
IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

B. AESTHETICS

INTRODUCTION

This section addresses the subject of aesthetics resources, sometimes referred to as visual resources, with respect to the proposed Stonegate Subdivision and General Plan Amendment/Rezone project located in southeast Chico, CA (project). The setting begins with a description of existing visual conditions and an evaluation of potential aesthetic effects associated with implementing the proposed project.

The existing visual character of the project site is evaluated for its physical characteristics in the context of the surrounding setting and includes an evaluation of compatibility with surrounding land uses. The evaluation of visual character includes availability of specific views and the overall character of surrounding viewsheds. Viewsheds are groups of views with similar characteristics, defined by the available visible elements such as the horizon, topography, vegetation, roads, structures, and other natural and manmade features that give an area its unique visual signature and context. Development of all types, when combined with the natural setting becomes part of the overall visual character of an area.

Publicly accessible views, such as those from streets, sidewalks, parks, scenic roads and vista points are the subject of this CEQA analysis. Key Observation Points (“KOPs”) are selected by the lead agency, from a broader array of photographs, to be representative of the most sensitive publically accessible views. KOPs typically show the entire project area from designated scenic resources, such as parks or scenic roads. Visual impacts of a project consider the effect of the visual change made by the project to the visible characteristics of an area. A negative change in the visual character of an area, or the obstruction of existing scenic vista which has typically been available to the general public would be considered an impact. Visual impacts at nighttime are evaluated by considering sources of additional light and glare from the project.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Regional Visual Character

The general topography of the Butte County area is characterized by Sacramento Valley of California. The City’s topography within this Sacramento Valley varies from gentle slopes in the western portion of the City to increasing hilly terrain along the eastern edge into surrounding Butte County unincorporated land. SR 99 marks the edge of the western agricultural landscape and is the point where the elevation begins to rise and transition to the foothills in the east. The average elevation of the City of Chico is 230 feet above mean sea level. The City is bordered on the west by Hamilton City, on the north and south by unincorporated areas of Butte County,

and on the east by the City of Paradise. Chico lies approximately 90 miles north of Sacramento and 70 miles south of Redding.

The City is characterized by traditional grid patterns of development in the downtown center, and newer residential neighborhoods on the City's periphery. Natural water features within the City include Butte Creek, Big Chico Creek, Little Chico Creek, Comanche Creek/Edgar Slough, and Mud Creek that drain to the Sacramento River. Bidwell Park is a notable natural feature of the City, stretching over 10 miles along Big Chico Creek from the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountains (Upper Bidwell Park) to the valley floor (Lower Bidwell Park).

Local Visual Character

As described in Section III (Project Description), the project site is located in the southeast quadrant of Chico along the east and west sides of Bruce Road, between E. 20th Street and the Skyway. The project site is generally level open space, gradually sloping up to the northeast from elevations of 225 feet at its south border along Skyway to 267 feet on the north border along E. 20th Street. Historic uses of the property have been open grazing land, although that use has been much less active during the past 25 years.

All of the site's parcels are vacant, undeveloped land containing vernal pools, non-native annual grasses, and known populations of Butte County Meadowfoam ("BCM"), a state and federally listed endangered species. Sparse blue oak trees are located in the southeastern portion of the site and some riparian woodland tree species and habitat are within the south-central portion along the Butte Creek Diversion Channel. The most abundant animal life on-site includes small mammals, various songbirds, and foraging raptors.

The Butte Creek Diversion Channel runs in a north-south direction through the eastern portion of the site, about midway between Bruce Road and old Potter Road (now the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path, a Class-I paved bike path maintained by the City of Chico). Along both sides of the bike path are historic walls comprised of stacked volcanic boulders. The visual character of the site can generally be described as vacant land. The primary character defining features on the project site are its existing vegetation (non-native grasslands and riparian woodlands), vernal pools and swales, the Butte Creek Diversion Channel, and the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path. The area surrounding the project site is characterized by urban development, including single and multi-family residences to the north, single-family residences to the west, commercial land to the south, and an industrial use to the southeast. East of the project site is privately owned rangeland and open space that slopes gently up in elevation to rolling foothill terrain.

Visual Resources

The Figures IV.B-3 through IV.B-6, show key visual resources within the project site and surrounding areas. These include the existing vegetated state, Sierra Nevada foothills and the historic walls along the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path. These resources are described in detail below.

Existing Vegetation

The project site include annual grasslands, riparian woodlands, as well as the various vernal pools and swales within the confines of the site. The vegetation on-site is visible from all of the surrounding roadways and residences within the immediate vicinity and blends into the background of the Sierra Nevada foothills, just east of the project site.

Historic Walls

Historic walls comprised of stacked volcanic boulders are located on-site along the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path. The walls consist of volcanic boulders that have been stacked to form a low wall. According to the Chico General Plan this is a locally recognized cultural resource that contributes to the visual character of the site.

Sierra Nevada Foothills

The Sierra Nevada foothills characterize the eastern landscape of the City of Chico. The valley floor gradually inclines into the foothills and a series of ridges and buttes form break points in the terrain. The shifts in elevation are significant and the City becomes more visible from the development in areas of increasing topography. The Sierra Nevada foothills are visible looking east from the project site.

Views of the Project Site

The following discussion is based on an assessment of site visibility conducted by WRA. The photos presented in this discussion include views from vantage points in areas surrounding the project site in which the site is visible, as well as views of other surrounding land uses. The photos included are not meant as an exhaustive collection of all the views that include the project site from all vantage points, but is meant to show representative views toward the site from the surrounding areas.

As shown in Figures IV.B-3 and IV.B-4, views of the project site are available from a variety of surrounding locations, including short-range views from adjacent roadways and land uses, and medium-range views from land uses located further away from the site. The project site is west of the foothills that are elevated enough to provide long-range views of the project site.

In the immediate vicinity of the project site, short-range views of the site are available from East 20th Street, Bruce Road, Skyway, Raley Boulevard, Steve G. Harrison Memorial Bike Path, portions of the Raley's parking lot, and single-family residences located north and west of the project site. The views along Bruce Road and Skyway are generally temporary due to the nature of the heavily trafficked roadways. However, these views are long-term for the

residences located along East 20th Street and west of Bruce Road (Figure IV.B-1 & Figure IV.B-2).

Due to the variable topography, the project site slopes from the northeast to the southwest. As such, portions of the site are lower than the development to the north and west of the project site. However, the project site does not include an abundance of tall vegetation that would provide screening for the surrounding land uses. The landscape characteristics of the views of the project site consist of slightly sloping vegetated topography, barbed wire fences, and utility poles and lines.

Figure IV.B-1, consists of several views of the project site from various viewpoints. View 1 is a long-range view looking southwest onto the project site. The view illustrates the variable topography and differing uses present, as a gravel trail cuts across the foreground of the photograph, the middle-ground shows vacant vegetated land, and tall trees and development are visible in the background. This view would be available to viewers driving along East 20th Street and residents who live in the adjacent homes. Views of the project site from this vantage are largely unobstructed with the exception of vehicles traveling along East 20th Street.

Figure IV.B-1, View 2 shows the changing topography on-site as it forms the Butte Creek Diversion Channel. This view can be seen from East 20th Street looking south and shows the presence of differing biological communities on-site. Similar to the above, this view would be available to viewers along East 20th Street and residents who live in the adjacent homes. Views of the Butte Creek Diversion Channel would be obstructed to viewers traveling west on East 20th Street towards Bruce Road due to the change in topography.

Figure IV.B-1, Views 3 and 4 both provide views of the annual grasslands within the project site that can be seen along Skyway. The vacant vegetated views of the project site are prominent from most of the available viewpoints surrounding the project site. View 3 depicts a portion of the site that is completely vegetated, whereas View 4 includes an area of dense vegetation in the foreground, a portion of the rock wall, and a utility pole in the middle-ground, and additional vegetated land in the background. Both of these views would be unobstructed from passers-by along Skyway.

Figure IV.B-2, View 1 is a medium-range view depicting the Butte Creek Diversion Channel from the center of the site looking north. In the foreground the photograph shows the sloping topography of this section of the site and pools of water still present in the channel. The sides of the channel are largely lacking vegetation, in contrast to the majority of the rest of the site.

Figure IV.B-2, View 2 is another medium-range view depicting the expanse of vacant land consisting of vegetated annual grasslands. This view would be unobstructed from vehicles traveling along East 20th Street.

Figure IV.B-2, Views 3-4, when viewed together, show a panoramic view of the western expanse of the site. Both views illustrate the paths present within the confines of the project site, along with rock elements west of the Butte Creek Diversion Channel.

Long-range views of the project site are generally limited to locations situated at higher elevations than the project site that do not have intervening obstructions (i.e., homes, buildings, shopping center, trees and landscaping) between these locations and the project site. Such unobstructed and partially obstructed long-range views of the project site are available from the foothills east of the project site.

Views of the surrounding uses within the vicinity of the project site are variable. Residential uses are located to the west and north of the site as evidenced in Figure IV.B-3, View 1, View 4, and Figure IV.B-4, View 1.

Figure IV.B-3, View 1 shows one of residential developments located north of the project site. This area is located along East 20th Street. A number of the houses along East 20th street have unobstructed views of the existing project site.

Figure IV.B-3, View 4 shows the foreground and middle-ground of the vegetated project site, prior with the homes bordering the site on Roberto Court visible in the background. These homes have a permanent unobstructed view of the project site.

Figure IV.B-4, View 1 depicts residential uses north of the project site.

Figure IV.B-3, View 2 & IV.B-4, View 4, shows commercial development, including grocery stores, abuts the southern edge of the project site. This area is located on the eastern side of Bruce Road, the same side as the project site. The views of the project site in pre-project condition are visible from this adjacent use, however would be partially obstructed views of the site due to the expanse of parking lot, vacant lot, and vehicular traffic along Bruce Road.

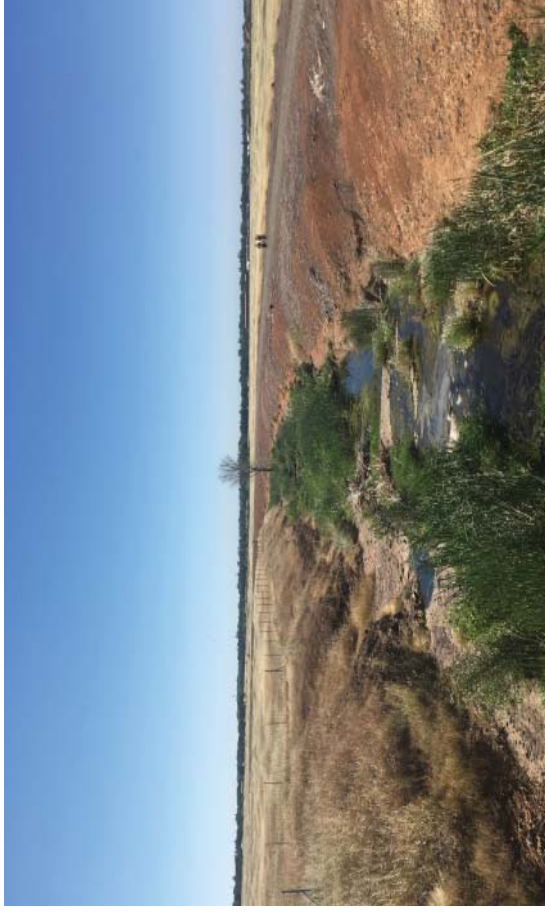
Figure IV.B-1, View 3 is a medium-range view of looking north along Bruce Road from the intersection of Raley Boulevard and Bruce Road. The street and adjacent vacant land is shown in the foreground and the stretch of road continues in the middle-ground. The vehicles in the photograph would pass the proposed project site. Unobstructed views of the project site would be available from this surrounding area.

Figure IV.B-4, View 2 shows the vacant land east of the project site along Skyway. This area of land is immediately east of the project site and consists of similar vegetation and aesthetic qualities. This area is immediately prior to the Sierra Nevada foothills and slowly increases in elevation compared to the project site. This area would have permanent and unobstructed views of the project site.

Figure IV.B-4, View 3 shows the area south of the project site where there is an industrial area near the eastern edge of the project boundary. The industrial area is located just east of the southern border of the site, where it would only have a partial view of the project site. Views would also be obstructed from the vehicular traffic along Skyway.



View 1. View of the project site looking southwest from E. 20th Street.



View 2. View of the project site looking south from E. 20th Street.



View 3. View of the project site looking north from Skyway.



View 4. View of the project site looking east from Skyway.

Figure IV.B-1 Views of the Project Site

Stonegate Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map and General Plan Amendment/Rezone
City of Chico, California



View 1. View of the project site looking north along the Butte Creek Diversion Channel.



View 2. View of the project site looking east from E. 20th Street.



View 3. View of the project site looking south from the gravel road adjacent to the Butte Creek Diversion Channel.



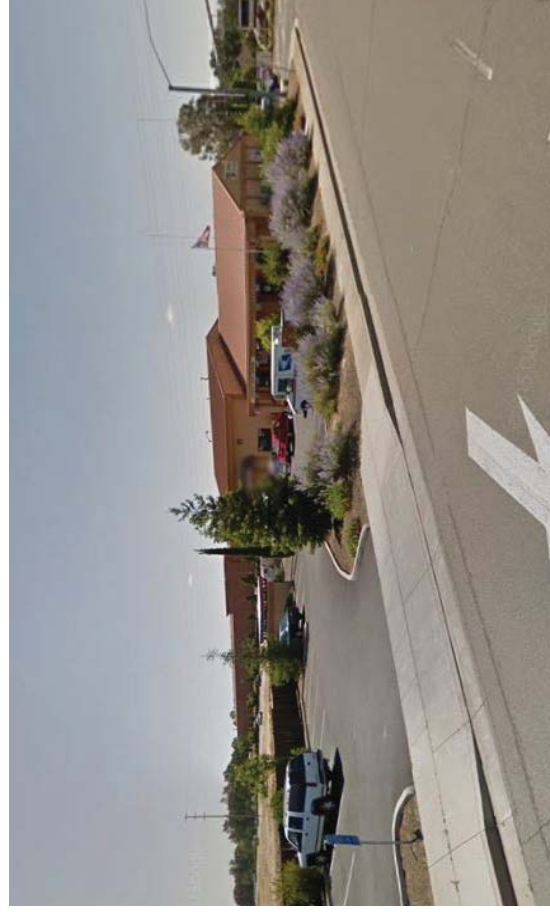
View 4. View of the project site looking west from the Butte Creek Diversion Channel.

Figure IV.B-2 Views of the Project Site

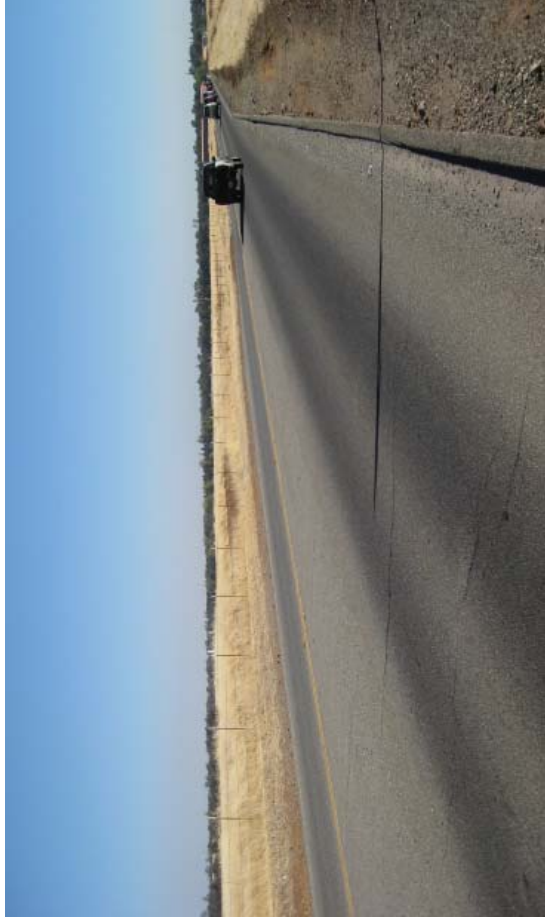
Stonegate Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map and General Plan Amendment/Rezone
City of Chico, California



View 1. View looking north from the project site towards the homes along E 20th Street.



View 2. View looking east from Bruce Road of commercial development abutting the southern end of the project site.



View 3. View looking north from of the intersection of Raley Boulevard and Bruce Road.



View 4. View looking west from the project site towards homes on Roberto Court.

Figure IV.B-3 Views of Surrounding Land Uses

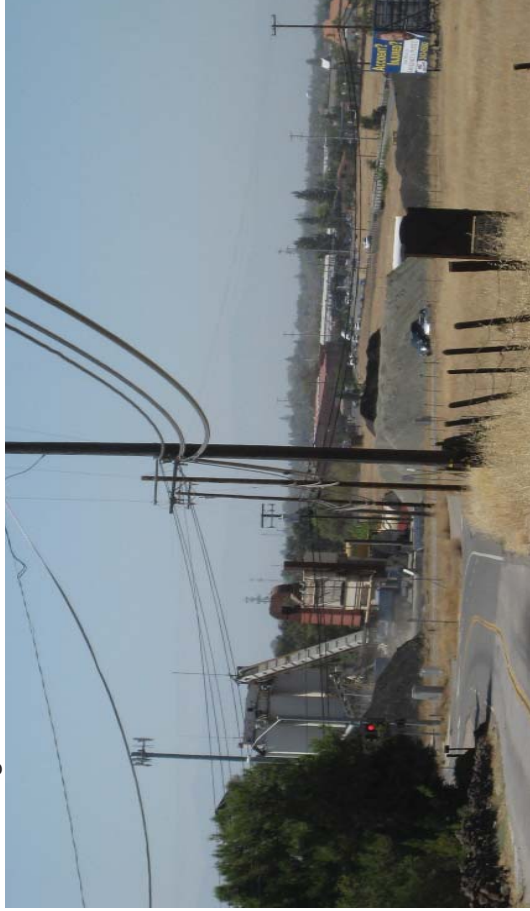
Stonegate Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map and General Plan Amendment/Rezone
City of Chico, California



View 1. View from the project site looking north towards a residential neighborhood.



View 2. View of vacant land east of the project site from Skyway.



View 3. View looking southeast from the southern border of the project site towards the industrial use.



View 4. View of commercial uses south of the project site.

Figure IV.B-4 Views of Surrounding Land Uses

Stonegate Vesting Tentative Subdivision Map and General Plan Amendment/Rezone
City of Chico, California

Light and Glare

There are currently no sources of light on the project site. Daytime sources of glare in the vicinity of the site include reflections off of light-colored surfaces, windows, and metal details on cars traveling on E. 20th Street, Bruce Road, or Skyway. Light sources in the vicinity of the site include streetlights along E. 20th Street and Skyway, headlights of cars traveling nearby, and outdoor and indoor lighting from the adjacent residential and commercial land uses.

Scenic Roadways

The Community Design Element of the General Plan identifies Vallombrosa Avenue, E. 8th Street, the Esplanade, Chico Canyon Road, Centennial Avenue, Manzanita Avenue, Humboldt Road, and Bidwell Avenue as scenic roadways. The proposed project does not contain nor is it adjacent to any of these scenic roadways.

Sierra Nevada Foothills

The Land Use and Community Design Elements of the City of Chico General Plan contain policies aimed at maintaining boundaries between urban uses and the foothills in order to protect viewsheds and allow for a compact urban form. Foothill development standards are included in the Chico Municipal Code and apply to areas generally east of Yosemite Drive, and east of Bruce Road at elevations of 270 feet and above. The proposed project site is not within this designated area.

REGULATORY SETTING

Federal

Currently no Federal policies and/or mandates related to aesthetic resources exist.

State

State Scenic Highway Program

The California Scenic Highway Program was established in 1963 in order to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to state highways. The state regulations and guidance governing the Program can be found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq. A highway may be designated as “scenic” depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler’s enjoyment of the view. A scenic corridor is defined as land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway and can be identified using a motorist’s line of vision. A reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to the distant horizon. There are no state scenic highways in or adjacent to the project site.

Nighttime Sky – Title 24 Outdoor Lighting Standards

The California legislature passed a bill in 2001 requiring the California Energy Commission (CEC) to adopt energy efficient standards for outdoor lighting for both the public and private sector. In November 2003, CEC adopted changes to the Title 24, parts 1 and n6, Building Energy Efficiency Standards. These standards are effective as of October 1, 2005 and include changes to the requirements for outdoor lighting and help to reduce the impacts related to light pollution, light trespass, and glare. The standards regulate lighting characteristics such as maximum power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls to turn lighting on and off. Different lighting standards are set by classifying areas by lighting zone. The classification is based on population figures of the 2000 Census. Areas can be designated as LZ1 (dark), LZ2 (rural), or LZ3 (urban).

Local

City of Chico Municipal Code (CMC)

Chapter 19.18 – Site Design and Architectural Review

Chapter 19.18 of the Municipal Code requires a discretionary design review process for all new commercial and multi-family residential development in the City, intended to promote a visual environment of high aesthetic quality. The Chico Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board promotes responsible architectural design, which is consistent with Chico’s character by applying adopted design guidelines. The Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board reviews project site plans, architectural renderings, and landscaping and lighting details, which are required to be submitted and approved in advance of the related building permit application. The City’s Design Guidelines Manual contains graphic examples and explanations of

architectural and site design elements that reflect the most desirable types of development within the City.

Section 19.60.050 – Exterior Lighting

Section 19.60.050 requires that exterior lighting be: *“architecturally integrated with the character of all structures, energy-efficient, and shielded or recessed so that direct glare and reflections are confined, to the maximum extent feasible, within the boundaries of the site. Exterior lighting shall be directed downward and away from adjacent properties and public rights-of-way. Shielded shall mean that the light rays are directed onto the site, and the light source, whether bulb or tube, is not visible from an adjacent property. This section does not apply to sign illumination, traffic safety lighting, or public street lighting. No permanently installed lighting shall blink, flash, or be unusually high intensity or brightness. All lighting fixtures shall be appropriate in scale, intensity, and height to the use they are serving.”*

City of Chico General Plan

Land Use Element

Policy LU-2.4 (Land Use Compatibility) – Promote land use compatibility through use restrictions, development standards, environmental review and special design considerations.

Policy LU-2.5 (Open Space and Resource Conservation) – Protect areas with known sensitive resources.

Action LU-2.5.1 (Resource Constraint Overlay) – For development proposals on properties with the Resource Constraint Overlay, which highlights known sensitive resource areas, land owners must conduct detailed environmental studies, adhere to CEQA requirements, and coordinate with resource agencies to determine actual development potential. Development proposals for a density or intensity of use above that assumed for the purposes of the General Plan projections and the General Plan EIR will need to address impacts not evaluated as part of the General Plan.

Policy LU-3.4 (Neighborhood Enhancement) – Strengthen the character of existing residential neighborhoods and districts.

Policy LU-4.2 (Infill Compatibility) – Support infill development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation projects that are compatible with surrounding properties and neighborhoods.

Policy LU-4.4 (Positive Contributions) – Encourage infill development that provides missing neighborhood elements, such as neighborhood retail, enhanced architectural quality, and circulation improvements for pedestrians, bicycles, and vehicles, or that otherwise contributes positively to existing neighborhoods.

Community Design Element

Policy CD-1.1 (Natural Features and Cultural Resources) – Reinforce the City's positive and distinctive image by recognizing and enhancing the natural features of the City and protecting cultural and historic resources.

Action CD-1.1.1 (Highlight Features and Resources) – Incorporate and highlight natural features such as scenic vistas, creeks, and trees, as well as cultural resources such as rock walls, into project design.

Action CD-1.1.2 (Landscape Improvement) – Emphasize landscaping as a fundamental design component, retaining mature landscaping when appropriate, to reinforce a sense of the natural environment and to maintain an established appearance.

Policy CD-4.1 (Distinctive Character) – Reinforce the distinctive character of neighborhoods with design elements reflected in the streetscape, landmarks, public art, and natural amenities.

Policy CD-5.1 (Compatible Infill Development) – Ensure that new development and redevelopment reinforces the desirable elements of its neighborhood including architectural scale, style, and setback patterns.

Policy CD-5.2 (Context Sensitive Transitions) – Encourage context sensitive transitions in architectural scale and character between new and existing residential development.

Parks, Public Facilities, and Service Element

Policy PPFS-2.1 (Use of Creeks and Greenways) – Utilize the City's creeks, greenways, and other open space for public access, habitat protection, and to enhance community connectivity.

Action PPFS-2.1.2 (Creekside Design) – Continue to use Chico's Design Guidelines Manual for proposed development adjacent to creeks to address setbacks, building orientation, security measures, and lighting to promote public access and use of the City's creeks as amenities without detracting from the natural setting.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Thresholds of Significance

Based on the CEQA Standards of Significance, the project would generally be considered to have a significant impact on the environment if it would:

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

Aesthetics Issues not Further Analyzed

The following issues were addressed in the Initial Study (see Appendix A) and Section IV.B of this Draft EIR and were determined to result in no impact or a less-than-significant impact and not warrant further analysis:

- Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings within a scenic highway.

Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact IV.B-1: The proposed project would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

The proposed project would result in a significant aesthetics impact if it would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. According to the Chico General Plan Update Draft Environmental Impact Report, scenic vistas for the City include views of the transition between landscapes (Sierra Nevada foothills to the east and the Central Valley to the west), the agricultural landscape, and the foothills and rising elevations to the east of Chico, the major creeks, Bidwell Park, and views of City neighborhoods. The project site is adjacent to private land that provides views of the Sierra Nevada foothills. Given the natural topography of the project site and surrounding land uses, public views of the surrounding foothills are limited to the roadways (including Bruce Rd, East 20th St, Raley Blvd, Webster Dr, Parkhurst St. and the Skyway) in proximity to the site.

Computer-generated visual massing Figures IV.B-5 through IV.B-7 illustrate existing and potential future conditions within select view corridors from representative public vantage points. The locations of the massing studies were selected in consultation with city staff. Digitized photographs and computer modeling techniques were utilized to prepare the massing diagrams. The images show “wire frame” illustrations, which are based on height and bulk allowed under the proposed zoning designations. The images do not show architectural detail, as specific architectural plans are not part of this review. Impacts from the various public view points are further discussed in Table IV.B-1 of this Draft EIR.

Figure IV.B-5A: Existing Conditions from Skyway Looking West



Figure IV.B-5B: Proposed Development from Skyway Looking West



Figure IV.B-6A: Existing Conditions from Bruce Road & East 20th Looking Southeast

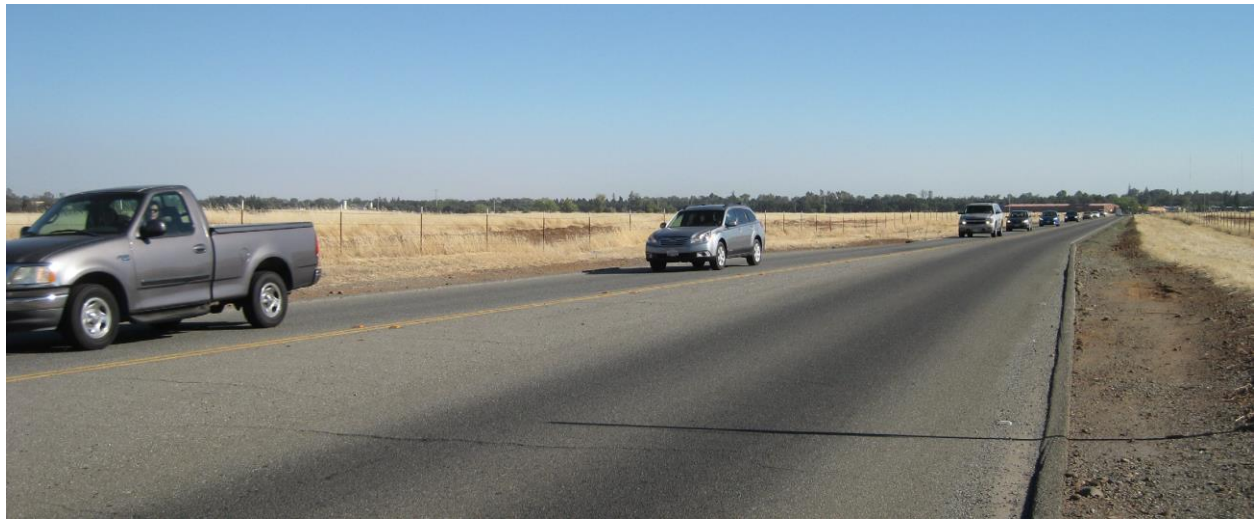


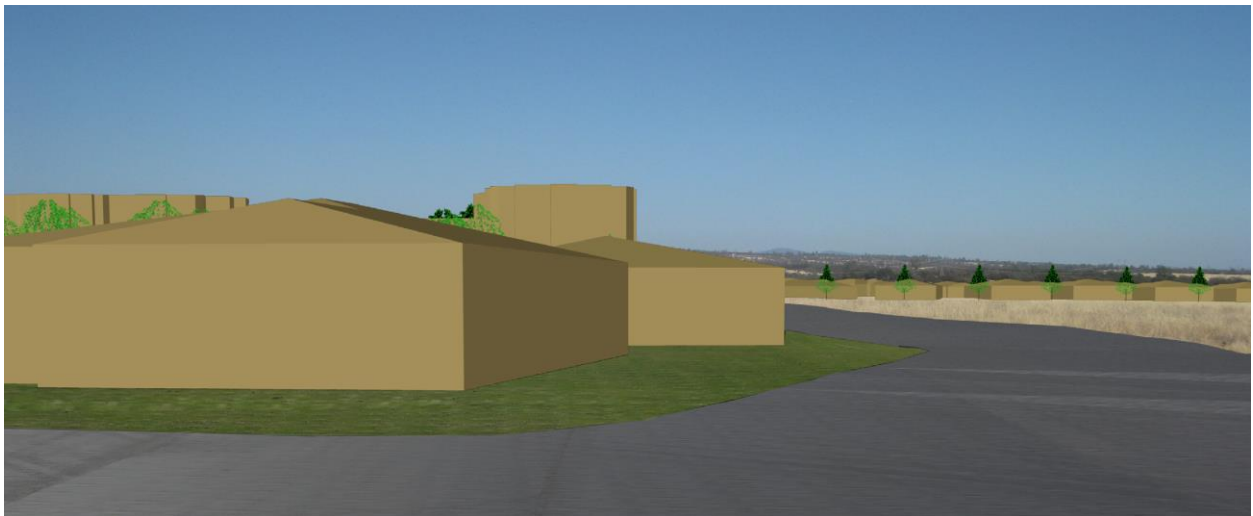
Figure IV.B-6B: Proposed Development from Bruce Road & East 20th Looking Southeast



Figure IV.B-7B: Existing Conditions from Webster Drive Looking West



Figure IV.B-7B: Proposed Development from Webster Drive Looking West



**Table IV.B-1
Impacts to Public Viewpoints of the Sierra Foothills**

View Area	Impact
Bruce Road	Views from Bruce Road are confined to motorist and bicyclist utilizing the road. The roadway travels North/South, opposite of the sightline that will be blocked by proposed project activities. There are no sidewalks for pedestrians to utilize along Bruce Road.
East 20 th Street	Limited portions of views of the eastern foothills will be blocked by the proposed project. The proposed project would block southeasterly views along East 20 th Street between Bruce Road and the Butte Creek Diversion Channel.
Parkhurst Street	The views from Parkhurst Street are confined to a small vantage point at the eastern terminus of the road. The project would likely block all views of the eastern foothills from this view point.
Laredo Lane	The views from Laredo Lane are confined to a small vantage point at the eastern terminus of the road. The project would likely block all views of the eastern foothills from this view point.
Webster Drive	The views from Webster Drive are confined to a small vantage point at the eastern terminus of the road. The project would likely block some views of the eastern foothills from this view point.
Fremont Street	The views from Fremont Street are confined to a small vantage point at the eastern terminus of the road. The project would not substantially block views of the eastern foothills at this location, however, views from Fremont Street may be blocked by construction of the Canyon View High School in the future.
Raley Boulevard	The views from Raley Blvd. of the foothills to the East would largely be blocked by future development of the proposed project.
Skyway	Limited portions of the view of the eastern foothills will be blocked by the proposed project. The proposed project would block some views along Skyway between Bruce Road and Potter Road.
Potter Road	The view from Potter Road of the currently undeveloped project site would be blocked for the entirety of the road, approximately 200 feet, by the RS-20 lots. Potter Road turns into a bicycle and pedestrian path after its initial 200 feet of roadway. Views from the bicycle and pedestrian path provide intermittent views of the project site. Views of the site would be altered from undeveloped grasslands to that of modern development. In addition, the commercial portions of the project would block existing views of residential development to the west of the site.

Visual impacts to public view points in the surrounding area are confined to roadways and sidewalks. The proposed project would primarily impact smaller local roads with limited existing views of the easterly sierra foothills. Views from the Potter Road pedestrian path would largely

maintain the same visual context. The views would have undeveloped grasslands and vernal pools in the foreground, while having modern development in the background. Construction of the Canyon View High School would further reduce the number of viewpoints of the sierra foothills in the project's vicinity. Given the limited number of public viewpoints, limited view at viewpoints and lack of pedestrian access to viewpoints the proposed project would have a ***less than significant*** impact to scenic vistas and no mitigation measures are required.

Impact IV.B-2: The proposed project would significantly degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

The proposed project would result in a significant aesthetics impact if it would significantly degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. As discussed previously, the visual character of the project site is vacant, undeveloped land containing vernal pools, and non-native annual grasses. Sparse oak trees are located in the southeastern portion of the site and some riparian woodland tree species exist within the south-central portion along the Butte Creek Diversion Channel. The Butte Creek Diversion Channel runs in a north-south direction through the eastern portion of the site, about midway between Bruce Road and old Potter Road (now the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path). Along portions of the bike path are historic walls comprised of stacked volcanic boulders. The visual character of the site can generally be described as vacant land. The primary character-defining features on the project site are its existing vegetation (non-native grasslands and riparian woodlands), vernal pools and swales, the Butte Creek Diversion Channel, and the Steve Harrison Memorial Bike Path.

The area surrounding the project site is characterized by urban development, including single and multi-family residences to the north, single-family residences to the west, commercial land to the south, and an industrial use to the southeast. East of the project site is privately owned rangeland and open space that gently slopes up in elevation to rolling foothill terrain. These uphill lands to the east comprise the Doe Mill/Honey Run Special Planning Area (SPA), identified in the Chico 2030 General Plan as a 1,400-acre growth area for the city.

The proposed project would preserve 108 acres, approximately 33 percent of the project site, as open space. The open space would include grassland habitat intermixed with a variety of seasonal wetlands, vernal pools known to support high concentrations of BCM, natural drainages, and the Butte Creek Diversion Channel. The proposed open space would be located immediately south of the City's Doe Mill Preserve, a 15-acre BCM preserve. Views of the foothills would be available from a street, public park, and a pedestrian/bike path planned along the western boundary of the open space. There would be no substantial change to existing visual resources from the implementation of the open space element of the proposed project.

Development resulting from the proposed project would substantially affect all of the primary character-defining features of the site located outside of the open space preserve. Although the project would preserve a significant portion of the project site as open space areas, much of these natural character-defining features of the project site would be obscured from view by the proposed houses, commercial development, and landscaping, shown in Figures IV.B-5 through IV.B-7. Therefore, the project would change the visual character of the site from that of vacant

land containing vernal pools and non-native annual grasses to that of modern development, containing housing and commercial uses. Because all of the primary character-defining features of the site would be significantly altered, the project would substantially change the visual character of the site.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the development of residential and commercial land uses on the project site that are similar to the land uses found adjacent to and in the vicinity of the site to the north, west, and south. The massing, height, and architectural-style of the proposed homes and the associated landscaping would be similar to that found in the subdivisions adjacent to and near the project site to the north, west, and south. As stated above, future development of commercial and multi-family residential lots would be required to comply with the City's visual quality policies via the site design and architectural review process, which would ensure that these components are designed and constructed to be compatible with surrounding neighborhoods. Although development would significantly alter the visual character of the area, the alteration would not constitute a substantial degradation in relationship to the off-site land uses to the north, west, and south. The proposed project would constitute infill development of an expanding area of the City of Chico. Therefore, impacts would be ***less than significant*** and no mitigation measures are required.

Impact IV.B-3: The proposed project would create a new source of light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

A significant impact would occur if the proposed project were to introduce new sources of light or glare on or from the project site which would be incompatible with the area surrounding the project site, or which pose a safety hazard to motorists utilizing adjacent streets. The project site is located in an urbanized area characterized by a variety of land uses. Daytime sources of light and glare in the vicinity of the site include reflections off of car windows, mirrors, metal details, or surfaces of cars traveling along Skyway, Bruce Road, and East 20th Street or reflections from or light colored surfaces, or windows on surrounding residences and commercial uses. Light sources in the vicinity of the site include street lights along East 20th Street, lights associated with the residential uses along the northern and western borders of the site, and lighting associated with the commercial area near the southern edge of the project site.

Implementation of the proposed project would introduce new sources of light and glare to the site, including interior and exterior building lighting, vehicle headlights, parking lot lights on commercial and multi-family residential lots, and reflective surfaces such as windows and light-colored trim on a site that is currently vacant. Although the additional light and glare sources added to the project site as a result of the proposed project would be noticeable to some viewers in the surrounding area, it would not be substantial enough to significantly impact day or nighttime views in the area. All exterior lighting associated with specific development proposals on commercial and multi-family residential lots would be reviewed for compliance with CMC 19.60.050, by the City planning staff and the City's Architectural Review and Historic Preservation Board. Exterior lighting associated with single-family residences is typically low-level or recessed, of low intensity, and must also comply with CMC 19.60.050. Overall, light and glare impacts would be ***less than significant*** and no mitigation measures are required.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Aesthetics impacts associated with the proposed project would be ***less than significant***.