

# HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH

## APPENDIX B

### VISUAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

*to the*

### DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

PDS2015-GPA-15-002; PDS2015-SP-15-002  
PDS2015-TM-5600; PDS2015-REZ-15-003  
PDS2015-MUP-15-008; PDS2015-ER-15-08-006

APRIL 2017

*Prepared for:*  
COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO  
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES  
5510 OVERLAND AVENUE, SUITE 310  
SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA 92123

## Harmony Grove Village South Project

### Visual Impact Analysis

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April 2017

Project Proponent:

**RCS Harmony Partners, LLC**

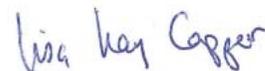
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April 2017

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Proposed Project would consist of a residential community with 453 single and multiple household dwelling units (DUs) in five neighborhoods, park and recreational uses, open space, an on-site wastewater treatment and reclamation facility, and related roadway and utility infrastructure improvements. Off-site roadway improvements to Country Club are also proposed, consisting of upgrades to the Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive intersection southern approach, addition of a third lane to the segment south of Harmony Grove Road, and replacement of the Arizona crossing over Escondido Creek with a bridge.

The Proposed Project is located in the unincorporated portion of northern San Diego County, just west of the City of Escondido boundary and south of east-west trending portions of Harmony Grove Road and Escondido Creek. The Project is located in the Harmony Grove community, and the City of Escondido is located within 0.25 mile to the east. The Elfin Forest community is located approximately four miles to the west. The Proposed Project is contiguous to Harmony Grove Village (HGV); being located less than 500 feet from the intersection of Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive, within 300 feet of the County equestrian park being developed on the west side of Country Club Drive, and being directly across the street from the HGV Equestrian Ranch. HGV is already actively developing the northwest, southwest, and northeast quadrants with the rural village approved for the area in 2007. Home sales began in May 2015.

The 111-acre HGV South Project site is generally divided into two areas. The northern portion of the site contains topography generally sloping down to the north-northwest corner of the property, as well as disturbed biological habitat. A southern portion of less disturbed habitat is located on increasingly steep and higher on-site hills. This area drains even higher off-site hills to the south, with incised ravines entering the Project and draining to the northwest on the south side of the relatively level and east-west trending slope crossing the Project site south of the mid-point. 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 listed scenic roadway closest 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. At its closest point, a portion of the Harmony Grove Road segment is located just north of Escondido Creek, which is located just north of the Project site. It is identified as a scenic corridor in the Conservation and Open Space (COS) Element and is included as part of the County Scenic Highway System.

The Project site is currently vacant. Structural remnants (patio/porch areas and some features associated with an old basement) are located adjacent to Country Club Drive, and are associated with several pepper trees. The only above-ground feature remaining is an isolated chimney remnant. An old cistern is located in the central-east portion of the site. One paved and several unpaved (dirt) roads traverse the site in a primarily east-west direction, providing access to homes located east of the property.

The Project has incorporated a substantial 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. On-site residential lots would be clustered to limit both the physical, as well as visual, impact footprint. Measures also 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). Extensive landscaping known to perform well in San Diego County and to be consistent with the visual quality of the village and neighborhood overall would be installed along the site perimeter, along Project roadways, within residential neighborhoods, and within the Project community center/park at a primary Project entry (the Center House). 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 development patterns on both east and west 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, 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, as well as the substantial landscaping scheme. 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.

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 and replacement of the existing Arizona crossing with a bridge would be mitigated through enhancement and creation within the creek.

Cross-sections prepared for the full length and width of four locations across the site depict the existing topography, as well as the projected post-development topography, for each of the portions of the site they bisect. As shown, Project grading would respect, and conform to, overall existing topography on site. In other words, although the planned precise site elevations at any specific point internal to the Project site may deviate from the existing elevation, 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. The Project would conform to the Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) with regard to steep slopes through a combination of waiver of encroachment into steep slopes, exception for installation of roads and utilities, and strict adherence to less than 10 percent encroachment into steep slopes protected under the RPO, as well as the County Light Pollution Code (Dark Sky Ordinance).

Based on topography alone (i.e., not including screening provided by vegetation or intervening structures), the site is generally not highly visible to off-site viewers. Assuming three-miles from Project boundaries, the Project would have a final footprint of approximately 67 acres within a viewshed of 21,891 acres (or 0.003 percent of the viewshed). Approximately 16 percent of all the

areas within three miles of the Project in any direction would have the potential to see some part of the Project if there are no intervening structures or adjacent vegetation.

Views from off-site primary roadways typically would be lateral/peripheral in nature, or strongly colored by the existing built uses along them where they edge more direct views toward the Project. 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.

Private views include those from private homes within the Project viewshed. Very few (approximately 10) of them are in the immediate vicinity of the Project, with potential 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 the viewer and the Proposed Project, and/or the nature of intervening topography, development, and/or private lot vegetation.

Taking all these factors into consideration, although implementation of the Project would represent a change from past conditions, the combination of all Project elements, in conjunction with its setting at the HGV crossroads, generally would result in less than significant effects on area character or quality following Project buildout and vegetation maturity, and therefore would result in less than significant impacts. This is supported by photo-simulations of the Project provided in this report, as shown in Figures 23a and 24.

Two potential significant impacts are identified; relating to raw stone and horizontal drainage features across cut slope, and short-term visual effects.

The rock exposed by potential blasting would not be weathered, and could vary from other outcrops in the Project area, and the drainage features could also visually differentiate. Mitigation would require newly exposed cut rocks and any horizontal drainage features to be stained to soften their contrast, which would lower the visual impact to less than significant levels.

Short-term visual impacts, during construction and for a period following, would be adverse. These impacts would relate to the combination of raw valley and slope soils during the construction period, industrial/construction equipment moving about the site, and increased lighting being visible immediately following Project construction. Vegetation removal from Escondido Creek also would be required for anticipated bridge construction. Restoration/enhancement of creek riparian habitat would occur immediately following construction. Riparian species such as willow are rapid growers, and would be expected to provide good massing and canopy within three to five years. On site, ultimately landscaping would lessen adverse visual effects of raw slopes and new buildings. Even though landscaping of manufactured slopes and Country Club Drive frontage would be prioritized as a first action following grading, however, visual vegetation maturity generally would not be attained until 10 years following installation (particularly for trees). Vegetation impacts related to trail improvements required by the County in the southernmost part of the Project parcel (otherwise in biological open space) also would be visible from off-site locations, with these impacts contributing to short-term impacts until vegetation grows back adjacent to the improved trailbed. Similarly, Project lighting effects

would be expected to result in increased glow from the area over existing conditions. As a result, short-term adverse visual impacts to the Project site's visual character associated with Project construction until general visual maturity is attained in 10 years are identified as significant and unmitigable. Following that time, although CEQA visual impacts related to this initial time period would be less than significant. Vegetation would continue to increase in height and width over time, resulting in ongoing increased screening, and further reduction of the less-than-significant impacts.

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The following Visual Impact Analysis (VIA) was prepared for the Harmony Grove Village South Project (Project, Proposed Project, HGV South). It is based upon the project description found in Chapter 1.0 of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) and the Project Specific Plan. Conceptual Project elements applicable to aesthetics review include installation of the proposed development including residential uses; limited Project-associated community/retail; recreational uses; open space; and necessary infrastructure such as road improvements, sewage facilities, etc., uses; as well as architectural, landscaping/fire management, lighting and preliminary grading assumptions.

### 1.1 Purpose of This Report

The purpose of this VIA is to:

1. assess the visual impacts of the Proposed Project;
2. determine the significance of the impacts under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA); and
3. propose measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate adverse visual impacts associated with the construction of Proposed Project on the surrounding visual environment, as appropriate.

This analysis has been prepared per the County of San Diego (County) 2007 Visual Resources Guidelines and Significance Thresholds and Report Format and Content Requirements, as well as the County Guidelines and Significance Thresholds and Report Format and Content Requirements for Dark Skies and Glare (2007, as modified in 2009).

### 1.2 Key Issues

This report evaluates potential impacts to the visual character and quality of the Project site and surrounding area as viewed from public and private view points within the Project viewshed. Visual effects associated with construction of Project uses on a currently disturbed but undeveloped parcel are evaluated. The report focuses on variation in visual effects of the proposed development from the existing condition. Issues related to Project design, density and massing, landform modification, lighting, and visibility from a scenic highway segment are evaluated. This report also discusses Project conformity with applicable adopted land use plans, policies, and design guidelines related to visual resources.

### 1.3 Principal Viewpoints to be Covered

This report describes the Project parcels and evaluates principal views of the Proposed Project from public roads, recreational trails, and private viewpoints in the Project vicinity. Viewpoints include locations both immediately adjacent to the Proposed Project and at a distance, from which more expansive views, containing larger and visually varying portions of the Project may be obtained. An introduction to these viewpoints is provided in Section 3.0, *Visual Environment of the Project*, with locales providing the most illustrative information regarding Project design

selected for discussion of changed conditions, as described in Section 5.2, *Key Views and Illustrative Simulations*.

## **2.0 PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

### **2.1 Project Location**

The Proposed Project is located in the unincorporated portion of northern San Diego County, just west of City of Escondido boundaries, south of east-west trending portions of Harmony Grove Road and Escondido Creek, north and west of the Del Dios Highlands Preserve (DDHP; see Figures 1 through 4, with Figure 4 illustrating Project boundaries on an aerial photograph), and adjacent to the Harmony Grove Village (HGV) project, which is currently under construction. The site includes four individual parcels, with the following Assessor's Parcel Numbers (APNs): 235-011-06-00, 238-021-08-00, 238-021-09-00, and 238-021-10-00.

The 111-acre HGV South Project site is generally divided into two areas. The northern portion of the site contains topography generally sloping down to the north-northwest corner of the property, as well as disturbed biological habitat. A southern portion of less disturbed habitat is located on increasingly steep and higher on-site hills. This area drains even higher off-site hills to the south, with incised ravines entering the Project and draining to the northwest on the south side of the relatively level and east-west trending slope crossing the Project site south of the midpoint. 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.

State Route 78 (SR-78) is located approximately 2.6 miles to the north and Interstate 15 (I-15) is located approximately 2.5 miles to the east. Country Club Drive is the primary north-south roadway in the vicinity of the Proposed Project; the northwest portion of the Project site borders this roadway. Harmony Grove Road is the primary east-west connector; it is located just north of Escondido Creek, which is located just north of the Project.

### **2.2 Project Description**

The Project GPA/SP document addresses the current approximately 111-acre Project area (see Figure 5, on a topographic base). In summary, the land use plan includes four categories: residential, limited retail/commercial, utilities/institutional and open space/recreation. The residential portions of the Project would contain 453 residential units, with five different design areas (Cottage, Bungalow, Harmony Court, Farmhouse, and Granary). The variety of housing types would include both single-family detached to multi-family (single-family attached; additionally described below). In general, the multi-family product types would be situated interior to the development, and would be surrounded by the less intensive single-family residential uses. The Proposed Project would grade approximately 67 acres, or approximately 60 percent of the overall Project site, with 34.9 acres, or approximately 31 percent of the site retained in biological open space (BOS) or impact neutral areas 34.8 acres and (0.1 acre, respectively) and steep slope set-aside. Overall, upon Project completion, the BOS and impact neutral acreage, combined with Homeowner Association (HOA)-maintained manufactured

slopes, landscaped areas, and natural-appearing drainages, as well as park areas would total 75 acres. Site dedicated to pads or roads would total approximately 26 acres, or 32 percent of the site. In addition to the on-site uses, the Proposed Project would require the construction of on- and off-site infrastructure improvements associated with roads, water, and sewer.

The Project includes review and proposed approval of six discretionary actions: (1) a tentative map (TM) to subdivide the property; (2) a Specific Plan (SP) to provide detail on proposed uses; (3) a rezone (REZ) from A70 (Limited Agriculture) and RR (Rural Residential) to S88 (Specific Plan); (4) a General Plan Amendment (GPA) to revise land use designations from Semi-rural Residential 0.5 to a combination of Semi-rural Residential 0.5 and Village Residential 10.9; (5) an associated Community Plan Amendment (CPA); and (6) a Major Use Permit (MUP) to provide detail on the water treatment/water reclamation facility.

The site would be encumbered with a D1 designator for site plans. If the Project is approved, County staff will review each site plan submitted for consistency with scenic corridor restrictions (for all site areas visible from Harmony Grove Road), as well as for conformance with the Project Specific Plan and associated guidelines.

### **2.2.1 Project Theme and Primary Concept**

The HGV South development would complement and support HGV through expanding the mix of housing opportunities and providing limited commercial/civic uses that are compatible with that contiguous project. The center of HGV South would be immediately adjacent to the planned equestrian ranch, which is intended to offer limited retail and residential uses in addition to horse boarding, training, and showing.

HGV South has been designed to maximize open space (including BOS adjacent to existing preserve areas) and enhance recreational opportunities. The development has been clustered on the site to preserve a large swath of open space in the southern portion of the property that contains high quality biological resources. Lots would be graded to reflect the natural topography, where feasible. Sharp or abrupt grade transitions that do not appear natural would be avoided. Roadways and a continuous network of multi-use trails and pathways would conform to the natural topography, and incorporate curvilinear elements.

In addition to maximizing open space, the Project is designed to minimize perception of built structures. The 453 residences noted above do not equate to 453 structures. A substantial number of the residences would be in structures built to accommodate multiple dwellings. Many HGV South lots have been designed to accommodate one-to-four single- or multi-family (i.e., single-family attached) buildings on the same plot of land. These structures would be aligned with landscaped areas between them, so that there would be visible open areas between built footprints. As currently mapped, the number of overall Proposed Project residential structures is expected to total approximately half of the number of residences.

Storm water storage and treatment features would be located in subsurface vaults, with park and recreation facilities located on top of them and visible to the viewer. Interior to the development footprint, a remnant drainage that was largely eliminated due to prior on-site uses would be restored to a naturalized state. This feature would provide a habitat for birds and other species in

the area, enhance aesthetic value, create recreational opportunities, and carry some stormwater. Paving and hardscape areas would be minimized to the extent possible to allow the landscape to retain more of its natural hydrological function. The spacing between buildings would provide for a sense of openness and accommodate landscaping and small private parks.

Community gardens would reference the area's farming heritage and provide a recreational opportunity for Project residents, and the proposed architecture respects the predominantly single-family and agricultural character of the existing Harmony Grove community. (The Project's wet weather storage requirements associated with the on-site WTRF would be located below those gardens in a subsurface vault.) Project design elements, such as lighting, signage, walls, fences, and architecture, are intended to be as consistent as possible with those of HGV. While there would be continuity of design, the Proposed Project also would create interest by establishing its own identity, reminiscent of how communities naturally evolve and integrate new development over time.

Home sites have been designed to maximize protection from fires and accommodate a substantial brush management zone.

It is important to note that the County encourages new developments with access to sewer to provide housing opportunities for a range of household incomes by offering both a variety of housing types (multi-family to single-family), and a variety of lot sizes. The proposed density range has been based on the physical landform, its setting within the Harmony Grove Valley, and consideration of economics supporting infrastructure and County services (i.e., waste water components and emergency services such as fire response). Many Project lots have been designed to accommodate one to four single-family or multi-family (i.e., single-family attached) buildings on the same plot of land. As a result, the Project has the flexibility to support a wide range of units in varying layouts without affecting the development footprint.

Project components are described in detail below. Figure 5 depicts the site plan of the Project and shows the neighborhood locations, associated lot configurations, minimum and average lot sizes, dwelling units (DUs), and grading limits.

## **2.2.2 Residential Development**

### **Community-wide Design**

In order to unite Project uses into a community, some overarching design principles have been developed. These emphasize the clustered residential formats to result in increased open space and a connection of each residential area to the underlying topographic features as described above and shown on Figure 5, and architectural design as described below. Emphasis would be on a harmonious development, human-scale architecture and a pedestrian-friendly environment.<sup>1</sup>

Consistent design elements throughout the Project would contribute to the sense of community as described in the Project SP (PDC 2017). The overall architectural design concept for HGV South would be consistent with HGV, yet provide for a unique Project identity. Per the

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<sup>1</sup> "Human scale" refers to a building and its details, including: garage doors, pedestrian entries, windows, plate heights, roof lines and balconies as they are in proportion to the height of an average person.

HGV Specific Plan, HGV is designed to have a Western Farmhouse/Cottage architectural theme. The theme for HGV South is based on the Western Farm Village architecture tradition. The Western Farm Village style is consistent with the rural character and history of this area and any rural town area, incorporating small-scale commercial and visually referencing agribusiness/industrial structures. This theme includes Western Farmhouse/Cottage as well as other farm building references such as the Granary, Barn and Mill. This style is inspired by homesteads, cottages, and farm elements of the late 19th and early 20th centuries where buildings are often modified or repurposed to accommodate a change in use as the years pass and needs change. This theme supports a rural, utilitarian style that reflects both historical and current uses of the site and surrounding area; specifically the agricultural and rural ranch and equestrian traditions. The Western Farm Village style emphasizes function and utility, relying minimally on stylistic effects to define its character. It employs ornamentation that is primarily functional rather than merely decorative, such as porches or bay windows adorning the fronts of houses.

Utilizing a slightly broader architectural style provides a more organic feel to the community. It allows the larger Harmony Grove community to retain its rural character, yet adds interest by permitting other building types that contribute to the sense that the community has evolved over time. Larger buildings, such as those that reflect granaries or mills, also allow for a wider range of housing types. Multi-family housing units would be disguised in these farm-like structures.

Figures 6a and 6b provide typical elevations of the Proposed Project architecture. Although specific details may vary, these typicals illustrate the design characteristics that make up the Western Farm Village style. Overall, apparent size, bulk, and scale of proposed buildings would be minimized through use of techniques such as: breaking up façades through a combination of vertical and horizontal elements; incorporating variation in the roofline through the use of gables, overhangs, etc.; reducing the presence of garage doors from the street scene by locating them on alleys, in cluster courtyards, etc.; varying the height of building segments through incorporation of 1.5 story massing with dormers; staggering setbacks; incorporating projections and recesses that provide shadow and relief; recessing of some structure elements into the slope it is sited on; use of accent colors on trim, shutters, and architectural elements to provide visual interest and character; and providing overhead structures at entries, such as porches, trellises, or pergolas. These design elements are additionally described below.

Roof lines and materials are particularly important. The Project would incorporate forms indicative of traditional farmhouse architecture with porches, dormers, and simple roof shapes along with a combination of pitched roofs and flat parapet roofs historically inherent to commercial and industrial building design.

Some buildings, such as the “Granary” structures, have been designed to look as if original buildings have been added on to and expanded. This is typical of the way development naturally occurs over time, with each new building reflecting the stylistic norms of the day, and reuse of substantial structures as appropriate. For these structures, exterior materials to provide visual diversity would be specifically placed to mimic buildings constructed or modified over time; variously including use of stone, masonry, painted or stained horizontal and vertical wood siding, stucco and metal. The upper floors of multi-family units would incorporate “step backs” or patio areas to minimize perceived height and scale of the structures.

The Project color palette would use creams, tans, and muted ashy tones, also as depicted on Figures 6a and 6b.

## **Residential Uses**

As noted above, the Project is anticipated to provide five residential formats: Cottage, Bungalow, Harmony Court, Farmhouse, and Granary. The Cottages, Bungalows and Harmony Court structures are single-family residences, and combined would total 193 residences. Farmhouses and Granaries are multi-family format, and would total 260 residences. As noted, typical schematics for residential types are provided in Figures 6a and 6b; actual specific design details may vary through final design.

**Cottages** would be located at the core of the development, where the topography is relatively flat (less than 25 percent grade). These structures would be both detached single-family homes and attached duplexes, with garages accessed off of alleys/lanes. Incorporating internal site topography into the product design, a change in elevation of approximately 15 feet would be accommodated between the western and eastern extents of each cottage grouping. A pedestrian pathway with stairs that lead down to the adjacent cul-de-sac would be located in the middle of each row of cottages to encourage pedestrian activity and neighbor interaction. Typically cottages would be two stories; however, third story tower elements would be permitted to add interest. The main portions of two-story structures would be held to 28 feet. Maximum structure height, including intermittent third story elements are limited to 35 feet at the front of the home along the paseos, and up to 35 to 45 feet along the rear alley. Non-habitable architectural projections (e.g., a chimney) could be four feet above the highest roof elevation. The total percentage of roof line projections would be less than five percent of the cottage roof line. These homes include two-car garages to be accessed from an alley to eliminate the presence of garages along the main private drives.

**Bungalows** would consist of four clustered single-family detached or attached homes situated around a single private driveway. These homes typically would be one-and-a-half to two stories (maximum of 28 feet) in height. A three-story element on one home within each cluster would be permitted to provide visual interest and break up vertical massing. Maximum structure height, including any three-story element, would be 35 feet, with non-habitable architectural projections and percentages being the same as for Cottages. Bungalows would offer flexible side yards that can form courtyards and outdoor living spaces. Where sited on a slope, these homes would be permitted to build limited stone walls out over the slope to better utilize outdoor living space. Each unit would have its own two-car garage, with one home being accessed directly from the main private drive while the other three would obtain access from a shared driveway/courtyard.

**Harmony Court** structures also would consist of approximately four single-family detached units organized in a group of four. These homes would be slightly larger than the bungalows. Each court would vary from one to three stories in height and include an attached two car garage. Maximum structure height would be 28 feet, with varied roof pitches. One three-story element (with a maximum height of up to 35 feet) within each cluster may be included to provide visual interest, and non-habitable roof line projections and percentages would be the same as for Cottages. All four homes would share an entrance from a private driveway/ courtyard. Where

sited on a slope, these homes would be permitted to build limited stone walls out over the hill to maximize the outdoor living space.

**Farmhouses** would be multi-family homes consisting of approximately five DUs each; in a multi-family building. To fit in with the countryside setting, these buildings have been designed to appear as large single-family residences rather than a grouping of “flats,” or apartments. Farmhouses would range from three to four stories generally 38 feet in height. Maximum structure height would be 42 feet, with additional non-habitable projections being the same as described for Cottages. A smaller single-level studio unit (approximately 1,000 square feet) may be provided on the ground floor.

**Granary** structures have been designed to look as if they are historic farm buildings that have been added on to and repurposed from their original use to accommodate residential lofts. Each granary would contain approximately 15 units. The buildings would be two-to-three stories above a partially underground parking garage, with a court in the middle of each building that is open to the sky on each floor. In keeping with a more “agribusiness” sized structure, maximum structure height would be 45 feet. A roof top entertainment space could be provided on the top level. Architectural expressions such as gables, spires, outlooks, steeples, chimneys, and similar non-inhabitable architectural elements may extend up eight feet above the highest roof elevation and provide roofline projections of up to five percent of the overall granary structure rooflines.

Despite the name, this housing type is not limited to a “literal” granary style. It may take on the characteristics of an old schoolhouse, inn, mill, or other re-purposed community building use that is found within a village reflecting a rural agricultural heritage.

### **2.2.3 Community Commercial/Recreation Areas and Open Space**

#### **Retail/Commercial Uses**

The Project would provide a community destination location—the Center House—just south of the primary Project entry. The total square footage of structures associated with this use is approximately 5,000 square feet, to be accommodated within a small footprint and two stories in height. The building façade may be designed to appear as an authentic historic structure with old faded signage painted on the exterior or other features that contribute to the character of the community. A potential design is presented in Figure 7. Such decoration would be excluded from the allowable sign area calculations presented in Section 2.2.9, *Signage*, below.

This limited commercial land use category is intended to accommodate a private clubhouse or limited overnight accommodations as small public commercial uses (such as a coffee shop). Parking is provided for this area, accommodating both Project residents and community members who don’t want to walk to the facility. Landscaping, including trees, would be incorporated into the parking area. This use would be centrally located, easily accessed by regional multi-use trails, and situated across from the planned equestrian ranch.

#### **Open Space/Recreation**

On-site undeveloped open space consists of biological open space (BOS) and HOA maintenance district areas, such as parks without buildings, community gardens and brush management zones.

These open space uses combined would account for approximately 75 acres, or 68 percent of the Project site area (Figure 8).

A BOS lot totaling approximately 35 acres would be dedicated on site, and would consist of natural (non-irrigated) areas located beyond the Project brush management zones. A limited building zone (LBZ), to contain no habitable structures, and to fit within the overall fuel management zone, also would be provided on site. The fuel management zone would extend 100 feet from the BOS toward Project residences. Acreage associated with legal easements anticipated to remain post Project development (i.e., a 20-foot trail easement sited on the existing primitive trail in the southern portion of the Project property) has been deleted from the BOS acreage total.

Project development would be set back a minimum of 150 feet from riparian habitat in Escondido Creek. Steep slopes/scrub and the majority of coast live oak woodland on the Project's southern end also would be protected as part of Project BOS. The proximity of the residential uses to BOS protected through identification of the proposed development hardline could allow for views to natural areas and contribute to an atmosphere of openness.

Biological open space areas would be fenced off from the proposed development to reduce domestic animal access. In addition, signs would be placed along the edge of the biological open space and existing trails crossing the open space to deter human incursion. On-site BOS would be preserved in perpetuity and actively managed by a conservation entity in accordance with the Project Resource Management Plan.

Naturalized Open Space is made up of areas which may be graded during HGV South development, but would be revegetated with native and/or drought tolerant plant materials and, often, could be indistinguishable from natural open space. Revegetated slopes and drainage features fall into this category. For fire safety purposes, an irrigation system would be provided within naturalized open space areas. Naturalized open space areas represent approximately 20 acres or about 18 percent of HGV South.

Landscaped areas include modified hillsides behind homes, parkways along roadsides, open areas adjacent to roads, and sites that constitute prominent visual features. Landscaped areas would typically be irrigated permanently and would be planted with a combination of natives and exotics. Landscaped areas are scattered throughout the Project area and make up approximately 16 acres or 14 percent of HGV South.

A community destination location (the Center House) would consist of a landscaped and seating area providing visual amenities, a possible local community visual reference (as, if feasible, it would incorporate a restored locally known standing chimney that is a remnant of earlier area uses), and some limited retail/commercial options, as discussed above. The Center House would also feature electric vehicle charging stations. Edible landscaping features at the Center House, such as grapevines, citrus trees, and pomegranates, would reflect the agricultural character of the area. The commercial components of the Center House would be accessible to members of the community.

Approximately 4.1 acres of public and private parks are planned to be developed in HGV South. Seven public parks are planned, which would range from approximately 0.08 to 0.54 acre in size. A dog park is planned to be developed within the community as well as a basketball court adjacent to the Center House. Other public park uses are anticipated to include equestrian staging areas, barbecue areas, picnic tables, fitness greens and/or informal play areas. Public parks would be dedicated to the County.

The plan also includes six private parks, which would range from approximately 0.1 to 0.82 acre in size. The Center House (described above) includes the approximately 0.82-acre private park including, as feasible, the restored wood burning fireplace (planned to be restored to working order by the Project, if possible), as well as a pool/spa area, and potential barbecue/picnic area, play field, restrooms, gazebo, and/or other similar park uses. Other private parks would be developed as dual use (subsurface vault) storm water storage and treatment areas under recreational areas and community gardens. Private parks would be operated and maintained by a homeowner's association.

As discussed throughout this EIR, a system of public and private trails intended to serve pedestrians, equestrians, and other non-motorized forms of travel would weave throughout the Project and link to the planned off-site San Diego County trail system. In addition to providing an important equestrian and pedestrian circulation framework for the Project, the multi-use trail system would thread an element of landscape detail through the site and complement the open space and recreation areas. Anticipated rail fences, shade trees, and landscaping would add interest and variety to the multi-use trail system. Specific locations are described under the discussion of Access and Circulation, below.

### Visual Open Space

At buildout, the open space and recreational areas discussed above combine to total approximately 75 acres (or approximately 68 percent) of the Project site. These areas would not visually read as “developed” following Project completion and installation of revegetation and landscaping, and/or would not change from existing conditions.

#### **2.2.4 Access and Circulation**

Current access to the site is provided by Harmony Grove Road (the nearest primary east-west connector) and Country Club Drive, which trends north-south and abuts the Project on its northwestern extent. Project improvements would include improvements to the Country Club Drive segment south of Harmony Grove Road/improvements to the Escondido Creek crossing an intersection upgrades at the Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive junction, and provision of Project entries and internal streets. The Project Applicant also is coordinating with the County regarding planned improvements to the Escondido Creek crossing.

Country Club Drive in this area is currently constructed with a paved width of 20 feet and two 10-foot lanes (one in each direction). As described above, the approved HGV project will implement a multi-purpose trail on the west side of the road (improvement plans have already been approved by the County). HGV South proposed upgrades would result in a road built to an “enhanced” Rural Residential Collector standard, with regard to travel lanes.

A design for the future road at full buildout is shown in Figure 9a. The road improvements shown fit within the right-of-way approved for HGV in 2007 (and the above-noted improvement drawings, more recently approved in 2012), combined with Proposed Project right-of-way. The Project would implement the roadbed improvements, as well as the shoulder and sidewalk, on the east side of the road, where Country Club Drive is sited along Project frontage. Elements depicted on the west side of the road—shoulder, landscaping and multi-purpose trail consistent with the approved HGV project, and to abut the future Equestrian Ranch—are improvement conditions of the current HGV property owner. Striped crossings connecting the east and west sides of Country Club Drive would be located from each of the Project entries to the future multi-use trail on the west side of the road to accommodate pedestrians/equestrians in crossing the road. South of the southern Project entrance north of Cordrey Drive, the improved road would transition back to the existing two-lane configuration.

As part of HGV South, the northbound approach on Country Club Drive also would be improved. North of the bridge, and approaching the intersection with Harmony Grove Road, there would be one through lane, one dedicated right-turn lane, and one dedicated left-turn lane in addition to a southbound lane. This is consistent with the configuration of Country Club Drive as it joins Harmony Grove Road from the north. The new proposed configuration would improve the function of the Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road intersection, enhance safety, and provide for better circulation during horse events once the Equestrian Ranch is developed.

In addition to these roadway improvements, the current crossing of Escondido Creek would be substantially upgraded. When the creek floods, flood waters have historically been high enough that existing residents south of the creek cannot cross it. The existing at-grade, concrete pavement crossing, underlain by culverts and supported by substantial rip-rap, would be removed and replaced with a bridge. Pending final design, and subject to change if the bridge is implemented by others, the following assumptions allowed for a conservative (worst-case footprint) assessment of bridge environmental effects regardless of final specifics.

The bridge is anticipated to be approximately 250 feet long, and expected to accommodate two northbound and one southbound travel lanes. The bridge is expected to be supported on abutments at its northern and southern extents, with intermediate pier supports. Each pier would have a single column or pier wall, the precise shape of which would be determined during final design. The piers would be spaced at least 100 feet apart, to provide the widest possible section without bridge supports in the portion of the creek with running water. The slopes at the ends of the bridge would be protected by erosion-control measures, such as rock slope protection to protect the abutments scour during storm events.

The bridge superstructure would be a cast-in-place, pre-stressed concrete box girder. The proposed roadway would consist of the above-noted three travel lanes, the multi-use trail connection to the approved HGV multi-purpose trail, the pathway on the east side, and additional paved shoulders on each side of roadway (see Figure 9b). The bridge girder (located below the travel lanes) would be designed to carry utilities north and south of the bridge, and would be expected to contain the Project potable water, as well having the potential for reclaimed water and additional utility lines. It is also expected that any bridge approved for this area would be tall enough to accommodate wildlife crossings within the riparian zone and would also accommodate 100-year flood flows.

Two primary Project entries would be provided from Country Club Drive south of the intersection with Harmony Grove Road. The first would be located approximately one-quarter mile south of the intersection with Harmony Grove Road and would provide direct access to the destination gathering location and Cottage and Bungalow housing. A second entrance would be located approximately 200 feet north of Cordrey Drive and would provide direct access to Farmhouse and Harmony Court housing. A third entry to the Project would provide access to the WTWRF in particular (as well as a secondary access/egress point from the Project) without requiring users to wind through the larger residential neighborhood (see Figure 10a). These intersections would be stop-controlled from the Project side.

### **Private Project Roads**

Figure 10a schematically illustrates internal (on-site) roadways. Points of access to HGV South would be via Country Club Drive. All internal roads would be private. To satisfy fire safety concerns, portions of the two main roadways entering the site from Country Club Drive would be three-lane roadways (refer to Figures 10b and 10c). The remaining private drives are two lane roadways (see Figures 10d through 10g). Private road types within the Project would be landscaped with a variety of plantings as illustrated in the noted road cross-sections, which would provide a unifying theme of plantings throughout the development.

As noted above, a system of public and private trails would link key open space features of the Project site, as well as connecting to off-site areas and planned public trails (Figure 11). Trails would be constructed with decomposed granite or similar soft surface material and would comply with appropriate San Diego County Trail Designation and County Design and Construction Guidelines. Fencing would be used as needed. The primitive trail easement identified on Figure 11 would remain unimproved so as to minimize impacts to open space resources. Public multi-use trail easements would be offered for dedication to the County; private trails internal to the Project would be maintained by the Project HOA.

As discussed above, the HGV-implemented primary multi-use trail would extend southerly of Harmony Grove Road along Country Club Drive on the west side of the road, and is intended to provide access to areas south of Harmony Grove Road and the approved equestrian ranch at HGV. This trail would constitute part of the County-identified Country Club Drive Trail (Trail 04),<sup>2</sup> planned to extend approximately 1.66 miles overall from the northern extent of HGV southerly to where Country Club Drive begins to trend west. At the southern Project entry, the trail would cross over Country Club Drive and end on the Project at another trail intersection (Trail 13). A five-foot decomposed granite pathway also would be provided by the Project along the east side of Country Club Drive, from Harmony Grove Road to the southern Project entry.

On-site portions of three County trails (Trails 11, 12 and 13), would be built as six to eight-foot trails, as depicted on Figure 11. These trails would be variously located along internal Project streets, adjacent to planned community gardens in non-BOS open space, and along the western Project boundary within the overall development-modified footprint. These trail segments would be portions of the:

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<sup>2</sup> County Trails Program Community Trails Master Plan (2005)

- Lake Hodges Trail (11), extending across the Project approximately 0.55 mile from Country Club Drive east to the County/Escondido line.
- Summit Trail (12), depicted in the Community Trails Master Plan as extending southerly approximately 0.21 mile from the Lake Hodges Trail into the heart of the Project.
- Elfin Forest Trail (13), trending west and then south from the Summit Trail along the western Project boundary to the County/Escondido line.<sup>3</sup>

Beyond the residential development footprint, the route identified for Trail 13 would enter open space, and would be improved to be a four-to-six foot trail within a 20-foot easement granted by the Project to the County. Trail 13 is routinely used by the existing local community. This currently unimproved trail continues south to meet the east-west trending Del Dios Highlands Trail in the DDHP. Trail 12 would not enter open space, but would be 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.

Excluding only one small street in the northeast portion of the Project, pedestrian trails also would wind through the residential neighborhoods on each residential street. To maintain the rural character of the area, decomposed granite or similar soft surface material is preferred for the walkways along the private drives within the project site. Light colored, stained, or painted concrete sidewalks also would be permitted.

A secondary and northernmost entry to the Project (north of the WTWRF) would provide a good entry/exit point for pedestrians/bike-riding residents wishing to access points within the northern portion of the development without continuing southerly to the primary entrance. The landscaping required under the Project Conceptual Landscape Plan would shield the surrounding wall from users along this access point where it might otherwise be visible.

### **2.2.5 Walls and Fences**

A component of the landscape infrastructure would be low freestanding and retaining walls as well as equestrian themed fencing (primarily along trails and pathways). The primary role of Project walls and fences is to establish a sense of place while enhancing the overall rural character of the development. The walls and fences that occur throughout the project have been designed to provide privacy, as well as a sense of continuity. At the same time, walls and fences would provide as many opportunities for views as possible. Figures 12a and 12b schematically depict typical wall and fence styles.

#### **Project Identification/Entry Walls**

Walls would be used to delineate entries and accent points and to bring detail to the common elements of the project. Entry walls would be sited on both sides of the entry streets (A and C) into the Project from Country Club Drive. These would be low walls (4.5 feet tall or less) with possible pilaster elements (up to approximately five feet in height). Similar low walls may

<sup>3</sup> The Trails Master Plan also identifies the Escondido Creek Trail (14), just north of the Project, trending along the Escondido Creek drainage for approximately 2.16 miles. That trail is off site, and no modifications are planned.

introduce entries to the different village neighborhoods within the Project, and would be incorporated as appropriate into Project park areas, as described below.

### **Residential Privacy Walls and Fencing**

A variety of fences and/or walls would be implemented throughout the Project. For most residential structures, barriers of various materials may range up to approximately four feet in height. Granaries would have some outside walls attached to the building that are part of the entry stair or ramp with heights of six feet or more. The Center House area adjacent to Country Club Drive is currently planned to have wood post and rail, stone or masonry features ranging from less than three to six feet height, although these could vary during final design.

In addition to the fencing noted above, fencing also would be located along on-site trail sections, associated with the regional/community pathway along Country Club Drive, and potentially along or within recreational areas on site.

### **Park Walls and Fencing**

Several parks would have retaining wall features, as described below under that heading. The Dog Park would be fenced and gated, with fencing matching the post and mesh fencing shown on Figure 12b.

### **Retaining Walls**

A total of eight retaining walls are currently proposed for the Project based on the preliminary grading plan. Excluding the southern-most wall, each of these walls would be architecturally enhanced with natural or man-made facing stone, as depicted for small free-standing walls on Figure 12c. The preliminary wall parameters noted below provide a good basis for clarification of potential visibility based on general location and projected heights and lengths. Final specifics would be defined during final design.

Along the western side of Lots 1, and at the toe of slope, an approximately 400-foot long and 4-foot high retaining wall would be sited at the eastern edge (back) of the Dog Park. Dog Park greensward, intervening slope, and Country Club Drive landscaping would be located between Country Club Drive and this wall. At the southeastern extent of Lots 1, an approximately 80-foot long and 3-foot high wall would be sited at the back of the lot and below the slope between Lots 1 and Private Drive K. Around the southerly edge of the cul-de-sac associated with Private Drive G, an approximately 110-foot long and 2 to 8-foot high retaining wall would be located at the base of the slope on the north side of Lots 104 and 105. Just east of Lot 173, an approximately 300-foot long and 4-foot high retaining wall would be sited at the base of the slope of Lot 173, curving to meet the edge of Private Drive B. An approximately 200-foot long wall ranging from zero to approximately 20-feet in height and then returning to zero height would be sited at the base of the slope southwest of Lots 152 and 153, abutting a greensward interior to the Project. This wall would be plantable (e.g., concrete geo-grid) and would be covered in self-clinging vines, with irrigation provided at the base of the wall. It would primarily face Project BOS to the south. Roughly midpoint in the slope below Lots 137, 140, 141, 144 and 145, a wall approximately 2-to-4 feet in height would trend roughly north-south for approximately 450 feet. Mixed use trail and slope plantings would separate this wall from

off-site residential property backyards located to the west. A final retaining wall would be located along the eastern boundary of the public park area southerly of the Center House. This wall would be approximately 500-feet long and 4 feet high, and would be separated from Country Club Drive by park uses (including a basketball court) and streetscape plantings north of Private Drive C.

### Noise Wall(s)

A single noise wall is recommended as mitigation for traffic noise adjacent to residences on Lots 123 and 124, adjacent to Country Club Drive west of Private Drive C (refer to Figure 12d). A solid wall height of approximately 5 feet, with no openings and approximate 20-foot long returns, would adequately abate noise for these lots.

### Potential Fire Wall(s)

Based on final design (ultimate structure height and precise setback from top of slope) six-foot fire-resistive walls may be required along the south development boundary in the western portion of the Project (possible for Lots 148, 149, 152, 153, and 156 through 158). If required, the location of this wall would be as shown on Figure 12e, at the southern portion of the development. Per the Project FPP, various designs are possible, so long as it provides a non-combustible, heat deflecting barrier. This could include a solid wall, or the bottom portion of this wall being solid block barrier and the upper portion being dual pane, with one pane tempered glass. These barriers would only be required if structure setbacks from the top of the slope:

1. do not attain minimum of 15 horizontal feet from top of slope to the farthest projection from a roof for single-story structures; and
2. 30 horizontal feet from top of slope to the farthest projection from a roof for two-story structures at the identified lot locations.

Structures taller than two stories adjacent to slopes steeper than 2:1 may require a greater setback. During the site plan review process required for this Project, the FAHJ would review setbacks relative to appropriate fire standards and if the appropriate setback is unavailable, walls would be implemented along one or more of these lots. For lots where the code-required setback would not be possible, installation of a six-foot tall, non-combustible, heat-deflecting, wall would be provided for additional heat and flame deflection. This wall may be a combination of masonry and dual pane (one pane tempered glazing) materials. Although the potential need for such a barrier is not certain, and may not be required, Figure 12f 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.

### **Trail Fencing**

Multi-use trail post-and-rail fencing could include any of the following materials: wood, masonry, stone or composite. This fencing would be 42 to 48 inches in height.

## 2.2.6 Lighting

The Proposed Project includes lighting elements to both accent community focal elements and to provide safety. Lighting for the Proposed Project is designed to use the least amount of lighting possible, be energy efficient, and still be in compliance with state and local regulations for safety, and to adhere to the County Light Pollution Code (LPC) and dark skies policies. Materials may include metal, wood, composite material, and masonry.

Prohibited lighting includes fluorescent, high-pressure sodium, laser, floodlights, lights that move or flash, and searchlights; light fixtures would be equipped with appropriate reflection and shielded to prevent illumination of the adjacent land uses/areas, and all bulbs and fixtures would be non-glare. Exterior light fixtures would provide adequate lighting for Project walkways and where possible would be incorporated into building design and restricted to the first (ground) floor.

Consistent with the rustic character of Project site and surrounding area, street lighting would be minimal (see Figures 13a and 13b). Themed streetlights would be provided at on-site road intersections within the Project for safety and directional purposes. Full cut-off light fixtures and glare louvers would be utilized to ensure that light rays are projected downward and light spillage onto adjacent properties is minimized.

Project lights overall would be low level, timed, directed downward and screened to minimize Project impacts on the dark sky and minimize spillover onto adjacent properties. 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. Any additional up lights provided to define a sense of place and highlight landscape features would be turned off at 11:00 p.m., as conditioned in the Project Specific Plan

At the Project entries, low voltage lights would be used to illuminate vertical planes such as signs and walls, and to light paths and sidewalks. Additional low voltage accent lighting would be directed off trees, rocks, and other natural features, as well as up toward Project signs. Ground-mounted can lights would be largely obscured by ground covers and shrubbery at the Project entrances. All Project lighting would be equipped with glare shields and louvers, allowing the light to be directed to specific focal points, and limiting glare as well as light spill.

Special consideration would be taken for any lighting along the riparian corridor to the north of the Project, including use of full cut-off lighting that accepts only long wavelength (580 nanometers [nm] or longer). Lights with permanent filters that filter all light below that standard also would be acceptable. Security lighting at the WTWRF would be shielded to limit spill and glare onto adjacent areas. Any lighting necessary for safety and code compliance in this area would be controlled by sensors to turn on only when needed. Pole lights would not exceed 14 feet and would be shielded. In this area, lighting on the Escondido Creek bridge would be located interior to the bridge, and directed down and inward to provide on-bridge lighting for non-vehicular users.

## 2.2.7 Utilities

The Proposed Project would require the extension of waste water and potable water pipelines, as well as gas, electric, and phone/cable lines throughout the development and, variously, to off-site connection points. All existing public utilities and services would be improved and new facilities would be constructed and available concurrent with need. All new on-site utility lines would be installed underground within improved roadbeds.

### Potable Water

Primary potable water service would be in a new 12-inch pipeline connecting to an existing potable line in Harmony Grove Road. Potable water would be brought to the Project south from the connection with the Harmony Grove Road line over the Project-installed bridge, and then installed within Country Club Drive. For purposes of redundancy, the Project also would hook into an existing eight-inch water line near the western terminus of Country Club Drive (near the Harmony Grove Spiritualist Center). The connecting pipeline to the Project also would be eight inches in width and would be sited within roadbed from the Project boundary to the tie-in point (Figure 14a). Within the Project, all potable water lines would be located within roadbed, and would extend to serve each residential use.

### Wastewater

The Project assumes construction of a stand-alone facility located at the northerly extent of the development.<sup>4</sup> It also would result in two wastewater facilities being located within 600 feet of each other on either side of Escondido Creek. Both facilities would perform similar functions and operate in a similar manner. Although duplicative, this conservative assumption was made in order to provide assumptions regarding the largest Project footprint necessary for plant facilities on the Project. The stand-alone plant would require an on-site influent pump station. The pump station would be approximately 10 feet in width, 10 feet in length and 10 feet high (all recessed into the ground).

Two design options could apply to the on-site plant: the plant would consist of Aeromod or Ovivo facilities. Because the Aeromod plant would be the largest of the two stand-alone facilities, it is described below, which allows for a worst-case impact assessment.

Project design includes an enclosed 0.4-acre on-site WTWRF (refer to Figure 14b). A summary of major plant components includes the:

- **Equalization basin** to balance out variations in flow by storing a portion of the peak flows received for treatment in the plant during low-flow periods, and incorporating the **Headworks** to provide fine screening of the influent wastewater.
- **Secondary treatment areas to include** aeration basins and anoxic basins performing the activated sludge process along with biological nitrogen removal as well as clarifier basins

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<sup>4</sup> As described in the Project EIR Chapter 4.0, Alternatives, alternative design scenarios were evaluated for the treatment of wastewater. Of the possible scenarios, the full on-site WTWRF proposed for the Project would result in the greatest visual impacts, and was therefore included in this analysis as a worst case.

to settle most of the solids out of the wastewater to yield a clarified flow that goes to filters for further turbidity removal

- **Filters** for further removal of turbidity to produce reclaimed water meeting Title 22 standards for effluent clarity.
- **Chlorine contact basins** for disinfection of the reclaimed water by chlorine solution.
- **Residual solids processing.** The Aero-Mod process typically includes digester basins for further reduction of the settled solids produced by the treatment process.
- **Equipment building,** also providing space for employees to store their personal items, restrooms and showers for employees, some desk space and a small laboratory for use in operational control of the plant would be constructed on site.
- **Non-compliant effluent storage tank(s)** to provide 24 hours of storage.

The WTWRF would include each of the facilities noted above as well as a small parking lot. As noted above, the on-site plant would be located in the northwestern portion of the Project. A 2:1 slope would separate the facility from Country Club Drive. The treatment basins would be located approximately eight feet downslope (and southerly) from the plant. The WTWRF would be enclosed by a solid six-foot high wall, and screened with landscape plantings. The building would be one story, no higher than 25 feet, and would reflect architectural characteristics consistent with the rest of the Proposed Project. The intent is to create the impression of an out-building cluster of agrarian barn structures. Design details would include: varied building massing; gable roof profiles with standing-seam materials to provide textural interest; horizontal siding; exposed, simple beams and columns; carriage style stable and man doors; cupolas and weather vanes; and roof dormers. The structures would be screened by the landscaping, and lighting for the facility would not be any higher than the height of the equipment and only activated when workers are present. All mechanical equipment would be housed within buildings or noise-attenuating covers.

All of the Ovivo plant elements would easily fit within the footprint identified on Figure 14b. An expanded description of the plant (Ovivo design) is included in Appendix A of Appendix Q to the Project EIR. Architectural detailing could match that described above, and the surrounding wall also would be a consistent design element for this scenario.

## **Recycled Water**

On-site generated wastewater would result in production of reclaimed effluent per applicable regulatory standards for irrigation of on-site landscaping. The Project includes a recycled water system distributed throughout the site via pipes in Project streets.

## **Drainage**

Currently, there are no drainage improvements on site, and drainage flows overland. The Proposed Project would generally maintain existing drainage patterns, but also would recreate a drainage through the central portion of the site that had largely been eliminated. It would be

recreated and incorporated into the site plan as a naturalized open space area with a meandering swale, trails and adjacent community gardens.

### **2.2.8 Landscape**

The landscape theme would be consistent throughout the community, serving as a cohesive link for the various residential uses of the Proposed Project as well as visually integrating the Project with the surrounding area. Accent landscaping would be used at the entry to the Project site, and would incorporate focal plantings, decorative stone wall(s), and signage. Landscaping would be installed to enhance the visual character of the Project, provide amenities for pedestrians, encourage walkability throughout the Project, and provide erosion control. The Project landscape concept plan incorporates a number of design considerations.

As noted elsewhere in this chapter, a primary objective of the Project is to provide a cohesive theme that ties HGV South to HGV. Landscape design can be an effective tool for this. Utilizing consistent street trees and similar planting materials provides a continuous link between the two projects, strengthening the concept that the two projects constitute one unified village. Additional objectives include:

- Water conservation through a “Modified California Native” plant palette that reflects the natural setting and incorporates drought tolerant and native species, utilizes reclaimed water, and implements a water-efficient irrigation system.
- Provision of amenities that contribute to a pleasant and comfortable walk or bike ride.
- Reduction in wildfire threat through incorporation of adequate fuel modification zones and utilizing plant materials with an inherent resistance to fire.

The landscape design for HGV South is derived primarily from natural land forms and local conditions. When selecting planting material, consideration was given to the natural landform, coastal sage/chaparral habitats, and mature oaks and sycamores which follow water courses through the site. The landscape design concept reflects the natural setting in and around the site, as well as the dense riparian corridor that edges the northern Project boundary. Informal arrangements of plant materials in development as a whole, combined with more formal, tended landscapes closer to homes, support a more rural landscape effect. Where appropriate, landscaping would be designed to optimize energy savings--providing shade to the homes in the spring and summer and allowing light in the fall and winter.

A conceptual landscape plan identifies a series of landscape zones reflecting on-site conditions: Valley, Hillside, Riparian, Natural/Transitional, Biological Open Space, Special Use Area, and Wastewater Treatment Area. These general zones are schematically depicted on Figure 15a. Figure 15b schematically depicts planting areas and Project-important call-outs (including container sizes at installation). Specific plant lists developed for each of the zones described below are listed in Table 1. Although the final landscape plan may vary in specifics, prohibitions against invasives, requirements for FAHJ review of the final landscape, and overall plant coverage is expected to remain the same.

**Table 1  
PROJECT LANDSCAPE PALETTE**

<b>Typical Valley Landscape Zone Palette</b>	
<b>• Primary Theme Streetscape (Country Club Drive)</b>	
Shinus molle	California Pepper*
Quercus species	Oak
Platanus racemosa	California Sycamore
Tristania conferta	Brisbane Box
<b>• Internal Village Streetscape</b>	
Agonis flexuosa	Peppermint Tree
Arbutus unedo	Strawberry Tree
Cinnamomum camphora	Camphor Tree
Fraxinus angustifolia 'Raywood'	Ash
Lagerstroemia species	Crape Myrtle
Liquidambar styraciflua 'Festival'	American Sweetgum
Magnolia grandiflora 'Majestic Beauty'	Southern Magnolia
Quercus virginiana	Southern Live Oak
Tristania conferta	Brisbane Box
<b>Typical Hillside Landscape Zone Palette</b>	
<b>• Hillside Landscape</b>	
Geijera parviflora	Australian Willow
Lophostemon conferta	Brush Box
Platanus racemosa	California Sycamore
Quercus agrifolia	Coast Live Oak
Rhus lancea	African Sumac
Sambucus mexicana	Blue Elderberry
Tristania conferta	Brisbane Box
Quercus Virginia	Southern Live Oak
Malmosa laurina	Laurel Sumac
Heteromeles arbutifolia	Toyon
Rhus integrifolia	Lemonade Berry
Vitis variety	Grape
Citrus variety	Lemon, Lime, Orange
Punica granatum variety	Pomegranate
<b>• Internal Landscape and Streetscape</b>	
Agonis flexuosa	Peppermint Tree
Arbutus unedo	Strawberry Tree
Fraxinus angustifolia 'Raywood'	Ash
Lagerstroemia species	Crape Myrtle
Quercus virginiana	Southern Live Oak
Lophostemon conferta	Brush Box

**Table 1 (cont.)  
PROJECT LANDSCAPE PALETTE**

<b>Typical Riparian Landscape Zone Palette</b>	
Alnus rhombifolia	White Alder
Laurus nobilis	Sweet Bay
Platanus racemosa	California Sycamore
Populus fremontii	Western Cottonwood
Populus nigra italica	Lombardy Poplar
Quercus agrifolia	Coast Live Oak
Salix species	Willow
Sambucus mexicana	Blue Elderberry
<b>Typical Natural/Transitional Landscape Zone Palette</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Transition Planting Zones</b></li> </ul>	
Heteromeles arbutifolia	Toyon
Malosma laurina	Laurel Sumac
Quercus species	Oak
Rhus integrifolia	Lemonade Berry
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Native Landscape</b> – Vegetation in these areas consist primarily of grasses and Scrub/Chaparral habitat.</li> </ul>	
<b>Special Use Areas Landscape Zone Palette</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Private Recreation Facility and Limited Commercial Use</b></li> </ul>	
Schinus molle	California Pepper
Ginkgo biloba (male trees)	Maidenhair Tree
Magnolia grandiflora	Southern Magnolia
Quercus suber	Cork Oak
Populus italica nigpa	Lombardy Poplar
Vitis variety	Grape
Citrus variety	Lemon, Lime, Orange
Punica granatum variety	Pomegranite
<b>Biological Open Space (BOS) Landscape Zone Palette</b>	
<p>Biological open space includes the Escondido Creek area (off site) and the large biological open space to south which consists of southern mixed chaparral and a stand of mature California live oaks. These areas would remain largely undisturbed. Where restoration is needed, native plant species would be used to match the existing vegetation.</p>	
<b>Wastewater Treatment and Weather Storage</b>	
<p>Trees such as Brisbane box will be used in combination with native shrubs.</p>	
<b>Landscape Zone Palette</b>	
Tristania conferta	Brisbane Box
Platanus racemosa	California Sycamore
Heteromeles arbutifolia	Toyon
Malosma laurina	Laurel Sumac
<b>Shrubs, Vines and Groundcover**</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Shrubs 3' – 8' Evergreen, Slope Control (Interior Slope)</b></li> </ul>	
Agave attenuata	Foxtail Agave
Aloe strata	Coral Aloe
Cistus x canescens	Rock Rose
Cistus ladanifer maculatus	Brown-Eyed Rock Rose
Heteromeles arbutifolia	Toyon

**Table 1 (cont.)  
PROJECT LANDSCAPE PALETTE**

<b>Shrubs, Vines and Groundcover** (cont.)</b>	
<b>• Shrubs 3' – 8' Evergreen, Slope Control (Interior Slope) (cont.)</b>	
Leptospermum scoparium 'Ruby Glow'	Ruby Glow New Zealand Tea Tree
Rhus ovata	Sugar Bush
Rhaphiolepis indica 'Ballerina'	Ballerina Indian Hawthorne
Rosemarinus officinalis 'Tucson Blue'	Tuscan Blue Rosemary
Salvia leucantha	Mexican Sage
Salvia mellifera	Black Sage
<b>• Groundcover – Evergreen, Slope Erosion Control (Interior Slopes)</b>	
Baccharis pilularis 'Twin Peaks'	Dwarf Coyote Brush
Ceanothus griseus horiz yankee pt	Yankee Point Ceanothus
Myoporum parvifolium	Prostrate Myoporum
Rosmarinus officinalis 'Huntington Carpet'	Huntington Carpet
<b>• Groundcover – Evergreen, Slope Erosion Control (Exterior Slopes)</b>	
Artemisia palmeri	San Diego Sagewort
Baccharis pilularis 'Twin Peaks'	Dwarf Coyote Brush
Comarostaphylis diversifolia ssp.	Summer Holly
Ceanothus verrucosus	Wart-Stemmed Ceanothus
Encelia californica	Coast Sunflower
Eriophyllum confertiflorum	Golden-Yarrow
Eschscholzia californica	California Poppy
Hazardia squarrosa	Yellow Squirrel Cover
Heteromeles arbutifolia	Toyon
Lotus scoparius	Deerweed
Malosma Laurina	Laurel Sumac
Mimulus aurantiacus puniceus	Red Monkeyflower
Nemophila menziesii	Baby Blue Eyes
Rhus integrifolia	Lemonade Berry
<b>• Open Space Adjacent Riparian Corridor &amp; Detention Slopes</b>	
Artemisia palmeri	San Diego Sagewort
Carex spissa	San Diego Sedge
Iva Hayasiana	San Diego Marsh Elder
Juncus Acutus	Spiny Rush
Mimulus guttatus	Golden Monkey Flower
<b>• Hydroseed – Coastal Sage Scrub Mix</b>	
Artemisia californica	Coastal Sagebrush
Encelia californica	Bush Sunflower
Eriogonum fasciculatum	California Buckwheat
Eriogonum parvifolium	Sea Cliff Buckwheat
Eriophyllum confertiflorum	Golden Yarrow
Eschscholzia californica	California Poppy
Helianthemum scoparium	Rush Rose
Lotus scoparius	Deerweed
Lupinus bicolor	Pygmy-Leaf Lupine
Lupinus succulentus	Arroyo Lupine
Mimulus puniceus	Bush Monkeyflower

**Table 1 (cont.)  
PROJECT LANDSCAPE PALETTE**

<b>Shrubs, Vines and Groundcover** (cont.)</b>	
<b>• Hydroseed – Coastal Sage Scrub Mix (cont.)</b>	
Salvia mellifera	Black Sage
Vulpia microstachys	Small Fescue
<b>• Temporary Pad Hydroseed (Non-irrigated)</b>	
Bromus carinatus ‘Cucamonga’	Cucamonga Brome
Trifolium willdenovii	Tomcat Clover
Vulpia microstachys	Small Fescue

\*Primary streetscape tree. To be planted in formal rows, occasionally interrupted with small groves of Oak, Sycamore, and Brisbane box.

\*\* Shrub categories would be used throughout the Zones identified above, as appropriate.

### **Valley Landscape Zone**

Lower elevations of HGV South – what is essentially the central valley of the Project – would have a traditional landscape character and employ an eclectic selection of plant material that would be permanently irrigated. This is probably the most colorful and vibrant of the various Project landscape zones. Several elements of this zone are notable.

*General streetscapes* would utilize formal street tree spacing to define pedestrian circulation routes along roadways and provide shade. Internal village streets would be planted with small to medium canopy trees, primarily broadleaf evergreen, in formal rows. Carefully selected plant species would minimize water consumption in the landscape. Stabilized decomposed granite generally would be used for trails interior to the project site.

*Country Club Drive* provides access to the Project. The landscape character of this roadway would reflect the rural history of the site. Consistent with HGV, from the Escondido Creek crossing south to the southern Project entrance, Country Club Drive would contain rows of California Pepper<sup>5</sup> interrupted occasionally with informal groups of Oak, Sycamore, and Brisbane Box. Details such as wood rail fences and low stone walls would be expected to reinforce the rural theme. In addition to a stabilized decomposed granite path on the eastern side of the road, the west side of this roadway ultimately will accommodate a 10-foot decomposed granite multi-use trail.

*Community Gardens* would provide an opportunity for residents to grow edible fruits and vegetables along the northern edge of this zone of the reconstructed drainage (see Figure 5).

### **Hillside Landscape Zone**

The Hillside Landscape Zone includes the hillsides that frame the lower elevations of the site. Landscaping within this area would be informal and include groves of predominantly tall, open trees and clumps of native shrubs and possible agricultural landscape features such as fruit tree orchards. Trees near homes would be selected and sited to provide shade and scale while framing views to on- and off-site scenic features. The eastern and southern edges would transition to

<sup>5</sup> This tree would not be planted within 50 feet of Escondido Creek.

scrub communities. Planting would occur in informal groves with Brisbane box (*Tristania conferta*) and evergreen canopy trees. An informal arrangement of plant materials would contribute to the overall rural character. For fire protection, this area would be permanently irrigated.

### **Riparian Landscape Zone**

A restored water course that traverses the site would be used to support a riparian habitat landscape zone. Because of its density and height (with accompanying related visual shielding properties), this landscape type also would be used along the western Project boundary. This habitat would be characterized by large oak, sycamore, and poplar trees as well as other appropriate small trees, shrubs and groundcovers, and would create a major visual amenity for the community. For fire protection, this area would be permanently irrigated.

### **Natural/Transitional Landscape Zone**

Large open areas that typically lie at the perimeter of a project would be used to transition from the HGV South Valley and Hillside landscape zones to native vegetation. A limited number of these transitions also would occur within internal Project areas, and not merely at the Project edges. Transitional areas would contain lower growing trees that are native or indigenous and blend with natural or more ornamental landscapes. Native landscape vegetation within this zone primarily would be grasses and coastal sage or chaparral habitat plants. As part of this program, an assessment of on-site trees for retention would be made and, as appropriate, steps taken to encourage their continued survival. While low-water-use plant materials would be employed, these transition areas would require irrigation on a temporary or permanent basis. Graded slopes and the 100-foot brush management area next to perimeter development would be in this Natural/Transitional Landscape Zone.

### **Biological Open Space Landscape Zone**

This zone reflects on-site native habitat that would remain largely undisturbed by grading and would be protected post-development through open space set-aside. A trail easement in the southern portion of the Project has been deleted from BOS totals, as described in Section 2.2.3, above. No planting would be allowed within this zone that is not part of a Project-specific approved revegetation or enhancement plan. It incorporates the steeper southern mixed chaparral-covered slopes and ravine with oaks in the southern portion of the Project, as well as the on-site portion of the Escondido Creek drainage buffer/native habitat located south of the creek.

### **Special Use Area Landscape Zone**

The Special Use Areas contain an informal and eclectic mix of tree forms, shrubs, and ground cover, including agricultural landscape features to provide a rich setting and backdrop for ongoing functions. The small parks would incorporate some of this planting scheme as accents. Some fruit trees would be sited at the edge of Dog Park and Basketball Park just above the retaining walls. Fruit trees also would be installed at the base of some of the large slopes next to streets.

*Commercial/Civic Area.* This area includes private recreation and limited commercial uses. It contains remnants of a fireplace that would be restored, if feasible. Planting would include iconic western trees to provide shade as well as a backdrop for private or community functions. The mix of elements described above would be more pronounced at the park and recreation area around the Center House. Anticipated tree types include some “California” Pepper Trees, some Lombardy Poplars, and some fruit trees such as Pomegranates.

*Residential Sites.* As noted above, landscaping would support a rural effect by using informal arrangements of plant materials in the broader community, and a more formal, tended landscape closer to the homes. The common area for clustered residences would employ a low water use, native/naturalized palette of plant materials. Trees would be located so as to provide shade for structures and outdoor spaces in the spring and summer months, while allowing sun in the fall and winter months. The potential for fruit trees located at the base of some large slopes next to streets would not be typical in the residential landscape.

*Wastewater Treatment.* Landscape would provide a primary screening element for the proposed WTWRF planted in informal clusters using both trees and large shrubs. Trees such as Brisbane box would be used in combination with native shrubs. An informal arrangement would provide visual buffering of the facilities while also blending with the character of the overall village landscape. To a limited degree, the overall special use landscape zone described above could be installed at the edge of the dual use park adjacent to the WTWRF.

*Shrubs, Vines and Groundcover.* In addition to the screening of the project with trees, the use of taller shrubs is proposed to soften the visual impact associated with the development. Lower shrubs and ground cover also would be used planted to control erosion and blend the Project into the existing hillside features. The proposed drought-tolerant shrub palette would incorporate naturalized and native species to be planted throughout the Project. The naturalized species would be used within the Project on interior slopes between residential units as well as those areas which are between units and roadways. The native species would be planted from containers and hydro-seed mixes around transitional edges adjacent to undisturbed open space. The two interior and exterior shrub and small tree palettes would range up to 10 feet in height and up to 15 feet in breadth.

### **2.2.9 Signage**

Signs would be integrated into site and building design to create a unified appearance for the total development. A hierarchy of project identity signage (larger to smaller) would direct individuals through the site (see planned locations on Figure 16). Project identification signage would be placed within low stone walls or pilaster landscape elements (with secondary identification signage similar in appearance, but smaller in scale). Project identification signage would incorporate small scale landscape up-lighting. The maximum size of residential directory signage is limited to 25 square feet

“Way-finding” and informational signage would be located at intersections and decision points so as to generate the fewest number of signs. Signs depicting trail safety and rules could be located at strategic places along Project trails, as appropriate. In addition, signs would be placed

along the edge of the biological open space to deter human incursion. Historical interpretive signage may be established within the community center park area.

Natural materials would be prioritized, with other materials used as appropriate. Sign posts and other structural elements would be made of wood or metal with a white, earth tone, black, or natural stain finish. Reflective or bright colors would be avoided.

Specific to the community center/commercial use, signs may include a monument sign, awning valance or canopy signs, hanging signs, projecting signs, wall signs, single pole hanging signs, and window signs (no larger than 25 percent of the window on or behind which it is displayed).<sup>6</sup> Letter and symbol height would be limited to a maximum of 10 inches, and total sign area is limited to 1 square foot of sign area per linear foot of building length along Private Drive A and Private Drive J, up to a maximum of 90 square feet. If the building ultimately houses multiple tenants, one additional building directory sign not exceeding 10 square feet in size may be allowed at each public entrance.

Prohibited signs include neon signs, internally illuminated plastic signs, and back lit signs that appear to be internally illuminated.

#### **2.2.10 Grading and Construction Parameters**

The existing elevation for the Project site ranges from approximately 570 to 938 feet amsl. The lowest portion of the site is located in the northern portion of the property adjacent to the entry road. The highest portion is located adjacent to the southernmost boundary. Both the low and high points would remain the same post-construction. Along Country Club Drive, a gentle slope would increase in elevation from north to south in order to allow the potential for a gravity-flow sewer line. At the bridge over Escondido Creek, the difference in elevation between the southern and northern extents of the bridge would be approximately five feet, with the road tying into the existing intersection with Harmony Grove Road at the end of Project improvements.

The slope ratio of manufactured fill slopes would not exceed 2:1, and cut slopes would not exceed 1.5:1. Based on the preliminary grading plan, the maximum cut slope would be approximately 90 feet high, south of Private Drive B, and sited behind residential structures north of Private Drive B. The maximum fill slope would be approximately 80 feet in height, along the southwest side of the Project, and ultimately covered in landscaping. Finished grade of pad heights would range from approximately 630 feet amsl within the northern area of Lot 1 to approximately 728 feet amsl at the highest point of structure development within the central Project area.

Soil removed from the central portion of the site would be used to raise pad elevations above the Escondido Creek flood zone in the northern portion of the Project. During earth-moving operations, grading quantities would be balanced on site and there would be no need to import or export soil from/to off site.

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<sup>6</sup> Aesthetic design to look like historic rural signs painted on large building sides such as “barn advertising” that may be included on the community center/commercial use façade would not be considered “signage” within the meaning of this section.

An additional construction easement would be required in order to re-grade the creek bottom and accommodate construction activities such as construction vehicles, ongoing resident access, and temporary supports. This area would require approximately 100 feet on each side of the bridge.

For the purposes of environmental review throughout this EIR, assumptions also have been made regarding construction equipment operations. Particularly relevant for visual review is the potential need for a rock crusher to be located on site to break oversize rock generated by potential Project blasting.

### **2.2.11 Off-site Improvements**

Proposed off-site improvements assumed as part of the Project include roadway improvements to segments of Country Club Drive are described above.

Also described above, off-site utility connections would be completed within existing roads holding similar utilities, and are assumed to have already been excavated to depths required for utility installation. Water line extensions west of the site in Country Club Drive to its western terminus and north within Country Club Drive to the Harmony Grove Road intersection would not exceed approximately five feet in depth and would require a three-foot wide trench, to be patched to a four-foot width following installation. Reclaimed water lines trending north in Country Club Drive would have the same general parameters. All utilities crossing Escondido Creek are expected to do so in cables attached to the Project bridge, and would not result in subsurface excavation or post-bridge construction disturbance to the creek. Potential additional utility lines in Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive north of Escondido Creek would be sited within roadways already containing similar utilities.

### **2.2.12 Construction Phasing**

Market conditions, funding for public facilities, and similar conditions beyond the control of the developer would drive the overall implementation period. Nonetheless, a likely approach to Project development has been designed that would ensure a logical and orderly expansion of roadways, infrastructure, and the Project overall.

The first phase focuses on overall on-site mass grading, and is expected to require approximately three months. On-site infrastructure installation (roads and utilities) would follow (over a period of six months), followed by finish grading of lots (over an additional three months). The final phase would consist of “vertical” development of the Project, which is expected to take a little over two years (27 months). Landscaping would be installed as possible and during buildout. Immediately following mass grading, the area would be hydroseeded to address potential storm runoff, as well as minimizing views to raw soil. The entry planting, Country Club Drive frontage, interior roads and manufactured slopes would all be planted when finish grading is completed for each area in order to provide a visual amenity for viewers of the Project and the greatest amount of vegetation maturity in the shortest period of time. Specific lot planting would occur on a rolling basis as homes are developed and readied for sale. Coast live oak trees used for slope plantings on the manufactured slope north of the granaries would be installed from 36-inch boxes.

Off-site infrastructure (utility upgrades) would be initiated at the same time as on-site infrastructure installation, and would continue through finish grading on site. This would include all elements necessary to support proposed developed uses; such as construction of Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road intersection improvements, pump station improvements, and connection of all potable water, electrical, etc., utility lines between these existing facilities and the Project boundary. Bridge construction would take approximately one year, and would be accomplished within the overall Project timeframe identified above.

The third quarter of 2018 has been identified for assumed ground-breaking, with construction completed in 2021. Dedication of Project biological open space areas adjacent to any area for which grading activities are proposed would occur as first actions preceding grading, with concurrent monitoring of construction activities adjacent to any open space set aside.

### **2.3 Land Use Designations and Zoning**

The entire project site is located within the northeastern-most portion of the Harmony Grove Subarea of the San Dieguito Community Planning Area in the County's 2011 General Plan. Currently, the site is located within the Semi-Rural Regional Category of the General Plan. The existing Land Use Designation is Semi-Rural Residential (SR-0.5) for nearly the entire site (approximately 110.5 acres) and Rural Lands (RL-20) for a tiny area (approximately 0.5 acre) located at the northerly portion of the site. The Semi-Rural Residential (SR-0.5) portion would allow a density of 2 DUs per gross acre, while the Rural Lands (RL-20) segment requires a minimum of 20 acres per DU. Zoning also assumes 0.5-acre lots, with the majority of the site designated as A70 (Limited Agriculture), and a triangular shaped portion in the southwestern site corner designated RR (Rural Residential).

The Project proposes a GPA to reclassify the existing Regional Category of the property from Semi-Rural to Village and would also re-designate the existing land use to Village Residential (VR-10.9), as well as associated CPA to revise portions of the plan for GP conformance and adjust the Village boundary line. As noted, Proposed Project implementation would include approval of the following actions: (1) a GPA/CPA and Rezone from A70 and RR to SP (Specific Plan) to accommodate the proposed development; (2) an SP to establish criteria such as height limits, design parameters, and landscaping palettes; (3) a TM to subdivide the property; and (4) an MUP for an on-site WTWRF.

North of Harmony Grove Road, a 468-acre area is designated the HGV Specific Plan Area, currently under construction. Other adjacent County General Plan land use designations include Semi-rural residential (SR-0.5, SR-2 and SR-4 categories), Rural Lands (RR-20) and Open Space (Conservation). The eastern portion of the Project site approaches the City of Escondido.

### **2.4 Regulatory Framework**

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.

#### **2.4.1 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 were formerly 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. In the vicinity of the Project site, Elfin Forest Road/Harmony Grove Road, from the San Marcos city limits to Escondido city limits, is identified as a scenic corridor in the COS Element and is included as part of the County Scenic Highway System. A Harmony Grove Road segment of this roadway is located just north of Escondido Creek at its closest point, which is just north of the Project site.

#### **2.4.2 San Dieguito Community Plan**

The San Dieguito Community Plan (August 2011) augments the 2011 General Plan and contains goals and policies specific to the overall San Dieguito community planning area. The Project site is located in the northeastern portion of the San Dieguito community planning area, within a focused Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove subarea. Substantial guidance related to aesthetics is located in the Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove Community Plan portion of the San Dieguito Community Plan.

#### **2.4.3 Resource Protection Ordinance**

The County's Resource Protection Ordinance (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. Sixty percent of the site contains slopes of less than 25 percent slope, while 40 percent of the site exceeds 25 percent slope. Of the 44.3 acres exceeding 25 percent slope, approximately 26.5 acres meet the definition of steep slopes under the County's RPO. This represents approximately 24 percent of Project site. Figures depicting steep slopes are addressed in Section 5.5.2 of this VIA.

#### **2.4.4 Dark Skies/Glare**

The 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.

## **2.5 Design Policies and Guidance**

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

### **2.5.1 County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element**

Specific elements relative to visual resources are described in the County COS Element (2011). Three goals and nine policies apply to the Proposed Project and are listed below.

**Goal COS-11** addresses preservation of scenic resources, including vistas of important natural and unique features, where visual impacts of development are minimized. Five applicable policies define elements of concern relative to Project analyses.

- COS-11.1 addresses protection of scenic resources and requires the protection of scenic highways, corridors, regionally significant scenic vistas, and natural features, including prominent ridgelines, dominant landforms, reservoirs, and scenic landscapes.
- COS-11.2 promotes scenic resource connections between regionally significant natural features, designated historic landmarks, and points of regional historic, visual, and cultural interest via designated scenic corridors, such as scenic highways and regional trails.
- COS-11.3 requires development within visually sensitive areas to minimize visual impacts and to preserve unique or special visual features, particularly in rural areas, through the following:
  - Creative site planning
  - Integration of natural features into the project
  - Appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape
  - Minimal disturbance of topography
  - Clustering of development so as to preserve a balance of open space vistas, natural features, and community character
  - Creation of contiguous open space networks

- COS-11.4 addresses coordination with adjacent federal and State agencies, local jurisdictions, and tribal governments to protect scenic resources and corridors that extend beyond the County’s land use authority, but are important to the welfare of County residents.
- COS-11.7 requires new development to place utilities underground and encourage “undergrounding” in existing development to maintain viewsheds

**Goal COS-12** addresses preservation of ridgelines and steep hillsides for their character and scenic value. Two policies could apply to the Project.

- COS-12.1 protects undeveloped ridgelines and steep hillsides by maintaining semi-rural or rural designations on these areas.
- COS-12.2 requires development to preserve existing physical features by being located down and away from ridgelines so that structures are not silhouetted against the sky.

**Goal COS-13** addresses preservation of dark skies that contribute to rural character and are necessary for the local observatories. Two policies are applicable to the Project.

- COS-13.1 restricts outdoor light and glare from development projects in Semi-Rural and Rural Lands and designated rural communities to retain the quality of night skies by minimizing light pollution.
- COS-13.2 requires minimization, to the maximum extent feasible, of the impact of development on the dark skies surrounding Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories to maintain dark skies which are vital to these two world-class observatories by restricting exterior light sources within the impact areas of the observatories.

## **2.5.2 Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove Community Plan**

As noted above, the Project is located within the portion of the San Dieguito Community Plan that addresses the Elfin Forest and Harmony Grove communities. This portion of the plan identifies six goals and 19 policies associated with Harmony Grove community character that are relevant to visual review.

**Goal LU-1.5** addresses preservation of the rural small town feeling of Harmony Grove.

- LU-1.5.2 requires developers to obtain community review and input of their plans prior to permit approval.
- LU-1.5.3 provides for lot sizes permitting residents to keep leisure and market animals on their property.
- LU-1.5.4 restricts land use primarily to single-family residences outside of the Village.

**Goal LU-1.6** addresses open access community design that fosters a feeling of “one neighborhood” despite multiple developments.

- LU-1.6.1 requires large developments to retain connectivity with visual or physical pedestrian/equestrian access to community features.
- LU-1.6.2 promotes design of development with a rural, country theme.

**Goal LU-1.7** addresses preservation of mature native trees.

- LU-1.7.1 requires development design that avoids the removal of mature trees and encourages shady parking areas with trees.

**Goal LU-1.8** addresses dedicated open space.

- Policy LU-1.8.1 requires mitigation land for development within the community to be purchased within the community to create open space and trails.

**Goal LU-1.9** requests an attractive equestrian community that encourages environmentally sensitive, responsible horse keeping.

- LU-1.9.1 requires disclosure of Harmony Grove’s rural nature to potential home buyers in order for new residents to accept the consequences and benefits of living in a rural environment (i.e., proximity of large animals and small farms and ranches).
- LU-1.9.2 encourages the keeping of equestrian and market animals.
- LU-1.9.3 encourages proper maintenance of fences and animal enclosures.
- LU-1.9.8 promotes the use of a non-motorized trail system for the enjoyment of horses and their riders, hikers and bicyclists.
- LU-1.10 supports preservation of a rural visual environment, including leisure and market animals grazing in fenced front yards.

The rich visual resources of the valley, including a locally significant visual resource, i.e., “Lady of the Valley” mountain formation, are threatened by urban sprawl. Although policies concerning ridgelines are addressed above under Goal COS-11.1, this portion of the Community Plan contains an additional goal.

**Goal LU-1.12.1** fosters 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.

### **3.0 VISUAL ENVIRONMENT OF THE PROJECT**

This section of the VIA describes the existing visual setting and aesthetics conditions in the area, and is intended to paint a picture of the Project location. This provides the basis for analysis of the level of change to this setting that would result from Project implementation. Information is based upon topographic mapping, aerial and at-grade photographs, reference document reviews, and site reconnaissance. It provides information on the Project parcels, as well as overall Project

setting, including information on landforms (including drainages, ridgelines and the presence of steep slopes), as well as vegetative cover and any built uses. This section also includes a discussion of the Project viewshed, as well as the type, location, and duration, or frequency, of views.

### **3.1 Project Setting**

#### **3.1.1 On-site Visual Setting and Uses**

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. The primary route from Escondido accesses the site via Harmony Grove Road, a County Scenic Highway, additionally addressed below (see Figures 2 and 3).

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. Otherwise developed uses include cistern elements, an old stock pond, and a small electrical line that bisects the Project site in an east-west direction, as well as 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.

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 site is generally divided into two areas. The northern portion 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.

An east-west trending bench extends across the roughly center point in the site, separating the Project 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.

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 exits from the site south of the central bench at approximately 630 feet 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). Steep slopes in the southern third of the site are largely

identified for permanent preservation within open space if the Project is approved. See discussion in Section 5.5.2, below, for illustration of existing steep slopes on site.

The majority of the Project is mapped as southern mixed chaparral (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 on site. 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. 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 Project site lies outside of the boundaries of the County's approved Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP), but would be within the planning area of the proposed North County Segment of the MSCP, once it is approved.

### **3.1.2 Off-site Visual Setting/Uses, and Overall Visual Environment**

This discussion starts with a summary of important setting issues in the immediate vicinity of the Project, followed by more general setting and expanded information.

In 2007, the County designated an approximately 500-acre area of land in the center of Harmony Grove Valley to become a new village to contain 742 single-story and two-story homes in village massing. That village is currently building out and is undergoing sales. HGV straddles three sides of the area's literal "crossroads" at Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive; providing a focal point/center of the valley. Relative to HGV, the Project completes the fourth quadrant of the crossroads intersection; sited about 400 feet south of Harmony Grove Road, it is part of the HG "valley floor," and shares the valley's watershed and viewshed. The HGV future Equestrian Ranch is located immediately across the street (Country Club Drive) west of the Proposed Project. That facility is a centerpiece of the HGV plan and will feature a variety of equestrian uses along with limited commercial and residential components. Buildings on that site are anticipated to be one- and two-story structures. Other areas west of the Project include a diverse array of residential uses (Figures 3 and 4). The 39-lot Harmony Grove Spiritualist Association (HGSA) includes single-story residences on higher density lots (as small as 1,300 square feet). One and two-story homes are located on lots in the 5,000 to 10,000 square foot range in the flatter areas of this sector, and multiple story (three- and four-story) residences are present on much larger parcels. Moving easterly from the Proposed Project, there are large residences that can reach up to 40 feet height in terms of massing, even if there are as few as two stories. HGV South is planned to complete HGV; and as the "Village" designation and Community Development Model (CDM) direct, focus clustered residential and supporting village land uses on the valley floor. The Village is then surrounded by the lower density Semi-rural and Rural land uses, as the CDM directs. HGV South would offer building massing compatible with the overall valley character.

As indicated above, the Proposed Project is sited in the Harmony Grove Valley, located at the eastern foot of Mount Whitney, south of SR-78 and west of I-15. Within the above-referenced mixed residential and topographic setting, the Project is within a few minutes of drive time to the cities of Escondido and San Marcos. Escondido Creek, which begins at the upper headwaters in

Bear Valley above Lake Wohlford, trends southwesterly through the community, eventually flowing into the San Elijo Lagoon. The creek provides an important link between the unincorporated areas of Harmony Grove, Questhaven, Elfin Forest, and Rancho Santa Fe. It offers recreational opportunities and numerous existing and planned trails traverse the area.

The Project site is surrounded on all sides except to the immediate northwest by a continuing series of hills and canyons, with approximately 20 ridgetops. Figure 1-5 of the Project EIR shows the ridgelines that surround the valley, and unite all valley areas, including HGV and HGV South. These range from approximately 600 feet amsl to a high point of over 1,735 feet amsl at the top of Mt. Whitney, located to the west-northwest, and include peaks with elevations approaching 1,300 feet amsl occur to the west and south of the Project site. This transition from ridgetop to valley floor provides a dramatic physical setting to the valley. Lower hills and knolls, ranging up to approximately 1,040 feet amsl, occur due east of the property. The one area that does not contain numerous hills and canyons in close proximity to each other is in the northwest quadrant of the Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive intersection.

To support the summary above, HGV is currently undergoing development and sale of 742 homes, recreational, and small commercial uses, as well as a water reclamation facility (WRF), as part of the approved HGV Project. The HGV land use plan includes a pedestrian-oriented village center of public amenities, convenience retail, and commercial uses surrounded by a variety of single-family residential units, open space, and multi-use trails. HGV will contain a commercial core adjacent to Country Club Drive less than one-half mile (approximately 2,100 feet) north of the planned commercial/civic center located in HGV South. This village center area is surrounded by a variety of single-family residential uses on lots ranging in size from approximately 2,500 square feet to 1.5 acres, with residential densities generally decreasing as one moves away from the core. An approved equestrian ranch immediately to the west of the HGV South property, across Country Club Drive, is a rectangular parcel of approximately 36 acres that is intended to accommodate horses for boarding and training as well as horse shows. Associated retail sales and temporary commercial operations, including food and beverage sales, are also expected to occur on site. As noted in Section 2.2.7, HGV will be served by an on-site wastewater treatment facility, located at the northeast corner of Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive, approximately 550 feet north of the of HGV South's northern boundary.

Currently, HGV has upgraded the main north-south and east-west roadways in Harmony Grove (Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road) where they abut portions of the village that are building out. The buildable portions of the 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. Homes are present (sales began in 2015) 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 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.

The visual character of the Project locale, therefore, encompasses diverse forms, including numerous hills and hillsides, ravines, and the open flatter valley area. 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 Elfin Forest Recreational Reserve (EFRR), respectively (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 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, as it bisects the valley in an east to 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.

Settlement in Harmony Grove Valley has long been a part of the visual experience. Early activities included ranching, as well as the notable HGSA. The historic and well-known HGSA is located approximately 0.25 mile west of the site, at the terminus of Country Club Drive. 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. Until May 2014, the HGSA consisted of a church, 29 cottage-like residences on very small lots, associated buildings, and central grove area. The HGSA was impacted by the May 2014 wildfires in the community, but is rebuilding. It is, therefore, considered an ongoing existing use.

The above-described areas in the Project site vicinity are bordered by more intensive urban development in the cities of San Marcos and Escondido to the north and east, respectively; and large expanses of natural open space to the west, south and southwest (refer to Figure 3). Uses within the region include a mix of agricultural, suburban and urban developments. Palomar Medical Center is located approximately two miles to the north via sight-line and Stone Brewery is located approximately one and a half miles to the north as a crow flies. The Escondido Energy and Technology Center (ERTC), an industrial/commercial, employment and services locus, is also located within a mile north-northeast of the Project, accessed by Harmony Grove Road.

As noted, residential uses include scattered single-family homes on the ridgelines to the west-northwest that overlook the valley area and the Project (Figure 17). Additional ridgeline and hillside residential development exists south and southwest of the Proposed Project along Harmony Grove Road and Escondido Creek. Surrounding residential development is located on a wide variety of lot sizes ranging from approximately 14,000 square feet to 4 acres to the west-southwest, and 3 to 30 acres to the east. Larger lots in the Harmony Grove area sometimes include large animal uses (e.g., horse keeping). Denser housing and subdivisions exist approximately 0.5 mile to the east. Lot sizes in this area are much smaller, with approximately eight houses to an acre. Mobile home parks and apartments are also present to the east (within approximately 0.8 mile of the Project). Existing agricultural uses in surrounding areas continue to include remnant orchards north and west of the HGV property. 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.

Vegetation communities in the study area consist primarily of freshwater marsh, riparian woodland, southern willow scrub, mule fat scrub, disturbed wetland, Diegan coastal sage scrub, coast live oak woodland, southern mixed chaparral, and non-native grasslands. These resources can be fairly disturbed due to the existing development and existing and past agricultural operations in the area. Escondido Creek is considered a regionally significant resource, but has been largely degraded where it crosses HGV property, as well as to the east, by agricultural and/or other development-related activities. Restoration has been occurring in these portions of the creek as part of the HGV development program. The portion immediate west of Country Club Drive, however, remains in a degraded state due to the presence of rip-rap required to reduce scour west of the culverts supporting the at-grade Arizona crossing of Escondido Creek.

This juxtaposition of the natural and the engineered (man-made) environment 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 (see Figure 17). 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, and in areas to the north of the Project, where residential development in the City of San Marcos is visible sky-lined to the naked eye, at distance. The off-site but 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 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 the 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.<sup>7</sup>

Public park or recreation facilities within the Project viewshed (additionally addressed in the discussion of the Project viewshed, in Section 3.2, 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 7.5 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. County-owned community park areas built as part of HGV are located south of Harmony Grove Road and west of Country Club Drive. The easternmost of these facilities, which is equestrian themed, is close to the northwest corner of the Project.

No additional existing public park or recreational areas are located within the Project viewshed identified as having topographically accessible views to the Project.

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 for a total of 1.66 miles 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 0.55 mile from Country Club Drive east to the County/Escondido line;
3. \*\*Summit Trail 12, extending southerly approximately 0.21 mile from the Lake Hodges Trail into the heart of the Project and routed along the southern Project boundary within

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<sup>7</sup> The segment of Via Rancho Parkway between Del Dios Highway and SR-78, which is located approximately 0.7 mile east of the Project site (at the intersection of Via Rancho Parkway and Del Dios Highway) is also designated a Scenic Highway. Intervening topographic features, however, prevent any views of the Proposed Project from this scenic highway and thus, it is not within the Project viewshed (refer to Figure 22, below). This segment is not further discussed in this VIA.

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 2.16 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. That project 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.

### **3.1.3 Photo Observation Points**

Figure 18 is an aerial photograph of the Project site and the surrounding area, and shows the location from which each photograph was taken. Information is provided regarding what is seen in each photo, as well as why the location was chosen. In order to make it easier for the user to read consecutive pages of text and to find photographs all in one place, all Project figures are located following document text and tables at the back of this report.

The following criteria were considered during determination of 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 19a through 19d followed by pictures to the site from off-site locations (Figures 20a through 20k). Photographs providing additional context for development in the valley are provided in Figures 21a through 21d.

### **On-site Visual Elements**

Figure 19a, Photo A was taken from the northwestern-most corner of the property. 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 19a, 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 19b, Photo A looks to the west. This photo was taken just north of the same paved road that provides access to 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, and on the HGV Equestrian Ranch property, being used as a staging area for the HGV construction going on north of Harmony Grove Road. The trees associated with the remains of the earlier on-site house 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 is 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 19b, 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.

Figure 19c, 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 19c, Photo B was taken from the top of the 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 so 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 19d, Photo A also was 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. A portion of the HGSA (burned out in May 2014) is visible to the west of the HGV Equestrian Ranch. 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 19d, Photo B looks from the site south-southwesterly along the western Project boundary south of the intersection of Country Club Drive and Cordrey Drive as well as to the southern boundary that meets the DDHP. Residences abutting the Project boundary are visible, 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 (toward the left-hand side of the photo).

## Off-site Vantage Points

Off-site vantage points surround the Project property, and provide the basis for a number of photographs (Figures 20a through 20k). The primary vantage points include roadways (including those adjacent to or abutting the site) and public trails.

### Harmony Grove Road

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. At its closest point, this roadway segment is located just north of Escondido Creek, which is located just north of the Project site. It is identified as a scenic corridor in the COS Element and is included as part of the County Scenic Highway System. Figures 20a through 20c 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 20a). 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 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 this section of Harmony Grove Road, 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 20b). 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, future 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 20c). 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 20d depicts views 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 (see, Figure 20e).

After crossing the creek, the views become more expansive to both the east and west (Figure 20f). 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 transmission/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, the line is 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, 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, the central portion (currently being encroached upon and used as corral area by an abutting property owner) and northern portion of the Project parcels come into view (see Figure 20g). 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 22, below, 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 (see Figure 22, below).

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 20h). 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 20i), 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 grading for HGV. (Additional phases will move grading closer to Seeforever Drive; see Figure A3 in Attachment A to this VIA.) 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 Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) preserve system. The Project site is visible from trails on north-facing slopes within both the DDHP and the EFRR from trails used by hikers, equestrians and bicyclists. 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 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.

Figure 20j 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 parcels. 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 an 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 HGV grading, ultimately to be developed with structures, parks and landscaping, is notable. (As described elsewhere, 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 pool were all in place. Grading and construction of HGV WRF facilities has also occurred.) Equally notable in the photograph are Escondido 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 20k 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, 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

These photos 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. They provide additional context for community conformity text in Section 5.0 of this VIA.

Figure 21a 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 below, 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 21b 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 21c 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 21d depicts two homes in the vicinity of the Proposed Project that provide some structural context for the immediate area. As shown, these homes contain visible elevations that indicate three to four story residential uses.

### **3.2 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 22 illustrates the Project viewshed on an aerial photographic base. For the Project area, views within a three-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 even one 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 21,891 acres, or 34.2 square miles. 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 three 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 one-half mile depending on these atmospheric conditions.

The computer-generated 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 22, based on topography alone, views from I-15 begin approximately 2.25 miles to the northeast, with the most distant location having visibility for the longest period of time (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. Worst case, visibility would be available for a total of less than five seconds at freeway speeds (65 mph) for southbound travelers only, from the locale with the most “sustained” visibility. The other, more brief, views would be harder to focus upon. 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 three-mile radius, but with potential lines of sight to the Project and within approximately five 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 developed from specific locales to the development footprint of the site. This very conservative five-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 of 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 22). Similarly, the Del Dios Community Park (at the north end of Lake Hodges) is in the vicinity, but has no views to the site (see also Figure 22).

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

### **3.3 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 “walls” of the room 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. 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.

## **4.0 EXISTING VISUAL RESOURCES AND VIEWER RESPONSE**

### **4.1 Existing Visual Resources**

#### **4.1.1 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 combined with substantial landform modification resulted in an assessment of significant and unmitigable construction effects for the issue of visual resources in that Project's EIR, once HGV is built out, it will visually read as much more in keeping with other abutting uses as structures would have darker roofs (less likely to draw the eye from elevated view locations), some farmhouse motif structures are designed for that project, and a robust planting scheme is included, with equestrian pathways/streetscape being 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 this VIA.

As noted throughout this VIA, 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 man-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.

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. 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.

#### 4.1.2 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. Although the result of individual development on multiple parcels, the setting locates 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 – 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, however, result in a moderate rating.

## **4.2 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.

### **4.2.1 Viewer Groups and Viewer Sensitivity**

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**

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 area travelers on this primary roadway as having 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 often smaller, primarily 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 given 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 sensitive to 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.

### **Recreationalists**

The DDHP (accessed from Del Dios Highway at Date Lane) includes a trail that accesses EFRR. Views to the Project are available approximately one mile into the DDHP from the connection with Del Dios Highway (see the viewshed in Figure 22, as well as the open nature of views into the site shown on Figure 20k. 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 overall moderate.

### **Residents**

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.

## 4.2.2 Existing Viewer Exposure

### Motorists' Exposure

As shown on Figure 22, 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. 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 carries approximately 605 average daily traffic (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 in this VIA, 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 segment 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.

### Recreationalists' 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 come to the Reserve (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 Reserve entrance a trail is located, the fewer hikers use the trail. In other words, the majority of Reserve 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 20j, from the Del Dios Highlands Trail south of the Project. As seen in Figure 20k, the relatively oblique viewing orientation from EFRR to the site renders views less open than those available from DDHP.

Recreationalists in the nearby DDHP/EFRR lands and hiking on nearby trails are assessed as having moderate exposure. This is based on 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.

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 focused often more on the roadway activity immediately adjacent to them than longer-range views. Exposure to the Project is considered moderately low.

## **Residents' 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.

### **4.2.3 Existing Viewer Awareness**

#### **Motorists' Awareness**

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' Awareness**

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, and a number of other single-family residences in the area. They 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' Awareness**

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 extremely aware of changes associated with Project implementation.

## 5.0 VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

### 5.1 Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

The following CEQA significance guidelines are from the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Visual Resources (July 30, 2007), and were derived from the CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, Environmental Checklist Form, as well as the County Guidelines for Determining Significance – Dark Skies and Glare (July 30, 2007, as modified on January 15, 2009).

They guide the evaluation of whether a significant impact to visual resources will occur as a result of Project implementation. A project will generally be considered to have a significant effect if it proposes any of the following, absent specific evidence to the contrary. Conversely, if a project does not propose any of the following, it will generally not be considered to have a significant effect on visual resources, absent specific evidence of such an effect.

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.
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.
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.
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.

Significance Guideline 1 protects the existing visual character and visual quality by not allowing adverse changes or elements with high visual contrast. The guideline ensures that the existing community and/or neighborhood will maintain its particular character through conformance with applicable community plans and design guidelines. Any change to the existing visual quality is assessed based on the viewers' responses to changes in the character and quality of views of the Project site, and whether they would perceive the Project contributing to or detracting from the existing character and quality. These aspects of the Project are assessed by analyzing changes that would occur in particular "key" views, and viewers' responses to the changes.

Significance Guideline 2 addresses potential substantial damage to particular resources that represent or characterize a community or neighborhood. Loss or damage to one or more of these particular resources can change the visual character and may also degrade the visual quality. The effect of the change is determined by the viewer response to the changes, and the determination of significance is based on the assessment of both their response to the potential change, and the potential level of change to the existing visual character and quality.

Significance Guideline 3 is directed at potentially substantial adverse effects to scenic vistas and public vantage points available from roads, recreational areas, and trails. When vistas are important enough that highways and viewpoints are 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.

The documents listed in Significance Guideline 4 have been developed to maintain the visual character and quality of communities and neighborhoods that are regulated by the County General Plan or Zoning. Projects that substantially stray from County regulations may result in significant adverse effects, depending on the degree and nature of the variation.

Additionally, a Project may contribute to a significant adverse cumulative effect even if the Project itself does not cause a significant adverse impact.

With regard to dark skies and glare, the following thresholds are identified:

5. 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).
6. The project will 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.
7. The project will generate light trespass that exceeds 0.2 foot-candle measured five feet onto the adjacent property.
8. 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.
9. 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 LPC.

The fifth and sixth significance guidelines, which rely on the lamp and shielding requirements and hours of operation standards established in the LPC, have been determined to effectively reduce impacts on dark skies. The standards are the result of a collaborative effort from technical lighting experts, astronomers, and County staff to effectively address and minimize the impact of light pollution on dark skies. The standards were developed in cooperation with lighting

engineers, astronomers, SDG&E, Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories, San Diego County Department of Planning and Land Use (now PDS) and Department of Public Works, and local community planning and sponsor groups. The LPC was written specifically to ensure that new outdoor lighting would have minimal impacts on astronomical observatories.

The seventh significance guideline relies on the light trespass restriction specified in the County Zoning Ordinance to effectively reduce impacts on dark skies. It also aims at reducing or eliminating light trespass into neighbors' yards and windows and/or into Guidelines for Determining Significance 14 Dark Skies and Glare adjacent habitats. As with the LPC, the light trespass requirements are the result of a collaborative effort from technical lighting experts, astronomers, and County staff to effectively address and minimize the impact of light pollution on adjacent properties. It should be noted that there is always some level of naturally occurring nighttime illuminance. For instance the typical illuminance from moonlight is 0.03 foot-candle.

Coupled with artificial lighting in our 24-hour society, nighttime illuminance is typically higher than the naturally occurring prevalent level, especially in urban and suburban areas. Therefore, a project that will directly illuminate adjacent properties and contribute to a level of light trespass in excess of established foot-candle will generally result in a potentially significant impact. As specified in the Zoning Ordinance, the property line, as opposed to structures, has been chosen as the point where light trespass or unwanted light may affect a neighbor. These provisions of the Zoning Ordinance were adopted specifically to ensure that new outdoor lighting would have minimal impacts on neighboring properties.

The eighth significance guideline minimizes unnecessary daytime glare impacts to motorists, cyclists, pedestrians or individuals from reflected sunlight. With today's advances in engineering, non-reflective building materials can be used to minimize glare. Any new structure that uses highly reflective building materials may result in glare impacts and this should not occur. It should be noted that conformance to the LPC (Guidelines five and six) also limits nighttime glare from outdoor lighting and nonconformance may also result in glare impacts.

This ninth significance guideline directs consideration of the project's compliance with all applicable federal, state and local statutes and regulations including the County LPC or any other statute or regulation that may be applicable and has not been listed in this document. If such other statute or regulation is identified, the significance of a project's failure to conform to it would depend upon factors such as the purpose of the regulation or statute and the degree of that project's failure to conform to it.

## **5.2 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 5, architectural information currently available, and the palette of possible plant varieties provided in the Project Specific Plan, and this VIA.

Analyzing all of the views from which a proposed project potentially can be seen is not feasible. Several of these potential views are in neighborhoods or areas not accessible to the general public. The selected key views (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 key views were selected using the following considerations:

- Type of viewers and their sensitivity and exposure—simulations generally are prepared using views available to the public rather than privately available views due to access issues and the generally higher viewer exposure (a greater number of viewers makes the view more sensitive).
- 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.
- Breadth of the view—a more encompassing viewpoint generally provides a more realistic representation of commonly available views, and often includes multiple elements rather than focusing on a specific criterion.
- Depth of the view—a short distance may provide detailed views of one element, while an increased distance both includes more elements and makes them appear smaller and less detailed, although visibility may be affected by atmospheric conditions such as fog, smog, etc.

Based on these considerations and consultation among the visual analysis team, the Project proponent, and County staff, publically accessible key viewpoints (KVs 1 and 2, depicted on Figures 20d and 23 (Photo A), and 20j and 24 (Photo A), respectively) have been selected that most clearly display the visual effects of the Project from sensitive viewpoints. The selected key views used for simulations and discussed in the analysis are briefly described below. More detail on the visual effects of the Project relative to its overall setting is provided in general text associated with Section 5.3 of this VIA, below. Refer to Figure 18 for the location and direction of these views on an aerial photograph.

The themes indicated in the key view discussions are expanded upon in more detailed analyses in Sections 5.3, 5.4 and 5.5 of this VIA.

### **5.2.1 Key View 1**

*Orientation.* KV 1 is located at the intersection of Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road, north of Escondido Creek (see Figures 18, 20d and 23a). 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.

*Existing Visual Character and Quality.* As shown in Figures 20d and 23a, 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 are 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 described elsewhere in this VIA 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 (c.f., Figures 18, 19a, 19d and 20f). As Country Club Drive climbs in elevation to the north of Harmony Grove Road, the top portion of 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 two-to-four 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.

*Proposed Project Features.* 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, due to 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 key view. 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 (with dedicated east- and west-turn, as well as north- and southbound through 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 bridge would be installed over Escondido Creek. This facility would constitute a wider crossing of the creek than currently exists, and the bridge also would be elevated relative to the Arizona crossing. It still provides a low-profile feature in the view.

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.

On the site itself, potential utility and residential uses would be located on visible parts of the Project parcels from this key view.

*Change to Visual Character and Quality.* As noted, Project implementation would place built features on currently undeveloped portions of the site. Views toward the site also would be broader in nature due to the wider crossing of Escondido Creek, which would result in removal of some of the mature vegetation that currently is located immediately adjacent to the at-grade crossing. 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, residences aligned generally north-south in the northern extent of the Project do not show in the KV 1 simulation. Those following more 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 (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 23a simulation, homes built on Lot 2 would be sited on a knoll internal to the Project. Although higher topographic features are located 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 23b 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 in Figure 23a also depicts the level to which some elements would be obscured from view from this key view 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 WTWRP 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.* Viewer response from this key view 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, due to intervening structures and solid sound barriers along development edge. Many views to the south also 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.

*Resulting Visual Impact.* 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 key view. 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 trail landscape located on the west side of Country Club Drive and installed by 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. Structures associated with the HGV South expansion of the village would be constructed in muted tones that reference soil tones (creams, browns, tans) as well as incorporate natural stone elements. 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 key view 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.

## 5.2.2 Key View 2

*Orientation.* KV 2 is located south of the Project parcels within the DDHP and illustrates the view northerly (Figures 18, 20j and 24). 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.

*Existing Visual Character and Visual Quality.* 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 village 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 contained 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 key view. 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.

*Proposed Project Features.* 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 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, six-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 also would be provided along the small portion of Country Club Drive seen from this key view.

*Change to Visual Character and Quality.* The Project would 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, as can be seen in Figure 20j and the Figure 24 simulation, the structures would be somewhat visually foreshortened due to the height of the trail from which this key view was taken. 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 key view, 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 key view 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 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 coloration 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 by the FAHJ during final design) would occur along lots edge of pad/top of slope visible from KV 2. These six-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 24, 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 build, 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 key view location.

It is possible that some of the Project electrical needs would be satisfied through on-site photovoltaic panels. These panels would most likely be placed on structure roofs oriented toward the south/southwest, and therefore 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.* 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 key view. It also, in the near-term, would expand upon the disturbed portion of the valley undergoing build-out of HGV. This extremely large project has had an extended grading period, with removal of vegetation north of Harmony Grove Road to the feet of the hills on the west and to the vicinity of Mt. Whitney Road on the north. The notable hill (old quarry) in the northeast quadrant of the Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive intersection also has undergone substantial topographic modification in order to accommodate that project's WRF. 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.

*Resulting Visual Impact.* Ultimately, the Project is expected to continue the visual pattern of village development established by HGV, and which the viewer would see extending to the north of the 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 key view. 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 key view, 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 key view 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. It 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 key view 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 key view 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.

### **5.3 Assessment of Visual Character and Visual Quality**

This section addresses overall changes anticipated to result to visual character and quality of the visual environment of the Project site and the Project viewshed based on Project implementation. Assessment of the significance of these anticipated changes is contained in Section 5.5, below.

#### **5.3.1 Assessment of Visual Character**

*Existing Condition.* The visual character of the Project site and surrounding area encompasses visually diverse forms, including numerous hills, valley and ravine areas, and notable hilltop development, with geometric and rectilinear structures skylined from valley views. The area is topographically diverse, with east-facing steep slopes along the western valley being visually dominant from the east. Mt. Whitney is the tallest peak in the background ridgeline. Higher hills and peaks are also notable to the south for viewers from the north. The valley floor and lower hills in the County contain rural residential uses (varying lot sizes and some large animal keeping areas), including the area of HGV which is currently building out. Areas within the City of

Escondido contain more dense and heavily vegetated homes. Individual large-lot homes are located up slope from the Project to the west, southwest and east.

*During Construction.* The Project would change the composition of the visual pattern in the existing on-site setting. During Project construction, 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 (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 to the extent feasible, 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. As discussed in Section 2.2, the Proposed Project would be constructed in phases and is expected to take approximately less than four years to complete full buildout. Viewers would be exposed to these construction-related elements on site for the duration of the construction period. Vegetation removal at Escondido Creek and the year-long anticipated construction of the bridge also would occur. 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.

There also would be some loss of chaparral 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. The trail would wind up slope from the southern edge of the HGV South structural development to meet the DDHP trail (a fire-break road) that bisects the large hill south of the Project. 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 four-to-six foot wide path, with adjacent slopes having a two-to-five percent grade within the 20-foot easement. Additional disturbance along the slope during pathway improvements would contribute to the short-term significant and unmitigable visual impact associated with overall Project development.

*End of Construction.* Project landscaping would be installed. Immediately following mass grading, the area would be hydroseeded to address potential storm runoff, as well as minimizing views to raw soil. The entry planting, Country Club Drive frontage, interior roads and manufactured slopes would all be planted as finish grading is completed for each area in order to provide a visual amenity for viewers of the Project and the greatest amount of vegetation maturity in the shortest period of time. Specific lot planting would occur on a rolling basis as homes are developed and readied for sale.

This would obscure views to raw slopes and lessen adverse visual impacts of raw slopes and new buildings, ending with general vegetation maturity being attained in approximately 10 years after installation. (Oaks, comprising part of the landscape plan because of their iconic California nature and wildlife value, are slow to mature, and are not included within this general category of plants reaching visual maturity within 10 years, although it should be noted that Coast live oak trees used for slope plantings on the manufactured slope north of the granaries would be installed from up to 36-inch boxes and southern live oak would be installed from up to 48-inch boxes.) Until the general landscaping reaches maturity, short-term visual impacts would be adverse. Similarly, Project lighting effects would result in increased glow from the area over existing conditions. While street trees and internal landscaping, when mature, would help to buffer the homes from views to the Proposed Project from off site, soften sharp edges, unify the Project, and obscure Project lighting effects, this would not be the case in the short-term.

Revegetation/restoration and enhancement of vegetation within Escondido Creek also would occur immediately following the end of construction of the bridge. Riparian species can be very rapid growers, and the area subject to creekbed repair would be expected to support a fairly dense canopy within three to five years. Nonetheless, in the period immediately following bridge implementation, the lack of vegetation in the creek right at the crossing would be notable for those familiar with the crossing, and also could provide more open views to potentially visible disturbance on site, although some existing vegetation beyond the creek line could remain on site.

All areas not required for the four-to-six foot wide trail footprint would be allowed to revegetate with the vigorous chaparral habitat currently located on both sides of the trail.

*Maturity.* In the long term, Proposed Project elements would change the visual character of the Project site from an undeveloped site with disturbed vegetation to single- and multi-family residential uses interspersed with visual open space. Where visible to off-site viewers, Project retaining walls would not contribute to long-term changes in character. Retaining walls often would be internal to the Project and down-slope from most viewers. It is not expected that they would contribute to the built nature of the Project for off-site viewers. Where abutting public view areas, such as along Country Club Drive, retaining walls would not exceed four-feet in height and would be architecturally enhanced, as well as often placed behind intervening site uses and landscaping. The southern retaining wall – built of geo-grid materials and up to 20 feet in height – would be “plantable.” It therefore would visually read to viewers on the off-site Del Dios Highlands Trail as a steep slope with vegetation that may differentiate somewhat from abutting manufactured slope areas. It would be “greener” than the currently disturbed grasslands/raw soil covering so much of the site today during the summer (refer to Figure 24). The one recommended sound wall would be sited at only two lots (Lot 123 and 124) and would

be only five feet in height. This would read visually as a privacy wall common to residential development. In addition, it would be located behind Valley Landscape plantings as well as a thin line of Riparian Landscape plantings landscaping sited between the sound wall and Country Club Drive at the very western extent of the Project. As described above, if required, the potential fire-resistive walls may include block and glass elements. Their limited nature (potentially on seven lots), distance and down-slope nature (foreshortening the walls), relationship to other development on site, potential for screening vegetation, etc., all combine to minimize potential visual effects.

Moving beyond isolated or small scale elements, more geometric forms and rectilinear lines, and hard textures would be visible on the site due to Project development. As opposed to the “individual” nature of currently abutting development, the Project would present more uniform structures of varying heights and mass within a more compact footprint. It would, in some ways, reference the developing nearby village residential uses, with some additional height to the structures. As noted in Section 5.2 of this VIA, however, the HGV South Project would include notable greenswards that would not only obscure much of the development in the more northern portion of the site from views from the north, but also would provide notable visual “relief” from the built environment for views from the south. As shown on Figure 24b, the width of the landscaping between build elements combined with roof top garden areas on the granary structures also results in the Project providing a stepped visual transition between the undisturbed open space and the large lot uses to the west and the tighter development footprint visible in HGV (and even City of Escondido areas) from this key view.

Harmony Grove contains dramatic and tall landform features rimming the valley that provide a background to the Project. The higher 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 would reference the semi-rural character of the Project area. These 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 history of the setting.

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, and set into larger lots. As shown on the simulation in Figure 24 in the discussion of KV 2, however, the combination of joined or adjacent residence/garage/barn structures, and the presence of large estate-style home 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 is 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).

The improved primitive trail south of the residential development 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, or deviations from the main trail, 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 DHCP). The trail is considered visually consistent with others in the area, and impacts would be less than significant.

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.

In sum, therefore, although the visual character of the site would change from existing conditions, Project development would be generally consistent with the relative scale of development 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. And as noted above, the granaries' height and architectural projections would reference the steep and pointed peaks around the valley, and their placement within the heart of the site would surround them with smaller individual structures closer to off-site viewers. 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) that. 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.

### **5.3.2 Assessment of Visual Quality**

*Existing Condition.* The visual quality of the Project site and surrounding area within the landscape unit is moderate in terms of visual unity. Existing residential uses generally have a visual pattern of varied rural, semi-rural and estate homes and open space on hillsides and ridgelines. The homes themselves have some architectural consistency in that they are often one to two stories with similar design elements, including wooden or stucco exteriors and shake or tile roofing; although some structures in the immediate vicinity of the Project are up to three or four stories tall and with varying roof colors (including a vibrant blue). The intactness of the area currently is moderately low due to competing visual elements of the natural and built environment that encroach upon each other and the variety of residential types. As noted above, the site setting is also not very vivid itself due to its relatively small size, varying nature, and presence of nearby more dominant visual elements. These include the green swath of Escondido Creek and the high hills of the DDHP and EFRR, which are adjacent and minimize the less distinct hillocks as well as grasslands and chaparral slopes of the Project site. The open nature of this northern portion of the valley floor combined with the higher topography of the hillsides and ridgelines to the west, however, combine to result in a moderate rating.

*During Construction.* The visual quality of the Project site would be affected during the construction phases of the Project. As discussed above in Section 5.3.1, the Proposed Project would be constructed in phases with a total duration of approximately three years to complete buildout. Views of the site would include grading and construction activities, reduction in existing vegetation, presence of construction vehicles and workers, and storage of building materials. These elements, while short-term, would further reduce the existing moderately low intactness of the site during the construction period due to the introduction of additional visual contrasting features, such as raw soil, newly graded building pads, cut/fill slopes, construction fencing, construction equipment and construction materials stockpiling and storage. There is also potential for rock crushing to occur on site during Project construction so that oversize rock can be reduced in size. While its use would be relatively short-term (during and immediately following potential blasting activities on site), the crusher, and trucks transporting rocks to and from the crusher, would provide an additional industrial note that is currently absent from the Project site. Viewers would be exposed to these construction-related elements, which would encroach into the existing visual pattern of the site for the duration of the construction period. The existing moderate vividness of the Project site also would be reduced during the construction phases because the character of the valley would be affected by construction activities (as discussed above), which could draw the viewer's eye and detract from the existing views of the Project against the backdrop of the steeper hillsides to the south. Project construction would reduce the existing moderate level of unity of the undeveloped site as well because the contrasting elements would disrupt the existing on-site visual pattern.

*End of Construction.* Although landscaping, when mature, would buffer the homes from views to the Proposed Project from off site, soften sharp edges, and unify the Project, this would not be the case in the short-term. Until the landscaping reaches a level of visual maturity (in approximately 10 years) short-term visual impacts would be adverse.

*Maturity.* The Proposed Project would include a variety of structures, which would be visible from surrounding roadways, trails, and residential uses. The Project site, however, would have a net area of approximately 67 acres within a viewshed of 21,891 acres (less than one percent [0.003 percent] of the viewshed). Following construction and planting of landscaping, etc., development footprint associated with structures would include approximately 36 acres (or 0.0016 percent of the viewshed). From the north, the location with the greatest number of viewers, the site would be in the middle ground or background of expansive views toward the south. A broad mix of residential development is currently visible from these areas, as is the developing HGV project. As a result, it is anticipated that the Proposed Project would continue the visual patterns of development of the surrounding neighborhoods, which would increase the compositional harmony of the area, potentially increasing the visual unity in the long term. The visual intactness of the area similarly would not be reduced in the long term because the Project, as a whole, would not substantially contrast with surrounding development and visually, would be an extension of existing patterns, as described above. The Proposed Project also would not substantially change the vividness of the area in the long term because views to the notable ridgelines and hills to the west and south would be retained, and the Project would not introduce new dominant elements that would obstruct views of these features for off-site viewers. In the long term, the Project site's visual quality would not be adversely affected by the Proposed Project.

From the south, and at the higher elevations where public trails are located, HGV also would form a notable element of views, as it would cover much of the valley east of Mt Whitney, with varying intensity of development pattern within that overall project). The Project would be seen as a less dense expansion of that development pattern, within the smaller footprint. The variety of housing styles would introduce variation into the community views, with open space and larger lots feathering out from the village footprint due to variation in lot size both in the village and in existing off-site uses. The Project would not substantially diminish the visual quality of the Harmony Grove valley.

#### **5.4 Assessment of Viewer Response**

*Existing Condition.* The majority of viewers, and those with the highest exposure, are motorists (and passengers) on Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road, and to a lesser extent (due to a low number of motorists) from streets such as Wilgen Road, Bresa de Loma, and Seeforever Drive. They are identified as having moderately high sensitivity to change in the visual environment seen from the roadways. Although winding and often interrupted by intervening landform, expansive views from the edge of the viewshed, and closer, more detailed views of the Project site are available from these roadways, with subsequent exposure combining to create a moderate rating. Residents within the viewshed have high sensitivity to changes and although most views would be distant or blocked, can have high exposure because where views exist they are static in nature and can be long in duration. The combination of these elements results in an assessment of moderately high exposure for those with open views. Combined with sensitivity, this results in a moderately high level of anticipated viewer response. Recreationalists at public trails with existing views of the Project site are assessed as having moderate sensitivity to changes and moderate to moderately low viewer exposure based on the small portion of the expansive views constituted by the Project site and the relatively low number of viewers with exposure to them.

*During Construction.* Overall, viewer response during the construction phase would be greater compared to the post-construction condition because grading activities, construction equipment, and materials storage/stockpiles may be visible from public roads, homes, and public trails within the Project viewshed. Such changes are typically noticeable by all viewer groups (i.e., motorists, residents, and recreationalists) because of the visually disruptive and contrasting elements that are introduced into their viewshed for the construction period.

*Completion of Construction and Maturity.* Following construction, viewer response would vary depending on the viewer group, although Project features would initially be more noticeable by all viewer groups because they would be new elements in the visual environment. They would also be more visible immediately following construction when Project landscaping has not reached maturity and achieved the intended screening effects. Motorists along Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road would continue to be the largest viewer group in proximity to the Project and would be expected to have the highest response with high sensitivity and high exposure specifically where they are adjacent to the Project. Residents also could have a high viewer response, as they are expected to be highly sensitive to changes from the existing condition, and can have high exposure given the static nature of their viewpoints. Although the generally low visibility to the site would be expected to minimize adverse response from the viewers sited to the northwest along higher elevations, it is expected that existing nearby residents located at higher elevations to the east (three homes) and homes abutting the western boundary immediately adjacent to proposed development (up to approximately four homes) could be highly adverse. Recreationalists would be expected to have moderate viewer response due to distance, interruption of views and consistency of Project features with adjacent uses.

## **5.5 Determination of Significance**

This section addresses the projected changes to the visual environment based on the County significance guidelines, and provides a conclusion for each specific guideline.

### **5.5.1 Significance Guideline 1: Contrast with Existing Visual Character and/or Quality by Conflicting With Important Visual Elements or the Quality of the Area, or by Being Inconsistent With Applicable Design Guidelines**

#### **Project Design and Development Features**

##### 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 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 a notable portion of the Project.

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, and (even when no longer including large expanses of barren graded soil), would minimize the visual effect of Proposed Project development. Excluding open space (BOS, 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 (i.e., 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 areas of landscaping 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.

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, 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 southern-most developed 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, respectively, moving from east to west. All of these structures would be shielded by intervening Project uses for viewers from the north based on their being sited behind, and/or lower, than the first row of granary structures.

Overall, the Project would extend the visual patterns of development in the surrounding area onto the currently undeveloped Project site. Taking all of the above into consideration, the

development overall would be visually consistent with the existing and developing surrounding landscape and development to the north.

Grading and blasting may be required 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 trail 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

As noted above, 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, with vertical lines and pronounced gables, and are generally two stories (allowed up 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 references 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, roofs, etc., are provided in Figures 6a and 6b for each of the housing styles potentially proposed for the Project. Most of the proposed homes would be two stories. Three-story structures such as the farmhouse and granary styles would be included. 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 five 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. Similar to HGV, some homes would be clustered together on single pads in order to minimize landform alteration as well as the need for multiple driveways on the property.

The WTWRF would include elements described under the Project Description (refer to Section 2.2.7), and would be surrounded by a six-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.<sup>8</sup>

Three 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. From this distance, combined with the small footprint (less than 0.4 acre) of the most intensive anticipated on-site 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 three 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.

### 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 at surrounding residential development 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. 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 multi-family units 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

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<sup>8</sup> 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.

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 massing effects associated with this residential community.

Project landscaping also would ultimately provide screening of the residential development, thereby reducing perceived massing, and would be largely visually mature within 10 years (see Figure 24). 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 15c).

Storm water catchment and treatment features would be subsurface, with park facilities on top of them. Similarly, wet weather storage would be subsurface, with 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 WTWRP could be substantially visible to off-site viewers as 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 87 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. The slope edge would be approximately 25 feet lower than the Project low point at the property line and would be landscaped. Visual impacts of these manufactured slopes would be less than significant. Views to surface areas would see park facilities, which also would constitute less than significant visual impacts, and would, to the contrary, provide additional green elements to the Project.

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 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 visual maturity and 10 years, while heights would range from 25 to 100 feet. Although the trees would be placed in accordance with the Fire Protection Plan, 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.

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 conforms to underlying existing topography throughout most of the Project, a manufactured slope would be aligned along Country Club Drive from just south of the northern basin to the northern-most primary entry road. Based on the preliminary grading plan, this slope would be approximately 45 feet at its highest extent and would be different from the currently seen relatively flat topography on site with a slow rise to the east. A slope of this height 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 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). 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 and Sound Walls

#### Retaining 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 12c. As currently designed, five walls would not exceed approximately four 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 two-to-four 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 three-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 planting 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.

## Community Identity Walls and Fencing

A variety of privacy fences and/or walls would be implemented throughout the Project. Design sketches are shown on Figures 12a and 12b.

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 solid walls mimics 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 substantial design variety, be constructed of rustic materials, and often be screened by landscaping.

## Proposed Sound Wall

As detailed in the Project Acoustical Assessment Report (HELIX 2017a), one noise wall is proposed (see Figure 12d). This wall would be five 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, and would result in a less than significant visual impact related to change in community character. 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 through 48-inch box sizes.

## Potential Fire Wall(s)

As detailed in the Project FPP (Dudek 2016), based on final design (ultimate structure height and precise setback from top of slope) the FAHJ may require six-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). For lots where the code-required setback would not be possible, installation of a six-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. As described in Section 5.2.2 of this VIA, if implemented, 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 from 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, but as described in Section 5.2.2, 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 for policies and guidelines that specifically relate to visual issues and to the discussion of Land Use in the EIR for overall land use issues. In brief, the Project complies with applicable goals, policies, and requirements as identified in Section 2.5. This is discussed in more detail relative to the RPO ordinance under Significance Guideline 2 of this VIA, as well as in relation to Significance Guideline 4, 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 WTWRP would replace existing field views.

The entrance area to the WTWRP 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 visually 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 WTWRP buildings would be visible from Country Club Drive, the barn-like character of the structures would continue the semi-rural quality of the Project area.

While 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, visual impacts would be less than significant due to both the setting within which it would be seen, as well as a number of 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 report, that larger project 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/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 above 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 under Significance Guideline 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 current 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 Equestrian Ranch at HGV would be open, as the Project is across Country Club Drive from the Equestrian Ranch. Elements of the WTWRP facility higher than the six-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-section A under Massing and Scale, above, and on Figure 15c.

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 628 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 four 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 723 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 (approximately 6 to 7) 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 Drive), intervening yardscapes and structures located between these viewers and the Project (see Figure 3) 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 detention basins, 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, rather than red Spanish tile or reflective materials, 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 abutting 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 (disturbed valley versus surrounding open space peaks). Overall, visual effects from this viewpoint would be less than significant from these more distant locales.

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.

### **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 the village and 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 of 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, 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, WTWRP, 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 (off-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 where more direct views 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 1000 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 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, the distance between and nature of intervening topography, development, and/or private lot vegetation, as described above.

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 area character or quality following Project buildout and vegetation maturity. They would therefore result in less than significant impacts under Guideline 1.

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/primitive 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 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. 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 under Guideline 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 in Section 5.3.1, above, 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 pursuant to Guideline 1.

### **5.5.2 Significance Guideline 2: Result in the Removal of/or Change to the Valued Visual Elements**

Whereas the discussion in Section 5.5.1 addressed overall visual effects related to Project implementation and whether or not the Project would fit visually into the overall valley community, 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, 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 under Significance Guideline 2.

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 to these trees relative to Threshold 2.

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 four-to-six 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 the Project EIR. This 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 (c.f.; Figures 18, 19a, 19d and 20f). 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 two-to-four 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, or 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 DHCP). 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

As described throughout this VIA, 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.

As shown on Figure 25, preliminary cross-sections were prepared for the full length and width of four locations across the site. Based on the preliminary grading plan, the figure depicts the four cross-sections, and shows the existing topography, as well as the projected post-development topography, for each of the portions of the site they bisect. Although final grading plans may vary in specifics from these depictions, they provide a good projection of how the Project

grading practices overall would affect the existing landform. As shown, 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 shown on the preliminary grading plan at any specific point internal to the Project site may deviate from the existing elevation, 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 23a and 24; 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 occur 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. 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 in an area for which an RPO steep slope waiver finding was made by the PDS Director in 2016 (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 26a, and a focused view of on-site slopes is provided on Figure 26b.

Project proposed encroachment into these slopes is shown on Figure 26c. 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. Both waiver and exception categories are discussed below relative to this Project, and additionally addressed in Appendix C to the Project EIR.

### Important Baseline Information

Visual context is critical to this evaluation. Figure 26a illustrates steep slope areas on site and on the larger the hill and valley formations within which Project slopes are located. As can be seen from this figure, the site is located in valley "flats" and the beginning of the slopes leading to the dominant hill and mountain features that rim Harmony Grove. A swath of valley with slopes of less than 25 percent bisects the northern portion of the site in a northwest to southeast direction, and small areas of steeper slopes are located on site, but generally not connected to these off-site slopes.

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 (see Figure 26a). 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 26a, b, and c, on-site 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 southern-most (“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.

Referring to Figure 26d, 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 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.

Of the approximately 7.7 acres of RPO steep slopes that would be impacted by the Project (see Figure 26c), the great majority is either exempt or subject to waiver. Less than one acre overall of protected RPO steep slope area would be encroached upon, and that encroachment would fall within the allowable 10 percent per lot. The remainder of this discussion details the analysis.

#### Access Exception

Section 86.604(e)(2)(bb)(ii) provides that local private roads and driveways that are necessary for primary or secondary access to the portion of the site to be developed on lands of less than 25 percent are allowed provided no less environmentally damaging alternative exists.

This exception is being sought in the south-central and northeastern portions of the site. The private roadway exception applies to the eastern-most extent of Private Drives B and E in the south-central/eastern portion of the site, where the Project would abut the northern-most boundary of the DDHP, and on a small hillock where Lots 1 and 2 would be aligned along the base and top of that hillock, along private drives J and K, respectively (see Figure 26d).

Development of the Project, including the location of the various lots and the roadways required to access the site, has been proposed such that no less damaging alternative is available. The Project has been designed to create a compact and efficient development footprint that would cluster development in a manner to result in the preservation of a large swath of open space in the southern portion of the Project site that contains high quality biological resources while providing development that is scaled to complement development within HGV, which is located contiguous to the Project site. As a result of clustering development within certain areas of the

project, approximately 35 acres of continuous pristine biological open space would be retained in the southern portions of the site, adjacent to DDHP. The Project design is also intended to minimize visual impacts from off-site views by preserving the iconic ridgeline surrounding the valley and clustering development on the site to decrease the development footprint to make the most efficient use of non-protected RPO steep slope areas. In addition, those open areas would allow for the improvement to on-site drainage control (and ultimate improvements over current runoff patterns into Escondido Creek). The Project design would provide a more natural drainage plan on the Project and provide for visual open space between residential uses. This would allow for greater conformity with existing community character than would result if the Project footprint were to utilize only non-steep slope land without regard to these design considerations. The site's proposed intensity also would implement the principles of sustainable development by allowing for a diversity of uses contiguous to HGV that would encourage walkable communities, increase efficiencies of public facilities, and provide opportunities for the Project to contribute to the funding of needed services that can serve the Project, HGV and the surrounding community. Thus, the Project's compact design is consistent with General Plan policies and the RPO, resulting in the most efficient use of environmentally sensitive lands rather than standard design that would need to develop every square foot of non-steep slope land.

Additionally, since both the provision of visual open space and preference for lessened encroachment into steep slopes are considered for the same reasons (consistency with community character), the relative visual "weight" of the effect of development versus retention of untouched slope was considered. The value of additional on-site open space area is weighted more heavily in this evaluation. This is because the slopes that would be encroached upon generally won't be visible to off-site viewers from the north following development in any event as they would be south of (behind) Project structures, and also because those open areas would allow for the improvement to on-site drainage control (and ultimate improvements over current runoff patterns into Escondido Creek). Where Project-modified slopes *might* be visible the encroachment would be required for the construction period only, and would be remediated; i.e., contoured to appear natural, revegetated, and retained as part of the Project permanent open space.

Relative to Drives J and K, in order for the access road and driveways to conform to County design standards, and to prepare adequate engineered pads both at the top and base of this hillock (and largely out of steep slope areas), grading is required across the slope that joins Lots 1 and 2, resulting in a short-term visual impact. This would occur during the overall site construction period, and would be part of the visual impacts associated with the construction period. These intervening slopes would be fully remediated, however, and would appear "natural" following contour grading and revegetation.

In all, approximately 1.3 acres of steep slopes would be subject to temporary impacts during site construction, and then would be re-contoured as necessary and revegetated; making their post-impact and revegetation visual effect indistinguishable from undisturbed slopes with native habitat or residential planting.

As indicated in the description of their location, for the purposes of visual evaluation, the areas exempted from slope protection for purposes of roadway construction are limited in extent. Scattered throughout developed portions of the site, they would often be obscured by other

Project elements such as structures. Two portions are also aligned within areas addressed through RPO waiver (described in detail immediately below), with all the elements relative to those less than significant visual findings also applicable to the exception.

Upon approval of this encroachment finding by the Board of Supervisors during consideration of the Project for approval, and based upon the rationale provided, these encroachments qualify for the exception. This is additionally discussed in the EIR Land Use section relative to plan compliance, but the visual impacts associated with the exception are assessed as less than significant.

### RPO Steep Slope Waiver

A waiver from the restrictions of the RPO steep slopes and easement requirements (County Code Title 8, Division 6, Chapter 6) will be granted if four findings can be made (RPO Section 86.604[e][2][cc][3]), and detailed in EIR Appendix C: Three of the findings relate to zoning, goals and objectives of the Community Plan, and site plan review. Each of these findings is addressed in EIR Appendix C. The most critical of these findings relates to whether or not the slope is an insignificant visual feature. Relative to this criterion, each of the slope areas in 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 26c, as A, B (1, 2 and 3) and C, and also are color coded (purple) on Figure 26d. As shown on Figures 26c 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.

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 27a. 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 half 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 26c, 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 four 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 is 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 27b, 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 27b, 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 27c, 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 27c, 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.

A waiver from the RPO steep slope easement restrictions is considered appropriate for these two areas. This is 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).

Please also see Appendix C to the Project EIR. Staff reviewed the Steep Slopes Waiver analysis in EIR Appendix C and the Director of PDS issued an 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.

#### Less than 10 Percent Steep Slope Encroachment into Protected Steep Slopes

Ten lots (1, 2, 96, 116, 138, 142, 145, 158, 169 and 170) would contain steep slopes that are not excepted or subject to waiver under the RPO. The RPO allows encroachment into RPO-protected steep slopes on a lot by lot basis. Where lots contain 75 percent or less steep slope, up to 10 percent permanent encroachment per lot is permitted.

Figure 26c identifies all Project lots that encroach permanently into on-site RPO-protected steep slopes. Excluding the areas either waived or exempted as described above, a total of approximately 38,060 square feet, or 0.88 acre of permanent encroachment would occur to protected on-site slopes. This totals less than one percent of the site overall. The lot by lot breakdown of these impacts includes a total of 10 lots: ranging from the smallest encroachment of 0.15 percent of Lot 169 to the largest encroachment of 9.98 percent of Lot 2, as detailed in the table on Figure 26c. Each of these encroachments is within the 10 percent allowable by lot. The visual effects of the encroachment would be obscured by the residential construction on the lot, and in any event would be minimal compared to the natural steep slopes retained on the Project site. No significant impact would occur.

In summary, development of the Proposed Project would not remove on-site valued visual elements. As noted, the areas where on-site steep slopes have been identified through detailed engineering review are generally isolated, and visually minimized by immediately adjacent larger forms, which would not be removed or changed by the Proposed Project. The prominent ridgelines and hills surrounding the site would remain as they currently are, and the most iconic view, of the DDHP peak, would continue to surmount the ridgeline to the south and overlook the

site (refer to Figures 19a through 20k, as well as Figure 23a). The amount of encroachment would conform to standards specified in the RPO. As a result, no significant impacts are identified relative to encroachment into RPO steep slopes pursuant to Guideline 2.

Relative to temporary effects, some steep slope modification could be visible from public viewpoints, for instance where existing or planned trails may abut or cross an area identified as steep slope. Where not required for road right-of-way or otherwise waived, these areas would be remediated – the affected slopes would be contoured to match abutting elements of the local landform, and would be revegetated. Visually, the encroachment would have a temporary effect, with slopes beyond the permanent Project footprint looking natural and untouched following the remediation and revegetation required as part of Project design. Less than significant impacts are identified relative to temporary encroachment into RPO steep slopes pursuant to Guideline 2.

### **5.5.3 Significance Guideline 3: Substantial Obstruction, Interruption, or Detraction from a Valued Focal and/or Panoramic Vista**

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

#### **Scenic Highways**

As discussed in Section 3.1, 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. As previously stated in this VIA, 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, 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 in Sections 5.3.1 and 5.5.1 of this VIA. Discussion as to long-term Project visual effects for west- and eastbound travelers is provided below.

For travelers heading west, the view would provide a developed vista to the left as the travelers rounds a substantial hill feature on the right. 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. Additional development would extend southerly, and rise up the north-facing slope of the site. Elements of the building(s) associated with the WTWRF may be intermittently visible

where not shielded by creek vegetation or Project landscaping. These structures and landscaping, at the higher elevation, also would be visible.

The built nature would be different from the existing condition, but not long-lived in the view (c.f. the view from KV 1 at the intersection of Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road in Section 5.2.2 of this VIA). 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, which would also 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 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 east of Country Club Drive in HGV Planning Area II on the north side of the road (see VIA Attachment A, Photo Simulation D), as well as other road users.

Based on 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), 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 competing visual factors to draw the viewer's attention toward closer development associated with HGV, the presence of the Project would be noticeable, impacts to views from this County-designated scenic corridor would be less than significant pursuant to Guideline Threshold 3.

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 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 a bit farther distant, relative to these more closely abutting uses, which would reduce their visual impact. Viewers would have to look southeasterly over the creek and the Equestrian Ranch property, as well as through vegetation associated with the HGV 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, the homes on Lot 2 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 Lot 2 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 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 pursuant to Guideline Threshold 3.

### **Trails in Recreational Areas**

As described in Section 3.1.2 of this VIA, 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. 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 consist 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.

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 5.2.2 of this VIA.

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. The Project would not substantially obstruct, interrupt, or detract from the panoramic vistas along the trails in these recreational areas. Therefore, although the Project would result in changes to the views from these trails, the changes would be less than significant under Significance Guideline 3.

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 (or several) small deviations within the larger pathway area where terrain is difficult to traverse. The Project would widen this trail to four-to-six 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 trailbed. 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.

### **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 peak 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. 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 under Significance Guideline 3.

### **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 under Significance Guideline 3.

Similarly, a future trail segment along the north side of the Project could be implemented by the abutting property owner, the Escondido Creek Conservancy. 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 to the viewer's south. "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. Impacts associated with this future experience are considered less than significant under Significance Guideline 3.

#### **5.5.4 Significance Guideline 4: Compliance with Applicable Goals, Policies, or Requirements**

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 portion of the San Dieguito

Community Plan. The COS Element and policies within the Community Plan include specific goals and policies directed at visual quality and community character. These goals and policies are identified in Section 2.5 of this VIA. A Project consistency evaluation of goal and policy applicable to visual resources is provided in Attachment B to this 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 overarching design guidelines for the Project. The Specific Plan provides site design and layout; architecture guidelines; and landscape architecture goals, criteria, and guidance related to trails, lighting, walls and fences, and plant palettes.

In summary, the Project would be consistent with applicable goals and policies related to aesthetics contained within applicable local land use plans, and no significant visual impacts would occur under Significance Guideline 4.

### **5.5.5 Effects of Lighting and Glare**

Currently, the Project site and immediately abutting area are not lit with streetlights. Visible night lighting is associated with private homes. Streetlights are associated with HGV and portions of the Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road segments improved by HGV, as well as Harmony Grove Village Parkway.

#### **5.5.5.1 *Installation of Outdoor Light Fixtures Inconsistent with the County Light Pollution Code***

As described in Section 2.2.6, 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 shown in Figure 13. 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. Project-related impacts would be less than significant pursuant to Guideline 5.

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

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 (see Figure 13) 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:

1. Holiday decorations, if installed by the HOA, and specifically exempted (Section 59.109[f]).
2. Operational safety lights at the WTWRF, which, in the unusual event of nighttime need, would be activated by operators' arrival, and only be on for as long as operators are present.
3. 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 pursuant to Guideline 6.

#### ***5.5.5.3 Use of Nighttime Lighting Extending onto Adjacent Property and Exceeding Light Pollution Code Limits***

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 five feet onto the adjacent property. As part of final mapping for the Project, all lighting must be defined in detail and approved by 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 and would help shield light from all but the immediate area. 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. Additional lights would illuminate vertical planes such as signs and walls, or highlight trees and other features. Up-lights provided to define 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.

Although Project lighting would produce light levels brighter than currently exist, all lighting would adhere to the County of San Diego's dark sky ordinance. Less than significant adverse visual impacts relating to night lighting would occur over the long-term (see also the discussion of short-term visual effects, below). Specific locations where light spill could be anticipated to occur are addressed below.

As can be seen from Figure 13a, 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. 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. Based on Figure 13, 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 shown at the intersection of Private Drives B, D and E, and at the southernmost curve of Private Drives B, would be located adjacent to biological open space. 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, complying with the County LPC, 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 will be provided to residents. In addition, the privacy fencing/walls shown on Figure 12a and perimeter vegetation shown on Figures 15a and 15b 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, less than significant impacts would occur pursuant to Guideline 7.

#### **5.5.5.4 Installation of Highly Reflective Building Materials**

Substantial glare is generally not anticipated from residential units. As can be seen from Figures 6a and 6b, 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. As a result, Project structures could be designed to incorporate solar panels. Project electrical energy goals could be satisfied in a number of ways given the proposed structural variety, through use of on-site solar panels and/or through enrollment in a renewables program as described in EIR Chapter 1.0 and Appendix J, Project Greenhouse Gas Analyses Report.

Photovoltaic panels are typically constructed of primarily dark absorptive material that is designed to capture as much light energy as possible. Because they would be most likely 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).

As described in Section 5.2.2, there 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 if a solid block wall is implemented, which could occur.

Although potentially occurring to a limited extent, visual impacts related to glare from solar/ photovoltaic panels and from potential incorporation of glass panels into potentially required fire barriers would be less than significant pursuant to Guideline 8.

#### **5.5.5.5 Conformance with Light Pollution Code**

Considering the above analysis relative to Project lighting type, location, and hours of operation, as well as potential for spill onto adjacent properties, the Project would be in compliance with the County LPC. No significant impact would occur pursuant to Guideline 9. The reader is referred to the discussion of short-term/construction period visual effects, in Section 5.3.1, however, for discussion of nuisance visual effects prior to maturity of Project-installed landscaping.

#### **5.5.6 Effects of Proposed Off-site Improvements**

As discussed in Section 2.2.11, the Project is expected to implement planned off-site road improvements to a segment of Country Club Drive fronting the property, as well as the Country Club Drive bridge over Escondido Creek and the intersection of that roadway with Harmony Grove Road. Roadbed improvements would consist of addition of a single vehicular lane to Country Club Drive. Bridge structure, landscaping and trail elements also would be included. The discussion of the visual effect of these improvements is largely addressed under KV 2 in Section 5.2.2. A notable improvement along Country Club Drive south of Harmony Grove Road related to Project implementation would be the undergrounding of the overhead utility lines that currently provide visual distraction in this area on the east side of the road within the Project.

Other off-sites include the subsurface utility lines sited within Country Club Drive and Harmony Grove Road. Visual effects would be experienced only during the construction period. These pipelines are not unusual in terms of size (8 to 12 inches) or in terms of trench depth required (4 to 6 feet). As a result, the cuts into the current paved surface would vary from 3 to 5 feet in width, and would affect only a portion of the roadway. Construction equipment, the trench itself and flagging/signs required during the construction period are expected to be visible, and potentially adverse. They would not be out of character with routine utility line maintenance routinely experienced by County residents, however, and given the short-term nature of the impact are identified as less than significant visual impacts.

### **5.6 Cumulative Impact Analysis**

As stated in CEQA Guidelines Definitions and Section 15130, cumulative impacts are those resulting from Proposed Project effects combined with those of past, present or probable future projects producing related or cumulative effects. For visual issues, Projects within the above-described Project viewshed (including the Proposed Project) would 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. As shown on Table 2, below, and Figure 28, the projects within the

viewshed include five development projects; including four primarily residential projects and one hospital facility.

<b>Table 2 CUMULATIVE PROJECTS</b>					
<b>Map Key<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Project Numbers Issued by Agency</b>	<b>Project Name</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Area (acres)</b>	<b>Proposed Improvements</b>
<b>COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO</b>					
A	GPA 04-007 REZ 04-014 TM 5382	Montiel Heights/ Montiel Road Townhomes	1310 Montiel Road, Escondido	5.01	70 condominiums; 1 existing SFR to be removed
B	SP 04-003 GPA 04-004 REZ 04-010 VTM 5365 MUP 04-012 MUP 04-013 MUP 04-014	Harmony Grove Village	North and south of Harmony Grove Road, and east and west of Country Club Drive	468	Up to 742 SFRs, commercial services, park and community gathering locales, and equestrian facilities
C	SP-13-001 GPA 13-001 STP 13-003 TM 5575 REZ 13-001	Valiano	South of Hill Valley Drive and west of Country Club Drive	210	326 SFRs, parks and open space
<b>CITY OF SAN MARCOS</b>					
D	MF 1785 TSM 479 MFSCDP 10- 51 R 10-146 GV 10-85 CUP 10-835 ND 10-806	Candera	Intersection of Bougher Road/Via Camellia, San Marcos	7.17	8 SFRs and 50 condominiums; 1 existing SFR to be removed
<b>CITY OF ESCONDIDO</b>					
<b>PALOMAR POMERADO HEALTHCARE DISTRICT</b>					
E	2001-01-SPA 2005-81- SPA/DA PHG 11-0034 SCH No. 200112106	Escondido Research & Technology Center (ERTC)	South of Vineyard Avenue, north of Harmony Grove Road and along either side of Citracado Parkway, Escondido	164	Approximately 1,200,000-s.f. hospital/ medical campus with 453 beds

Acronyms/abbreviations:

-- = not available	MFR = multi-family residence	SCH = State Clearinghouse	SFR = single-family residence
CUP = Conditional Use Permit	MUP = Major Use Permit	s.f. = square feet	TM = Tentative Map
GPA = General Plan Amendment	REZ = Rezone	SP = Specific Plan	VTM = Vesting Tentative Map
		SPA = Specific Plan Amendment	

<sup>1</sup> Letters refer to cumulative projects identified in Figure 28.

The residential projects range from 58 to 742 residential DUs and, together with the Proposed Project, would result in a total of approximately 1,196 residences. Each of the cumulative projects within the viewshed is located to the north of the Proposed Project.

Project A, the Montiel development, would include 8 single-family residences and 120 condominiums. Project D, Candera, 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. As previously discussed, the HGV project is currently under construction, and is expected to be fully built out by the time HGV South is approved, and completes final design. (Home sales began in May 2015, and are ongoing.) The Valiano project is currently undergoing environmental review.

HGV (B) 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 project 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.

Valiano (C) is a planned residential community of 326 single-family DUs and related facilities located north of HGV. The development would include park and recreation areas, equestrian staging areas, and an on-site WTWRF. Post development, approximately 149 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 (E) 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 Section 5.5 of this VIA; in many cases, those 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 or recently contained 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 would 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 contiguous HGV Community Park at the intersection of Harmony Grove Road and Country Club Drive, as well as the HGV Equestrian Ranch property across the street currently provides and would continue to provide (even when developed) a more open rural setting 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 would be located to the north, and 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 a vegetated slope with a line of 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.

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. 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.

## **5.7 Summary of Project Impacts and Significance and Conclusions**

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

- Impact 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 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.

As detailed in discussions throughout Section 5.5, above, the Project would result in less than significant visual impacts related to conceptual residential design and massing, privacy walls, retaining walls, a Project sound wall, potential limited fire-resistive walls, and lighting being as a result of:

1. the relative number of viewers and orientation to the Project, combined with
2. the dominant nature of the surrounding topography and attenuative measures built into Project design and detailed in Section 6.0 of this VIA, as well as
3. ordinance compliance relative to steep slopes and night-lighting.

## **6.0 VISUAL MITIGATION AND DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS**

### **6.1 Mitigation Measures**

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

- 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, and potential light cement coloration that might be visible from trail areas.

Short-term visual impacts during and immediately following construction would be adverse. Ultimately, the landscaping installed within each constructed phase would lessen adverse visual impacts of raw slopes and new buildings, and overall vegetation maturity would be visually attained in approximately 10 years. 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.

## **6.2 Design Considerations**

In addition to the mitigation specified above, a number of Project design features that will become Project Conditions for both construction and operational phases have been incorporated into the Project that have been relied upon in the analysis. Beyond elements such as grading, which constitute part of the base Grading Plan files, these considerations are presented in EIR Table 1-2, Project Design Features, and will be made Project Conditions, to ensure their implementation, if the Project is approved.

1. In compliance with the approved conceptual landscape plans, the Landscape Plans shall require:
  - Final landscape (including container/box plant sizes) along Country Club Drive, at entries, along Project streets, and on manufactured slopes, shall be installed immediately following completion of grading and installation of irrigation.
2. Project grading shall be implemented in accordance with the approved Preliminary Grading Plan, designed to follow general rise and fall in existing topography and to avoid sharp or abrupt grade transitions.
3. Construction of the Project shall comply with the Project's visual study through approved building and construction plans. Specific conditions and approved building plans include:
  - Incorporation of open space corridors and parks. A minimum of approximately 60 percent of the Project shall be in biological open space set-aside or landscaped space.
  - Trails/pathways with equestrian fencing and/or landscaping shall be sited along all Project roadways excluding a portion of the access to Lot 2.
  - Varied rooflines with differing tower/chimney elements.
  - Non-inhabitable architectural elements will not exceed five percent of the structure rooflines.
  - Dark roofs (gray, brown) of varying shades will be used rather than lighter colors or red tile.

- All trash dumpsters/compactors/receptacles will be screened (by buildings or screen walls) if they would otherwise be visible from a street or common area. Mechanical units also will be screened.
  - Where distinguishable, roof-top equipment will be screened from view from adjacent roads, properties, and pedestrian areas. This equipment may include HVAC, etc. Where shielding of routine roof equipment may not be possible, equipment would be organized in an orderly, uncluttered fashion and painted to match the roof color. Rooftop equipment screening would be identified on site plans.
  - Exterior building materials will variously include stone, masonry, painted or stained horizontal and vertical wood siding, stucco, and metal elements.
  - Architectural elements will visually reduce the apparent size, bulk, and scale of proposed buildings through use of techniques such as:
    - Incorporating roofline variation through use of flat parapet roofs, as well as gables, dormers, overhangs etc.
    - Locating garage doors in alleys/courtyards, etc., as opposed to on streets.
    - Providing overhead structures at entries, such as porches, trellises, or pergolas.
    - Aligning roadways in a curvilinear manner.
4. The Project footprint will be consolidated in accordance with PDS2015-TM-5600 as depicted on Figure 5 (Figure 6a of the EIR).
5. Lighting shall be oriented downward, shall not spill onto open space or off-site areas, and will be sited as shown on Figure 13a (EIR Figure 1-21a), in compliance with the County LPC. Additional specific Conditions include:
- Full cutoff fixtures (lights will turn off at 11:00 p.m.), low-reflective surfaces (matte surfaces that do not reflect glare) and low-angle spotlights (to focus light on specific features and not allow “spill”) shall be used.
  - No lighting shall blink, flash, or be of unusually high intensity or brightness.
  - WTWRP lighting shall use full cut off fixtures for all lights. Pole lights shall be shielded, 10 to 14 feet tall, and will only be activated when workers are present.
  - Street lights shall be located only at intersections and at one location in parking for the Center House and be shielded down lights. Lights will be a maximum of 15 feet to 20 feet tall at Project major intersections and 10 to 15 feet tall at interior street locales shown on Figure 13a (EIR Figure 1-21a).

6. Project identification signage will incorporate small scale landscape up-lighting and will not include internally lighted letters.
- To ensure consistency in format and content of signs, a comprehensive sign package will be developed and submitted to PDS as part of the site plan application. Specific conditions include:
    - Sign posts and other structural elements will be wood or metal with a white, earth tone, black, or natural stain finish. Reflective or bright colors are prohibited.
    - “Way-finding” and informational signage will be located at intersections and decision points so as to generate the fewest number of signs.
    - Project identification signage will be discretely placed within low stone walls or pilaster landscape elements, with secondary signs being smaller in scale.
    - The maximum size of residential directory signage will be limited to 25 square feet.
    - Center House window signs will be no larger than 25 percent of the window on or behind which they are displayed.
    - Rooftop and roof-mounted signs, neon signs, internally illuminated plastic signs, and back lit signs that appear to be internally illuminated shall not be installed and are prohibited.
    - Letter and symbol height will be limited to a maximum of 10 inches.
    - Center House, total sign area is limited to one square foot of sign area per linear foot of building length along Private Drive A and Private Drive J, up to a maximum of 90 square feet.
    - One additional building directory sign not exceeding 10 square feet in size may be allowed at each Center House public entrance for each tenant.

### **6.3 Overall Conclusions**

The following overall conclusions result.

The rock exposed by blasting and new horizontal drainage elements across the face of cut slopes would not be weathered, and would vary from other outcrops in the Project areas. The Project landscaping plan would revegetate these slopes, but the increased visibility of slopes over more level areas where edge screening can be effective results in the need for additional mitigation. Newly exposed cut rocks and light-colored cement would be stained to soften and screen their appearance, as specified in Mitigation Measure 1, which would lower the visual impact to less than significant levels.

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 construction-period/initial installation visual impacts, short-term visual impacts would be adverse. 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. Vegetation removal from Escondido Creek also would be required for anticipated bridge construction. Restoration/enhancement of creek riparian habitat would occur immediately following construction, and riparian species such as willow are rapid growers, and would be expected to provide good massing and canopy within three to five years. On site, ultimately landscaping would lessen adverse visual effects of raw slopes and new buildings. Even though landscaping of manufactured slopes and Country Club Drive frontage would be prioritized as a first action following grading, however, visual vegetation maturity generally would not be attained until 10 years following installation (particularly for trees). Similarly, Project lighting effects would be expected to result in increased glow from the area over existing conditions. Short-term adverse visual impacts to the Project site's visual character associated with Project construction until visual maturity is attained in 10 years are therefore identified as significant and unmitigable.

As demonstrated in the above Section 5.0 analyses, 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 the village and 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 both those uses, as well as the Harmony Grove Valley 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, as well as the Project landscaping, as shown in the post-Project photo-simulations (Figures 23a and 24 of this VIA). One area in the northeastern portion of the Project site would site homes on top of an interior

knoll that could result in skylining of a worst-case total of six homes from some locations. In general, this would occur to existing views for travelers moving south on Country Club Drive and east on Harmony Grove Road. This would not be true from all vantage points along these roads, nor from views from the protected recreational areas to the west such as the Community Park south of Harmony Grove Road, or south (DDHP and EFRR). 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.

Based on topography alone (i.e., not including screening provided by vegetation or intervening structures, the site is generally not highly visible to off-site viewers. The Project would have a footprint of approximately 67 acres within a viewshed of 21,891 acres (or 0.003 percent of the viewshed). Approximately 16 percent of all the areas within three miles of the Project in any direction would have the potential to see some part of the Project if there are no intervening structures or adjacent vegetation.

Views from off-site primary roadways typically would be lateral/peripheral in nature, or strongly colored by the existing built uses along them where they edge more direct views toward the Project. 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.

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

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.

Preliminary cross-sections prepared for the full length and width of four locations across the site depict the existing topography, as well as the post-development topography, for each of the portions of the site they bisect. As shown, Project grading would respect, and generally conform to, the overall rise and fall of existing topography on site. In other words, although the planned precise site elevations at any specific point internal to the Project site may deviate from the existing elevation, based on the preliminary grading plan, the post-Project cross-sections depict the Project grading guidelines to follow the natural rise and fall in site topography overall and always meet the existing topography within the site at the grading perimeter. A finding regarding waiver of some RPO steep slope encroachment was obtained from the Director of PDS in 2016

based on encroachment into insignificant steep slopes, in accordance with RPO Section 86.604[e][2][cc][3]). This will be confirmed by the decision makers during Project consideration. An exception under RPO Section 86.604(e)(2)(bb)(ii) also will be sought from the decision makers, to address remaining encroachment into Project steep slopes exceeding 10 percent per lot. Plan compatibility relative to land use findings is addressed in the EIR. This VIA addresses the visual effects associated with these findings. Given the small and scattered nature of these encroachments and their lack of existing visual dominance, combined with the Project development plan that both generally follows the underlying topography and preserves steep slopes in the southern portion of the Project adjacent to contiguous and higher slopes, these encroachments would not result in significant visual effects over the long term.

The Project would conform to the County LPC.

Taking all these factors into consideration, although implementation of the Project would represent a change from existing conditions, the combination of all Project elements, in conjunction with its setting at the HGV crossroads, would result in less than significant effects on area character or quality following implementation of mitigation, Project buildout and vegetation maturity; therefore, are expected to result in less than significant visual impacts.

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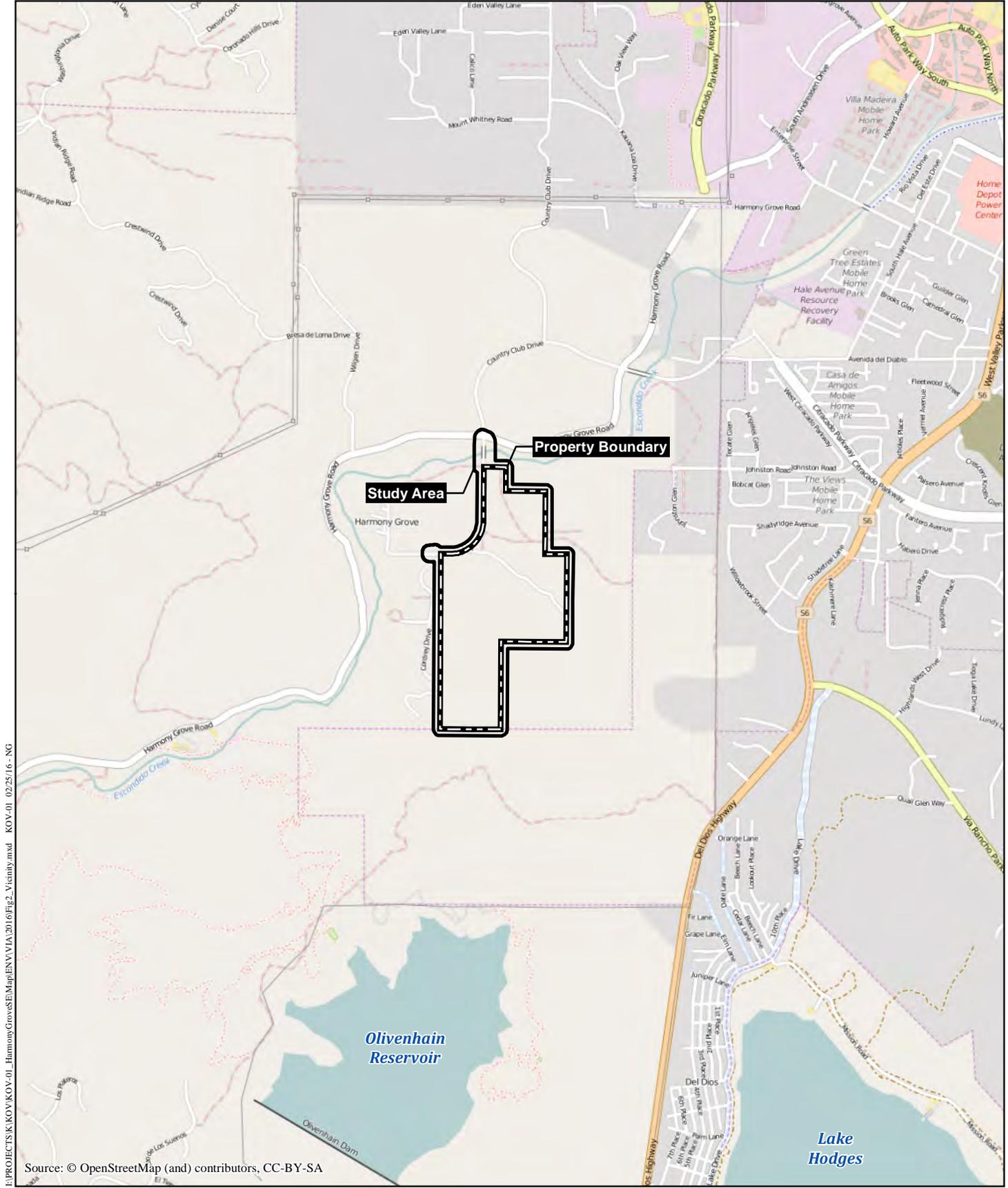
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## Regional Location Map

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA



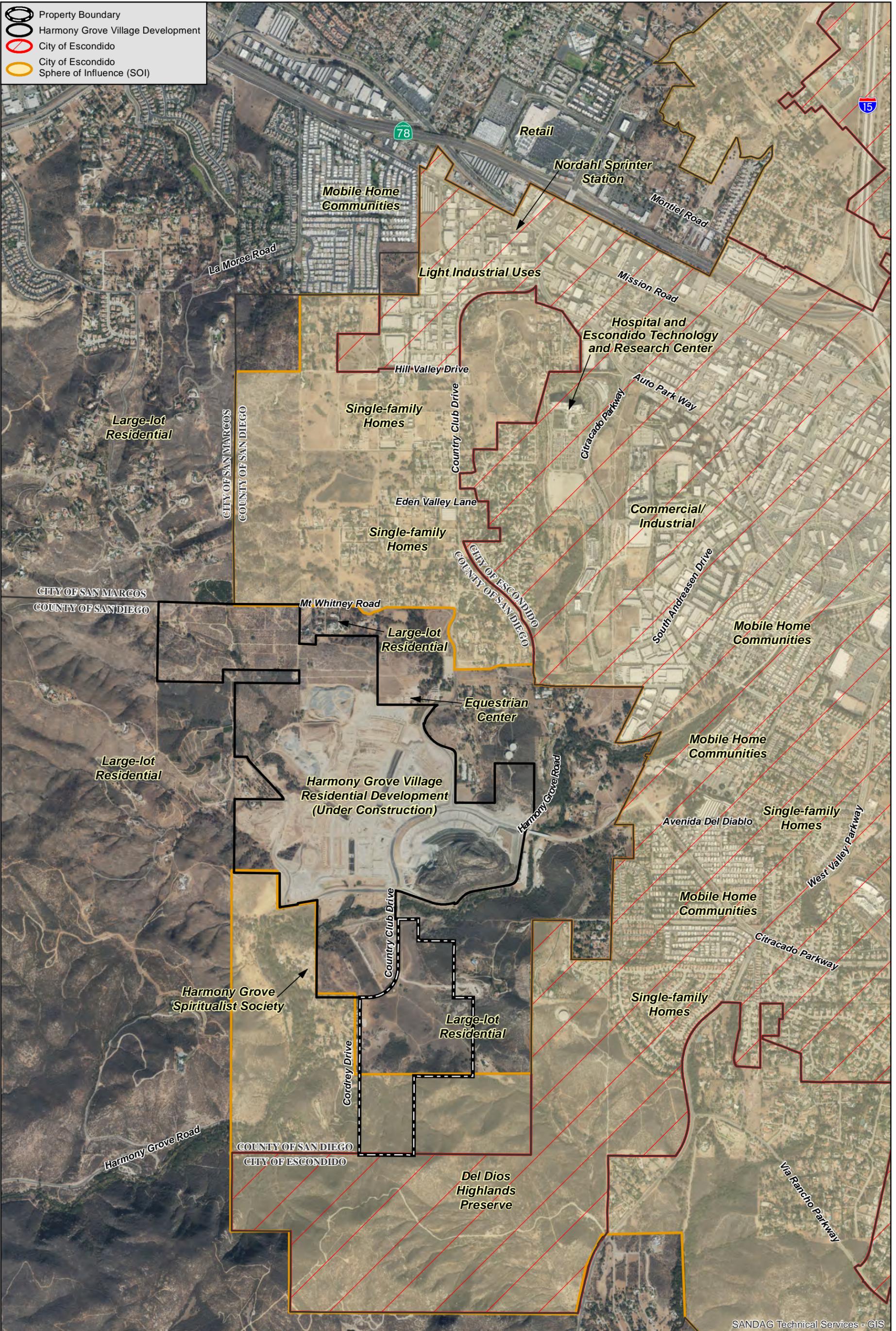
# Project Vicinity Map

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA

Figure 2

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-  Property Boundary
-  Harmony Grove Village Development
-  City of Escondido
-  City of Escondido Sphere of Influence (SOI)

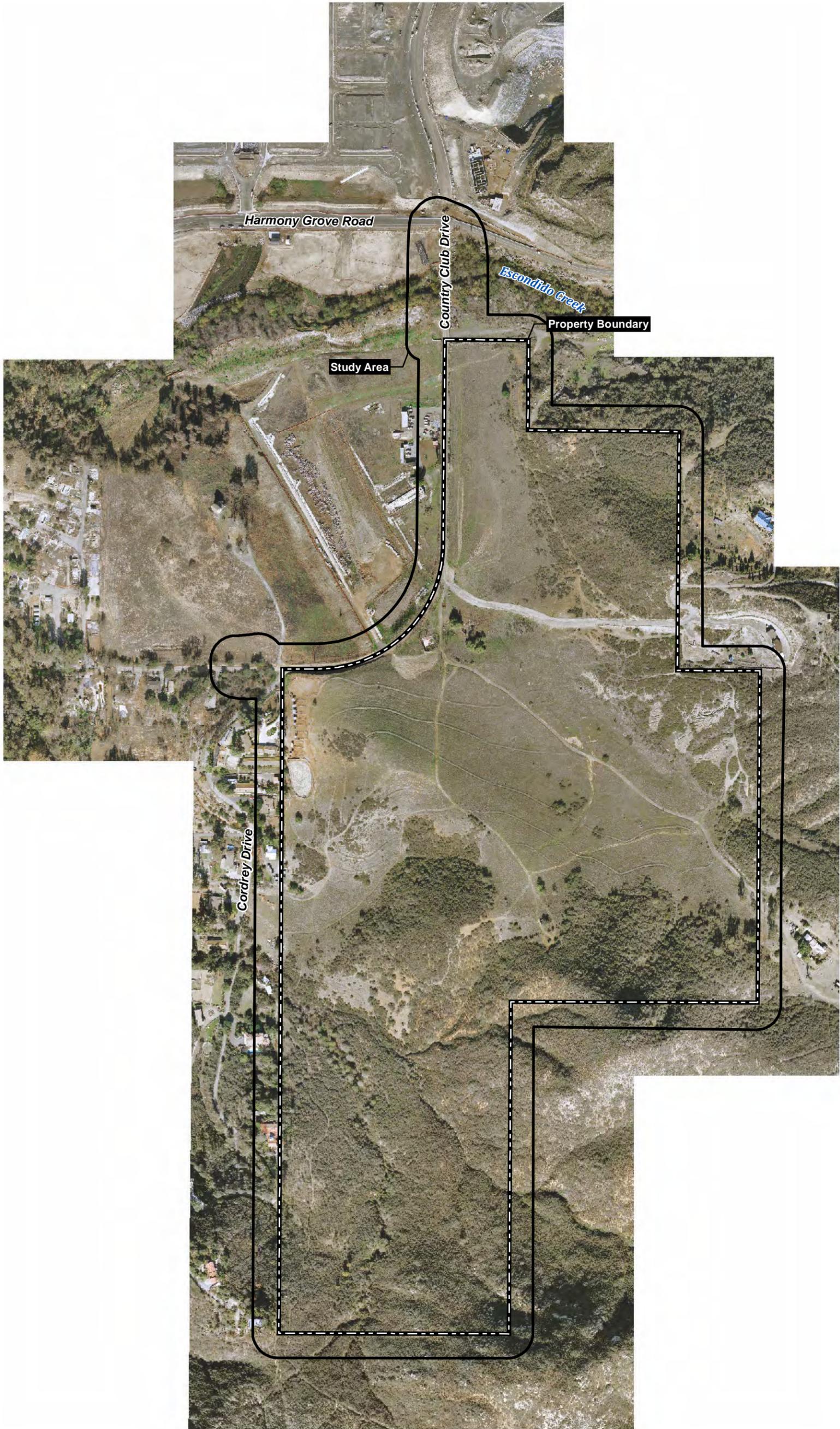


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SANDAG Technical Services - GIS

## Area Land Uses

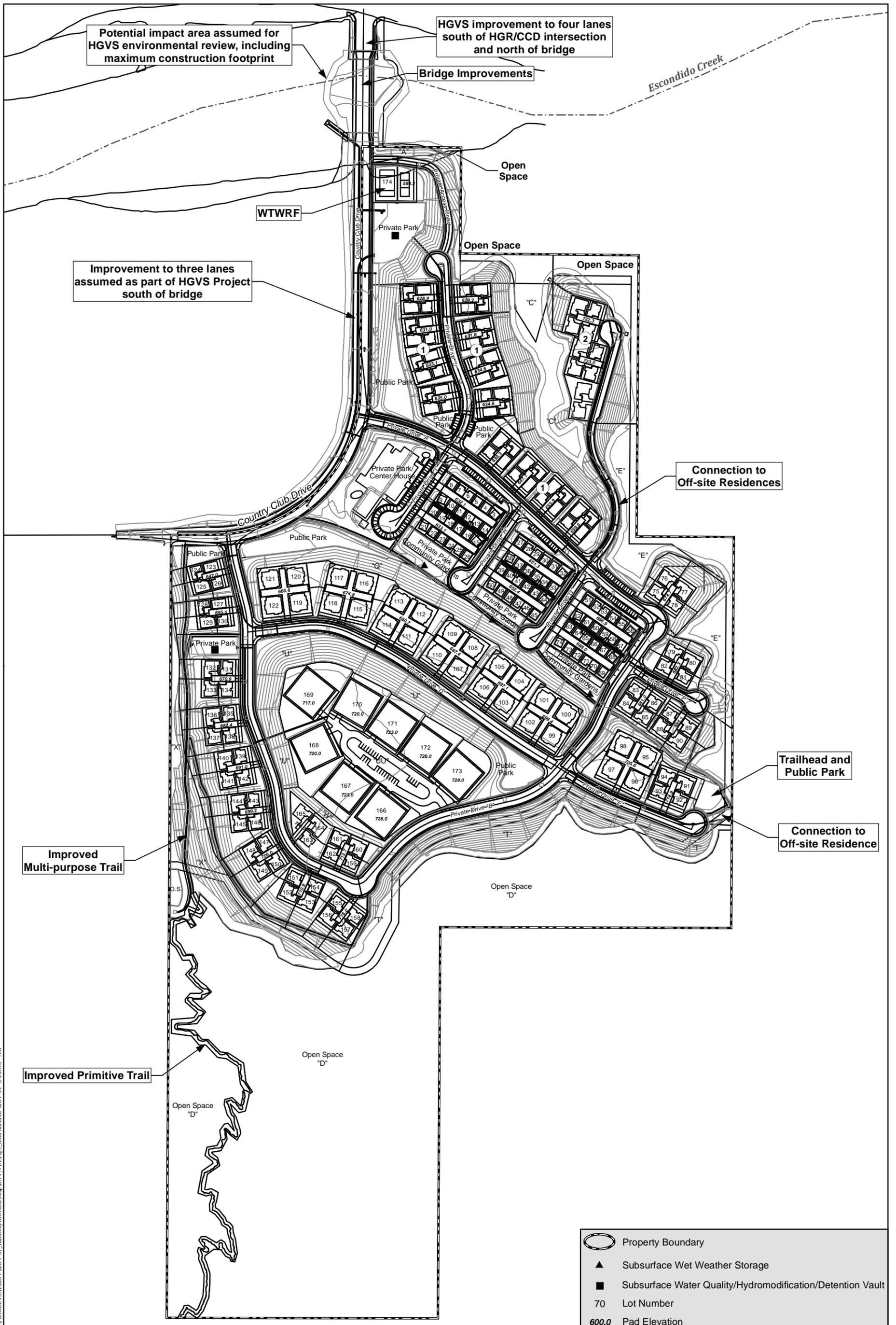
HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA



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# Project Site Aerial Photograph

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA



**Site Plan**

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA

Figure 5

I:\PROJECTS\KOV\KOV-01\_HarmonyGroveSEMap\ENV\VI\Fig.5\_SitePlan.mxd KOV-01\_5/4/2016 - NG



Cottage



Source: PDC 2016

## Typical Architectural Styles

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA

Figure 6a



**Bungalow**



**Farmhouse**



**Granary**



**Harmony Court**

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Source: PDC 2016

## Typical Architectural Styles

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA

Figure 6b

PROJECTS\KOV\KOV-01\_Harmony Grove SE\Map\ENV\ENVIA\Fig 7\_Potential Community Buildings.indd KOV-01\_03/17/15 KP

Source: Forest Studio 2015

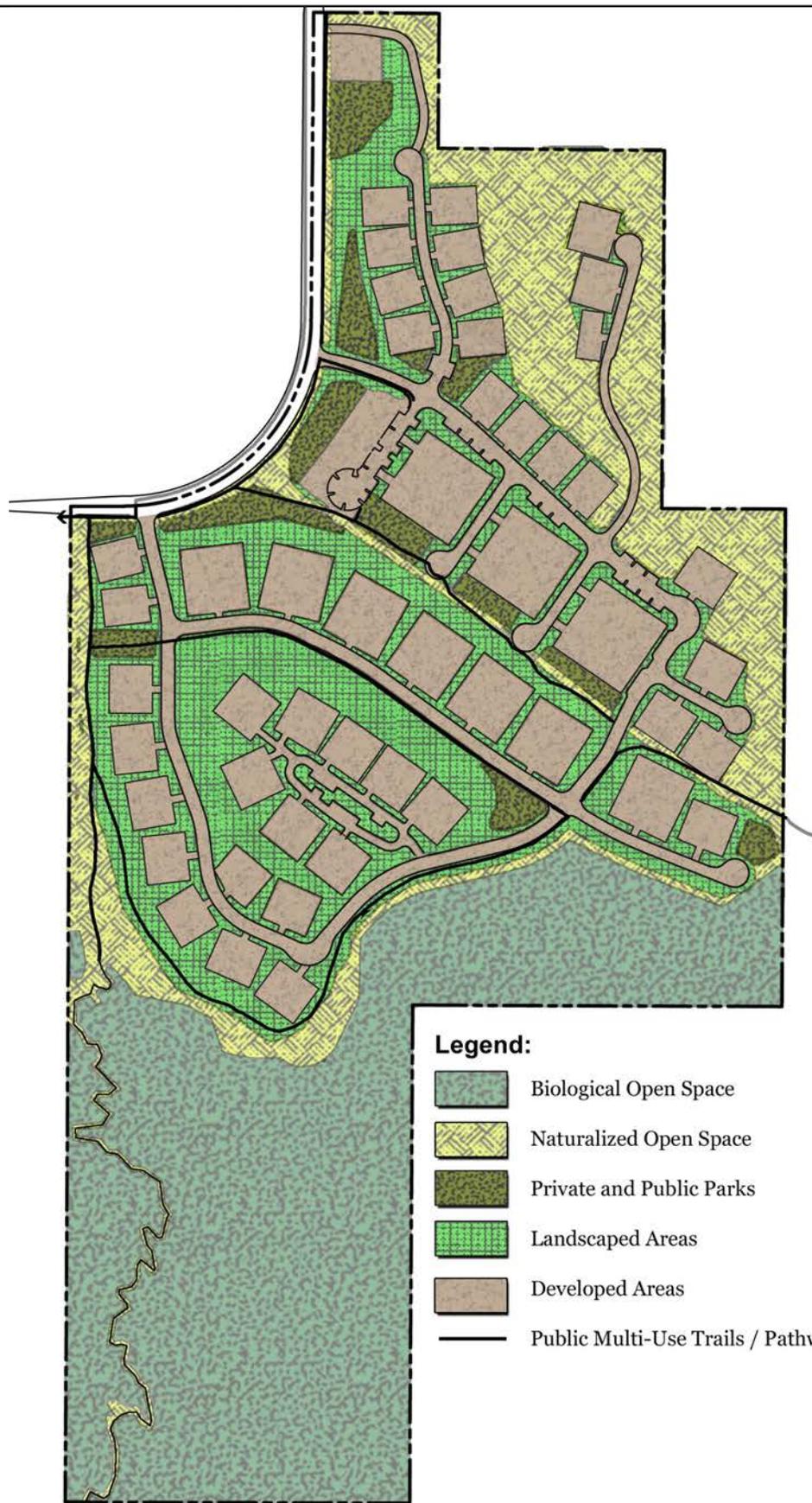


## Center House Concept Plan

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA



No Scale



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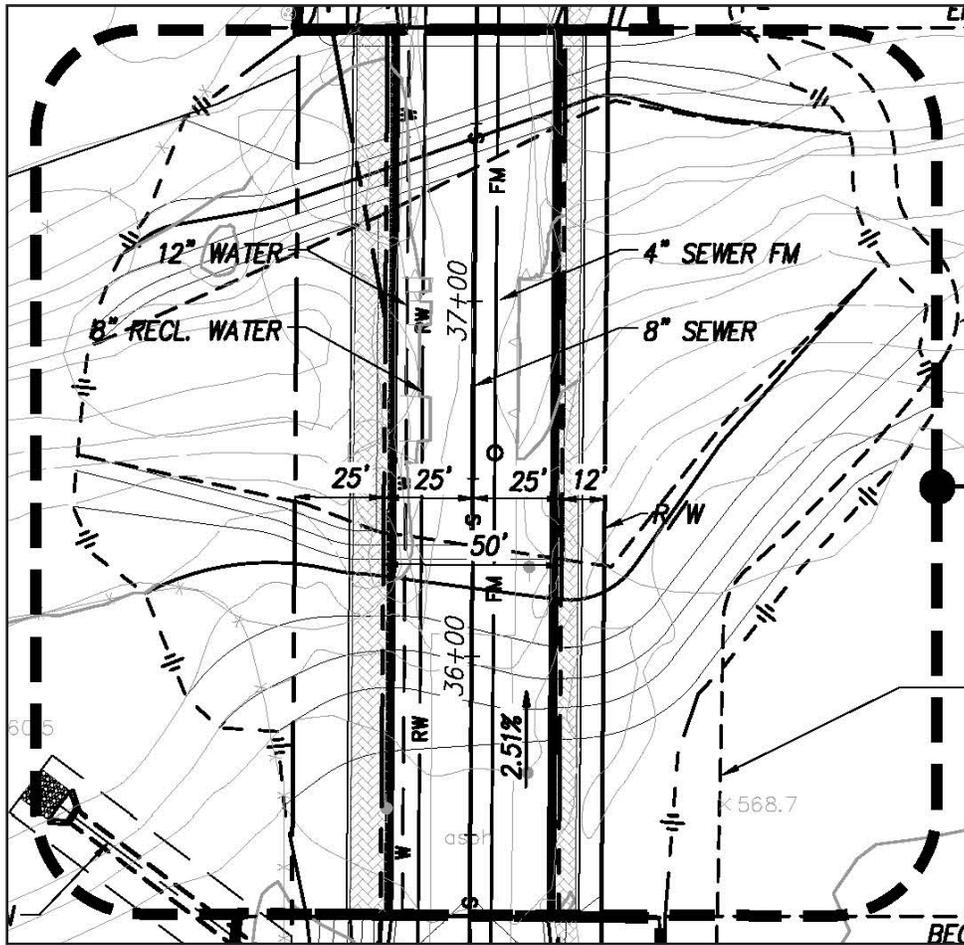
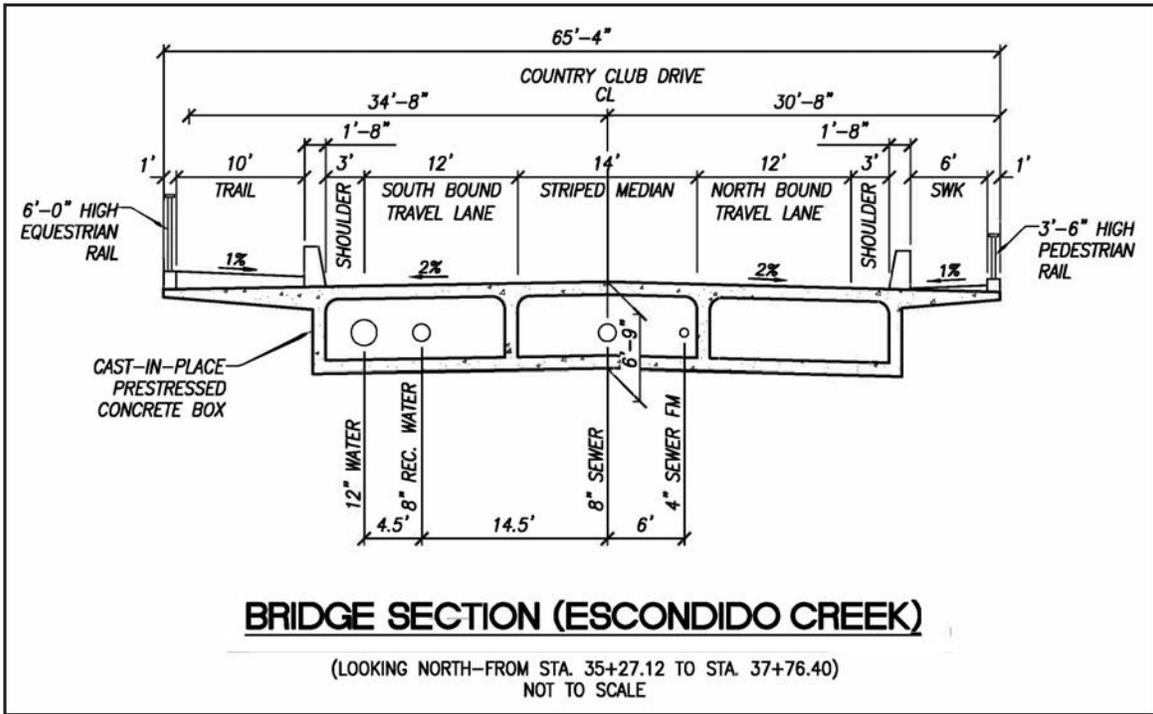
Source: PDC 2016

## Open Space Plan

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA

Figure 8





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Source: PDC 2016

## Escondido Creek Bridge Schematic

HARMONY GROVE VILLAGE SOUTH VIA