail becomes apparent, including the overhead utility lines that abut Country Club Drive on both sides of this portion of the road. As one nears the curve to the west in Country Club Drive, lines are located only the west side of the road. As Country Club Drive approaches the heart of the Project, it curves to the west, rising and then dropping somewhat in elevation, and leaving the Project behind as it trends toward its termination at the HGSA. Where the road begins to turn west, a cut slope (with the road below) begins to interrupt views to the Project. After the turn, the site is located generally behind the viewer, and does not comprise a notable part of the view. In this area, vegetation abutting the roadway also generally funnels views to the road directly in front of, and downslope from, the traveler.

For eastward travelers along the road from its western terminus, the Project is generally obscured by the slope along which Country Club Drive rises until near the intersection with Cordrey Drive (as well as the edging vegetation, noted above). As the viewer moves to and past the Country Club Drive/Cordrey Drive intersection, and intervening topography/road edge cut slopes drop away, the central and northern portion of the Project parcels come into view (see Figure 2.1-3i). The southern portion, with its higher hills, is not really visible. The road edge cut slopes interrupt views from the roadway, and where the site is becoming open to view, the road swings northerly, so that the southern slopes of the Project are located behind the viewer. For these travelers, the site would quickly become a peripheral view to the right, as the viewer's attention is drawn northerly to the creek and cross traffic on Harmony Grove Road.

From north of the Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road intersection, views are limited. Northbound travelers have their backs to the Project, and do not see it at all. As shown on the viewshed graphic in Figure 2.1-5, *Viewshed Analysis* (see discussion in Section 2.1.1.2 of this subchapter), the notable hill on which HGV homes and the WRF are located obscures a large

portion of the views to southbound travelers on this road. Intervening structures and mature vegetation also play a part in keeping views “local” from points along the road further north. The Project site does not become visible to southbound travelers until just before the intersection with Harmony Grove Road, at which point, there is a generally open view for the duration of the stop at the intersection.

Additional Local Roads

As illustrated by photographs within this study, although panoramic views are possible from surrounding ridgelines, the topographic and landscape conditions noted above may constrict views to and from the site, limiting primary visibility of the Project site features from the public and private streets in the area. Nearby public streets in the City of Escondido, such as Willowbrook Street, or Shadyridge, have views to the Project blocked by intervening topography (Figure 2.1-5).

Approximately 10 to 15 homes abut or are in the immediate vicinity of the Project along Cordrey Drive or to the east abutting the Property boundary or on small elevated knolls (approximately five homes). Existing homes that are not immediately adjacent to the Project property lines and that are located at approximately the same elevation as the Project currently see very little of the property. This is due to the existing intervening buildings, trees/vegetation, and in some cases small topographic variation, that block views across the valley floor, and restrict views in most of this area to a viewer’s immediate surroundings. Between homes or along streets in places where the landscaping is less dense, as well as where property lines are shared with Project parcels, viewers are able to view some portion of the Project site. For some viewers along Cordrey Drive, the slopes (up) from these residential uses result in primary focus being on the slopes immediately adjacent to their lots rather than expansive views over the site.

There are a number of public and private roads located in the hills around the site; with the focus being on roads west and north of the Project with potential for intermittent but open views to the site; such as Wilgen Road, Bresa de Loma, Coronado Hills and Seeforever Drive. These roads are travelled by a small number of individuals as they access individual homes, intermittently located within the hills, and at increasing distances from the Project. Coronado Hills and Seeforever Drive are public roads that could be accessed during Project review. Near the intersection of Coronado Hills and Cyad Drive, there is a moment when the curving nature of this road presents a (distant but) direct view onto the Project site (Figure 2.1-3j). The large lot nature of these estate homes is clear. Lot-specific landscaping is interspersed among a disturbed scrub habitat in the foreground. The Project site is roughly centered in the view from this location, in the middle of the photo, and beyond a portion of the HGV grading. The higher topography associated with the hills and mountains to the south and east, respectively, provides the skyline. From Seeforever Drive (Figure 2.1-3k), the viewer has moved easterly and a bit south; around to the more consistently east-facing slope of these hills. The valley floor is more open to the viewer, as are the slightly less abrupt slopes in front of the viewer. From this viewpoint, both Harmony Grove and Eden valleys are open to view. The foreground shows a portion of the burn area from the May 2014 fires, backed by irrigated groves. Development in Escondido is apparent, as is the first phase grading for HGV (ultimate development will be closer to the viewer from this location, as indicated in the HGV simulations included in Attachment A to Appendix B of this EIR). Beyond the line of riparian

vegetation that demarks Escondido Creek, the Project site is visible, below the higher hills to the east and south.

A number of additional private homes at greater distances within the viewshed, and the private roads that access them, are at elevations from which the Project site area could be viewed absent intervening topography and vegetation. Large expanses of the Project site may be visible from hilltops and Project-facing sides of ridges and hills westerly of the property. These views can be expansive, with the Project site comprising small to substantial elements in a larger view.

Trails

As indicated above, vantage points are also available from existing trails in the area. These include publicly identified trails in preserved open space with a primary purpose of recreation and access to area views.

The EFRR provides approximately 11 miles of hiking, mountain biking, equestrian trails, and picnic areas within 784 acres surrounding the Olivenhain Reservoir. The DDHP encompasses approximately 774 acres and is part of the County's MSCP preserve system. Although some of the trails are located on south-facing slopes and/or focused on views to Olivenhain Reservoir or Lake Hodges, trails are available on north-facing slopes with open views over the Harmony Grove Valley. The Project site is visible from the trails used by hikers, equestrians and bicyclists on these north-facing slopes within both the DDHP and the EFRR (see Figures 2.1-3l and m, respectively). The 1.5-mile multi-use trail (Del Dios Highlands Trail) connects to within the EFRR and is approximately 0.3 mile from the on-site Project development. Views into the Project site are also provided from the EFRR Way Up Trail, approximately 0.5-0.6 mile from the Project.

Views from these trails are expansive, and include elements of individual residences and HGV in the County, as well as City of Escondido residences and facilities. More urban uses (including light industrial uses) to the north of Hill Drive in the distance, as well as elements of the ERTC can be seen. Hills rimming the Harmony Grove and Eden valleys are seen from these viewpoints on all sides, with distant hills forming the edge of view to the north, and slopes dropping away from the viewer in the foreground. Mt. Whitney and the western ridgelines provide a strong topographic background to the west, including the "Lady of the Valley," as described above.

As noted, Figure 2.1-3l depicts the closest and most open view to the Project from trails in the open space south of the Project. Taken from DDHP, the Project southern boundary is approximately 0.1 mile north of the viewer. The elevated and expansive nature of the view from this viewpoint visually "flattens" the topography that seems locally notable in views from the valley floor. The homes west of the parcel boundary are clearly visible, with the white home located at the approximate southerly extension of the Project. The chaparral that extends northerly onto the site from this open space is located in the foreground, but the view also encompasses portions of the site to its northern boundary, south of Escondido Creek, which is demarked by the east-west trending strip of green riparian vegetation. Although the focus of this figure is the expansive nature of the view from this viewpoint, the extensive nature of the current HGV grading, ultimately to be developed with structures, parks, and landscaping, is notable. (As described elsewhere in this EIR, substantial development already has occurred. Home sales began in 2015, at which point on-site roads, homes, Fourth of July Park and a private HGV recreational area with

a club house and pool were all in place. Grading and construction of the HGV WRF also has occurred.) Equally notable in the photograph are Escondido's Palomar Hospital (with its atypical height and massing for this area), the lighter-colored structures associated with the ERTC, and commercial and residential development in San Marcos in the distance.

Figure 2.1-3m depicts visibility of the site from EFRR, and was taken from the Harmony Grove Overlook, an area that provides seating under a shade structure and is likely to provide the most extended views over the Project. The red and white roofs of the homes along the western Project boundary are visible on the right-hand side of the photo. Much of the site is obscured by the tall trees associated with those Cordrey Drive residences, but part of the on-site chaparral is visible, as are some of the Project non-native grassland and scrub covered hills (all generally to the right of the dead bush in the center of the photo).

As noted above, the HGV project has constructed fenced mixed-use trails along Country Club Drive north of Harmony Grove Road and along Harmony Grove Road project footage north of Escondido Creek, and plans to construct a similar trail along Country Club Drive southerly to the Equestrian Ranch sited just west (across the street) from the Proposed Project. Open views from each of these facilities would be available to the Project, as these trails edge the roadway segments detailed above. Project-visible elements from these trails would be similar to those discussed for the roadways they abut.

Additional Context Photographs

As noted above, Figures 2.1-4a through 2.1-4d depict several focused elements that provide important elements within the viewshed and community. They are primarily focused on current build out of HGV, and also include some large lot single-family residential homes in the area. These photographs provide additional context for community conformity text in Section 2.1.2 of this EIR.

Figure 2.1-4a looks northerly from a point in the northwest section of the Project. The curve in Country Club Drive that forms the northwest boundary of the Project is visible, as is the north-south extension of Country Club Drive across Harmony Grove Road. The HGV WRF is visible above the slope edging Harmony Grove Road in roughly the center of the photo. HGV homes extend from west to east across the center of the photo—including the relocated Johnston Ward farmhouse, and homes both west and east of Country Club Drive. Additional pads for HGV homes are located between those built structures and the viewer, also on both sides of Country Club Drive. The steep and high manufactured slopes graded as part of HGV are particularly visible in the areas east of Country Club Drive. Palomar Hospital provides a notable multi-story built structure at the northern extent of the photo.

Figure 2.1-4b depicts home styles and massing of HGV residences west of Country Club Drive and the HGV Fourth of July Park. The proximity of the HGV houses to each other can be seen, and additional grading, to accommodate additional phasing, is seen on the hill behind the homes. Off-site, existing residential uses, including multi-story homes, range up the slope and are located along the ridgeline.

Figure 2.1-4c illustrates slopes abutting Harmony Grove Village Parkway within HGV. The sidewalk, equestrian-style fencing, multi-purpose trail and some streetscape landscaping is clearly seen, as is the height of the abutting manufactured slope.

Figure 2.1-4d depicts two homes in the vicinity of the Proposed Project that provide some structural context for the immediate area. They are both southwest of Harmony Grove Road, and are located near the Project to the northeast and southwest, respectively. As shown, these homes contain visible elevations that indicate three- to four-story residential uses.

2.1.1.2 Project Site Visibility/Viewshed and Landscape Unit

Project Viewshed

A “viewshed” is an analytical tool to aid in identification of views that could be affected by a potential project. The viewshed is defined as the surrounding geographic area from which the on-site elements of the Project are likely to be seen, and mostly is delineated based on topography. The viewshed boundary for the Proposed Project was primarily determined through the computer analysis of local topographic maps, and was field verified by Project analysts (see further discussion below). The viewshed boundary represents the geographic limits for this visual assessment.

Figure 2.1-5 illustrates the Project viewshed on an aerial photographic base. For the Project area, views within a 3-mile radius were considered close enough to allow viewers to visually “read” Project elements such as landform modifications, and (potentially) the spatial mass and form of proposed structures. Beyond a mile, topographic modifications and residential structures begin to become visually muted and distinguishable only as facets of the larger regional landscape. Using these criteria, the Project viewshed covers approximately 34 square miles, or 21,891 acres. This area was delineated using spatial models that analyze the topographic data and determine which portions of the Project site are potentially visible from surrounding areas. As shown, based on topographic information alone, approximately 16 percent of the viewshed, or 3,575 acres, within 3 miles of the Project potentially would have views to some part of the Project.

This is a conservative number as visual “shielding” by intervening structures or landscaping is not taken into account by the model. Because of intervening structural or vegetation elements, the entire Project site would not be visible from all of the identified points based solely on topographic elements within the viewshed area. Even under conditions in which topography or other intervening elements do not obstruct views, views to any given point within a viewshed may not be clear due to levels of humidity or haze. Features can lose sharpness at approximately 0.5 mile depending on these atmospheric conditions.

The computer-generated viewshed map was field checked by Project analysts and specific sensitive locations (segments of I-15, parks, trails) were visited to confirm or eliminate visibility.

As depicted on the viewshed map in Figure 2.1-5, based on topography alone, views from I-15 begin approximately 2.25 miles to the northeast, with the most distant location having visibility for approximately 250 feet. The higher locations within the open space set-aside from this locale have an available line-of-sight for southbound travelers. Although no visibility is currently available to the lower valley portions of the Project parcels, following grading and structure

construction, some limited views may be visible to the northeastern portion of the site. At most, visibility would be available for a total of less than 5 seconds at freeway speeds (65 mph) for southbound travelers only. The other, more brief, views would be increasingly harder to focus upon from a moving vehicle. Field checks of the locales north of this I-15 segment indicate that highway-related structures, as well as other buildings and vegetation obscure any views to the Project from more northerly locales on I-15 that the viewshed indicates as having views based on topography alone. Given the brief “worst-case” timespan for the single segment with potential views, combined with the distance from the site, the generally lateral nature of the view, and presence of visual distractions that would divert the viewer’s attention from that specific locale (nearby cars, built uses abutting the freeway, etc.), views from I-15 do not comprise a viewer group that requires additional discussion.

Because of their visual sensitivity, a total of four parks in the cities of San Marcos and Escondido that were beyond the 3-mile radius, but with potential lines of sight to the Project and within approximately 5 miles, were field-checked. Where it was not possible to determine with surety whether or not the Project would be visible given distance and meteorological conditions (haze), computer-generated lines of sight were generated for specific locales to the development footprint of the site.

This very conservative 5-mile radius includes Rod McLeod Park, located approximately 3.9 miles northeast of the Project; and Jesmond Dene Park, located approximately 5.0 miles northeast of the Project; within the City of Escondido. Within the City of San Marcos, it includes the upper reaches of Woodland Park, located approximately 3.7 miles to the north; and Helen Bougher Memorial Park, located approximately 4.0 miles to the north.

From Rod McLeod Park small intervening hills (including the one abutting the northeast side of Project parcels) are visible. Based on topography alone, some views to the northerly facing slopes of that park are available, as is the major feature in Del Dios Highlands, but the developable portions of the Project site would be shielded. Views are also not considered available from Jesmond Dene Park. The developed portion of the park (ballfields and greensward) is located in a valley on the north side of a small hill abutting Broadway, west of the Reidy Creek Golf Course. A narrow swath of park extends southerly along Broadway. This area consists of scrub habitat, and ends on the south at Rabbit Acres. Some very narrow footpaths are located in among the scrub, and may be used by local residents to walk their dogs or pass through the habitat. In addition to the distance from the Project, it is considered that park users in this area would be focused on the surrounding brush and homes. A line of eucalyptus trees is also located along Rabbit Acres, which obscures views to the south. No significant view toward the Project was identified.

For Woodland Park and Helen Bougher in the City of San Marcos, the views shown as possible based on topography are not available. At Woodland Park, the only potential area would have been the tennis courts at the north end of the park, just south of Fulton Road. The tennis courts are edged in high chain-link fencing and webbing to stop balls, which also interrupt views to the south. On the south side of the screened fencing, there are trees (including California pepper trees), which also serve to block views. From Helen Bougher, the focus of this park is on the landscaping (including trees) internal to the park. Some visibility was noted to the upper stories of the hospital, but southerly views are generally shielded by buildings edging Woodland Parkway.

A circuit-training trail is open to the public in the vicinity of the Palomar Hospital medical center in the City of Escondido, approximately 1.5 miles to the north, but there is not visibility to the site from this ground-level facility at this location (see Figure 2.1-5). Similarly, the Del Dios Community Park (at the north end of Lake Hodges) is in the vicinity, but has no views to the site (also see Figure 2.1-5).

Because these facilities are not considered to have views to the Project, the viewshed for the impact analysis has not been extended to include them, and they are not additionally discussed below.

Project Landscape Unit

A landscape unit is a portion of the regional landscape and can be thought of as an outdoor room that exhibits a distinct visual character. A landscape unit will often correspond to a place or district that is commonly known among local viewers. Specifics related to visibility and intervening uses are provided as relevant within analyses below.

The “visual room” within which the Project is located consists of a single landscape unit. The room “walls” are provided by the ridge line/hilltops to the south, west and east, which provide parameters to views in those directions, and the Escondido Creek drainage to the north, which provides a vegetated line across the valley floor.

The area is topographically diverse, with north-facing gentle slopes generally located within the northern portion of the Project, some hillocks toward the eastern boundary of the Project, and more differentiated landforms in the southern portion of the Project (i.e., topography is more abrupt, and steep slopes drop away to both the east and west, or north and south from the smaller ridgelines). South of the Project, slopes continue to increase in height to the south. The “valley floor” associated with Escondido Creek generally slants up to the south and east as one moves through the Project. Individual large-lot homes are located up slope from the Project to the east towards Escondido, and downslope (abutting the Project western boundary) on the east side within County jurisdiction. Off-site residential uses are also sporadically located along hills west and south of the Project.

2.1.1.3 Visual Character

Visual character is descriptive and non-evaluative, which means it is based on defined attributes that are neither good nor bad in themselves. A change in visual character cannot be described as having good or bad attributes until it is compared with the viewer response to that change. If there is public preference for the established visual character of a regional landscape and a resistance to or a preference for a project that would change or contrast with that character, then changes in the visual character can be evaluated.

The visual character of the Project locale encompasses diverse forms, including numerous hills and hillsides, ravines, and the open valley area, now largely under construction as part of HGV. The ongoing grading provides a large expanse of light-colored soil that draws the eye and is discordant with the otherwise largely vegetated adjacent land uses. Although a lengthy construction period resulted in an assessment of significant and unmitigable construction effects for the issue of visual resources in that project’s EIR, once that project is built out, it will visually read as more visually compatible with other abutting uses. This is because the HGV structures

would have darker roofs (less likely to draw the eye from elevated view locations), some farmhouse motif structures, a robust planting scheme, and equestrian pathways/streetscape located between close-in viewers along Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road portions abutting the project. Simulations of projected views following completion of HGV as provided in the 2007-certified EIR for that project are in Attachment A to the Project VIA (Appendix B to this EIR).

As noted throughout this discussion, hilltop development is relatively small in scale and somewhat intermittent, but very noticeable, with geometric and rectilinear structures skylined from off-site views. This mix of the natural and human-made environment is notable. Roadways wind along the hillsides and views from local roadways can provide dramatically different visual experiences. Along the public roadways (generally located at lower elevations) and from built out areas in the valley bottoms, views can be fairly restricted. This is because the topography bottoms out and intervening residential land uses and associated structures and landscaping result in views being fairly focused and localized. From private roadways, public trails and private residential lots at higher elevations, views are panoramic in nature—with a viewshed often extending miles.

In general, area grading reflects the natural topography; in that it steps up and down the original gradient, following increases and decreases in elevation. The ultimate result, however, is that the ridgelines (which draw the eye from lower elevations) are developed with structures that are skylined to viewers from below, or at, similar elevations. This is particularly so in areas to the north of the Project, where San Marcos residential development is sky-lined in the distance, and in some of the areas west of the Harmony Grove and Eden valleys. Closer to the Project, there are instances in which, depending on the viewer's specific location, a structure located on a lower knoll or hillside may appear to be located on a ridge. These instances occur in passing when a viewer may see either a low-lying knoll from a vantage point in which it obscures a higher topographic feature behind it, or where a structure located on a hillside may be seen in profile, allowing the viewer to see the home with sky behind it even though it is actually backed up to a higher topographic feature. As noted above, the Project is across the street from the planned Equestrian Ranch at HGV. North of Harmony Grove Road, residential, commercial and industrial elements of that project are actively building out. South of Harmony Grove Road and north of Escondido Creek, a County community park is in place and a County equestrian-themed park is underway.

Depending on the season, the non-irrigated non-native grass fields of the Project parcels may be tan to a light to emerald green. Darker greens associated with on-site eucalyptus and California peppers (near Country Club Drive) are openly visible, and oaks along a riparian corridor in the southern portion of the Project are visible to local viewers. The greens to muted brown-greens of sage/chaparral habitats predominate on the Project hillsides. Overall, the colors are visually “soft,” with topographic ridgelines and hilltops providing harder edged and dominant forms at the skyline.

Colors of existing built structures vary, and have a commensurate tendency to fade into their surroundings (generally brown/tan structures) or draw the eye (white or cream structures). Red tile roofs are more visible than brownish tones, and the blue roof on a home northeast of the Project is a small feature but notable due to its unusual color.

The off-site but visually prominent Palomar Hospital provides a dominant geometric, hard-edged element to views in the general area. From the site, it is a distant, but notable element from the central slopes of the Project, given its rectilinear nature and height (11 stories), which cannot be obscured or minimized by landscaping. This structure is highly visible from several locations in the area. Roads and residential structures, which are smaller in scale, provide some variety of form and line. Shrubs and trees can also provide bulbous or vertical elements in a valley floor viewscape when they are isolated from more dense vegetation. As noted above, when vegetation is more dense, and particularly at distance, it merges into a softer image.

All of these noted visual elements, however, are visually overpowered by the dominant scale of hills that border Harmony Grove and Eden Valleys to the north, west and south.

2.1.1.4 *Visual Quality*

Visual quality is evaluated by identifying the vividness, intactness, and unity present in the viewshed. This approach to evaluating visual quality can help identify specific methods for mitigating specific adverse impacts that may occur as a result of a project. The three criteria for evaluating visual quality can be defined as follows:

- **Unity** is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. It frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the landscape.
- **Intactness** is the visual integrity of the natural and man-made landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. It can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings.
- **Vividness** is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in distinctive visual patterns.

The visual unity of the landscape unit is moderate. As a result of individual development patterns, the setting includes varied residential uses (rural, semi-rural and estate) with large expanses of retained open space on hillsides. These homes have some architectural unity as well. Residential uses in the immediate area typically exhibit one-story ranch-style features with wooden or stucco exteriors and dark brown or reddish roofing. The residential elements show a level of compositional harmony, even among the variety of features. Agricultural groves or scrub habitats cover the hills, and are largely visible.

The intactness of the area currently is moderately low. The existing setting includes small uses to large homes, some with visible agricultural or equestrian elements. Dirt roads are visible, as are open fields. Mature vegetation edges many of the residences and other structures and some stands of trees are notable. Agricultural and native scrub slopes are interspersed with large lot and estate residential uses. Based on assumptions in the EIR, HGV construction should be completed by approximately 2017 to 2018, resulting in the village center and 742 homes being present in the northern portion of the valley.

The site setting is not particularly vivid due to its relatively small size and varying nature. The generally open nature of this southern part of the valley floor, combined with the higher topography of the southern ridgelines rimming the larger valley, result in a moderate rating.

2.1.1.5 Viewer Response

Viewer response, or awareness, is composed of two elements: viewer sensitivity and viewer exposure. These elements combine to form a method of predicting how the public might react to visual changes brought about by a project's implementation.

Viewer sensitivity is defined both as the viewers' concern for scenic quality and the viewers' response to change in the visual resources that make up the view. Local values and goals may confer visual significance on landscape components and areas that would otherwise appear unexceptional in a visual resource analysis. *Viewer exposure* is typically assessed by measuring the number of viewers exposed to the resource change, type of viewer activity, duration of the view, the speed at which the viewer moves, and position of the viewer. A viewer's response is also affected by the degree to which he/she is receptive to the visual details, character, and quality of the surround landscape. A viewer's ability to perceive the landscape is affected by his/her activity. A viewer on vacation in San Diego County would probably take pleasure in looking at the landscape, and an individual may be strongly attached to the view from his home, but a local County resident commuting to work may not "register" those same visual resources on a daily basis.

The following discussion of viewer groups addresses both public and private views. With regard to private views, the majority of these are from residences or streets that are not accessible to the general public but are expected to have views to the Project.

Motorists

Sensitivity

As noted, the primary roadways in the vicinity are Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive. Motorists on Harmony Grove Road generally would be through travelers, or on their way to the larger HGV development (the latter group constitutes approximately a third of the roadway users based on the HGV traffic technical report [LLG 2017]). Viewers could also experience "close-in" views available onto the Project site; and as a County-designated scenic corridor, travelers may have expectations of scenic views. Balancing these elements results in travelers on these primary roadways being assigned a moderately high sensitivity to change.

Travelers on Country Club Drive would have direct views onto the site along the northwest side, where the road abuts the Project. Other roadways in the Project vicinity provide limited views to the Project. They are narrow, often edged with obscuring vegetation, and subject to relatively few viewers given the low number of homes west of the Proposed Project. Motorists on these smaller, residential roads in the area (including the abutting portion of Country Club Drive) also are presumed to generally have moderately high sensitivity. This is because a high percentage of the viewers along these roads are presumed to be residents; others may be present specifically for the scenic nature of the roads in this area provided by the surrounding topography. Residents' sensitivity (discussed below) generally would be high; however, the winding nature of the roads

in the residential areas of the viewshed would require that motorists in these areas be more focused on the immediate roadway rather than wider views. This may not be the case with passengers, who would be able to pay more attention to the surrounding scenery.

Exposure

As shown on Figure 2.1-5, views to the Project from portions of Country Club Drive north of Escondido Creek are largely shielded by intervening topography for over a mile to the north. Screening vegetation and/or abutting residences also obscure views to the Project parcels in many areas. Due to this, viewer exposure to the Project along these northern sections of Country Club Drive is expected to be low.

The portion of Country Club Drive adjacent to the Project currently carries approximately 605 ADT (LLG 2017), and is projected to carry approximately 5,135 ADT with the Project. Views onto the Project would be sustained for a number of seconds as travelers move along its western boundary. As noted above, Harmony Grove Road trends east-west in proximity to the northern boundary of the Project, and then trends southerly on the west side of Escondido Creek where both the road and the creek turn toward Elfin Forest. Travelers on this road would comprise the single largest viewer group in the area. The creek and its riparian vegetation are always located between the road and the property, but it is possible to see over some portions of the vegetation to portions of the site. Exposure to the Project along these sections of Harmony Grove Road and the abutting portion of Country Club Drive is expected to be high.

Along other roads, views are additionally attenuated by distance, the curving nature of the roadways, and/or vegetation. The brief duration of views and low number of viewers indicates that motorists on these roads in the residential areas have moderate exposure.

Conclusion

Although drivers on local roads are expected to note Project-related changes, their primary focus generally would be on speed of travel and interaction with other drivers on the road, as well as attention to local children, domesticated animals, and the occasional wildlife sightings in this area. This, combined with both the relatively short duration of exposure time on the local two-lane roadways generally located within the Project area and the number of competing visual elements in the shifting viewshed, is expected to lessen the importance of specific view elements for this group of viewers. Traffic conditions and competing visual elements would comprise an element of distraction from passenger views as well, but it generally would be less than for the driver. In these cases, passengers within the vehicle could be more focused on the passing viewscape. Although lessened in level of effect, any distraction at all, when combined with the relatively short duration for visibility, would result in the visual impact of specific view elements being less important for this group of viewers (e.g., less important relative to viewers such as residents, discussed below). Overall, motorists' awareness is assessed as moderately low.

Recreationalists

Sensitivity

The DDHP (accessed from Del Dios Highway at Date Lane) includes a trail that accesses EFRR. Views to the Project are available approximately 1 mile into the DDHP from the connection with Del Dios Highway (see the viewshed in Figure 2.1-5, as well as the open nature of views into the site represented by Figure 2.1-31). The EFRR offers approximately 11 miles of hiking, mountain biking, and equestrian trails, as well as picnic areas and scenic hillside/mountain viewing points. A number of trails are on the northeastern slopes of the Reserve, with views oriented northerly potentially including the Harmony Grove community and (at least obliquely) the Proposed Project. Some individuals using the cited trail systems are expected to be locals with ongoing experience of the trails. These users are generally expected to be highly sensitive to changes in the immediate viewscape. Other users are new-comers, or will be residents of HGV, and potentially, the Project. These users will not have pre-existing expectations of views seen from the trails and are expected to be appreciative of the expansive nature of the views overall, as well, perhaps, as interest in their specific neighborhood as visible from the trail. These users are expected to have moderately low sensitivity. Combined, sensitivity is considered to be moderate overall.

Current residents may walk, or ride bikes and/or horses, along the valley floor roadways for recreational purposes. The County trails map shows that designated community trails are planned for this area. Individuals walking or riding along the local roadways who are already residents in the area would be expected to be sensitive to Project-related changes and would be anticipated to have expectations of existing conditions retention. A number of residential users of these trails are anticipated to come from the HGV development, currently under construction. Those individuals would not have expectations preceding the more built environment, as they would reside in HGV, and would experience the Project vicinity following development of that 468-acre project. The expectation would be the same for users of the trails from the Proposed Project. Their sensitivity to change in views from the current condition is considered low. Combined, sensitivity is considered to be moderate overall.

Exposure

Based on car counts made by EFRR staff, an average of 3,500 cars accesses the Reserve per month. EFRR staff assume 1.5 to 2.5 individuals per car, so that an estimated 63,000 to 105,000 visitors a year may visit the EFRR (Anderson 2014: pers. comm.). Trail use in the EFRR can be heavy, with the most heavily used trail being the “Way Up Trail,” which is used to access others in the system. The farther away from the entrance a trail is located, the fewer hikers use the trail. In other words, the majority of EFRR visitors focus their visit on areas closer to the visitor center, with fewer visitors visiting locales miles in from the entrance and away from the trail head (Anderson 2012: pers. comm.). The number of hikers would be highest within these recreational areas on the north-facing slopes.

DDHP trail use is based on individuals registering at the point in which the Del Dios Highlands Trail merges with the trails in EFRR. Use varies by season, with the greatest use occurring during cooler months. Guests average approximately 500 trail uses during the hotter months, and approximately 1,250 during the cooler months. Since the register is far up the trail, the DDHP

ranger estimates that approximately 750 individuals use the trail in the summer months and up to 1,500 individuals use the trail in the winter months (these numbers include those who experience the trail at lower elevations, and then turn back prior to crossing into EFRR). Dividing the year generally into hotter and cooler months, about half the year DDHP would be expected to host approximately 1,500 guests per month, and about half the year DDHP would be expected to host approximately 750 guests per month, for an assumed total of approximately 13,500 visitors per year (Rodes 2014: pers comm).

Viewers using these trails would be moving at pedestrian rates of travel, or could be stationary at overlooks. After approximately the first mile of the Del Dios Highlands Trail, users would round to the north side of the hill, and would be able to experience views to the north initially blocked by the hillside. They would pass directly to the south of the southern Project boundary, and would be able to look directly down and over the site. Viewers from EFRR would not be looking directly onto the site. Although open views are available, the majority of views from the Way Up Trail (in particular) in the EFRR to the Project are screened by larger topographic forms, and/or by the twists and turns of the trail. This trail has numerous switchbacks, which keep trail users from looking toward the site for a substantial period of trail use. Intervening topography and/or vegetation also plays a part, and provide major elements of the visual experience from the EFRR trails. Where views to the north/northeast are available, they are expansive, and contain many elements (natural, built, near and distant). Current views from the trail include abutting native vegetation, as well as highly urban portions of the City of Escondido, the dark green vegetation associated with Escondido Creek, existing residential neighborhoods densely planted with ornamental trees, and the HGV area. A good example of one of the most open views onto the Project is provided in Figure 2.1-3l, from the Del Dios Highlands Trail south of the Project. As seen in Figure 2.1-3m the relatively oblique viewing orientation from EFRR to the site renders views less open than those available from DDHP.

Combining a relatively slow rate of passage (i.e., high exposure duration to the expansive views) with the generally intermittent nature of the views, and the facts that the Project site comprises only a portion of extremely expansive views and that the most open views from DDHP are seen by a relatively low number of viewers, results in recreationalists in the nearby DDHP/EFRR lands and hiking on nearby trails having moderate exposure.

Individuals walking or riding adjacent to the Project along the local roadways also would move at a relatively slow rate of passage, and could be expected to have chosen non-vehicular transportation in order to enjoy the experience. Their number is relatively low, however, and their attention would be expected to be often focused more on the roadway activity immediately adjacent them than longer-range views. Exposure to the Project is considered moderately low.

Conclusion

As noted above, hikers in the nearby DDHP and EFRR may have a high awareness of the surrounding area and the available views, including views toward the Project parcels. While occasional or first-time visitors may not have expectations regarding potential views, regular visitors could wish to retain near and mid-range semi-rural elements within the expansive views. The views toward the Project parcels are not currently natural however, as they encompass the developing HGV grading project, as well as grading activity associated with new build of a

residence just east of the Project, along with a number of other single-family residences in the area. The views are also not sustained for long periods of time, as the trails twist and turn, varying the line of sight as the hiker moves along the trail. The changing focus of the recreationalist on these trails, combined with the substantial amount of current mid-ground disturbance and ultimate HGV buildout of that large project, would be expected to lower viewer awareness of activity on the Proposed Project to moderate to moderately low levels.

Riders and hikers along local roads adjacent to the Project are assumed to be local—with all the expectations of local residents, as described below.

Residents

Sensitivity

A number of homes are located within the Project viewshed. Large, estate-style single-family residences and smaller residential uses are located in the Project vicinity and on the surrounding hills. For these viewers, the Project parcels can provide an often-seen and intimately known view that contributes to the sense of home or the broader community. Although home orientation or screening vegetation would obstruct many views, residential viewers are expected to be highly sensitive to changes in the immediate viewscape.

Exposure

A substantial amount of local topographic variation (small hills, bumps, and gullies located on the larger hill forms) is present throughout the viewshed, and residential landscaping also provides frequent shielding of view elements, both from the home where the landscaping is installed as well as for adjacent structures. Approximately 10 existing homes are located on parcels abutting the western or eastern boundaries of the site, which is a very low number of residents with potentially direct and close views. In other cases, residential (or related) structures themselves block views. Therefore, not every structure encompassed in the viewshed limits has uninterrupted views from the entire property. Regardless, where views exist, they can be expansive, and many homes are sited specifically to take advantage of these open views. In these instances, open views encompass adjacent developed and/or developing uses, and both hillside and hilltop residential development. Where residents in the viewshed have long-term, stationary views, they are rated as experiencing moderately high exposure.

Conclusion

Although views from many homes may be substantially obscured or absent based on intervening structures or vegetation, based on past experience, where views to the Project are associated with existing homes it is assumed that residents will strongly prefer retention of existing conditions. Where they are associated with new build (e.g., particularly part of the HGV project), they are expected to appreciate the conditions as present at initiation of their residence in the community. Nearby residents are expected to be highly aware of changes associated with Project implementation.

2.1.1.6 Regulatory Setting

The Proposed Project is subject to a number of regulations applicable to the protection of visual resources, as well as plans and policies that ensure adequate consideration is given to preserving and/or enhancing the visual qualities of an area. These policies aid in evaluation of the planning agency/community perception of visual qualities within an area, as well as providing guidance as to whether Proposed Project modifications would be visually compatible with County and/or community goals. The Proposed Project is subject to the following guidelines and policies.

County of San Diego General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element

The 2011 Conservation and Open Space (COS) Element of the County General Plan combines what formerly were four separate elements (Open Space, Conservation, Scenic Highway, and Energy) and describes the natural resources within the County and goals and policies to preserve them. The COS Element provides direction for future growth and development in the County with respect to the conservation, management, and utilization of natural (biological, water, agricultural, paleontological, mineral, visual [including scenic corridors and dark skies]), and cultural resources; protection and preservation of open space; and provision of park and recreation resources. A segment of Harmony Grove Road just north of the Project and Escondido Creek, is identified as a scenic corridor in the COS Element and is included as part of the County Scenic Highway System. Specific goals and policies in the COS Element are addressed below under the heading “*Design Guidance and Policies.*”

San Dieguito Community Plan

The San Dieguito Community Plan (August 2011) augments the 2011 General Plan and contains goals and policies specific to the San Dieguito community planning area. The overall Community Plan is divided into two portions, one of which focuses on the Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove geographic areas and communities. Guidance related to aesthetics is contained in several elements of the San Dieguito Community Plan, including the Land Use, Circulation and Mobility, and Conservation and Open Space elements. Because the Project site falls within the Harmony Grove community, goals and policies related to aesthetics contained within the Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove portion of the Community Plan apply to the Project.

Resource Protection Ordinance

The County’s RPO provides special regulations applicable to certain types of discretionary applications, including tentative maps. The ordinance focuses on the preservation and protection of the County’s unique topography, natural beauty, diversity, natural resources, and quality of life. It is intended to protect the integrity of sensitive lands including wetlands, wetland buffers, floodplains/floodways, sensitive habitats, cultural resources, and steep slopes (lands having a natural gradient of 25 percent or greater and a minimum rise of 50 vertical feet, unless said land has been substantially disturbed by previous legal grading), all of which are components of visual quality and community character. Of the 44.3 acres exceeding 25 percent slope, approximately 26.5 acres meet the definition of steep slopes under the County’s RPO and is subject to analysis under the RPO. This represents approximately 24 percent of Project site. Refer to Section 2.1.2.2,

below, for a summary of this issue as it relates specifically to visual issues and to Section 3.1.6 of this EIR for full discussion regarding ordinance compliance.

Dark Skies/Glare

The County LPC seeks to control undesirable light rays emitted into the night sky in order to reduce detrimental effects on astronomical research. Zone A, defined as the area within a 15-mile radius centered on the Palomar Observatory and within a 15-mile radius centered on the Mount Laguna Observatory, has specific light emission restrictions. The unincorporated portions of San Diego County not within Zone A fall within Zone B, and are subject to lesser restrictions. Outdoor lighting, such as security or parking lot lighting, must be less than 4,050 lumens and fully shielded within Zone B. The Project site is located approximately 25 miles from the Palomar observatory and approximately 50 miles from the Laguna Observatory, and is therefore, within the Outdoor Lighting Ordinance Zone B.

Design Policies and Guidance

Design policies and guidance can be found in the County General Plan COS Element (2011a), and the San Dieguito Community Plan, including the portion of the Community Plan focused on Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove.

The County General Plan COS has three goals and nine policies that apply to the Proposed Project relative to: (1) preservation of scenic resources, including vistas of important natural and unique features (Goal COS-11, five policies); (2) preservation of ridgelines and steep hillsides for their character and scenic value (Goal COS-12, two policies); and (3) preservation of dark skies that contribute to rural character and are necessary for the local observatories (Goal COS-13, two policies).

The Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove Community Plan identifies goals and policies associated with Harmony Grove community character that are relevant to visual review; including preservation of the rural small town feeling of Harmony Grove (Goal LU-1.5, three policies), open access community design that fosters a feeling of “one neighborhood” despite multiple developments (Goal LU-1.6, two policies), preservation of mature native trees (Goal LU-1.7, one policy), dedicated open space (Goal LU-1.8, one policy), retention of an attractive equestrian community that encourages environmentally sensitive, responsible horse keeping (Goal LU-1.9, five policies), and fostering a rural residential lifestyle built in a fashion that is compatible with and sensitive to its natural setting; unspoiled views of intact hills, valleys, and creeks (Goal LU-1.12.1). Detail as to each of the goals and policies is provided on Attachment B to Appendix B of this EIR.

2.1.2 Analysis of Project Effects and Determination as to Significance

2.1.2.1 *Potential Conflict with Important Visual Elements or Inconsistency with Applicable Design Guidelines*

Guideline for the Determination of Significance

The Proposed Project will result in a significant impact if:

1. The Project would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area by conflicting with important visual elements or the quality of the area (such as theme, style, setbacks, density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, building materials, etc.) or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines.

Guideline Source

This guideline is from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Visual Resources (2007i).

Significance Guideline 1 protects the existing visual character and visual quality by not allowing adverse changes or elements with high visual contrast. These aspects of the Project are assessed by analyzing changes that would occur in particular “key” views, and viewers’ responses to the changes.

Analysis

Visual character is composed of the visual environment “as a whole,” and includes both existing natural and developed uses with a seen area.

Site Design and Layout

The Project would construct a primarily residential community with associated park and recreational uses on an approximately 111-acre site. Approximately one-third of the site ultimately would support residential lots, development streets, or potential utility uses; with the remaining two-thirds (approximately 75 acres) of the site retained in visual open space.

The site is located on sloping hillsides and sloping valley floor surrounded by existing and developing residential uses and hillsides/ridgelines. Residential lots would be grouped to limit the impact footprint as feasible and provide areas of open space and retention of on-site visual resources, such as native chaparral habitat and south-trending steep hillsides. Biological set-asides, Project landscaping, and/or park/recreational/undeveloped areas would comprise the majority of the Project.

Harmony Grove contains dramatic and tall landform features rimming the valley that provide a background to the Project. The taller structures on site, such as the granaries, would in some sense mimic the verticality of these surrounding landforms. Additional developed elements would include extension of a standardized roadway, manufactured slopes, standardized trail character,

and parkway landscaping. The Project-related elements, therefore, are expected to visually “balance” each other. For example, whereas the additional lane along Country Club Drive would minimize the rural nature of the existing two-lane roadway, Project design elements referencing the semi-rural character of the Project area include Project landscaping that would be compatible with native and locally appropriate plants (as well as the approved HGV landscaping plan), multi-use trails, split-rail fencing along public roadways, and large open space areas. The inclusion of landscaping along the east side of the road, with equestrian trail fencing, would explicitly reference the agricultural history of the community’s setting.

Residential lots in the central portion of the development footprint would be placed on north-facing sloping hillsides. This would “step” the structures up the hill in this area, to the top of the central topographic “bench” feature, with landscaping in between each residential type. To some extent, this would minimize seen structures, as the locale where the most viewers are located (north of Harmony Grove Road) would be at some distance, and one layer of structures would tend to shield the one behind it. This is particularly true for the granary structures. Based on the preliminary grading plan (see Figure 1-6a), pad elevations for the structures on the north side of the lot would be approximately 715 to 730 feet amsl. The second row of structures would be located on pads at approximately 720 to 730 feet amsl. Those three structures would not be visible from viewers to the north as they would be obscured by structures of the same height to the north of them. Also, an additional seven Harmony Court residences on the southernmost developed south-facing slope (and downslope from higher on-site elevations) would not be visible as they would be both shorter structures, as well as downslope from the granaries at approximate initial elevations of 705 to 715 feet amsl. Further downslope would be Harmony Court homes located at elevations of approximately 715 to 670 feet amsl, moving from east to west. All of these structures would be shielded by intervening Project buildings for viewers from the north based on those homes being sited behind, and/or lower, than the first row of granaries.

On an individual pad/structure basis, the Project would vary from the immediately abutting uses to the west, which generally have been individually designed and landscaped, set into large lots. As shown on the simulation in Figure 2.1-9, *Project Photo and Simulation from Key View 2*, in the discussion of Key View (KV) 2, however, the combination of joined or adjacent residence/garage/barn structures, and the presence of large estate-style homes containing multiple stories, result in Project structures visually being in scale with off-site homes. Closer up, the cottage structures close to Country Club Drive would be consistent with residential portions of the adjacent village (of which HGV South would be an extension). The overall change would be most visible/noticeable from the expansive views available from areas surrounding the Project site that are higher in elevation and encompass the on-site hillsides and valley in their visual context related to surrounding properties. In these more distant views, the HGV South Project footprint would be minimized by the much larger development area associated with HGV north of Harmony Grove Road. Overall, the density and massing is assessed as different from the immediately abutting uses, but generally visually consistent with the Harmony Grove Valley as a whole, and providing a visual transition from the more regimented and tighter village core design visible in HGV (and anticipated to continue to be visible following HGV vegetation maturity due to HGV core street lines).

More intense green coloration also would be visible in an area currently bordered by the dense vegetative line of Escondido Creek, but currently generally encompassing either on-site grasslands

or the more subdued green tones of scrub habitat. Project irrigation would allow for increased green tones on site, as well as along the Country Club Drive streetscape. These proposed design elements, combined with the existing elements that would be retained, would soften Project effects.

Overall, the Project would extend the visual patterns of development in the surrounding area onto the currently undeveloped Project site. They would also be generally visually consistent with the existing and notable surrounding landscape and development to the north.

The design configuration would visually mesh with the HGV project that is currently under construction in the northern quadrants of the area. This larger portion of the village (sited on over 450 acres) is currently building out just to the northwest of the Project. Even when HGV is completely built out and would no longer contain large expanses of barren grade soil, it would minimize the visual effect of Proposed Project development. Excluding open space (biological open space, landscaped areas and parks; a total of 211 acres), the developed footprint of HGV would be 258 acres, compared to the approximately 36 acres within the Proposed Project that would support development structures or streets (approximately 14 percent of the HGV equivalent area). HGV would provide a patterned developed element with rectangles, curves and greenswards to the view that would attract the viewer's eye as s/he gazes over the valley as a whole. The Project would provide a visual transition zone between the open space located to the south and the more compact and uniform development design of HGV. On either side of the development footprint of the Project (particularly when seen from the south, where potential viewers look more directly "down" onto south valley development), the single-family residences of the Project would also visually merge into the existing less dense development within the County on both sides of HGV South, providing a feathering into increasingly less development to the west and east. This would be attained by placing single-family Harmony Court residences along the southern Project development edge (with the larger and multi-family format attached dwellings of the granaries located north of the single-family homes). Larger lots have been designed here, with open space easements placed over the slope portions of those lots edging BOS. "Feathering" would also be accomplished through the use of open space swaths within the Project, providing notable swaths of landscaped area between housing groupings. This design renders the Project less visually "tight" and linear than the village layout of HGV to the north, and blends more easily into the even larger lots and single-family housing located to the west and east of the Project. Project permanent open space would abut the off-site open space areas associated with the DDHP and EFRR to the south.

During Project construction, however, construction-related activities would visibly contrast with on-site existing conditions due to removal of existing vegetation and the introduction of new, visually dominant elements, including raw soil; newly graded building pads and cut or filled slopes; construction-period fencing; construction equipment; and construction materials stockpiling and storage. Implementation of a bridge over Escondido Creek also would change the existing condition (currently a two-lane road crossing the creek at grade). A bridge would need to accommodate travel lanes as well as trail connections, and would be a wider facility. As a result, existing riparian vegetation in Escondido Creek on either side of the existing crossing would be removed to accommodate the bridge, as well as to repair damage to the creekbed, which would result in a change in the level of riparian vegetation seen at this location. Houses in the surrounding area may have views of the grading and other construction elements, although existing vegetation and structures in the surrounding area may block direct views. In particular, eastbound travelers

along Harmony Grove Road and southbound travelers along Country Club Drive also would have open views toward the Project from these adjacent areas from short stretches along these roads where they are approaching the site. From further distances, grading would not be distinctly visible as intervening hills, structures, and vegetation can block views of the site. As a result, mass grading would not substantially impact views (including, increasingly, those of HGV) from further distances. Viewers would be exposed to these construction-related elements for the duration of the construction period (assumed to be approximately 3 years). The most notable portion of this period would be the first year, when grading and infrastructure installation would result in the greatest amount of raw soil open to view.

Grading and blasting also is likely at the south end of the residential development footprint. This also could expose raw soil. This would be treated with standard hydroseeding and landscaping as part of Project design, but also could expose broken rock that (without treatment) would not appear aged for a substantial period of time. The introduction of newly broken rock into views that would be seen by members of the public as they use Project trails to access the primitive trails to DDHP and the EFRR is identified as adverse. This is because the rock's location in otherwise natural habitat would be viewed from an unimproved recreational trail designed to access natural open space, and the color of the newly broken rock would draw the eye and contrast with the natural setting. In addition, a drainage cross-feature that would control runoff from the face of the cut slope could introduce a light-colored horizontal line across the slope face.

Architectural Design

Residential uses in the immediate area abutting the Project are primarily one- to two-story structures, and often of California ranch design, although there is additional variation. Nearby residential uses include the small cabin-like homes of the HGSA, as well as three- and four-story homes with more variation in architectural styles and decorative features. The homes associated with the HGV project, currently building out, have been designed to reference a number of architectural styles, including American farmhouse architecture. The homes feature vertical lines and pronounced gables, and are generally two stories (allowed up to 36 to 38 feet in height). Many are stand-alone structures; some are oriented in "compound" designs where up to eight homes would be clustered on a circular pad. Nearby commercial and industrial uses to the north in the City of Escondido generally exhibit more utilitarian features with minimal architectural design. Residential uses include single-family homes on smaller lots as well as a large number of mobile home parks. Overall, there is not a single or unified architectural theme within the Project area.

Conceptual architectural design is described in the HGV South Specific Plan. The Project would provide architectural styling that is appropriate to the underlying topography (i.e., designed to minimize footprint relative to the number of homes) and would be harmonious with the styling of the approved HGV, while retaining an individual identity. Typical levels of projected architectural diversity based on detailing relative to structure facing, window style and surrounds, roof lines, etc., are provided in Figures 1-7a and 1-7b for each of the housing styles potentially proposed for the Project. Most of the proposed homes would be two stories. Some architectural detailing such as intermittent towers would be provided so that finished elevations would vary slightly within each residential type to break up the roof line. Non-inhabitable architectural projections would provide interest and act to pull the gaze upward, toward the higher steep slopes south of the property; and would not exceed 5 percent of the building structure types, overall.

On the hillsides, the alignment of Project roadways would meander to mimic the curvilinear lines of the topography in the visual landscape, to minimize contrast with the undulating visual forms of the hillsides and ridgelines. Roof colors generally would be dark browns (as opposed to red tile), and exterior facades and design elements would be in soft tones and often incorporate stone to visually blend with the surrounding area. The WTWRF would include elements described under the Project Description (refer to Section 1.2.2.2), and would be surrounded by a 6-foot high masonry wall and screened with landscape plantings. The building would be designed to reflect the architectural characteristics of the rest of the Proposed Project and would include design details intended to create the impression of an out-building cluster of agrarian barn structures. The structure would have a maximum height of 18 to 25 feet, and the planned carriage style stable and man doors, weather vanes, etc., would be at a scale in keeping with other rural structures in the area where not shielded by the 6-foot wall and landscaping. Lighting for the facility would not be any higher than the height of the equipment and would only be activated when workers are present.¹

Three existing homes to the east of the Project are located at higher elevations (over 800 feet) that could potentially look down and over the WTWRF. The closest of these homes from the proposed facility is approximately 0.25 mile distant, with the other two structures being similar or farther away. This distance, combined with the small footprint (less than 0.4 acre) of the most intensive anticipated on-site WTWRF uses, the small portion of the potential view, and the very low number of potential viewers; renders this a less than substantial effect. In addition, two of the homes are clearly oriented to take advantage of primary views in other directions, with a smaller “side” portion of the home facing the potential facility. These considerations would provide visually compatible features within the semi-rural visual environment and would mask the otherwise industrial look that is usually characteristic of this type of facility.

Overall, the Project would result in the construction of elements within the landscape that would be compatible with the existing varied visual character and would provide an updated architectural product with landscaping known to perform well in San Diego County and to be consistent with the visual quality of the neighborhood and HGV.

Massing and Scale

As discussed above under Site Design and Layout, the Project proposes to group residential lots to limit the impact footprint and provide a large area of BOS. As a result, residential lot sizes generally would be smaller than those residential uses immediately abutting the site parcels and absent design considerations, there is the potential for the development to contrast with the relative scale of existing surrounding development. The Project incorporates several site design features to reduce massing effects.

First, as detailed above, by grouping homes, large areas of open space would be provided. Pads would be sited at intermittent locales following the topography. This would minimize mass grading onto a single “build” pad and would allow for substantial landscaping swaths.

¹ This lighting also would be strictly shielded to retain light spill on the WTWRF work area, with no spill to the north, and toward Escondido Creek.

Single-family residences generally would be two stories with an approximate height of 28 feet and allowable tower features of up to 35 feet. Other residences would encompass more than one residence but would visually present as stand-alone single-family farmhouses, or old agrarian structures that have been added onto and built over through the years. These structures would be higher, at approximately 38 to 45 feet, respectively, for the primary buildings. The largest structures, the approximate 45-foot tall granaries (with additional architectural projections), also would be the fewest. Only eight of these structures are planned for the site, as they are designed to reference structures found in historical agricultural villages, and therefore would be proportionally fewer than the residences in such a village. The inclusion of multiple residences into single structures in the farmhouse and granary structures also results in fewer structures overall on site. Although the number of proposed residences would total 453, the number of proposed residential structures would be approximately half that number.

The farmhouse and granary structures would be sited in the south-central portion of the development footprint, and their mass would therefore be somewhat diminished both by distance from the majority of viewers (along Harmony Grove Road and points north) as well as by some level of shielding by other Project structures. The granaries also would be located westerly of on-site slopes reaching up to 910 feet amsl (and higher off site). These structures would therefore be downslope from higher on-site topographic elevations, which would minimize their scale. Also, as mentioned above, some of these structures, as well as a number of the harmony court residences, would be shielded by the first row of granaries as the buildings behind would be at lower elevations, and also would have lower heights. All of these design considerations help to reduce overall massing effects associated with this residential community.

Storm water catchment and treatment features would be subsurface, with park facilities on top of them. Similarly, wet weather storage would be subsurface, with park/potential community gardens on top of the vault. As a result, no industrial elements would be introduced into Project views due to surface water management. Manufactured slopes containing the storm water facilities would be planted with shrubs and groundcover to control erosion and to visually cover grading scars. This landscaping would visually mature very rapidly, and help these manufactured slopes to blend with surrounding landforms. The slopes associated with the subsurface water storage facility immediately south of the WTWRF could be substantially visible to off-site viewers. A straight slope would be located for approximately 175 feet along Country Club Drive based on the preliminary grading plan. As noted, this slope would be planted. It would be additionally shielded by streetscape between Country Club Drive and the Project edge. The other support slope (between lots 129/130 and 131/132) would present a short side (approximately 90 feet long on the preliminary grading plan) toward one off-site lot. The existing slope in this area rises sharply from just east of the property line and would continue to do so.

Project landscaping also would ultimately provide screening of the development, thereby reducing perceived massing, and would be largely visually mature within 10 years (see Figure 2.1-6, *Conceptual Landscape Cross Sections*). Landscape species consistent with the existing character of the Project area would be planted along the site perimeter, along Project roadways, within residential neighborhoods, and within park and recreation uses. Upon maturity, such landscaping would visually screen and soften views of the development, and would interrupt and visually soften structure massing effects of the homes. Two landscape cross sections were prepared to illustrate

proposed planting along the two largest and most visible slopes of the Project (see Figure 1-20b, *Landscape Plan*, for the location of the cross sections, and Figure 2.1-6, for their depiction).

The first cross section was placed across the slope abutting Country Club Drive and supporting pads on Lot 1. As shown on this depiction, there would be a series of tree rows starting right along the roadway and sited between the eastern-most paved travel lane and the Project-installed pathway. Then, trees would also be placed east of path edge, and in staggered locales up the slope toward pad edge. All of the trees chosen (California pepper, sycamore, and cottonwood) closest to the road are iconic California trees often seen within ranching and farming areas, with strongly developed canopies. The Brisbane box is common within southern California town areas, where the “bushiness” of the canopy can be encouraged and the beauty of the trunk bark can be enjoyed. Canopies of these trees range from 20 to 50 feet in width at 10 years maturity, while heights would range from 25 to 100 feet. Although tree spacing would conform to the Project Fire Protection Plan (FPP) (ensuring spacing between individual trees, or small groupings as necessary), because the trees would be planted over a linear distance of the slope, they would visually combine to provide screening of both the slope as well as some residential structures (note that the tree height near top of slope would exceed residential height of the structures behind them). Shrub massings, varied in height from less than 4 feet to approximately 15 feet, would augment ground cover below the trees. Combined, the varied heights of the plants, and staggered nature of their installation, is expected to cover the slope with varied vegetation textures and colors, obscure the manufactured nature of the slope, and provide shielding of a number of the residential structures on Lot 1 from the west.

Interior to the development, the second cross section depicts planting on a steep slope in the south-central part of the Project, approximately 0.3 to 0.4 mile south of Harmony Grove Road, and supporting lots with the tallest Project buildings atop a slope. Some of this slope would be obscured by the farmhouses located to the north side of Private Drive D; the five northern granary structures, however, would surmount the slope and be visible from the north. Where the slope could be visible at its highest elevations—and north, or “in front” of, the granaries—Brisbane box and coast live oak would reach heights of 30 to 60 feet, and 20 to 70 feet, respectively, with canopies spreading from 20 to 80 feet in width. Because of the slow growing habit of oaks, these trees would be installed from larger 36-inch box sizes, which would present a more mature tree at the outset than would occur with installation of smaller specimens; tree size at installation would be expected to range from 12 to 15 feet in height, as well as in breadth of canopy. Similar to the discussion above, all vegetation would comply with the FPP, which has requirements for both horizontal and vertical spacing between tree canopies. Because the slope extends across approximately 125 feet, however, there is the opportunity for staggered planting alignments that would combine to create a greater level of visual shielding than would be possible within a smaller planting footprint.

As noted above, the proposed WTWRF would be located in the northwest portion of the site adjacent to Country Club Drive and south of Escondido Creek. Vertical elements would be minimal (with a small footprint and not to exceed 18 to 25 feet in height), and all anticipated facilities would be contained within an area of less than 0.4 acre, surrounded by a 6-foot high wall (proposed both as part of WTWRF design and as Project noise mitigation). This would be at a scale in keeping with other rural structures and privacy walls. The WTWRF also would be surrounded by Project landscaping. Based on the design features of the WTWRF, its small

footprint, and the landscape screening, the WTWRF would not introduce inconsistent scale or massing into the viewscape when viewed from Country Club Drive.

Although the general site grading would conform to underlying existing topography throughout most of the Project, a manufactured slope would be aligned along Country Club Drive from just south of the WTWRF to the northern-most primary entry road. The Project introduction of this slope would change the currently seen relatively flat topography on site with a slow rise to the east. The proposed slope, however, is by no means inconsistent with slopes in the valley, and specifically in this area, as demonstrated by nearby slopes to the east and to the west in the HGV future Equestrian Ranch. This slope also would be substantially landscaped by the Project, as described above.

Overall, the density and massing is assessed as different from the immediately abutting uses, but generally visually consistent with the Harmony Grove area as a whole, including HGV. Areas in which the Project would vary, such as the overall height of the farmhouse and granary structures, would be visually minimized by their distance from off-site viewers and apparent reduction in scale resulting from the comparative height of the abutting topographic features. Implementation of the Project residences, WTWRF, and new slope along Country Club Drive, therefore, would not change the relative scale or massing of development in the overall area. These structures and slope also would not result in any new visual elements within the viewshed that outweigh in dominance those already visible.

Retaining Walls, Privacy Walls, Sound Walls and Potential Fire Walls

To maximize park and recreation area footprint, while minimizing extent of Project grading overall, a series of retaining walls is proposed for the Project. The preliminary lengths and heights of these walls are shown on Figure 2.1-7a, *Preliminary Retaining Wall Placement*. As currently designed, five walls would not exceed approximately 4 feet in height and would be architecturally enhanced. These include the three walls proposed to be located generally along the west side of the Project, and the two walls located at the “back” side of a park use, as well as the 2- to 4-foot-high wall located mid-slope east of Cordrey Drive, with Project landscaping located between this low wall and off-site uses. Two anticipated walls would be located entirely interior to the site (between Private Drives B and D, and along the cul-de-sac of Private Drive G, respectively) and would not be visible to off-site viewers. These walls would be shielded by the homes placed between these homes and off-site viewers, as well as by Project landscaping. One small (approximately 3-foot) wall is shown at the toe of an internal slope west of Private Drive K. It would be shielded from view by its low scale, the slope above it, as well as the planning placed on that slope. A final geo-grid (plantable) wall is proposed to be sited below the southern-most row of homes, minimizing Project grading into adjacent BOS. That wall would be subject to irrigation and planted with shrubs, allowing it to fade into other vegetated views from the south. The introduction of these internal and largely shielded walls with line elements and rectilinear surface planes would not be notable from off-site viewpoints.

A variety of privacy fences and/or walls would be implemented throughout the Project. Design sketches are shown on Figure 1-19b.

Overall, fencing would provide a non-solid barrier, which would stop cross traffic, but allow visibility to uses. Trail-side fencing would visually reference the area's equestrian ties, including the HGV Equestrian Ranch, across the street. The variety of fencing and generally low solid walls mimic the different design scenarios found on properties under different ownership, and would minimize the perception of a large-scale single-format development. The walls would have design variety, be constructed with rustic materials, often be screened by landscaping.

As detailed in Subchapter 2.5 of this EIR, one wall specifically designed to block noise is proposed (see Figure 2.5-1). This wall would be 5 feet high, and would be located between Lots 123 and 124 and Country Club Drive. It would be visually consistent with other Project barriers designed to provide privacy and visual interest. The slope on which the sound wall would be built would be behind streetscape, as well as Civic/Commercial/Recreational zone landscaping located in the park immediately north of the homes, which would provide screening landscaping of shrubs and trees installed from 24- to 48-inch box sizes.

As described in Section 3.1.4-3 of this EIR, based on final design (ultimate structure height and precise setback from top of slope) the FAHJ may require 6-foot fire-resistive walls along the south development boundary in the western portion of the Project (possible for Lots 148, 149, 152, 153, and 156 through 158; see Figure 3.1.43-1). For lots where the code-required setback would not be possible, installation of a 6-foot tall, non-combustible, heat-deflecting wall would be provided for additional heat and flame deflection. This wall may be solid, or a combination of masonry and dual pane materials. Figure 2.1-7b, *Potential Fire Walls*, shows examples of such barriers. As noted for other walls in the Project, if a solid barrier is chosen, it would be landscaped on the side facing public views. If required, these features would be visible to viewers from the south along the back yards of the seven lots, and would be expected to read as privacy walls. They would be lower in height than the homes they would protect and would constitute a small (and not visually dominant) part of the view to the Project. They would be shielded from views to the north by intervening structures and landscaping as they would be located south of the residences they would protect. For viewers from the east or west (limited private views on and off site) these walls would not be very evident. This is because they generally would be in line of sight (rather than perpendicular to it). The potential wall(s) along Lots 157 and 158 could comprise a larger part of the view to on-site viewers using the summit trail. These features would not be visually incompatible with the setting. They also would not be unusual in the larger community – both solid and partially see-through sound walls are provided along Country Club Drive north of Harmony Grove Road.

Consistency with Applicable Design Guidelines

The proposed Specific Plan for the Project calls for consistency with design policies contained in the County General Plan COS Element and the Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove Community Plan. Setbacks, density, building size and massing, lot coverage, and relative scale also would be guided by local zoning regulations. The reader is referred to detail provided in Attachment B of the VIA (Appendix B of this EIR) for policies and guidelines that specifically relate to visual issues and to Section 3.1.6 of this EIR for overall land use issues. In brief, the Project complies with applicable goals, policies, and requirements as identified in Section 2.1.1.5. This is discussed in more detail relative to the RPO ordinance under Section 2.1.2.2 of this subchapter, addressing removal or

change of valued visual elements, as well as referenced in Section 2.1.2.4, regarding goal and policy compliance overall.

Perceived Contrast

Country Club Drive

Viewers traveling along Country Club Drive would have unrestricted views to areas of the Proposed Project where the road abuts the Project. Along the roadway, Project slopes, residential and park uses and the WTWRF would replace existing field views.

The entrance area to the WTWRF would be located on Country Club Drive. The low profile, small-scale building and other equipment proposed for this area are not anticipated to be visibly dominant, and the proposed landscape plantings (including both trees/shrubs) would provide more green foliage in the views than is currently visible. This vegetation would serve to screen the facilities, providing unity with the rest of the landscaped project. Where the WTWRF buildings would be visible from the road, the barn-like character of the structures would continue the semi-rural quality of the Project area.

The Proposed Project would change the existing elements viewed from Country Club Drive and therefore, the visual character of these views to consist of residential neighborhoods and community recreational green spaces. This proposal must be evaluated relative to its setting and Project features. The setting includes the substantial element of approach either through HGV (coming south on Country Club Drive from north of Harmony Grove Road, or east on Harmony Grove Road) or with views toward the larger HGV project (traveling north on Country Club Drive south of Harmony Grove Road, or west on Harmony Grove Road north of the Project). As noted throughout this EIR, the larger project (currently building out) visually fills most of the valley area surrounded by the high hills to the south and west. The expansion of the village to the east and south to encompass the southeast quadrant of the Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive intersection would be visually consistent with the larger valley uses. Relative to Project features, these features would include: (1) retention of views of the current ridgeline backdrop of high hills; (2) landscaping along the roadway and street tree plantings within the dense areas of the Proposed Project; and (3) recreational areas and landscaped corridors that would soften and unify the buildings within this area. All of these design features and considerations would minimize the perceived dominance of the proposed development from Country Club Drive.

Harmony Grove Road

Views to the Project would not be as immediate as those described for Country Club Drive, as Harmony Grove Road does not abut the Project. Harmony Grove Road also provides generally more lateral (rather than straight-on) views as it trends east-west in this area, with the Project located to the south. Views are available, however, with their significance addressed in Section 2.1.2.3, below, as this segment of the road is designated as a scenic corridor by the County.

Other Public Roadways

Along other nearby public roadways, views to the Proposed Project currently are—and would continue to be—generally restricted. Few public roads are located along the ridgelines west and

northwest of the Project area. Where views are available along these roads, portions of the Proposed Project would be distinguishable. Roads in this area are generally winding, however, which results in both requiring the driver's focus on the roadway, as well as a frequent shifting of a viewer's viewscape. Views typically would be along narrow-street corridors framed by ornamental trees or homes, and generally would be fleeting in nature. This is a result of existing vegetation located along area roadways that frequently confines a traveler's view to the immediate vicinity of the roadway. No adverse effects to existing views seen from public roadways to the west/northwest would occur due to a combination of distance, intervening topography and landscaping. Also, HGV will be located in the foreground. As a result, the distant viewer would perceive a land use with more continuity than the existing diversity that exists between existing residences and the ongoing construction zone associated with abutting HGV. The built HGV project would both minimize the visual effect of the smaller and more distant HGV South development, as well as render it visually consistent with the HGV valley area.

Future Public Equestrian Ranch at HGV

Views to the Project from the recreational and commercial facilities at the future HGV Equestrian Ranch would be open; the Project is directly across Country Club Drive from the Equestrian Ranch. Elements of the WTWRF facility higher than the 6-foot wall may be visible, and the slope supporting bungalows on Lot 1 would be seen. Streetscape, as well as the slope plantings would visually separate the two uses. Please refer to the discussion of cross sections under Massing and Scale, above, and Cross Section A on Figure 2.1-6.

Where visible, the homes on Lot 1 would generally appear as a single row of structures—they would shield the similar housing on adjacent pads to the east within Lot 1 as the pads would be located at the same general elevations (within several feet of each other, around approximately 625 to 635 feet amsl based on the preliminary grading plan). Approximately 200 or more feet to the east, another line of six residences would be located on Lot 2 (there would be 10 homes on Lot 2, but 4 of them would be shielded from view as they would be located east of the six residences noted). Those structures would be sited on pads located approximately 90 feet higher than Lot 1, at approximately 725 feet amsl based on the preliminary grading plan. The landscaping between lots 1 and 2 is likely to be visible from some vantage points, as would the Lot 2 homes, together with their associated landscaping. These elements all would serve to visually "set back" the residential uses from the horse facility. Regardless, the equestrian facility would serve to provide active equestrian functions. Viewers would be focused on sights internal to the Equestrian Ranch (to shows, or other events), or on business/training activities associated with the mare motel, horse boarding or training or equestrian-themed commercial purchases.

Private Streets and Private Homes

The viewshed areas from the immediate west or east include a small number of existing private homes.

Fewer than 10 homes abut the western Project boundary. Two of these homes have direct and relatively at grade views onto the western extent of the Project, including equestrian uses (horse sheds, a work-out ring) that have been expanded by those abutting property owners onto the site parcel with the passage of time. Dirt fencing and horses, backed by Project slopes, make up

possible views from the two northernmost homes (these homes appear to be oriented with views to the north-south rather than east-west, which would have provided the most direct views onto the property). Another approximately two residences are located west of the Project boundary along an area planned for development; homes south of there would be adjacent to areas proposed for permanent open space. Actual exposure to the Project for these few homes would depend on home orientation, private yard landscaping, and use patterns within each lot. To the extent that views onto the property are available from the southernmost three homes, existing views of dense chaparral habitat would continue. For residences located slightly more to the west (i.e., with access from Country Club Drive rather than Cordrey Drive, or located on the west side of Cordrey road), intervening yardscapes and structures located between these viewers and the Project (see Figure 1-4) would lower visibility to the site.

As described above, a few homes are also located to the east, at higher elevations than the site. To the extent that viewers from these properties look westerly, they would look over Project built elements, and would continue to see valley and hill topographic elements. The generally lateral nature of the views from all of these nearby homes, combined with their very small numbers, would result in less than significant impacts.

Views seen by future HGV residents to the northwest could be possible from homes located on hillocks/more elevated locales. These views would be at a little distance, as viewers would be looking over some internal development, HGV subsurface vaults, park uses, Escondido Creek and the future Equestrian Ranch. The Project would present as an extension of the development patterns within the HGV project that would include similar visual elements. Project implementation, therefore, would not contrast with the view from a neighborhood from the northwest due to the continuity of the Proposed Project elements with planned (approved and developing) neighborhoods.

The areas included in the viewshed farther to the west and northwest of the Project site consist of mainly undeveloped hillsides and steeply sloped lands unlikely to be developed in the future. Homes accessed by private access roads are scattered along the ridgelines and hilltops in this area. From these locales, views are expansive and portions of the Proposed Project potentially would be visible (although views for travelers along the roadways would be limited in duration due to the winding nature of the roads). Rather than views of open space that currently are available, the view would encompass roofs and related development features, as well as ornamental street trees. Rooftops are proposed to be made of generally dark colors, however, and this coloration, together with the trees and associated landscaping, parks and riparian corridors would serve to lessen the scale, unify the project elements and provide continuity with the surrounding visual character. Additionally, the winding nature of these roads, the limited number of residential viewers, and the existing residential uses abutting the edges of the Proposed Project allow the development to visually blend with the surrounding and developing community. Therefore, although the view would be changed, the change would provide continuity with surrounding viewscape elements for viewers at an elevated distance and would not contrast with the important visual elements of the area (developed valley versus surrounding open space peaks).

Taken overall, a number of private homes are located within the Project viewshed. Very few (approximately 10) of them are in the immediate vicinity of/bordering the Project, with potential views onto the Project. The severity of the overall change resulting from Project development for

most private viewers would be relatively low due to several factors, including the combination of open space retained by the Project; and the distance between the Project and off-site viewers and nature of intervening topography, development, and/or private lot vegetation, as described above.

Key Views and Illustrative Simulations

In order to ensure a full understanding of potential visual effects related to Proposed Project implementation, simulations were created to exhibit projected conditions following construction. The purpose of simulations is to provide the reviewer with a reasonably accurate projection of future conditions based on Project-related changes to current views. The simulations provide future snapshots of specific locations with likely vegetation and maturity shown at 10 years after installation based on Project uses, lot locations and sizes as shown on Figure 1-6a, architectural information currently available, and the palette of possible plant varieties provided in the Project Specific Plan, Chapter 1.0 of this EIR and Appendix B.

Preparing simulations for all of the specific views from which a proposed project potentially can be seen is not feasible. In addition, a number of potential views are in neighborhoods or areas not accessible to the general public. Nonetheless, analysis of Key Views (KVs) allows focus on some specific views in order to evaluate the change from the existing condition to post-Project conditions in an ordered fashion. The selected KVs consist of photographs taken from public viewpoints, and were identified based on the number and frequency of views, the potential sensitivity of viewers, and the types of Project-related features that would be visible. Locations for KVs were selected using considerations that include type of viewers and their sensitivity and exposure, scenic status of local roadways and recreation areas where highly sensitive viewers may be present, the amount of time (duration) and/or number of times observers are exposed to the view, and the breadth and depth of the view. They are considered to comprise the most typical, often seen, and broadest, views of the Proposed Project.

Based on these considerations and following field review, two KVs were approved for detailed analysis. Locations of the KVs are depicted on Figure 2.1-1.

Key View 1

KV 1 is located at the intersection of Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road, north of Escondido Creek (refer to Figures 2.1-3f and 2.1-8a, *Project Photo and Simulation from Key View 1*). This view looks southerly, over the creek and into the site. It provides a view to the majority of the buildable footprint, and also represents a view seen by a large number of potential viewers (this roadway has a capacity of 19,200 ADT), that may be stopped at the location prior to turning or continuing through the intersection, with an opportunity for relatively extended viewing. This viewpoint is located approximately 500 feet north of the Project site. This view also provides a “worst-case” representative view for viewers turning onto the County-designated scenic corridor of Harmony Grove Road as it is a straight-on view to the Project rather than peripheral.

As shown in Figures 2.1-3f and 2.1-8a, the existing view looks along Country Club Drive and over Escondido Creek. The site is disturbed, but does not contain visible built elements from this vantage point. In contrast with the ongoing disturbance at the intersection, and some visible elements of staging/construction on the HGV equestrian ranch, it appears pastoral. The grasslands of the

Project parcels are notably different from the scrub/chaparral areas and on-site trees in texture, and color also varies depending on the season from tan to greens. Darker and generally more “intense” greens are associated with the trees and dusty greens associated with on-site scrub/chaparral habitats. All the colors are visually “soft,” however, with topographic ridgelines and hilltops providing harder edged and dominant forms at the skyline. The more prominent hills are clearly visible in the background.

A fire break cuts a consistent linear and bisecting swath through the vegetation as it rises along the slope south of the Project in an east-west direction and is seen from large distances (see Figures 2.1-1, 2.1-2a, 2.1-2d and 2.1-3h). As Country Club Drive climbs in elevation to the north of Harmony Grove Road, the top portion of the Project’s southern slopes become increasingly visible for south-bound travelers. An existing primitive trail is also somewhat visible, but only for close-in viewers, due to the amount of overgrowth and the narrow nature of the existing disturbance (roughly 2 to 4 feet in width depending on location along the trail). It is noted, that there are deviations within the main path due to a quest for firmer footing, resulting in a broader impact area.

Project implementation would result in built features that would replace the currently undeveloped nature of the site. Views toward the site would also be broader in nature due to the wider crossing of Escondido Creek, resulting from the removal of some of the mature vegetation that currently is located immediately adjacent to the at-grade crossing.

Starting in the near view, the Project would modify the segment of Country Club Drive visible from this KV. As shown in the simulation, the overall road would be three lanes in width, and the run-up to the intersection would contain four lanes necessary to meet the northern portion of Country Club Drive north of Harmony Grove Road. The road also would be slightly elevated over the existing grade. A new bridge over Escondido Creek would be a wider crossing of the creek than currently exists, and the bridge also would be elevated relative to the Arizona crossing; however, it still appears as a low-profile feature in the simulation view (Photo B, Figure 2.1-9). On the site itself, potential utility uses, as well as residential and recreational uses, would be located on visible parts of the Project parcels from this KV.

From the intersection and through the bridge, and to the southern entry to the project, the simulation depicts the Project-installed pedestrian path on the east side of Country Club Drive. From the intersection and to the south end of the bridge, the simulation also shows the mixed use equestrian trail on the west side that would be installed by the Project (implementation of the remaining part of the multi-use trail is a condition of HGV, and would be implemented by others). The vegetation on either side of the bridge in Escondido Creek is shown as relatively dense, which is appropriate for 10 years growth of fast-growing plants such as willows with a permanent water source.

Particularly in the short-term, during construction and until Project landscaping and creek restoration/enhancement activities have been completed, this would result in open views to disturbed ground and raw structures. Following establishment and approximately 10 years growth of the Project landscaping, the Project would appear more established in its setting.

Excluding a few structures in Lot 2 (Figure 2.1-8b, *Depiction of Lot 2 Topographic Backing from Community Park*), residences in the northern extent of the Project generally are not visible in the KV 1 simulation. Those following east-west alignments at approximately the turn in Country Club Drive and at higher on-site elevations are visible. This turn in pad and structure alignments allows the development to more naturally follow rising topography. Structures would be located on site to the top of the grass-covered slope that forms the linear element bisecting the site. The largest structures (approximately up to 45 feet in height, with some architectural projections above that) would be located at this high point. The structures may not appear to be this height, since the bottom level (parking) may be partially recessed into slope, and farmhouses located to the north of them would partially shield their lowest levels and could lessen seen structure elevation.

As shown in the Figure 2.1-8a simulation, homes built on Lot 2 would be sited on a knoll internal to the Project. Although higher topographic features are located north, east and south of this knoll, from this particular vantage point, the structures surmount the local topographic formation, and are backed by sky rather than hillside. This is a common condition in this part of the County, where topographic features of all sizes are seen from roads that turn and twist, constantly changing the viewer's perspective, and resulting in changed visual experiences as the viewer moves along the road. The worst-case "skylining" of these structures from this particular vantage point is one of the reasons that this key view was chosen for simulation. These structures would not be backed by sky from other vantage points. This includes areas westerly of the Country Club Drive intersection (e.g., in the general location of the County Community Park), where those same homes would appear to be mid-slope in the higher hills behind them. As an example, Figure 2.1-8b depicts the amount of topographic backdrop from the park seating area, which would be representative of other views sharing this other general orientation. Similar conditions would pertain from the south (see discussion of KV 2, below).

The simulation on Figure 2.1-8a also depicts the level to which some elements would be obscured from view from this KV location due to the streetscape proposed for Country Club Drive (which would continue around the curve in the distance, to the general southeastern extent of the visible portion of the Project) and the landscaping between residential structures (and residential types). This includes some proposed retaining walls that are in line-of-sight (where aligned north-south) and/or would be obscured by intervening planting and structures. As shown in the simulation, excluding the few homes on top of the internal knoll to the southeast, the WTWRF and most of the homes trending roughly north-south in the northern portion of the Project would be obscured by landscaping from this viewpoint. The first built elements that are notable consist of the row of farmhouses aligned generally east-west across the topographic bench. The first row of granaries is also visible behind them. Other Project structures south of the first row of granaries are located "behind" those structures, and/or are additionally at lower elevation, which results in their being visually shielded by the first row in the simulation. The hilltops behind the Project, which comprise an important part of the valley skyline, would continue to be visible.

Viewer response from this KV is expected to be adverse in the short-term overall. The community is currently undergoing build-out of HGV. This extremely large project has had an extended grading period, and while some local viewers may now accept this as "the new normal" and be desensitized, others are expected to be more sensitive to views of grading and construction. For new residents of HGV, it would be less noticeable, as ongoing disturbance areas are likely to be part of the existing condition during move in, and many views to the south would be obstructed

by intervening HGV residences for those residents in the village interior. In addition, where views are available, vegetation ultimately would be even more dense and taller than shown in this 10-year depiction, and commensurately less of the built environment would be seen from this location. Even at the 10-year point represented in the simulation, however, it is expected that the viewer exiting from the southbound Country Club Drive section north of Harmony Grove Road (having just passed the existing engineered manufactured slope surmounted by homes of HGV on the east, and the block sound walls to the west, combined with the HGV structures visible through entrance roadways), would find this viewpoint one that is more open and expansive than the views from Country Club Drive in HGV. Escondido Creek will remain in the foreground, and the expansive future HGV equestrian ranch will spread to the west. The backdrop of the higher hills of the DDHP and EFRR will continue to be undeveloped, and continue to provide the ridgelines so cherished by the community. Project conditions would be different from the existing condition, but the community as a whole is expected to retain a neutral or even positive view of the setting.

Ultimately, the Project is expected to continue the visual pattern of village development established by HGV, and which the viewer would have just traversed as they approach this intersection KV. The bridge is expected to provide a visual cue to the entry into the village equestrian center and residential uses south of Harmony Grove Road. The Project-installed landscaping along the east side of the street would introduce a verdant note that currently does not exist, and (ultimately) would visually tie into the similar pathway located on the west side of Country Club Drive through HGV. A notable positive change would be the undergrounding of transmission lines located along the Project western edge (and even along the west side of Country Club Drive if all utilities are combined into single dry-utility routes within roadbed), which would reduce visual “noise” from the seen view. The high hills south of the Project would continue to meet skyline, and would continue to provide views to their iconic San Diego County scrub-covered slopes. In the end, the long-term visual effect of the Project from this KV would be change from an undeveloped parcel to a village extension. Although the built nature of the Project would vary from the existing condition, it is expected to demonstrate a character that is consistent with the village overall.

Key View 2

KV 2 is located south of the Project parcels within the DDHP (refer to Figures 2.1-1, 2.1-3, and 2.1-9) and illustrates the view northerly. Although not anticipated to carry the greatest number of viewers, this locale is a public trail in a protected open space area, and is therefore sensitive. The open nature of the view (lack of intervening topography, structures or high vegetation) and proximity of the Project southern boundary to the trail (approximately 600 feet) renders this a representative “worst-case” view from DDHP/EFRR.

The existing view consists of chaparral habitat dropping rapidly away from the viewer to the north. The non-native grassland portions of the site are lighter green in color than the dense scrub in the foreground, and are bounded on the north by the Escondido Creek line of darker green vegetation. The initial phase building and substantial grading associated with HGV extends to the north from the creek, and comprises a substantial portion of the distant center on both sides of Harmony Grove Road (this condition will change with final buildout of that project). The structures along the western property boundary, as well as those (previously) associated with the HGSA and expected to rebuild are clearly visible. The size of some of the structures on these lots can be notable. In

some cases, it may be the result of combined residence/garage/barn structures (either actually connected, or appearing to be so due to their proximity to one-another and vegetation). In others, it is because the estate-style home contains multiple stories. Although the scattered homes located easterly of the Project are mostly obscured by intervening topography from this viewpoint, the bright blue roof associated with a home to the northeast can draw the viewer's eye. Ridgeline development is skylined on the hills to the west on the left-hand side of the Project, but is generally too distant to be observed to the north in San Marcos from this KV. The lighter-colored structures associated with ERTC and San Marcos commercial/light industrial uses are notable, as is the Palomar Hospital (gray in color, and atypical in terms of height and massing). The overall view from this area depicts an expansive setting in which existing and ongoing development is primarily located in valley areas, additional built structures are located on hillsides and along some ridgelines, and the very highest and steepest areas are generally retained in native scrub habitats.

Project structures would be sited primarily on site grasslands/disturbed areas, and would wrap around the vegetated hill on the east side of the Project; with Project residences being located north of the hill, and throughout the rest of the area to the northern Project boundary. Farmhouse housing typically arranged into four structures per lot, and Project granaries, would comprise the nearest residential uses, and also would obscure housing built downslope to the north of these uses. Approximately 35 acres of BOS would be retained between the viewer and those structures. The few homes on top of the knoll in Lot 2 would be visible in the northeast portion of the Project, backed by the much higher hills to the north. A plantable geo-grid wall would be used to retain the south-facing slope underlying Lots 149 and 156. Depending on the final grading plan and final design/structure setback, 6-foot fire walls may be located at top of slope along Lots 148, 149, 152, 153, and 156 through 158. Landscaping within the Project would wind along the internal Project roads and between residential neighborhoods. Streetscape would also be provided along the small portion of Country Club Drive seen from this KV.

The Project would therefore introduce built elements within Project boundaries, visually extending current residential uses west of the Project onto the Project site. The current view to the notable line of riparian vegetation along Escondido Creek would be softened. It would still exist, but intervening Project planting rather than non-native grasslands would continue a darker green onto the Project. HGV South structures would include buildings denser and taller than some of the abutting or nearby off-site residences. They would not appear out of scale with the homes along the western Project boundary for several reasons: the existing homes are also fairly large in scale, they visually merge into barn and garage structures associated with the off-site homes and which are incorporated into HGV South structures, and the off-site structures are generally lighter in color than the proposed HGV South homes, which attracts the viewer's eye. The height of Project structures generally would be foreshortened. This is because the height of the trail from which this KV was taken the structures would be somewhat visually foreshortened, much as the intervening slopes are foreshortened (see Figure 2.1-31). In addition, specifically for southern structure edges along the granaries, some berming would cover the lower part of the structures (containing off-street parking and partially recessed into the ground). For these reasons, it is expected that the site would largely be seen in an oblique or almost plan view from this KV, with rooftops encircled by the Project streetscape, and landscaping providing vegetative counterpoint.

The density would appear to be less intense than that seen in HGV. At buildout, HGV will include 742 residential structures with open space areas sited throughout the development, including the

linear drainage feature already visible in the HGV South simulation. HGV South is anticipated to include less than one-third that number of structures, with surrounding and interspersed open space. As a result, although individual structures would be larger (both in reality and because of their closer proximity to the viewer), the development overall is not as expansive as HGV, which provides the background to views from this KV point. In addition, the layout is far more responsive to the natural topography than appears from the HGV rectilinear layout of the lots along the valley bottom.

HGV South would use wide greenswards throughout the development and planned roof gardens on the granaries, which would provide substantive visual “relief” from the built environment. The width of the landscaping between build elements also results in the Project providing a stepped visual transition between the undisturbed open space and the large lot uses to the west to the tighter development footprint visible in HGV (and even City of Escondido areas) from this key view.

The reader should note that the simulation depicts vegetation in non-irrigated areas (along the very southern development footprint at the bottom of the slope) consistent with coloration shown for other non-irrigated areas in the existing conditions photograph. During the hottest months of late summer/early autumn, there may be less green on the south-facing slopes that are not irrigated than is shown on this simulation. This would be consistent with a general lightening of color throughout the Harmony Grove area where vegetation is not irrigated due to thinning of foliage or die back of some grasses. This is expected to constitute a very small part of the Project in any case; however, as irrigation is required throughout interior portions of the Project, as well as within 75 feet of any built structure by the Project FPP, and is provided for any larger park areas as a Project Condition. The (irrigated) geo-grid wall could be distinguishable from the abutting fill slope in the short-term as indicated on the simulation, but would blend into the vegetated slopes as plants within it reach visual maturity.

The potential installation of fire-resistive walls required as part of Project design (if identified as necessary during final design) would occur along lots edge of pad/top of slope visible from KV 2. These 6-foot features could be all block, or could be a combination of block and fire-resistive glass, so long as they are built to standards approved by the FAHJ. The residential structures would have architectural elements extending above these walls, and providing visual variation. Referring to Figure 2.1-9, potentially necessary walls would not exceed the general height of the tops of windows on the ground floor. This height would result in a lower horizontal feature for the backs of six lots facing the viewer, and a more lateral view to the potential feature located along the northeastern most of these southerly lots. Some of the wall(s) would be expected to be obscured by landscaping. Regardless, where visible, the barrier would provide a fairly low mid-ground feature backed by additional buildings, and in a location where the viewer’s eye is drawn up and over the Project to the north. There is a small potential for glare/reflection from glass if part of a barrier is “see through.” This would be extremely intermittent in nature, however, as visual effects would only occur when the orientation of the sun in the sky (both azimuth and altitude) would result in rays hitting the glass, when there is not cloud cover to reduce glare, when there is not intervening vegetation that shades the glass, and when there is an observer to see the glare (right place at the right time of day). In other words, although some level of glare may occur, it is not expected to result in long-term, ongoing significant effects. These effects would not occur if a solid block wall is implemented. The potential need for installation of one or more of these walls for up

to seven structures would be an incremental addition to the larger development footprint and would not substantially change the projected views from this KV location.

~~It is possible that some or all~~ All of the Project electrical needs would be satisfied through on-site photo-voltaic panels. These panels would most likely be placed on structure roofs oriented toward the south/southwest. The structures with solar panels on the southerly facing roofs could be visible to viewers from the elevated trail. During specific times of day, and if the viewer was in a specific viewing location, reflected glare from the roofs could draw the eye. These roofs would be located within an overall larger development, however, and the restriction of this occurrence to specific hours of the day when a viewer is located on the specific section of trail, as well as looking toward the Project, combine to minimize potential adverse effects. The Project would read as part of the overall HGV/existing valley development, and this extension of village residential formats would visually read as transitional and developed, but not inconsistent with other Harmony Grove community built uses.

Viewer response is expected to be adverse in the short-term. The Project would add disturbance in the middle-ground of the view to an area that currently appears to be pasture from this KV. It also, in the near-term, would expand upon the disturbed portion of the valley undergoing buildout of HGV. Following build out of HGV South and installation of vegetation, the response is expected to soften. For new residents of HGV, it would be less noticeable, due to intervening structures and solid sound barriers along the development edge.

Ultimately, the Project is expected to continue the visual pattern of village development established by HGV, which the viewer would see extending to the north of the future equestrian ranch and Harmony Grove Road west of Country Club Drive. The wider break in Escondido Creek vegetation required by the wider Country Club Drive and bridge may be discernible by the viewer from this KV. It would be balanced by additional greensward provided by Project-installed landscaping along the east side of Country Club Drive where trees and irrigated shrubbery currently do not exist, however, and would be consistent with the width of hardscape shown north of Harmony Grove Road. Structures associated with the HGV South expansion of the village would continue a “developed” footprint from the northern extent of the valley into this southern section. The structures would be somewhat foreshortened from being downslope from this KV, however, and although different in number and design from abutting houses to the west and east, appear individually similar in terms of massing and relation to lot vegetation. The inclusion of the broad landscaped areas within HGV South, and the non-grid layout of the development, also would provide a more natural transition between village and non-village portions of Harmony Grove community residential development, and soften the HGV grid pattern that currently draws the eye for viewers from this key view.

The long horizon line seen from this KV would be unchanged by Project development, as would the majority of the seen view. The Project would introduce additional built features into the center of the view, but would not affect the views of nearby native habitat, would largely retain similar areas visible on site, and would extend notable residential uses to the west (and north) of the Project onto site parcels. In the end, the long-term visual effect of the Project from this KV would be change from an undeveloped parcel to a village extension, and provide additional development appearing less dense than the heart of the village between Harmony Grove Road and the developed uses to the west, as well as the open space to the south. Although the built nature of the Project

would vary from the existing condition, it is expected to demonstrate a character from this KV that is consistent with the village and some built elements very near portions of the Project, as well as the development pattern visible in the County, City of Escondido and distant City of San Marcos.

Summary of Resulting Visual Impacts

Overall, the Project would construct built elements within a viewshed that would be compatible with the existing varied visual character. As demonstrated in the above analyses of Project key views and Significance Guideline 1, the Project has incorporated a number of design measures to ensure that the off-site viewer's experience is overall consistent with the character and quality of this existing and developing area. These measures include varied (i.e., not repetitive and monotonous) structure styles that incorporate rural design elements, and large amounts of open space (park areas, visual open space and retained/enhanced biological set-aside). Landscaping known to perform well in San Diego County and to be consistent with the visual quality of HGV and the neighborhood overall would be installed. No architectural design features are proposed that would sharply contrast with surrounding visual elements, or that would create a visually dominant feature. The Project would visually merge into the village pattern provided by HGV, and feather into the existing scattered development on both sides of the Project.

Overall, the density and massing would be different from the immediately abutting uses (i.e., the homes along the west and east sides of the Project), but generally visually consistent with the Harmony Grove Valley as a whole, and providing a visual transition from the more regimented and tighter village core design visible in HGV (anticipated to be true even following HGV vegetation maturity due to HGV core street lines). Areas in which the Project would vary, such as the overall height of the farmhouse and granary structures, would be visually minimized by their distance from off-site viewers, location of these features within the Project, and apparent reduction in scale resulting from the comparative height of the abutting topographic features. Implementation of the Project residences, WTWRF, and new slope along Country Club Drive, therefore, would not change the relative scale or massing of development in the overall area as it is currently building out. The Project would not result in any new visual elements within the viewshed that outweigh in dominance those already visible.

Walls and fences within the Project would comprise a variety of formats that mimic the different design scenarios found on properties under different ownership, and would minimize the perception of a large-scale single-format development. The generally low height and variation in design of these barriers, combined with the rustic elements proposed and the amount of screening ultimately provided by intervening structures or landscaping, would result in these walls and fences (including the single sound wall along Lots 123 and 124) being generally consistent with area privacy/yard barriers. The plantable wall located at the southern extent of the development would be down slope and at distance from viewers looking at it (open view) from the south. It also would be planted and irrigated, so that vegetation ultimately would obscure built elements. The potential fire walls would be restricted in extent (up to approximately seven lots) and generally shielded by structures (from the north) or at distance from the viewer (of-site public viewpoints to the south), or seen by individuals already in proximity to the larger Project footprint (on site on the Summit Trail and passing by these features with lateral views).

Views from off-site primary roadways typically would be lateral/peripheral in nature (generally Harmony Grove Road), or strongly colored by the existing built uses along them more direct or edging views toward the Project are possible (generally Country Club Drive). Smaller streets would generally present more distant views along narrow and winding street corridors framed by ornamental trees or homes, and generally would be either wholly blocked or fleeting in nature. Where Lots 2 residences would briefly superimpose over a backing topographic form from nearby roadways (resulting in apparent skylining), it would occur for travelers as they move through the study area and would affect a focused part of a much larger viewshed for a brief period of time. Before and after that point, the closest higher slopes to the east (at approximately 830 and 1,000 feet) would be visible and providing a backdrop to these homes. This is distinguishable from a number of existing homes that are permanently skylined for views from the valley due to their location on the highest topographic features rimming the valley.

Private views include those from private homes within the Project viewshed. Very few (approximately 10) would have direct views onto the Project. The severity of the overall change resulting from Project development for most private viewers would be relatively low due to several factors, including the combination of open space retained by the Project, the distance between and nature of intervening topography, development, and/or private lot vegetation, as described above.

The long-term visual effect of the Project from both KVs selected for detailed analysis would be related to the change from an undeveloped parcel to a village extension. Although the built nature of the Project would vary from the existing condition, it is expected to demonstrate a character that is consistent with the village overall, as well as the development pattern visible in the County, City of Escondido and distant City of San Marcos.

Although the visual character of the site would change from existing conditions, Project development would be generally consistent with the relative scale of development planned in the area, as well as general distance from the structures, intervening uses and landscaping. The Project would not result in new dominant visual elements within the larger viewshed. The Proposed Project would be visually compatible with existing and planned surrounding uses, as well as the surrounding topographic features. For instance, the harmony court and farmhouse structures, encircling a common driveway and courtyard, mimic the compound formations on HGV. As noted above, the granaries' height and architectural projections would reference the steep and pointed peaks around the valley. Character compatibility, therefore, would result from the diversity of elements that would be visually consistent throughout the Project site based on conformance with the Project Specific Plan, as well as neighboring development (particularly nearby residential portions of the abutting HGV project). The scale and contrast between the proposed development and the surrounding area would not be dominant in views toward the Project site as the greatest number of viewers would either be looking toward the Project from the north (from a setting in the heart of HGV), or from the south, from which vantage point the Project would be seen as the southernmost part of a consistent HGV development pattern. Additionally, retention of the highest on-site existing topographic forms in the southern portion of the Project, retention of sight lines to surrounding mountains and ridgelines, and revegetation with native and/or locally compatible plants would lessen the visual dominance and scale of the proposed development features from all cardinal directions.

Taking all these factors into consideration, although implementation of the Project would represent a change from the past, the combination of all Project elements, in conjunction with its setting at the HGV crossroads, would result in **less than significant** effects on the area's visual character or quality following Project buildout and vegetation maturity.

The introduction of newly broken rock and horizontal drainage facilities in cement across cut slopes into views that would be seen by members of the public as they use Project recreational/nature trails to access DDHP and the EFRR could be adverse. This is because the rock's location in otherwise natural habitat would be viewed from a primitive recreational trail designed to access natural open space, and the color of the newly broken rock would draw the eye and contrast with the natural setting. Contrast with the natural and unmodified nature of the aged surface rocks and existing vegetation that may currently be visible are identified as **significant impacts. (Impact AE-1)**

The conclusions above reflect Project effects following full buildout and attainment of Project maturity. There are, however, short-term visual effects related to potential staggered buildout throughout the development and the short-term period of time following installation prior to landscaping maturity. These impacts would relate to the combination of raw valley and slope soils during the construction period, the potential presence of rock crushing activities (with the industrial appearing crusher) and other construction equipment moving about the site, and increased lighting being visible immediately following Project construction. As described throughout discussion of this guideline, anticipated bridge construction also would result in removal of vegetation, and construction activities for approximately one year adjacent to Harmony Grove Road, which is an identified Scenic Corridor. Creek restoration/enhancement would take place immediately following completion of construction, and riparian species such as willows are rapid growers. Also, the early landscaping installed commensurate with slope completion and street implementation, as well as plantings around structures (installed as vertical construction is completed and homes are readied for sale)—would lessen adverse visual impacts of raw slopes and new buildings on site; and vegetation maturity would be visually attained in approximately 10 years. At that point, raw soil would be covered with Project improvements, and street trees and internal landscaping would buffer the homes from views to the Proposed Project from off site, softening sharp edges, unifying the Project, and softening Project lighting and glare. While temporary in nature and ultimately addressed through Project design and landscaping over the long-term, short-term adverse visual impacts to the Project site's visual character associated with Project construction would be significant and unmitigable. These short-term adverse visual impacts to the Project site's visual character associated with Project construction would be **significant. (Impact AE-2)**

2.1.2.2 Removal or Substantial Adverse Change of a Valued Feature

Guideline for the Determination of Significance

The Proposed Project will result in a significant impact if:

2. The Project would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of the neighborhood,

community, or localized area, including but not limited to landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings.

Guideline Source

This guideline is from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Visual Resources (2007i). Significance Guideline 2 addresses potential substantial damage to particular resources that represent or characterize a community or neighborhood.

Analysis

This analysis looks at specific on-site elements and whether they constitute valued visual elements in the on-site views. No designated landmarks, or known significant cultural resources exist on site. No identified visual resources such as unique topographical features, or prominent or unique rock outcroppings or ridgelines are located on site. These particular visual resources are located rimming the Harmony Grove Valley, and are off site to the south and west. Temporary effects to surface waters (Escondido Creek) resulting from potential Country Club Drive improvements would be mitigated through enhancement and creation within the creek. These issues are not further discussed. The analysis below addresses potentially visually important trees, native vegetation in the southern portion of the Project parcels, and on-site steep slopes.

On-site Vegetation

A few non-native trees (eucalyptus, California pepper) are clustered near the westward turn in Country Club Drive at the western edge of the property and are therefore highly visible. Although visually notable on the Property as they contrast in color and height with the surrounding non-native grassland in this area, the trees are few in number and do not include a protected species (e.g., oaks). A few isolated oaks are also located in the central eastern portion of the Project. Although these few and isolated trees are not considered significant visual resources, they would be evaluated for potential retention during Project grading. Also, the number of trees installed on the Project as part of the mandatory landscaping scheme, including trees installed as part of the community center adjacent to Country Club Drive, would far exceed the number of any removed trees and would visually replace them. Relative to loss of on-site isolated trees, **no impact** would occur.

Oak woodland occurs along a small, non-RPO drainage in the south end of the property. Although the oak woodlands are shielded from off-site viewers from the north by the central bench topography of the site, they may be visible to the few homes on the west side of the site with views to this portion of the site. These trees do not comprise a scenic element from trails to the south. The higher elevation of those trails results in foreshortening of the trees. Although there is a slightly different texture to the oaks from these higher views, they visually merge with the surrounding scrub in terms of size and do not comprise a distinct element. These trees are not visible from the north as they are located south of the central topographic bench on the property. The very local nature of the views to these trees (from a few homes off site) results in their not being identified as a valued visual element. Regardless, excluding some potential impacts associated with required drainage improvements, they are being retained, and a **less than significant** impact would occur.

There would be some loss of vegetation in the open space area south of the development footprint relative to trail improvements planned by the County. In this area, the Project had intended to retain the existing primitive trail in its current condition. The County is requiring some improvements to this trail to support additional use and improved access to the DDHP and EFRR trail connections. Although specifics would be identified during final design, some parameters have been identified. A 20-foot easement has been placed over the entire trail right-of-way. Although the entire 20-foot easement would not be impacted during construction, this is a conservative easement width that would allow for improvements at any point along the trail. At this time, Park and Recreation staff (Everett Hauser 2016, pers. comm. to PDC) have identified a 4- to 6-foot wide path, with adjacent slopes having a 2 to 5 percent grade within the 20-foot easement. All areas not required for the 4- to 6-foot wide trail footprint would be allowed to revegetate with the vigorous chaparral habitat currently located on both sides of the trail. Biological impacts and mitigation are addressed in Section 2.3 of this EIR. This following discussion addresses potential visual effects.

The trail would wind up slope from the southern edge of the HGV South residential uses to meet the DDHP trail (a fire-break road) that bisects the large hill south of the Project. That bisecting fire break cuts a consistent linear swath through the vegetation as it rises along the slope in an east-west direction and is seen from large distances (Figures 2.1-2a, 2.1-2d and 2.1-3i). As Country Club Drive climbs to the north of Harmony Grove Road, it becomes increasingly visible for south-bound travelers. The existing primitive trail is also somewhat visible, but only for close-in viewers, due to the amount of overgrowth and the narrow nature of the existing disturbance (roughly 2 to 4 feet in width depending on location along the trail). It is noted that there are deviations within the main path due to a quest for firmer footing, resulting in a broader impact area.

The trail envisioned by the County would have a wider footprint overall, and therefore would have increased visibility. In addition, overgrowth would not be allowed to encroach as closely as it currently does along the non-maintained trail. The ultimate impact is not expected to result in a significant visual impact, however. This is the result of several considerations: including (1) the relatively narrow width of the ultimate feature; (2) the elimination of areas where current trail instability has resulted in expansion of the path, deviations from the primary path, in a specific area; (3) the somewhat winding nature of the trail that would be responsive to local variation in terrain as it climbs the slope (as opposed to a consistent straight path forged in one direction); (4) the consistency with the existing path that already is present (including its location in the vicinity of residential uses west of the Project); and (5) the visual consistency with other slope areas in this part of the County which are crisscrossed by trails accessing recreational areas (e.g., EFRR and DDHP). As noted in discussions above, the construction period, when grading and path support efforts would show additional disturbance along the slope, would contribute to the short-term significant and unmitigable visual impact associated with overall Project development. Following revegetation of installation-period disturbance, the trail would be visually consistent with others in the area, and impacts would be **less than significant**.

Overall Topographic Modification and RPO-protected Steep Slopes

General Topographic Modification

In the northwest portion of the site, the western half is a gently sloping valley bottom, sloping down from both the south and east, toward the Project low point and (off-site) Escondido Creek.

The eastern portion of the northern part of the site rises into small scrub-covered hills. An east-west trending bench extends across the roughly center point in the site, separating the Project parcels visually into north and south halves. After a downward slope on the south side of the central bench, the southern part of the Project is located on increasingly steep and higher on-site hills. This area rises to even higher off-site hills to the south, including an iconic (uniform peak shape) form just south of the Project in the DDHP. On-site viewers would be expected to appreciate the local variation in topography. For off-site viewers, however, the on-site forms are relatively small, and visually dominated by off-site higher hills immediately off-site to the east, west and south.

On-site elevations range from approximately 570 feet amsl in the northern portion of the Project near Country Club Drive, to 938 feet amsl at the southernmost property boundary. The Proposed Project would include approximately 850,000 cubic yards of balanced cut and fill, substantially in support of proposed structure pads and Project roadways. The first issue that arises is whether the Project would substantially change the existing topography on site. Preliminary cross sections were prepared for the full length and width of four locations across the site and are presented in Figure 2.1-10, *Topographic Cross Sections*.

Cross Sections. Project grading would respect, and conform to, overall existing topography on site. This does not mean that the projected Project grading would conform exactly to each existing on-site elevation. It means that although the planned precise site elevations at any specific point internal to the Project site may deviate from the existing elevation, based on preliminary grading plans, the post-Project cross sections follow the natural rise and fall in site topography overall and always meet the existing topography within the site at the grading perimeter. It also means that following completion of Project implementation, the off-site viewer would not be expected to be aware of large-scale changes in underlying topography. This would be visually substantially different from a project proposing placement of all proposed uses on a single, flat, created pad. The overall footprint could potentially be smaller, but the elimination of natural landform would be notable. In addition to the cross sections described below, the reader is referred to the simulations on Figures 2.1-8a and 2.1-9, which also illustrate how the Project would follow the site topography, rising and falling with the underlying elevations.

Cross section A-A extends from the northern-most to southern-most Project boundary. It shows that the need to raise the potential WTWRF out of the Escondido Creek floodplain results in an increase in elevation at the north end of the Project relative to the existing condition, as well as attaining higher elevations at Pad 1 than naturally occurs at this location. The modifications, however, would remain lower than the more southerly increases in site elevation and rejoin more existing elevations by the central portion of the development footprint. At the southern extent, part of the central bench would be lowered in elevation, but the end of the grading footprint would daylight at a higher elevation than the pad. This would meet existing terrain at a small highpoint, as well as retaining some shielding of structure base as the pad would be lower than the slope abutting the southern extent of development. The Project follows the existing terrain's increase in elevation, and then reduction in elevation, with another small increase, as the Project is crossed west to east. As shown on the preliminary grading plan cross section, a large open block of terrain in the southern portion of the Project would be left open, with no residential grading. This southern area is the most topographically complex portion of the site, with the steepest incised drainages, and the highest part of the Project property.

Cross section B-B cuts west-east across the Project in an area with the greatest amount of proposed consistent development. It illustrates how the Project follows the existing terrain's increase in elevation, and then reduction in elevation, with another small increase, as the Project is crossed west to east.

Cross section C-C depicts a rise in pad elevations that follows the existing topography from one side of the Project to the other in a northwest to southeast direction. At points the proposed grading is expected to be almost identical to existing grade. Based on the preliminary grading plan, current/modified elevations are not expected to vary from each other more than 10 to 15 feet. In a site with variation from the north end to the south end of the Project of over 350 feet, this is considered visually negligible in terms of elevation (and would likely be considered so even if there was slightly more variation), even before structures and vegetation obscure the ground surface.

Cross section D-D again bisects the site north to south. This cross section was prepared to identify variation between the preliminary grading plan and final slope, (see additional discussion below). As shown, at some points the proposed grading would match or closely overlay existing grade (both high and low points). At some points more central to the Project there are areas of relatively large specific variation (e.g., up to approximately 40 to 45 feet difference in a spot elevation). The overall rise in elevation from north to south in this area is still respected, however, and similar to Cross section A-A above, the large open space area in the southern part of the Project property would be retained, with no residential grading on steepest and highest slopes on the Project property.

Steep Slopes

One of the critical visual elements in topographically diverse portions of the County, such as the Project location, is the presence and visual effect of steep slopes. County-protected steep slopes, i.e., natural slopes exceeding 25 percent slope with a vertical rise of 50 feet or more in elevation, are primarily located in the northeast hillocks of the Project site, on the central slope rising above the valley floor, and in the southern third of the Project. The location of these slopes relative to the Harmony Grove setting is depicted on Figure 2.1-11a, *Slopes Providing the Project Setting*, and a focused view of on-site slopes is provided on Figure 2.1-11b, *Study Area Slope Map*.

The reason these slopes are considered for protection by the County is because, separate and distinct from engineering issues related to slope which are addressed in building and safety codes, RPO steep slopes can be important components of an area's visual character. As such, steep slopes that provide important components to a particular view are provided protection. Steep slopes that do not provide critical view elements may receive a waiver under County standards (i.e., the need to protect these visually unimportant slopes may be "waived") by following a specified analytical process; and other incursions into steep slopes are exempted if they meet specified exemptions or exceptions within the ordinance. Land use plan and ordinance conformance related to waiver and exception categories are discussed in detail in Section 3.1.6, with the steep slope waiver addressed in detail in Appendix C to this EIR. Visual effects associated with a waiver are summarized below relative to this Project.

Important Baseline Information. Contiguous and visually dominant steep slopes (including notable and often connected sections of areas reaching or exceeding 50 percent slopes) are located all along the higher elevations, and generally curve around the southern portions of the Project (Figure 2.1-11a). These slopes contribute to the notable and often abrupt ridgelines in EFRR and DDHP to the south of the Project, as well as in hill formations located to the west; ultimately connecting to Mt. Whitney in the high slopes west of Harmony Grove and Eden Valleys. They also provide visual context for the Project site and tend to minimize the visual impact of smaller topographic features. In other words, the proximity and height of the higher surrounding slopes are so dominant in views toward the Project from the north, that on-site topographic variation in the (approximately) northern half of the site and within the disturbed/ grassland areas is not very prominent or visually “meaningful.”

Based on this general setting, and as described further below and shown on Figures 2.1-11a, 2.1-11b and 2.1-11c, *RPO Steep Slopes*, slopes meeting the definition of RPO-protected slopes generally are physically connected to the higher off-site slopes located in the central-southern half of the Project, where the DDHP cuts into the Project on its southeast corner, and in the southernmost (“L”) portion of the site to the west. A smaller area is located in the northeast portion of the site, where scrub habitat visually ties an on-site knoll to higher topography to the east (Figure 2.1-11a).

Referring to Figure 2.1-11d, *RPO Steep Slope Preserve and Encroachment Areas*, over 71 percent of all on-site RPO steep slopes (18.7 acres) are located in areas identified for preservation due to sensitive resources, including both steep slopes and native habitat (15.9 acres), or otherwise identified for open space (being outside grading within an HOA lot or subject to temporary grading but revegetated and returned to slope). The steepest on-site slopes, those above 50 percent grade, are all located within the proposed permanent open space set aside; in the southerly portions of the Project. These are also the most visible slopes, seen from off-site locations toward southerly portions of the Project, as well as the most visually abrupt slopes, connecting to the steeper formations associated with areas already protected as part of DDHP. The rest of the site’s steep slopes are located within proposed development areas, and must be evaluated for conformance with the RPO and associated visual effects to those slopes resulting from Project implementation. Conformance with the RPO relative to ordinance exceptions identified for roadways/utility rights of way, identification of the Project as “infill” under the ordinance, and conformance with the percentage of impact allowable under the ordinance by lot, are all addressed in Subchapter 3.1.6 of this EIR. The remainder of this aesthetics discussion addresses the issue of RPO visually “insignificant” slopes.

RPO Steep Slope Waiver. As detailed in Appendix C to this EIR, a waiver from the restrictions of the RPO steep slopes and easement requirements (County Code Title 8, Division 6, Chapter 6) can be granted if four findings can be made (RPO Section 86.604[e][2][cc][3]), and as discussed in detail in Section 3.1.6 of this EIR, including land use consistency with the Community Plan. The most critical of these findings relate to whether or not the slope is an insignificant visual feature. As a visual issue, that element is addressed here.

Each of the slope areas for which a waiver is being requested is physically separated from other areas of steep slope, and is visually insignificant and indistinguishable. They are identified on Figure 2.1-11c, as A, B (1, 2 and 3) and C, and also are color coded (purple) on Figure 2.1-11d.

As shown on Figure 2.1-11c and d, they do not flow into contiguous areas of RPO-protected steep slope, but are each surrounded by non-steep slope topography, creating small islands totaling 4.7 acres overall.

The first area is located just east of Country Club Drive where the road turns to trend west just east of Cordrey Drive. Area A (approximately 0.5 acre) is shown on Figure 2.1-12a, *View Toward Central Bench*. Photo a provides a good reference photo for this slope. As can be seen from this panorama, the bench is a topographically uniform feature. Although the argument is not being made that the slopes are modified (there is no known historic photography depicting slopes prior to the agricultural use of the parcels in the 1920s), it appears to be a modified slope, in that it is a uniformly sloping and rounded feature whereas most of the surrounding topographic features are more abrupt and peaked in nature. Regardless, given the visual uniformity, it is difficult to identify any specific area on this slope that is, or is not, steep slope. Photo b identifies the area that modeling (as opposed to the human eye) identifies as RPO steep slope on this north-facing slope. As shown, the approximately 0.5 acre of steep slope called out on Photo B does not stand out as anything different from the rest of the visible disturbed grassland. There is nothing interesting or unique about this 0.5 acre that differentiates it from the non-steep slope areas on the bench. It is completely consistent with and visually indistinguishable from the rest of the central bench depicted in the figure. Non-steep slope area extends “above” the area to the top of (and along) the bench feature, as well as to either side and below. This area is, therefore, both visually insignificant and isolated.

Area B is comprised of three very small vertical “bars” that are located on the south side of the central bench on the western side of the Project. As shown on Figure 2.1-11c, each of these isolated stretches just attains the 50-foot reach required under RPO. They are extremely narrow elements, surrounded on all sides by non-steep slope portions of the slope face, and are indistinguishable from those surrounding non-steep slope areas. These areas are also both visually insignificant and isolated.

Area C includes approximately 4 acres of area proposed for waiver as insignificant slope. It is located south of the bench just discussed, with a portion of this slope located on that south side, and a portion located on the westerly facing slope of increasingly (on- and off-site) steep hill above it. This area is generally not visible to viewers from the north, since so much of the slope is “hidden” from the north. In fact, the closer that one comes to the slope from the north, the less one can see it as it ultimately becomes entirely shielded by the intervening bench. Similar to the discussion of Area A, the on-site top portion of this feature is a very softened knoll, without the sharp and more vertical features of the surrounding peaks.

Viewpoints to this area with the greatest number of viewers sharing the most open and unobstructed views would be from the south/southwest along public trails. For the purposes of this discussion, the Harmony Grove Overlook in EFRR was chosen. This is one location where both shade and a seating area are provided, and the intention is to look northerly over the valley. It is possible to sit down to enjoy a static view from this viewpoint and this makes it likely that many visitors would do so (although currently abutting vegetation obscures views to the site from the bench itself). As can be seen in Figure 2.1-12b, *View Toward Project from Harmony Grove Overlook in Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve*, Photo a, the Project area is visible from the vicinity of the overlook. From this (and other elevated) viewpoints, the amount of vertical differential is not visible to the viewer. In fact, referencing Figure 2.1-12b, Photo b, relative to the unique and

surrounding steep slope mountains, the site looks flat, and without much topographic variation at all in this area. The location of the home being built in RPO steep slope area east of the Project boundary is more identifiable as being on slope. It is within steep slope area contiguous to the higher peak to the east, but still appears relatively flat to the viewer.

Although viewers are expected to be on the move, the site also would be openly visible to viewers from the Del Dios Highlands Trail in the DDHP, south of the Project. The height of the trail on the viewing hill (the only east-west trail in DDHP), and its location on the broad expanse of slopes exceeding 25 percent with a rise exceeding 50 feet, results in the on-site slope fading into the other non-RPO slopes on site. This is demonstrated on Figure 2.1-12c, *View toward Project from Del Dios Highlands Fire Break Trail*, Photo a, where the central portion of the Project can be seen to be located on what appears to be a very gentle slope with varied and somewhat disturbed vegetation rising to the east before lowering into a swale. The slope in question does not stand out as visually unique, memorable, or interesting. In fact, the viewer's eye is drawn over the site to the north, where the hill just north of Harmony Grove Road provides notable (albeit modified) slope features. The eye is then further drawn to the ridgeline in San Marcos, farther to the north, and to the tops of the mountain range beyond that. It should also be noted that this picture was taken with potential use for simulation under the rigorous County requirements in mind. As a result, it focuses on a 60 degree cone-of-vision. This eliminates views to nearby and lateral upper slopes of which the viewer would be aware (and actually see) as they move through the area. This includes the steep slopes in DDHP south of the viewer, as well as those nearby in the DDHP and EFRR to the east and west. Nonetheless, Figure 2.1-12c, Photo b, depicts how the more rolling nature of the lower slopes below the significant peak lines visually fades into connection with valley floor as opposed to reading as steep slope.

From both EFRR and DDHP viewpoints, the lack of unique or notable topography of this isolated feature, combined with its topographic disconnection with steep slopes to the east, north and west, render this slope visually insignificant.

In consideration of the combination of the: (1) generally low visibility; (2) lack of slope significance and/or connection of these slope areas to more contiguous RPO-steep slope areas; (3) requirements for design review and Project conditions; and (4) consistency with environmental protection and development intensification sections of the Community Plan (and referenced General Plan) as discussed in Section 3.1.6; a waiver from the RPO steep slope easement restrictions is considered appropriate for these two areas. Staff reviewed the Steep Slopes Waiver analysis in Appendix C of this EIR, and the Director of PDS issued a preliminary affirmative finding on the waiver as to insignificant slopes in 2016. This addresses the visual issues associated with the RPO-steep slope encroachment of the Project. The Board of Supervisors will consider and make a finding on the waiver during consideration of the Project for approval. This is addressed in the Land Use analysis of the EIR.

2.1.2.3 Substantial Obstruction, Interruption or Detraction from a Valued Vista

Guideline for the Determination of Significance

The Proposed Project will result in a significant impact if:

3. The Project would substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a valued focal and/or panoramic vista from:
 - a public road,
 - a trail within an adopted County or State trail system,
 - a scenic vista or highway, or
 - a recreational area.

Guideline Source

This guideline is from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Visual Resources (2007i).

Significance Guideline 3 is directed at potentially substantial adverse effects to scenic vistas and public vantage points available from roads, recreational areas, and trails important to be designated as scenic by the County or State. Changes to the resources that compose the view could be significant, depending on the degree and nature of the change, and whether the view would be obstructed.

Analysis

The following analysis discusses views from local scenic highways, as well as trails/recreation areas in the viewshed.

Scenic Highways

As described above, the closest scenic highway to the Project site is the segment of Harmony Grove Road just north of the Project and Escondido Creek. The abutting abrupt hill to the north and the creek vegetation to the south present the closest and visually most affecting elements in the view; viewers have to look over the creek to the site. The Project site is laterally visible to westbound viewers from Harmony Grove Road for approximately 600 feet (or 0.1 mile) east of the intersection with Country Club Drive. For this brief stretch, westward-bound travelers can look southerly over the Escondido Creek vegetation toward the central part of the Project in this area. For eastbound viewers, portions of the site are available to view for a longer period of time (approximately 2,250 feet, or 0.4 mile). From just east of the HGV pump station (located on the south side of Harmony Grove Road), some views are available to the heart of the Project over Escondido Creek vegetation until past the intersection with Country Club Drive, where intervening topography interrupts southerly views as the road prepares to turn northerly. The Project would develop area that is currently in visual open space (generally appearing to be an open field) in these views. Construction-period effects on site and at Escondido Creek are addressed above in Section 2.1.2.1. Discussion as to long-term Project visual effects for westbound and eastbound travelers is provided below.

For travelers heading west, the view would provide a developed vista to the left as a substantial hill feature on the right is rounded. Just prior to seeing the site, views southerly would consist of scrub-covered hills (small but substantial in the view due to their proximity and height relative to the road grade) with intermittent homes, contrasting in immediacy and relative openness with the northerly rock-catch fencing along the hillside to the right. The built structures of the Project would become visible over the creek vegetation, and (initially) include views to residences on Lot 2, and then on Lot 1, which would be located approximately 1,500 feet to the south. Elements of the building associated with the WTWRF may be intermittently visible where not shielded by creek vegetation or Project landscaping. Additional development would extend southerly, and rise up the north-facing slope of the site. These structures and landscaping at the higher elevations would be visible.

The built nature would be different from the existing condition, but not long-lived in the view. Harmony Grove Road views would be peripheral in nature as there are no straight-on views to the site from this portion of the road (all views would be to the side). The primary peak in DDHP would remain visible behind the lower Project site, as would the visible connection to other higher hills to the east and west. Almost as soon as the site would be visible, the continued line of riparian vegetation would continue to draw the viewer's eye along Harmony Grove Road, competing for views to the south. The County park equestrian ring and park uses on the west side of Country Club Drive also would be coming into view, as the intersection of the two roads is approached. This would be expected to draw the eye, as there could be movement there by park users. Once at the intersection, it is expected that attention would continue to be diverted from views to the south. This is because views would be drawn westerly along Harmony Grove Road, to incorporate the equestrian/park uses south of the road and the HGV homes on the small slope west of Country Club Drive in HGV on the north side of the road (see Attachment A, Photo Simulation D, in EIR Appendix B), as well as other road users.

Based on: (1) the brief timeframe when the site might draw the viewer's eye (from rounding the hill to the intersection with Country Club Drive, after which the Project would be located behind the traveler); (2) combined with the peripheral nature of the view and retention of the dominant peak in the DDHP that draws the eye up; as well as (3) competing visual factors to draw the viewer's attention toward closer development associated with HGV; the presence of the Project would be noticeable, but impacts to views from this County-designated scenic corridor would be **less than significant**.

For travelers heading east, the approach to Project views would be quite different. The Project would come into view after passing Wilgen Drive on the left and the HGV pump station on the right. The HGV built environment would be quite notable (see Appendix B, Attachment A, Photo Simulation C), with structures highly visible to the north, as well as on the hill at the junction of Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road (HGV Planning Areas II and IV, respectively). The Project structures would be located at a farther distance, relative to these more closely abutting uses, which would reduce their visual impact. Viewers would have to look southeasterly over the creek and the HGV Equestrian Ranch property, as well as through vegetation associated with the HGV public park uses south of Harmony Grove Road in this area. The much higher topographic features associated with DDHP and EFRR would be more openly visible to the viewers and would continue to dominate views in a southerly direction. Looking more easterly, homes generally would be backed by hillier hills to the east, but as the viewer moves closer to Country Club Drive,

the internal knoll on which some structures would be located may block views to the hills behind. This condition may continue (or may be blocked by Escondido Creek vegetation) for the short period of time the views are available. The view to these few homes would be transitory, and in any event comprise a small portion of a much larger viewshed. Approximately 0.7 acre of southern willow riparian forest is expected to be impacted during bridge construction, opening a wider area (approximately 100 feet) on either side of the bridge, than currently exists at the Arizona crossing. The creek would be revegetated with fast-growing riparian vegetation. Although vegetation immediately adjacent to the bridge would be subject to some brush thinning required in the FPP, this vegetation would still provide a screen between Harmony Grove Road and the Project as well as a focal point in itself. Once across the intersection with Country Club Drive, immediate views to the south would be blocked by the higher creek vegetation immediately adjacent to the vehicle, and the viewer's attention would be drawn forward to the narrow roadway curving between the encroaching hills on either side.

Based on consistency with the HGV setting, as well as distance to the site where it would be visible, combined with competing visual factors to draw the viewer's attention in other directions, the presence of the Project would be noticeable, but would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from the panoramic vistas to the higher peaks and ridgelines along this scenic corridor. Therefore, Project-related impacts to this County-designated scenic highway would be **less than significant**.

Trails in Recreational Areas

As described above, scenic vistas are available from public hiking trails along the north-facing slopes within the EFRR and DDHP, located south of the Project site. These views are generally expansive, and encompass portions of the Project site, as well as off-site elements such as surrounding hillsides, neighboring development, and commercial/light industrial development within the City of Escondido to the north. The Proposed Project would place structures within the Project site, and large portions of the development would be visible from specific vantage points along these trails. As previously noted, the most open and direct views are provided from the Del Dios Highlands Trail within the DDHP. These views are experienced by fewer recreationalists than trails in EFRR, and views to Project parcels from the trail are often blocked by the large hill traversed by the trail user. Where available, however, views are closer, and more open than those from EFRR.

The site does not present as visually "pristine." The disturbed grasslands and dirt roads/paths crisscrossing the northern portion of the site are notable. Homes along the western property boundary introduce built structures and human uses into the immediate viewshed, which otherwise consists of chaparral habitat immediately in front of the viewer. Currently, the viewer's eye is drawn to the west and further north, where the HGV construction staging area provides a discordant note west of the Project, and where the expansive graded area north of Harmony Grove Road results in lighter soils that draw the eye and contrast with the green of the Escondido Creek vegetation line and more landscaped residential areas to the north and west. The HGV WRF and HGV homes also present additional structural elements currently visible from the trail. The discordant graded areas and staging area locales on HGV are for the construction period and would not persist. At full buildout, the structural elements will be softened by more mature landscaping

and revegetation would be complete. Overall, the Project would visually read as an extension of the village onto HGV South.

The Proposed Project would place structures within the Project site, and large portions of the development would be visible from specific vantage points along these trails. DDHP provides a direct view into the Project. Views from EFRR are more lateral in nature as the Reserve is located southwest, rather than due south, of the Project parcels. The size and height of the granaries would be visible, as they would be located both closer and at a higher elevation than other existing similarly sized structures – which are either at lower elevation or farther distant from these trails. Although specific Project elements would be more visible due to the relationship to the DDHP trail, overall, the Project would visually read as a more open extension of the existing and planned village onto HGV South. The reader is referred to detailed discussion of KV 2 in Section 2.1.2.1 of this EIR.

In addition, and what may be counter-intuitive, the extremely expansive nature of the views from these trails would also somewhat minimize the Project visual effect. The viewer's eye is naturally drawn up and out, across a broad panorama encompassing the entirety of the Harmony Grove and Eden valleys, as well as San Marcos ridgelines, Mt. Whitney ridgelines, and urban elements.

These prominent peaks, ridgelines, and hills to the west such as Mt. Whitney and in the background of views from this area (in San Marcos) would continue to constitute background topography in both the “before” and “after” visual condition, and would remain dominant visual elements in views for recreationalists. This, combined with the continuation of surrounding existing patterns, retention of scrub on the areas closest to the viewers, and existing on-site features described above would provide continuity between existing and proposed conditions.

On site, and also serving a recreational purpose, is the primitive trail leading from the western Project boundary to the DDHP fire break trail. It is currently sporadically used by pedestrians and equestrians. This trail is currently unimproved. It is narrow, winding, and in some places includes wide areas of deviations within the larger pathway area where terrain is difficult to traverse. The Project would widen this trail to 4 to 6 feet in width, and standardize the trail bed. Areas currently disturbed due to uncontrolled access within the open space would be minimized, as users would be restricted to the improved trail bed. The trail would continue to wind its way through the vegetation in the vicinity of off-site development on the western boundary of the Project. Views to the undisturbed chaparral traversed by the trail would continue, but would be accessible to additional viewers. For trail users heading southerly, Project elements would be unnoticeable as soon as the southern edge of the development is exited. For those heading northerly, effects would be similar to those noted for DDHP at the south end, with development providing more proximate, and even immediate, parts of the view as the user moves closer to the Project homes.

Taking all of the above into consideration, although the Project would result in changes to the views from these trails, it would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from the panoramic vistas along the trails in these recreational areas; thus, changes would be **less than significant**.

Other Planned Trails

Planned trails are located along Country Club Drive abutting HGV elements south of the Harmony Grove Road, and potentially along Valiano frontage on Country Club Drive north of Harmony Grove Road, and paralleling Escondido Creek.

When implemented, the trails along roadways would be edged by landscaping and developed residential uses north of Escondido Creek. South of the creek, the more open Equestrian Ranch would be edged by the future trail. Each of these trails would be bordered by a roadway. The long and linear nature of the edging roads would tend to draw the trail users eye along the path of travel. Distraction also would be provided by nearby traffic along the roadways. Particularly where the trail user would be moving south along Country Club Drive, the view would lead toward and past the Project, along the roadway and up to the iconic peaks of the DDHP hills in the distance. The experience along these trails is expected to be a mix of recreation and transportation; i.e., the user is expected to be appreciative of the landscaping and long vistas, but cognizant of the need to watch for cross traffic, be prepared for the sound of oncoming vehicles, etc. This contrasts with the recreational experience provided on the trails discussed above. Project visibility would be an element of the view, but as the trails will not exist unless the abutting projects are implemented, users would not be contrasting the experience with trail use through open countryside along these roads. Because the Project would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from the focal point of the higher peaks to the south along these trails, impacts associated with this future experience are considered **less than significant**.

A future trail segment could be implemented to the north of the Project. The user of this trail would be expected to be focused on the immediately adjacent creek vegetation and potential wildlife activity provided by area birds. These valued sights would be located immediately to the north of the viewer, and away from the Project (south of the viewer). “Active” built portions of the Project associated with residences on Lots 1 and 2 would be located approximately 1,000 feet to the south. As the trail would be in proximity to a major thoroughfare (Harmony Grove Road) just north of the creek, as well as to Country Club Drive (a crossing element in the view), and existing residential uses are located to the east, “detraction” provided by these lots is considered less than significant. No Project elements would be located between the trail user and the Creekside, so no obstruction or interruption, from the focal point of the creek would occur. Because no obstruction or interruption to views of the creek would occur, impacts associated with this future experience are considered **less than significant**.

Other Panoramic Vistas

The Proposed Project would introduce built elements into the distant middle ground of panoramic vistas currently viewed from outlying areas (e.g., from more distant roads or locales), but the Project buildings and landscaping would be a visual extension of these developed areas. The foreground and background (i.e., horizon) view elements would remain unchanged, and would not be obstructed. Although the Project would change the open nature of the northern portion of the Project parcels, it would not change large landforms or the overall geographical configuration of the viewshed. The memorability of the area relies on the distinct visual patterns created by the higher landforms rimming the valley and the vegetated creek corridor within it. The scale of the Proposed Project’s built elements would be minimized by distance, elevation (in some cases),

associated landscaping, and contiguous built uses at the Project edges. The Project would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from the valued panorama of valley area surrounded by notable hills and ridgelines; changes to views from these outlying areas would be **less than significant**.

2.1.2.4 Inconsistency with Applicable Goals, Policies or Requirements of an Applicable County Community Plan, and Subregional Plan

Guideline for the Determination of Significance

The Proposed Project will result in a significant impact if:

4. The Project would not comply with applicable goals, policies or requirements of an applicable County Community Plan, Subregional Plan, or Historic District's Zoning.

Guideline Source

This guideline is from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Visual Resources (2007i). Additionally, a Project may contribute to a significant adverse cumulative effect even if the Project itself does not cause a significant adverse impact.

Analysis

The site is not subject to an Historic District's zoning. Applicable local land use plans governing visual character and quality include the County's General Plan COS Element and the Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove Community Plan. The COS and various other elements within the San Dieguito Community Plan (Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove portion) include specific goals and policies directed at visual quality and community character (see Section 3.1.6 of this EIR). These goals and policies are additionally identified in the VIA (HELIX 2017e), and a Project consistency evaluation of these applicable goals and policies is provided in Attachment B of the VIA. The reader is also referred to EIR Appendix C, which details conformance with policies specifically related to steep slope waiver review.

In addition, the proposed Specific Plan includes design guidelines for the Project. The Specific Plan establishes the site design and layout, the architecture, and the landscape goals, criteria, and guidance for trails, lighting, walls, and fences, and includes architectural themes, landscape palettes, and fuel modification zone treatments.

In summary, the Project would be consistent with applicable goals and policies related to aesthetics contained within applicable local land use plans, and associated visual impacts would be **less than significant**.

2.1.2.5 Installation of Outdoor Light Fixtures Inconsistent with the County Light Pollution Code

Guideline for the Determination of Significance

The Proposed Project will result in a significant impact if:

- 5.A The project will install outdoor light fixtures that do not conform to the lamp type and shielding requirements described in Section 59.105 (Requirements for Lamp Source and Shielding) and are not otherwise exempted pursuant Section 59.108 or Section 59.109 of the San Diego County Light Pollution Code (LPC).

Guideline Source

This guideline is from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Dark Skies and Glare (2009a).

Analysis

Project-proposed lighting would include lights similar to or lesser in intensity than other developed areas in the County. Consistent with the existing surrounding area, streetlights are not proposed along roadways within the Project in general; only at intersections where required for safety and directional purposes. Project lighting would include safety and accent lighting at intersections (see Figure 1-21a). Accent lighting would be provided at the two primary Project entries off of Country Club Drive as well as at the community center/Center House accessed from Private Drive I. Primary intersection street lights would be 15 to 20 feet tall, and secondary intersection lights (as well as one light located to illuminate Center House parking area, would be 10 to 15 feet tall. Both types of features would have a shielded down light. The Project entry lighting off of Country Club Drive would be ground-installed can-lighting; low-level and focused on Project name signage so that visitors are aware of the Project location. Additionally, proposed houses would be illuminated from interior lights or individual outdoor safety lighting. Project private parks would be for daytime use only, and would not have night lighting.

Although Project lighting would be expected to produce light levels brighter than currently exists on the Project site, all lighting would adhere to the County of San Diego's dark sky ordinance. Exterior lighting design would include the use of full cut off light fixtures and glare louvers, ensuring that light rays are projected downward and that glare and spillage into the sky or onto adjacent property are restricted to levels permitted by ordinance.

The Project site is located over 20 miles from Palomar Observatory, in Zone B as identified by the LPC (all areas beyond 15 miles). Project lighting would not adversely affect nighttime views or astronomical observations because the proposed lighting would conform to the lamp type and shielding requirements as well as the hours of operation detailed in the LPC. In view of the above considerations, **Project-related impacts would be less than significant.**

2.1.2.6 Use of Nighttime Lighting Inconsistent with the County Light Pollution Code or Extending onto Adjacent Property and Exceeding Code Limits

Guideline for the Determination of Significance

The Proposed Project will result in a significant impact if it would:

- 5.B Operate Class I or Class III outdoor lighting between 11:00 p.m. and sunrise that is not otherwise exempted pursuant Section 59.108 or Section 59.109 of the San Diego County LPC.

Guideline Source

This guideline is from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Dark Skies and Glare (2009a).

Analysis

Class I lighting refers to outdoor lighting uses to illuminate outdoor areas used for business (sales or work), recreational, decorative or signage purposes. Class II lights are used for safety purposes; i.e., walkways, roadways, equipment yards, parking lots and general outdoor security).

The majority of Project night lighting would consist of Class II lighting. Consistent with Section 59.108, the limited number of streetlights included in the Project would be low-pressure sodium lights. Project trails and recreational areas would be posted for use from dawn to dusk. As these facilities would not be illuminated, there would be no issue relative to night-lighting. Consistent with Section 59.108, if an evening event is occurring at the Center House recreational area, all lighting would be shut off prior to, or at, 11:00 p.m. There are only three exceptions to all exterior Project-installed lights being off by 11:00 p.m. These include:

- Holiday decorations, if installed by the HOA, and specifically exempted (Section 59.109[f])
- Operational safety lights at the WTWRP (in the unusual event of nighttime need, would be activated by operators' arrival, and only be on for as long as operators are present)
- Identification signs at the Project entrances, provided for directional and safety purposes

Based on compliance with the County's Dark Sky Ordinance visual impacts associated with Project-related Class 1 and 2 nighttime lighting would be **less than significant**.

2.1.2.7 Use of Nighttime Lighting Extending onto Adjacent Property and Exceeding Light Pollution Code Limits

Guideline for the Determination of Significance

The Proposed Project will result in a significant impact if it would:

- 5.C Generate light trespass that exceeds 0.2 foot-candle measured 5 feet onto the adjacent property.

Guideline Source

This guideline is from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Dark Skies and Glare (2009a). It should be noted that there is always some level of naturally occurring nighttime illuminance. For example, the typical illuminance from moonlight is 0.03 foot-candle.

Analysis

Light spill, or “trespass” is an important issue for the County. This is where light is cast beyond the area requiring lighting, and enters the adjacent property. Project lighting is also subject to substantial restriction in terms of light spill per County ordinance; conformance is mandatory. The standard is stated as light exceeding 0.2 foot candle more than 5 feet onto the adjacent property.

As part of final mapping for the Project, all lighting must be defined in detail and approved by County staff to demonstrate conformance with the ordinance. This plan will be provided.

Pole spacing would be coordinated with street-tree spacing, and proposed street trees are anticipated to exceed light pole height upon maturity. Lighting design would include the use of full cut off light fixtures and glare louvers, ensuring that light rays are projected downward and that glare and spillage into the sky or onto adjacent property are limited. Each light would provide the lowest light level necessary, and would be limited to less than 4,050 lumens output, maintaining compliance with state and local safety regulations. Some lights would illuminate vertical planes such as signs and walls, or highlight trees and other features. Up-lights, provided to design a sense of place and highlight landscape features, would be turned off between 11:00 p.m. and sunrise, and this is conditioned in the Specific Plan. Code-required lighting at the WRF would be controlled by sensors to turn on only when needed. A potential on-site pump station would not require lighting. Specific locations are addressed below.

Excluding the low lighting proposed for the bridge over Escondido Creek, the low pedestrian-level lights along Country Club Drive on the east-side trail, and entry lighting along Country Club Drive, Project-provided lighting would all be located within the site interior (see Figure 1-21a). Intersection safety lights would be housed in a lamp that covers the entire bulb. Given the height of the fixtures, light would spread from the lamp in a circular pattern onto the ground surrounding the light post, and beyond. The closest fixtures to the Project perimeter, however, would be the lights at the Project entries. Those lights would be provided from ground-mounted can lights and would not exceed the distance to Country Club Drive. Other Project lights would be interrupted by Project structures and landscaping, including trees, sited between the light and Project boundary. Light would be more focused in direction, toward the path, and being lower, would be

even more limited in terms of spill. There would not be any potential for light spill onto adjacent properties.

The entry lights would be up-lights directed toward the sign and isolated Project landscaping foci. These lights would be restricted to the entries, and would be directed toward the Project and away from the roadways. Nearby off-site properties are located on the other side of Country Club Drive, or further south along Cordrey Drive. Country Club Drive and intervening Lots 123 and 124 would provide a buffer between these directed and focused lights and adjacent properties. No adverse impact would occur to adjacent properties based on Project lighting of Project entries.

The lights at the intersection of Private Drives B, D and E, and at the southernmost curve of Private Drive B, would be located adjacent to BOS. That light would be specifically oriented to illuminate only the road in a “toward development” orientation. No spill would occur toward the landscaped slope separating the Project from proposed BOS.

Light spill could also occur from individual homes backing onto adjacent properties to the west and east of the Project. To avoid this potential impact, Project-installed lighting would strictly comply with the LPC. Guidelines requiring private home-based light to be directed and shielded to minimize impacts would be provided to homeowners. Guidelines/by-laws stating that outdoor residential lighting must be shielded and pointed away from open space/directed only onto the lot in question would be provided to all homeowners through the HOA and made a condition of the Administrative Permit. Information regarding beam angles of residential floodlights at higher versus lower mounting heights would be provided to residents. In addition, the privacy fencing/walls and perimeter vegetation would often interrupt the line of light and provide a hard cut-off. The HOA staff responsible for maintenance on site would periodically inspect the residential lot/open space interface to confirm that lighting on private lots conforms to the guidelines. Also, if any exceedances occur, the HOA would receive complaints from neighbors and homeowners in violation of the guidelines would be notified of the problem. This also would be a condition of the Project Administrative Permit.

With the measures specified above, although Project lighting would produce light levels brighter than currently exist, all lighting would adhere to the County’s dark sky ordinance. Impacts associated with light spill would be **less than significant**.

2.1.2.8 Installation of Highly Reflective Building Materials

Guideline for the Determination of Significance

The Proposed Project will result in a significant impact if:

- 5.D The project will install highly reflective building materials, including but not limited to reflective glass and high-gloss surface color, that will create daytime glare and be visible from roadways, pedestrian walkways or areas frequently used for outdoor activities on adjacent properties.

Guideline Source

This guideline is from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Dark Skies and Glare (2009a).

Analysis

Substantial glare is generally not anticipated from residential units. Large expanses of glass are not proposed for the Project. In fact, design shows the reverse; windows would often be located below shielding architectural elements. Landscaping, too, would play a role in shielding glass panes from reflective rays.

It is noted that Project electrical energy use would be provided by solar. Project electrical energy goals ~~could~~ would be satisfied ~~in a number of ways given the proposed structural variety, either through use of on-site solar panels on Project structures or through enrollment in a renewables program~~ as described in Table 1-2 of this EIR and Section 3.1.3, *Greenhouse Gas Emissions*.

Photovoltaic panels are typically constructed of primarily dark absorptive material that is designed to capture as much light energy as possible. To the extent that panels reflect sunlight, they lose their capacity to generate electricity. Anti-reflective coating, stippling, and other methods are used to trap light within the panel and minimize reflection. Because ~~they~~ panels would most likely be placed on roofs, they may be visible to viewers from off-site elevated viewpoints. Current technology results in these panels being less reflective than prior models, and some even look like ceramic tiling. To be conservative, however, it is noted that sun may be reflected during some times of day when the panel is located at a particular view angle. If this should occur, there is a chance that glare may be experienced by a viewer. This may occur only for a short duration per day under worst-case conditions (i.e., reflection 365 days per year, assuming no diffusion related to cloud cover or atmospheric conditions).

There also is a small potential for glare/reflection from glass if a dual-paned glass is incorporated into potentially required fire resistive barriers for seven lots along the southern development footprint in the western portion of the Project. This would be extremely intermittent in nature, however, as visual effects would only occur when: (1) the orientation of the sun in the sky (both azimuth and altitude) would result in rays hitting the glass; (2) cloud cover would not reduce glare; (3) intervening vegetation would not shade the glass; and (4) an observer would be present to see the glare (right place at the right time of day). In other words, although some level of glare may occur, it is not expected to result in long-term, ongoing significant effects. These effects would not occur at all if a solid block wall is implemented, which is also possible.

Although potentially occurring to a limited extent, visual impacts related to glare would be **less than significant**.

2.1.2.9 Conformance with Light Pollution Code

Guideline for the Determination of Significance

The Proposed Project will result in a significant impact if:

- 5.E The project does not conform to applicable federal, state or local statute or regulation related to dark skies or glare, including but not limited to the San Diego County Light Pollution Code.

Guideline Source

This guideline is from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Dark Skies and Glare (2009a).

Analysis

Considering the above analysis relative to Project lighting type, location, hours of operation and potential for spill onto adjacent properties, the Project would be in compliance with the LPC. **No impact** related to conformance with the LPC would occur.

The reader is referred to the discussion of short-term/construction period visual effects, in Section 2.1.2.1 of this subchapter, for discussion of nuisance visual effects prior to maturity of Project-installed landscaping.

2.1.3 Cumulative Impact Analysis

For visual resources, Projects within the above-described 3-mile Project viewshed (including the Proposed Project) could contribute to regionally cumulative visual effects, and are evaluated in this discussion. The viewshed includes areas with views to, or from, any single point on the Project, and therefore includes those projects that could be seen in concert with the Proposed Project. They would not all be visible at any one time or from one point, however. Only some of them are concentrated in one portion of the viewshed, and in general local topography, vegetation, intervening structures and land uses often block views to or from them.

Each of the cumulative projects within the viewshed is located to the north of the Proposed Project (see Figure 2.1-13, *Cumulative Projects for Visual Analysis*). Developments relevant to visual cumulative impacts are summarized below.

The Montiel development would include eight single-family residences and 120 condominiums. Candra includes 70 condominiums. Both of these projects are sited within existing developed areas north of SR-78 (Montiel is also immediately adjacent to I-15), and would not result in land use changes relative to existing views within the viewshed. These projects would visually blend with other built residential or light industrial uses in their portions of San Marcos and Escondido, respectively, and although within the viewshed, are visually separated from development south of SR-78/East Mission Road by development patterns within these cities.

Three of the cumulative projects comprise more substantial elements within the viewshed, and are also in closer proximity to the Proposed Project. HGV and Valiano are large residential projects within the County in the Harmony Grove and (abutting) Eden valleys. The HGV project is currently under construction, and is expected to be fully built out by the time HGV South is considered for approval, and completes final design. (Home sales began in May 2015, and are ongoing.) The Valiano project is currently undergoing environmental review.

HGV is a contiguous project located immediately to the west, north and northwest of HGV South, and is currently under construction. As noted above, sales began in May 2015. Once completed, this large residential development will include up to 742 single-family residences along with a Village Center, park and recreation areas, and equestrian facilities on 468 acres. Similar to the Proposed Project, but on a much larger scale, HGV is developing residential neighborhoods within the valley on land that previously used for agribusiness (chicken and dairy farms). The chicken ranch agribusiness included 32 long white linear structures that were extremely visible from area roadways and drew the viewer's eye due to their atypical length, width and color. HGV is introducing a large number of buildings and suburban elements, as well as reintroducing an historic drainage (removed during farming) into these areas. Because the HGV site has undergone mass grading and is currently building out, the relatively recent character of this major portion of Harmony Grove has already been altered across a large portion of the valley that extends to the north and includes the HGV site. Now, the homes and sound barriers (including those with partial "see through" panels) built on the pads adjacent to the east side of Country Club Drive (up a notably modified slope); as well as the homes being built and inhabited on the west side of Country Club Drive, along with landscaped and walled project entries, Fourth of July Park, etc., are all open to view. Solid block wall sound barriers on the west side of the road also are notable, as are HGV-installed concrete sidewalks, light standards, three-rail fencing and consistent standardized landscaping along the roadway. Full implementation of the project is assumed.

Valiano is a planned residential community of 326 single-family dwelling units and related facilities, located north of HGV. The development would include park and recreation areas, equestrian staging areas, and an on-site WTRF. Post development, approximately 146 acres would be retained as open space, including open space lots and easements, as well as biological and agricultural open space preserves.

The third primary cumulative project is a hospital facility located approximately 1.7 miles to the north, a portion of which has been constructed. The Palomar Medical Center was constructed in 2012 and includes an 11-story hospital facility. That project is planned to be expanded in phases. Given the size and height of this hospital building, it is a dominant visual element in the Project area and is visible from various distant vantage points within the viewshed. It is located at a transition point between industrial/commercial and residential development and is adjacent to existing industrial/commercial uses to the east and single-family residences to the west. Despite it being surrounded by existing development, the size contrasts with the smaller industrial and residential buildings in the area. The construction of additional structures at this location would increase the bulk and scale of this cumulative project and would make it more visible and disparate with the visual character.

Direct visual effects of views from public roads and recreational trails are addressed in detail in Sections 2.1.2.1 and 2.1.2.3; in many cases, those direct views also take in more proximate

development, or are broad in scope. The following discussion focuses only on the cumulative views; i.e., those views encompassing the Proposed Project plus one or more of the cumulative projects.

From public recreational trails to the south, views of the Project and HGV are open and would clearly show the introduction of built village uses into the viewshed. (Although views from the public trails in the permanent open space to the south could also include some distant built elements of the proposed Valiano project, beyond HGV, the stand of trees in the southernmost portion of that project, combined with the distance from the trails, would minimize the visual effect of that project.) The contiguous Proposed Project and HGV would introduce residential/ suburban elements within the valley into a view that currently contains (the Project) or recently contained (HGV) open grasslands, groves, and agribusiness uses. Additionally, the Palomar Medical Center has introduced large scale buildings and parking facilities adjacent to residential development and undeveloped land. Although even further distant than Valiano, the 11-story size of the hospital structure, combined with limited shielding of its multiple stories and its location skylined on a hilltop, results in it being a notable seen feature from the south. While existing residential uses and HGV construction activities currently are visible within the valley, the combination of these projects results in a change in visual character of the valley related to loss of visual open space, and increase in residential density.

Expansive views incorporating multiple projects also are available from the northwest at higher elevations. From these vantage points, the nearer Valiano development would be in the foreground of expansive views over the valley. That project would visually merge into the northernmost portion of the HGV development, and the viewer would look over both of these projects toward the taller hills rimming the southern edge of the valley, south of HGV South. The Proposed Project would continue visual elements associated with the larger HGV development, but would be visually minimized by distance, as well as the extent to which the southern hills would draw the viewer's gaze upward.

Overall, and taken together, the visual environment of the viewshed within the valley would be modified by the major physical change in composition introduced by the combination of HGV, and to lesser extents, the Proposed Project and Valiano. The visual effect of this change is heightened by the contiguous locales of these projects, which, when taken together, create a larger transformation in the composition and visual pattern of the valley over a 10- to 15-year period. Although each project would be visually consistent with each other in terms of visual pattern, the collective effect of the change created by these projects would contrast with the recent visual character and quality of the area. The Palomar Medical Center also contributes to this adverse effect. Therefore, the cumulative visual impact of the three projects in the valley, combined with the substantial and atypical height and massing changes introduced by the Palomar Medical Center would be significant.

The Project's contribution to this change, however, would not be cumulatively considerable for several reasons.

First, the HGV project on its own is approximately four times the size of the Proposed Project (468 acres versus 111 acres), with a corresponding difference in the magnitude of the built environment, and resultant visibility, between the two projects. When viewed from most vantage

points, the Proposed Project would not substantially contrast with visual patterns, particularly since large open space area would be retained at the highest and most visible portion of the Project. The Project essentially would be perceived as an extension of HGV uses to the north and would visually blend with the emerging visual pattern within the valley.

Second, as the viewer approaches the Project site from Country Club Drive, views would open up compared to the developed surrounding settings. This is because the traveler would be approaching open views to the Project through the more built up portions of Country Club Drive where views would encompass Escondido developments, planned Valiano, and the Village Core of HGV, as well as the steep slopes immediately east of the Village Core, which also have residential uses aligned along Country Club Drive. Approaching the intersection with Harmony Grove Road, the traveler would slow to see Escondido Creek vegetation for the first time, as well as the County parks south of Harmony Grove Road, and beyond those, the Project and the high hills behind. The Project would appear more visually open than what the viewer just experienced, in part because the topography would not curtail views to the east from the road (as happens along Country Club Drive north of Harmony Grove Road), and long and high wall features would not parallel Country Club Drive (as they do in HGV); and in part because the HGV Equestrian Ranch property currently provides (and even once developed would continue to provide) a more open rural appearance right across the street from the Project.

A similar experience would occur for eastbound viewers with sight lines to the Project from west of the Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road intersection. These travelers would be moving along a portion of the road where HGV is located to the north, and views to the Proposed Project would be partially obscured or interrupted by open park areas, Escondido Creek, and for some of the route, the HGV Equestrian Ranch property. The closest (most northern) portion of the site would be located south and east of these intervening view elements and would consist of what would visually read from this viewpoint as vegetated slopes with integrated residences against a backdrop of hills that exceed 900 feet east of the Project. The visual impact of the Project would be less strong than that of the more proximate HGV.

The extent of the HGV project, combined with the discordant element provided by the vertical and notably engineered hospital structure, have so substantially changed the nature of the valley that the visual effect of the presence of the Proposed Project would be minimized. As a result, although the Project would contribute to the level of seen development within the Harmony Grove Valley, it would not make a considerable contribution to the cumulative effect, and Project-related cumulative impacts would be **less than significant**.

2.1.4 Significance of Impacts Prior to Mitigation

The following significant impacts related to aesthetics would occur with Project implementation:

Impact AE-1 Landform modification associated with blasting/rock breaking is expected to result in newly exposed rocks and horizontal drainage features across cut slope that would contrast with the adjoining natural hillsides and would be visible from existing and planned trails on and off site.

Impact AE-2 Visual effects during and following the Project construction period related to vegetation removal, grading, bridge construction and vertical development would be substantial until buildout occurs and all vegetation is installed and reaches visual maturity in approximately 10 years.

2.1.5 Mitigation

The following mitigation measure addresses rock staining on the manufactured slopes to ensure long-term visual continuity of the newly broken/exposed rock on manufactured slopes with those rocks that have naturally weathered:

M-AE-1 Exposed newly cut rocks and horizontal drainage features shall be stained in earth tones (through spraying or dripping onto fresh rock face) to soften their contrast on Project cut slopes. Staining of rock shall occur during slope landscape installation and shall be in colors that match the surrounding rock. Application of stain shall be overseen by a qualified expert. Before staining, several test sections will be completed on the rock cut to determine the type of stain that will create the best match with the surrounding rock (i.e., pigmented stains, or creation of new color by leaching minerals from the rock or through photo-reactivity). The slope shall be dry and all loose material and vegetation shall be removed before stain is applied. If necessary, the slope face will be pressure-washed to remove fine-grained particles that could inhibit the stain penetration. Horizontal hillside drainage features will contain color-integrated cement as part of the installation.

Implementation of this mitigation measure would lower the impact to less than significant levels because it would minimize variation in color between naturally aged rock and recently broken rock, as well as horizontal drainage features, that might be visible from trail areas.

No mitigation is available to reduce the short-term visual impacts during and immediately following construction. While temporary in nature and ultimately addressed through Project design and landscaping over the long-term, short-term adverse visual impacts to the Project site's visual character associated with Project construction would be significant and unmitigable.

2.1.6 Conclusion

In addition to the mitigation specified above, a number of Project design features that would become Project Conditions for both construction and operational phases have been incorporated into the Project. These considerations are presented in Table 1-2 of this EIR, and will be made Project Conditions, to ensure their implementation, if the Project is approved. In brief, these design considerations include compliance with the approved conceptual landscape plan, including requirements for timing of installation of landscape (e.g., container box sizes along Country Club Drive, at entries, along Project streets and on manufactured slopes); grading in accordance the approved Preliminary Grading Plan, designed to follow general rise and fall in existing topography; incorporation of open space corridors and parks totaling a minimum of approximately 60 percent of the site; trails and pathways with equestrian fencing and/or landscaping; screening of trash dumpsters and mechanical units as described on Table 1-2; architectural elements incorporated to reduce apparent size, bulk and scale of structures and to introduce visual interest

as described on Table 1-2; lighting controls to ensure compliance with the County LPC; and signage restrictions as noted on Table 1-2.

Impacts remain potentially significant for two issues: views of newly exposed rock and horizontal drainage features in manufactured slope areas in areas of steep slopes, and views of the Project during the construction-period/initial development. These impacts and proposed mitigation are summarized below.

Regarding Impact AE-1, impacts to manufactured slopes with exposed broken rock and horizontal drainage features would be mitigated to less than significant because, with mitigation M-AE-1 and the staining of newly broken and visible rock/incorporation of color into horizontal drainage features, viewers would observe manufactured slopes that appear more similar to nearby slopes with natural weathered rock.

This is because rock staining is an effective and cost-efficient method of blending the color of fresh or faintly weathered excavated rock faces with that of the surrounding natural rock faces; enhancing both the short- and long-range perspectives. Rock staining products, which are sprayed or dripped onto the fresh rock face, can bring the cut rock to its natural, weathered color within weeks. It is noted that not every stain is compatible with all types of rock, and the final color depends on stain concentration and formulation. As required in the mitigation measure, before staining, test sections would be completed on the rock cut to determine the type of stain that would create the best match with the surrounding rock. Several coats of stain may be required if the fresh and weathered faces look very different. At conclusion, newly cut rock will blend with weathered areas.

Regarding Impact AE-2 and construction-period/initial installation visual impacts, these visual impacts would be adverse. These impacts relate to the combination of raw valley and slope soils during the construction period, the potential presence of rock crushing activities (with the industrial appearing crusher) and other construction equipment moving about the site, and increased lighting being visible immediately following Proposed Project construction. Ultimately, the landscaping installed within each constructed phase—with prioritization of manufactured slopes and areas edging Country Club Drive—would lessen adverse visual impacts of raw slopes and new buildings, and vegetation maturity would be visually attained in approximately 10 years. At that point, raw soil would be covered with Project improvements, and street trees and internal landscaping would buffer the homes from views to the Proposed Project from off site, softening sharp edges, unifying the Project, and shading Project lighting and glare. While temporary in nature and ultimately addressed through Project design and landscaping over the long-term, short-term adverse visual impacts would be significant and unmitigable.

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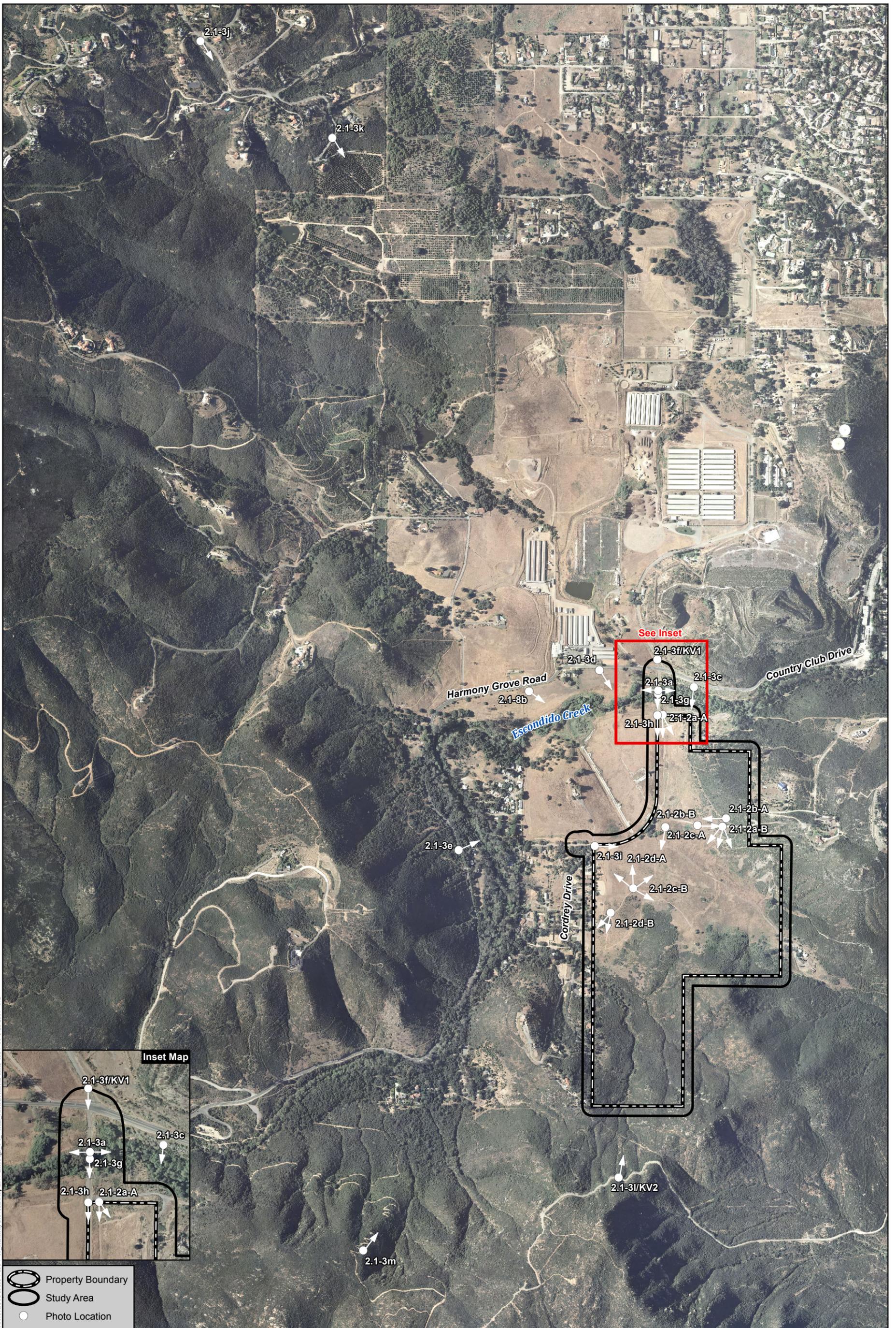
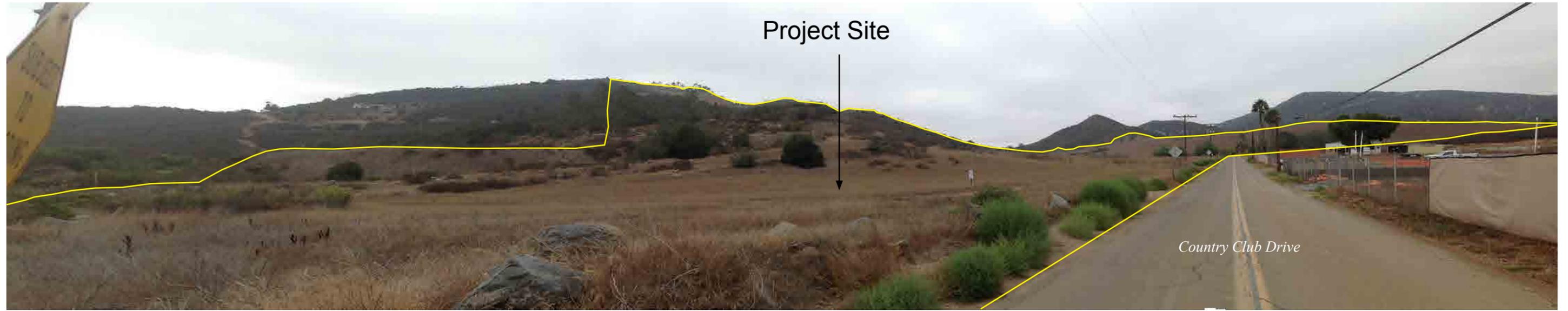


Photo Locations

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-1



A. Looking south-southeast over the Project from the northeast corner.



B. Looking onto the central bench from the north central part of the Project.

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On-site Photographs

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-2a



A. Looking west to HGV future Equestrian Ranch over on-site scrub and non-native grassland.



B. Looking east along the on-site paved road, leading to off-site residential uses.

On-site Photographs

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-2b

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A. Chimney remnant and on-site non-native grasslands of the Project central bench.



B. Looking east along the central bench, showing slope both north and south.

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On-site Photographs

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-2c



A. View to the north from the on-site central bench.



B. View from the central bench southerly along the Project western boundary and Cordrey Drive.

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On-site Photographs

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-2d



Looking east along Escondido Creek from Country Club Drive.



Looking west along Escondido Creek from Country Club Drive.

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Escondido Creek, East and West

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH



Looking westerly from the Project to typical ridgeline development.

Typical Ridgeline Development

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3b



View to the Project site from Harmony Grove Road, over Escondido Creek, east of Country Club Drive.

Surrounding Public Viewpoints

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3c

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View to Project site from Harmony Grove Road just east of the Harmony Grove pump station, looking southeasterly over future park area and Escondido Creek.

Surrounding Public Viewpoints

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3d



View toward Project from north-south portion of Harmony Grove Road.
Project is screened by intervening vegetation and topography.

Surrounding Public Viewpoints

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3e



View to Project site from north side of Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive intersection.

Surrounding Public Viewpoints

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3f

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Escondido Creek

Project Site

Country Club Drive

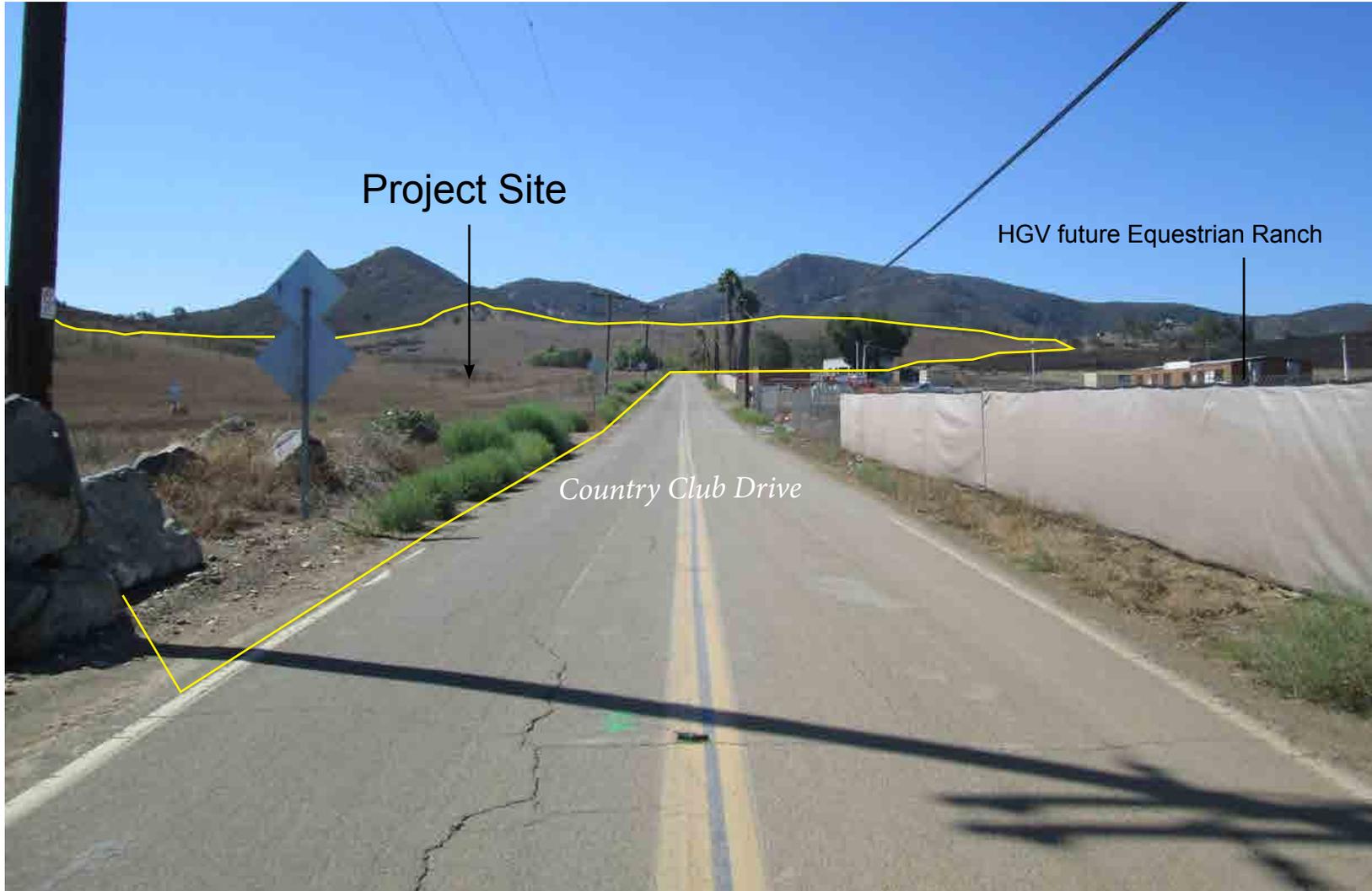
Looking southerly to Project Site from Country Club Drive crossing of Escondido Creek.

Surrounding Public Viewpoints

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3g

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View to Project site from Country Club Drive south of Escondido Creek.

Surrounding Public Viewpoints

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3h

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View toward Project site from Country Club Drive and Cordrey Drive intersection.

Surrounding Public Viewpoints

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3i

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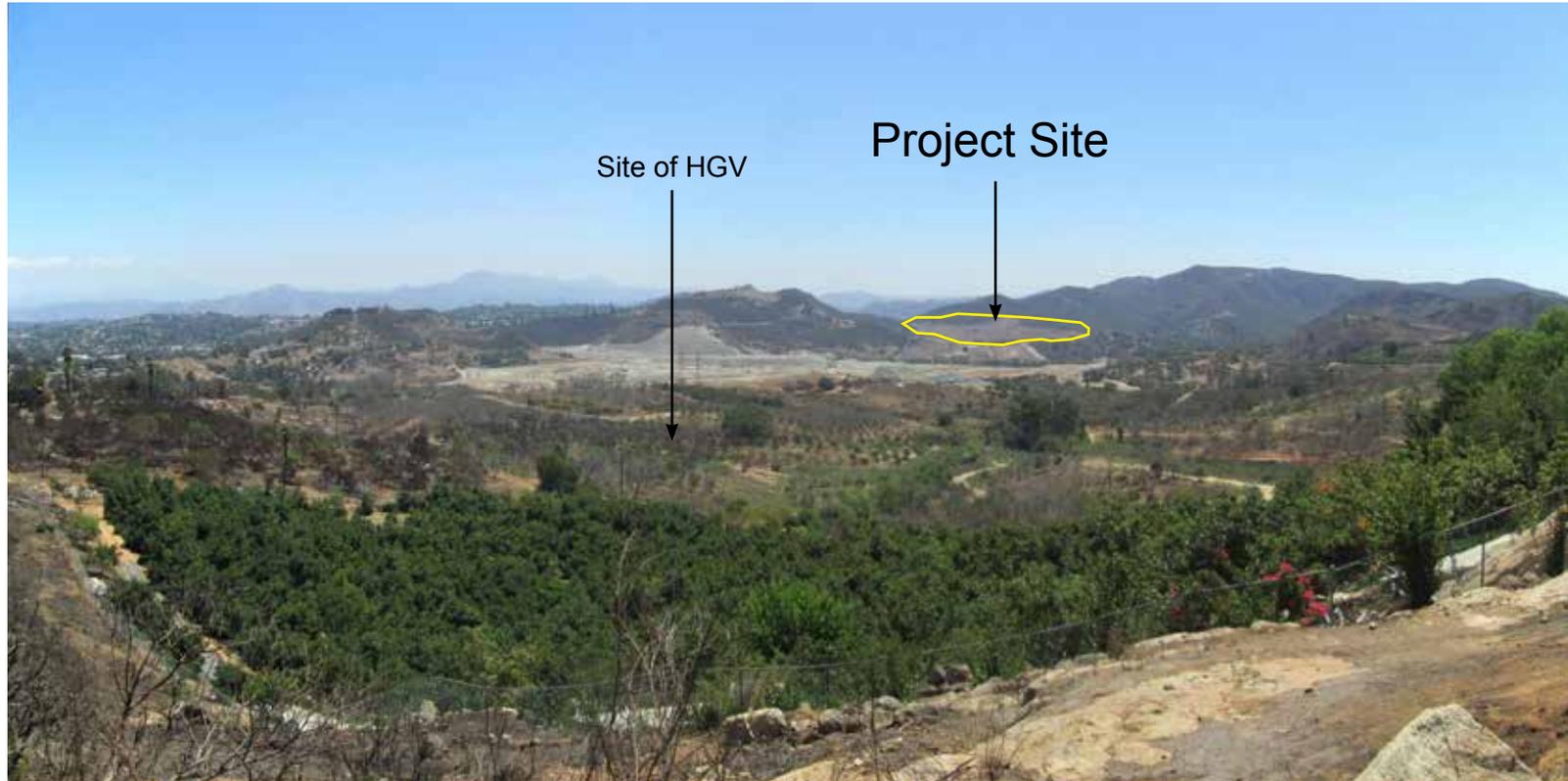


View to Project from Coronado Hills Drive and Cyad Drive over Harmony Grove Village, first phase grading.

Surrounding Public Viewpoints

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3j



View to Project site from Seeforever Drive over Harmony Grove Village, first phase grading.

Surrounding Public Viewpoints

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

Figure 2.1-3k