

## 4.1 Aesthetics

This section of the EIR describes the visual setting of the planning area and evaluates the potential for changes in the visual character with implementation of the proposed project. The following discussion provides information on the character of the existing visual landscape, including the visual character of each study area, scenic vistas and visual resources such as ridgelines, scenic highways, dark skies, and community character. This section also describes the potential for land uses and development occurring under the proposed project to impact scenic vistas, scenic resources, visual character and light and glare.

A summary of the aesthetics impacts identified in Section 4.1.3, Analysis of Project Impacts and Determination of Significance, is provided below.

### Aesthetics Summary of Impacts

Issue Number	Issue Topic	Project Direct Impact	Project Cumulative Impact	Impact After Mitigation
1	Scenic Vistas	Less than Significant	Less than Significant	Less than Significant
2	Scenic Resources	Less than Significant	Less than Significant	Less than Significant
3	Visual Character or Quality	Less than Significant	Less than Significant	Less than Significant
4	Light or Glare	Less than Significant	<del>Not Cumulatively Considerable</del> Less than Significant	Less than Significant

### 4.1.1 Existing Conditions

The General Plan Update area is characterized by a valley surrounded by rolling hills and mountains. The General Plan Update area includes a diversity of man-made and natural features that contribute to the existing visual setting. These features are described below.

#### 4.1.1.1 Scenic Vistas and Visual Resources

##### Natural Landforms

One of the characteristics that distinguishes Escondido from other communities in the region is its location in a series of valleys which are surrounded by visually distinctive hillsides and ridgelines. The hillsides and ridges are considered visually prominent in views from the valley floor. The natural setting of the area provides many opportunities for views from surrounding higher elevations. Photo 1 in Figure 4.1-1, Photo Locations 1 and 2, shows a representative view of the prominent hillsides and ridgelines that provide a backdrop to the City. The community's most prominent natural landforms have been identified as primary and secondary ridgelines to guide open space and viewshed preservation.

Additionally, portions of the General Plan Update area that are outside of the City boundary, but inside the General Plan Update planning area, are within the unincorporated communities of San Dieguito, North County Metropolitan (NC Metro) and Valley Center. The San Dieguito community is located in the southwest portion of the planning area. The NC Metro community is located in the northeast, west, south, and southeast portions of the planning area. The Valley Center community is located north of the City. The County of San Diego identifies scenic natural resources in these communities in their

respective adopted community plans (County of San Diego 2011). In the San Dieguito community, San Dieguito River Valley, Escondido Creek, and other watercourses and open space areas are considered scenic resources. The Elfin Forest - Harmony Grove area is located within San Dieguito community. In this area, a ridgeline along the western edge of Harmony Grove forms a locally important visual resource called the Lady of the Valley. The most scenic views in this area are views of the hills, valleys, riparian habitat, and grazing farm animals. The Jesmond Dene Oaks, located in NC Metro, contribute to the character of the semi-rural residential community of Jesmond Dene, located east of the City boundary along Jesmond Dene Road. Rugged terrain and mountains area also considered visual resources. Burnt Mountain, located in Valley Center at the northern end of the Dixon Dam and Lake City Park, serves as wildlife habitat and a visual landmark for residents in the area. Ridgelines, steep slopes, canyons, and floodplains are also considered scenic resources in Valley Center.

## Open Space and Other Natural Scenic Features

Other scenic natural features located throughout the project area include creeks and riparian areas, rock outcroppings, and lakes. The project area includes several large areas of open space that showcase these scenic resources, including parks, Multiple Habitat Conservation Program (MHCP) lands, and other designated conservation areas.

### Multiple Habitat Conservation Plan Focused Planning Areas

The MHCP is a comprehensive conservation planning process that addresses the needs of multiple plant and animal species in north western San Diego County. The City of Escondido's MHCP Subarea Plan has not been adopted; however, a public review draft was released in June 2001. Although the MHCP is not intended to protect aesthetic resources, the plan outlines the areas to be protected as open space in the City. These areas contribute to the scenic nature of the project area by preserving natural habitat. The City's Focused Planning Area (FPA) is the area within which the permanent Escondido preserve would be assembled and managed. Much of the area is planned for preservation through other agreements, such as conservation easements and mitigation agreements, regardless of adoption of the MHCP. Major FPA areas include Daley Ranch, Lake Dixon, Rancho San Pasqual, Kit Carson Park, Valley Center Road areas, Lake Wohlford, and Bernardo Mountain.

Daley Ranch is located in the northeastern portion of the City of Escondido, north of Lake Dixon ~~Lake~~ and west of Valley Center Road. The Daley Ranch Conservation Bank is an approved mitigation bank to satisfy the environmental mitigation requirements of development projects throughout all of western San Diego County. This 3,058-acre property is heavily covered with a variety of threatened and endangered species. There are thousands of acres of chaparral and Diegan coastal sage scrub, several large stands of coast live oak and Englemann oak woodland, wetlands and non-native grasslands. A representative view of open space in Daley Ranch is shown in Photo 2 in Figure 4.1-1, Photo Locations 1 and 2. This photo shows an example of a rock outcropping, which is considered to be a scenic natural resource. Daley Ranch also features a redwood ranch house (currently a private caretaker's residence), redwood barn, and numerous outbuildings of historical interest. Lake Dixon ~~Lake~~ is located within the Daley Ranch preserve. The Lake Dixon Recreational Area is developed as a regional and community park surrounding the Lake Dixon ~~Lake~~ Reservoir. Lake Dixon and the surrounding area are shown in Photo 3 in Figure 4.1-2, Photo Locations 3 and 4. Developed areas include a water treatment facility, campgrounds, picnic areas, recreational concessions, and roads and trails. Recreational concessions and trails near Lake Dixon are shown in Photo 3. The majority of the property is natural open space. An additional 103 acres located adjacent to and east of Daley Ranch, known as Stanley Peak, have been acquired by the City for use as open space.



Photo 1: Representative photo of prominent hillsides.

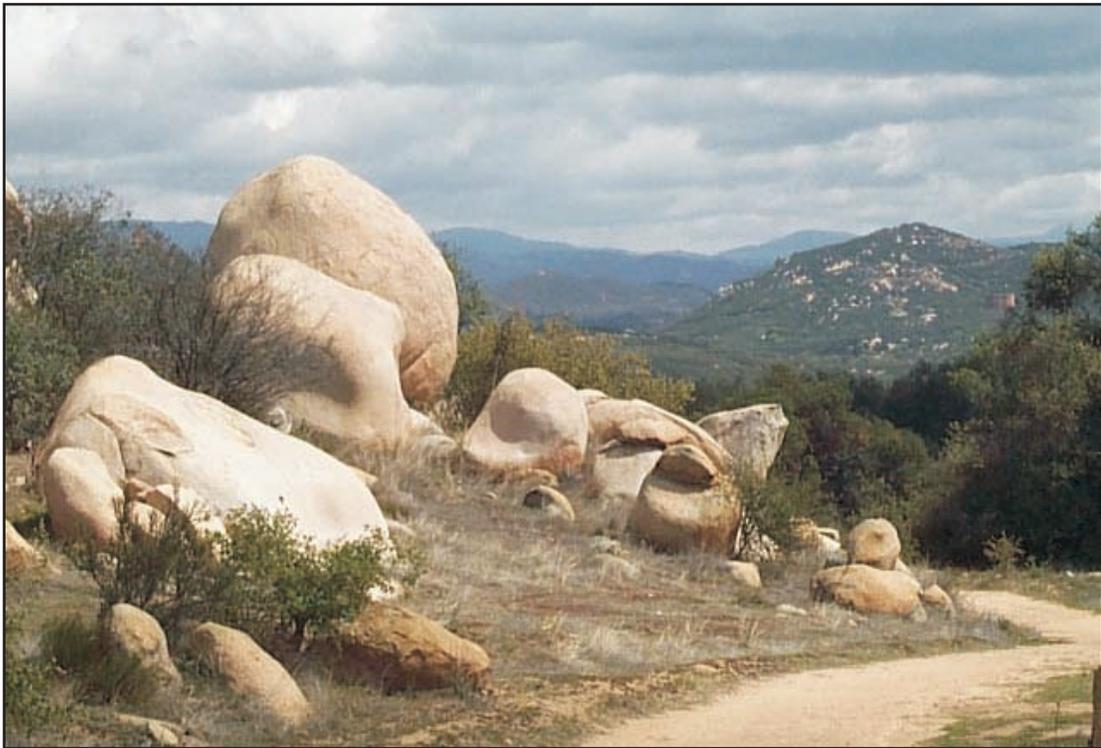


Photo 2: Representative photo of Daley Ranch.

Source: City of Escondido 2011



**PHOTO LOCATIONS 1 AND 2  
FIGURE 4.1-1**



Photo 3: Representative photo of Lake Dixon.

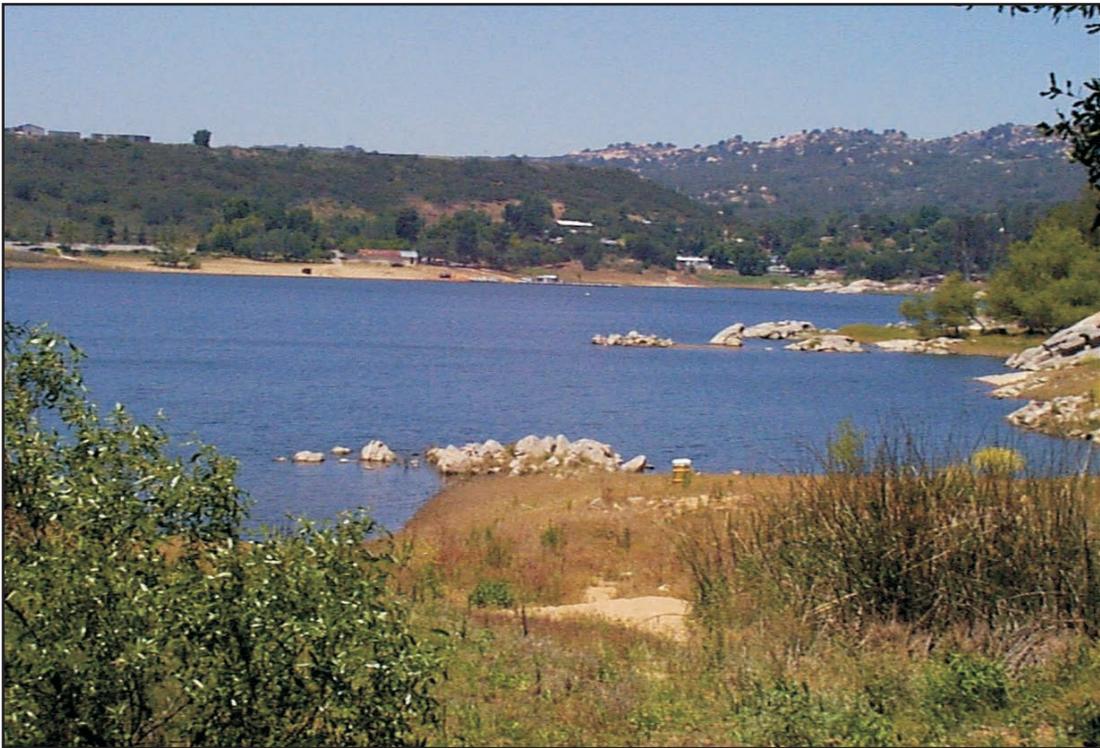


Photo 4: Representative photo of Lake Wohlford.

Source: City of Escondido 2011



**PHOTO LOCATIONS 3 AND 4  
FIGURE 4.1-2**

The Rancho San Pasqual Specific Plan Area (SPA), located in the southeast edge of the City and most recently amended in 1997, includes approximately 447 acres of natural open space. The open space area is managed by the homeowners association and provides a buffer between the SPA development and adjacent properties, and includes steeper slope areas along the north and east perimeter as well as portions of Cloverdale Creek. Natural vegetation communities include coastal sage scrub, chaparral, oak woodland and riparian areas. The SPA also includes the dedication of a 32-acre parcel to the City of Escondido along Cloverdale Creek immediately south of Rockwood Road for revegetation and enhancement.

Kit Carson Park is a 200-acre regional and community park. Kit Carson Park is located in east Escondido on Bear Valley Parkway, approximately five miles west of where Kit Carson fought in the Battle of San Pasqual. A historical monument commemorating the battle is located on Mule Hill, one mile southeast of the park. Approximately 100 acres of the park have been developed with active recreational uses, and 185 acres have been preserved as natural habitat. Open space areas include a riparian area and hillsides dominated by coastal sage scrub.

A portion of San Pasqual Valley is located within the southern area of the General Plan Update planning boundary, adjacent to the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park (San Dieguito River Park) which is located in City of San Diego. San Pasqual Valley is largely a scenic agricultural preserve, much of which is owned by the City of San Diego. However, the portion of the San Pasqual Valley within the General Plan Update planning area is not located within, or owned by, the City of San Diego. Several areas of San Pasqual Valley along the southern boundary of General Plan Update planning area are proposed for conservation due to the presence of quality coastal sage scrub and cactus scrub habitat (City 2001).

Bernardo Mountain is a prominent mountain within Escondido, overlooking ~~Lake~~ Hodges Reservoir at the southwest edge of the planning area. This area was purchased by the San Dieguito River Park Joint Powers Authority as open space and integrated into the park system. Natural vegetation communities consist of coastal sage scrub, chaparral, and riparian habitats. Additional habitat areas are located east of Bernardo Mountain in the Lomas Serenas neighborhood. This privately-owned neighborhood is generally developed with single family residences, with no further development entitlements. The south-facing slopes contain coastal sage scrub and grassland habitat. While the majority of these parcels do not have conservation easements, the slopes are protected from development by existing General Plan policies prohibiting development of steep slopes.

Lake Wohlford and its surrounding land are one of two FPA areas within the General Plan boundary large enough to support deer and mountain lions. The other area is Daley Ranch, described above. The majority of the City-owned property consists of 741 acres along Valley Center Road, and 916 acres along Lake Wohlford Road and around the Lake Wohlford Reservoir. The BLM owns approximately 79 acres in the middle of Lake Wohlford. Lake Wohlford is shown in Photo 4 in Figure 4.1-2, Photo Locations 3 and 4. As shown in the photo, scenic resources surrounding Lake Wohlford include ridgelines, rock outcroppings, and natural habitats such as coastal sage scrub, chaparral, coast live oak woodland, and riparian vegetation communities.

The Montreux Specific Plan encompasses 345 acres consisting primarily of coastal sage scrub and chaparral which has been purchased by the County of San Diego for use as open space. Other FPA areas would be privately managed by homeowners associations, including the Escondido Highlands, and Sonata. The Dorn subdivision map is an 80-acre property located northwest of Montreux. The property

consists primarily of coastal sage scrub and chaparral. Approximately 46 percent of existing natural habitat area will be conserved, partially contiguous to the open space in Montreux. The Escondido Highlands include approximately 289 acres of open space and a 63-acre parcel dedicated to the city for park and open space purposes. Natural habitats in these areas include chaparral and coastal sage scrub. Sonata is a low density, planned residential development overlooking Lake-Hodges Reservoir. An area to be preserved as permanent open space consists of coastal sage scrub. Additionally, the Vineyard at Escondido Golf Course is jointly owned by the cities of Escondido and San Diego. The golf course design included the preservation and enhancement of existing riparian areas.

### **Other Open Space Areas**

A conceptual “wildlife corridor” is identified in the City’s Master Plan for Parks, Trails, and Open Space that connects key habitat areas in a continuous link around the perimeter of the city. These habitat areas include the Deer Park County Reserve, Lake Dixon, Daley Ranch, Lake Wohlford, and San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park. Many of these areas have been incorporated into the MHCP, as described above. Deer Park County Reserve was sold by the County and is no longer a protected open space area; however, the site has not yet been developed. Additionally, Felicita County Park, located on Clarence Lane, is the site of one of the largest and oldest Indian villages in the county. Grinding holes and other artifacts have revealed evidence of a centuries-old community of the Northern Diegueno Indians. The park includes 53 acres of dense oak groves.

Several creeks traverse the General Plan Update area, including Kit Carson Creek and Cloverdale Creek. The main stream course through the City is Escondido Creek, which flows from Lake Wohlford southwesterly through the City into the San Elijo Canyon to meet the ocean at San Elijo Lagoon. The Escondido Creek Conservancy was established in 1991 to preserve, restore, and protect the natural open space within the Escondido Creek watershed. Included in the preserved area is Bottle Peak, a natural landmark east of the City of Escondido at the headwaters of Escondido Creek. Hundreds of acres are protected by the Conservancy through purchases from the County and other agencies, and as a result of mitigation for development in the watershed. Much of the creek is concrete-lined through the City and most of the conserved areas are located west of the General Plan Update boundary. However, several protected areas are located between the General Plan Update boundary and Lake Dixon. These protected areas are located in the southwest corner of the General Plan Update area within the City and the NC Metro community.

Additionally, permanent open space easements have been included in the adopted SPAs in the City. Major canyon slopes and floors will remain in their native state in the Emerald Heights SPA, with a total of approximately 70 percent of the 980-acre SPA preserved in its natural condition. The Rancho Vistamonte SPA includes 81 acres that will be preserved as open space. In the Northeast Gateway SPA, all slopes over 25 percent grade will be preserved as open space. The Lomas Del Lago SPA has preserved 130 acres of open space. The Hidden Trails Specific Plan integrates residential neighborhoods into a cohesive community structure and stresses preservation of skyline ridges and significant natural resources.

## **Man-Made Scenic Features and Landmarks**

The City includes several man-made scenic resources throughout the planning area, including prominent vegetation, agricultural lands, and landmarks. Prominent vegetation includes street trees and mature ornamental trees in existing neighborhoods. Centre City Parkway and Bear Valley Parkway both display mature trees which are considered valuable visual resources for the City.

Escondido's agricultural production is considered a visual amenity. As discussed in Section 4.2, Agricultural Resources of this EIR, agricultural operations in the City are generally located on the northern, eastern and southwestern edges of the City near the unincorporated County. Crops and products include avocados, tomatoes, strawberries, cucumbers, zucchini, citrus, nursery plants and trees, and livestock. A representative photo of scenic agricultural operations in the City is provided in Photo 5 in Figure 4.1-3, Photo Locations 5 and 6.

The Old Escondido Historic District is a major landmark area that displays the community's unique heritage. The district features 900 homes built in the mid-1880s to date, from tiny Craftsman bungalows to magnificent Victorian homes. Examples of the homes in this district are provided in Photo 6 in Figure 4.1-3, Photo Locations 5 and 6. The District is bounded by 4th Avenue on the north, 13<sup>th</sup> Avenue on the south, Escondido Boulevard to the west and Chestnut Street on the east. In order to maintain the integrity of the historical district, every homeowner is required to obtain a "certificate of appropriateness" prior to initiating exterior improvements or change, including painting, window replacement, and fence installation, whether a home is on the historical register or not. Grape Day Park on North Broadway is a registered landmark and home to a turn-of-the-century working barn, Santa Fe Railroad depot, blacksmith shop, and other historic buildings, museums, and monuments. These historic buildings are shown in Photo 7 in Figure 4.1-4, Photo Locations 7 and 8. Although not a designated landmark, the Joor Muffler Man is identified as a unique feature in the City that has been at the corner of East Valley Parkway and Juniper for 40 years (City of Escondido 2011d). The Muffler Man is a roadside attraction as part of a series of similar muffler men found throughout the U.S. (Roadside America 2011).

### 4.1.1.2 Scenic Highways

A freeway, highway, road, or other vehicular right-of-way along a corridor with considerable natural landscape and a high aesthetic value would have the potential to be eligible for a scenic highway designation. Scenic highway corridors generally include the land adjacent to and visible from the vehicular right-of-way. The dimension of the corridor is usually identified using a motorist's line of vision, but a reasonable boundary is selected when the view extends to the distant horizon.

State Scenic Highways are those highways that are either officially designated as State Scenic Highways by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) or are eligible for such designation. There are no officially designated or eligible highways within the project area. The closest State Scenic Highway is State Route (SR) 78 through the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, approximately 35 miles east of the project area.

However, the City has identified several scenic roadways in the General Plan Update area including Interstate 15 (I-15) through the entire planning area; the segments of Del Dios Highway to Via Rancho Parkway, Via Rancho Parkway to Bear Valley Parkway, Bear Valley Parkway to Valley Parkway, Valley Parkway to Lake Wohlford Road, and Lake Wohlford Road to the General Plan Update boundary that extend from the southwest corner of the planning area to the northeast corner; South Citrus Avenue from Bear Valley Road to San Pasqual Valley Road; San Pasqual Valley Road/SR-78 from Bear Valley Parkway to the General Plan Update eastern boundary; and San Pasqual Road from Bear Valley Parkway to San Pasqual Valley Road.



Photo 5: Representative photo of agricultural operations.



Photo 6: Representative photo of the Old Escondido Historic District.

Source: City of Escondido 2011

**ATKINS**

**PHOTO LOCATIONS 5 AND 6  
FIGURE 4.1-3**



Photo 7: Representative photo of Grape Day Park.



Photo 8: Representative photo of a scenic view from Bear Valley Parkway.

Source: City of Escondido 2011



**PHOTO LOCATIONS 7 AND 8  
FIGURE 4.1-4**

The existing City General Plan identifies scenic views within the I-15 corridor, defined as the area within 1,750 feet of the freeway. Prominent views along I-15 include outstanding continuous, panoramic views of the valley floor, surrounding ridges and Lake-Hodges Reservoir, and visually dominant features such as undisturbed hillsides or steep slopes with rock outcroppings. Additionally, a portion of the County's designated I-15 Scenic Corridor is located within the General Plan Update boundary in the unincorporated community of NC Metro. The corridor extends from the northern boundary of the City limits to the Riverside County line. The County has adopted scenic preservation guidelines for the corridor to protect and enhance scenic resources along the corridor, establish standards to regulate visual quality, and encourage scenic preservation.

Views from the scenic roadway from Del Dios Highway to Lake Wohlford include Lake-Hodges Reservoir, Kit Carson Park, Daley Ranch, Lake Dixon, and Lake Wohlford. Views from this segment, as well as the segments of South Citrus Avenue, San Pasqual Valley Road, and San Pasqual Road, include expanses of open space, agriculture operations, golf courses, trees, hillsides, steep slopes, and rock outcroppings. A representative scenic view is provided in Photo 8 in Figure 4.1-4, Photo Locations 7 and 8. The view in this photo is from Bear Valley Parkway and includes open space, hillsides, and rock outcroppings that characterize typical views from scenic roadways. Portions of these roadways are developed and provide limited views, or do not contain scenic views.

### 4.1.1.3 Community Character

Community character can be described as the "personality" of the community and is defined by land uses, historical resources, community design, architectural themes, natural resources, and any other man-made or natural features that give the community its overall look and feel. The City of Escondido is characterized by hills and mountains surrounding an open valley bisected by Escondido Creek. The community's character is derived from its varied lakes and natural habitat areas, visually distinctive historic and cultural resources, views of hillsides and ridgelines, and agricultural groves that surround the valley. These dramatic features are characteristics that distinguish Escondido from other areas in the region. The community derives its name "hidden valley" from the ring of mountains which rise 1,500 feet above the valley floor (City 1999). The City includes a historic downtown and urban core area. Escondido's urbanized core surrounds downtown within the "valley floor" of Escondido. Expanding out from its historic downtown and urban core with their traditional street grid patterns are established single and multi-family neighborhoods. Densities and intensities diminish and streets follow topographic contours in outlying areas as the community transitions to higher elevations where agricultural operations remain in many areas. In this outer area there are also several large natural expanses of preserved open space that buffers Escondido from surrounding communities. To the west forms the community's primary employment area, paralleling Highway 78 and the SprinterSPRINTER commuter rail line that links Escondido to the coast. I-15 bisects Escondido in a north-south pattern providing connections with San Diego and Riverside Counties. The character of each of General Plan study areas and SPAs for which changes are proposed, and the unincorporated communities within the General Plan Update boundary, are described below.

## Study Areas

### Imperial Oakes SPA

The Imperial Oakes SPA is characterized by the 18-acre Rod McLeod Community Park, as well as vacant parcels. It is also developed with visitor service and general retail uses, church, office, an RV park, and

single family residences. Residences are generally less than 35 years old. The site is bisected by San Diego Gas and Electric (SDG&E) overhead utility lines and there is limited access to the interior of the SPA as a result of the park and vacant areas. This area is a gateway into the City from the adjacent City of San Marcos.

### **Hwy-78 / Broadway Target Area**

The SR-78 / Broadway Target Area has a commercial and industrial character and is developed with low intensity general and auto-related retail, restaurants, office and commercial services and supply. This is an established area that is almost completely developed. Most buildings are between 15 to 25 years old. No cohesive visual theme exists in the area, including landscaping, signage, or building materials.

### **Transit Station Target Area**

The Transit Station Target Area has a low-intensity industrial character and is developed with general and auto-related retail, restaurants, manufacturing, commercial and industrial services, building/landscaping/irrigation supply, and concrete/asphalt production. Similar to the Hwy-78/Broadway Target Area, this is an established area that is almost completely developed. Most buildings are between 15 to 25 years old. No cohesive visual theme exists in the area, including landscaping, signage, or building materials.

### **South Quince Street Target Area**

The South Quince Street Target Area is developed with multi-family and single family residences, low-intensity general retail, office restaurants, and small-scale industrial and manufacturing services. This area is almost completely developed. The industrial area is the oldest in the City. The residential area is also one of the most established in the City. Buildings range from new to 50 years old. No cohesive visual theme exists in the area, including landscaping, signage, or building materials.

### **Escondido Research Technology Center North and South SPAs**

Escondido Research Technology Center (ERTC) North SPA and ERTC South SPA are located along Citracado Parkway between Auto Park Way and Avenida del Diablo. This northern area is mostly developed, and the southern area is partially developed. Development in the north is characterized by industrial and commercial uses, an SDG&E power plant, a new Palomar Hospital campus, and a Sprinter/SPRINTER station. Some established single family homes are located in the northern area. Most buildings are between 15 to 25 years old. No cohesive visual theme exists in the area, including landscaping, signage, or building materials. The southern portion is characterized by vacant land and established single family residences. This area is bisected by Escondido Creek and contains undulating topography.

### **I-15/Felicita Road Corporate Office Target Area**

The I-15/Felicita Road Corporate Office Target Area is characterized by vacant properties dotted with low intensity medical offices, single family residences, churches, and agriculture, including groves and field crops. This is an established neighborhood and some residences are more than 35 years old.

### **Promenade Retail Center and Vicinity Target Area**

The Promenade Retail Center and Vicinity Target Area is a retail shopping center with several anchor tenants, smaller shops, an auto dealership, a middle school, and multi-family residential development.

This area is almost completely developed with relatively new land uses. Most residences are less than 25 years old.

### **Nutmeg Street Study Area**

The Nutmeg Street Study Area is undeveloped and characterized by native vegetation north of Nutmeg Street and steep topography and a graded area south of Nutmeg Street.

### **Downtown Specific Planning Area**

Downtown SPA has an urban character and is divided into seven districts. It is partially developed and includes a historic, walkable retail and service core around Grand Avenue with suburban-style shopping centers on the western and northern ends. A historic residential neighborhood borders the downtown on the south with office and retail to the east. Grape Day Park and the historic downtown district are City landmarks that contribute to the visual quality of the area.

### **East Valley Parkway Target Area**

The East Valley Parkway Target Area is a suburban shopping area developed with low intensity general retail, office, restaurants, and small-scale service businesses. The existing Palomar Hospital campus is a unique feature in this area and is surrounded by medical support offices. Established single family and multi-family residences located throughout the study area are generally more than 30 years old. This area is a gateway into Escondido from SR-78 via Lincoln Avenue and Ash Street, but does not include any gateway signage or landscaping.

### **South Escondido Boulevard/Center City Parkway Target Area**

The South Escondido Boulevard / Center City Parkway Target Area is a suburban shopping area with single family and mid-range density, multi-family housing and small scale commercial services. It is characterized by convenient commercial development along Felicita Avenue. This area includes a mix of established single family residences and newer mixed use development.

### **South Escondido Boulevard/Felicita Road Target Area**

The South Escondido Boulevard/Felicita Road Target Area is developed with mid-range density, multi-family residential development, low-intensity suburban shopping, general retail, office, restaurants, and small scale services. This area is characterized by established commercial and residential development, including historic single family homes. Most homes are at least 30 years old.

### **Centre City Parkway / Brotherton Road Target Area**

The Centre City Parkway/Brotherton Road Target Area is an established neighborhood that serves as a gateway into Escondido. It is developed with mid-range density mixed use, low intensity suburban shopping, general retail, office, and small scale services. Homes are set back from Centre City Parkway and Escondido Boulevard, which establishes the area's commercial character.

### **Westfield Shoppingtown Target Area**

The Westfield Shoppingtown Target Area is characterized by a multi-story regional shopping center with several anchor tenants, smaller shops and free-standing up-scale dining establishments. This area is a gateway into Escondido and clearly visible from I-15.

## Specific Plan Areas and Unincorporated Communities

### Sager Ranch SPA

The Sager Ranch SPA is located adjacent to Daley Ranch. The SPA is within the unincorporated area of Escondido's General Plan Update boundary. It is currently undeveloped and while the General Plan Update includes guidelines and standards for development, no improvement plans for this SPA have been adopted. It is characterized by open space, natural vegetation, steep slopes and scenic ridge lines.

### Valley View SPA

A portion of the Valley View SPA in the southeastern portion of the City, accessed from Rockwood Road, has an Specific Plan adopted by the City and is developed with single family homes. The area is known as the Rancho Vistamonte SPA. The remaining undeveloped portion of the Valley View SPA is located in the unincorporated NC Metro community. This portion does not have an adopted plan and is currently undeveloped. This area is characterized by steep slopes and open space that connects to the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park.

### San Dieguito Community

The San Dieguito community is characterized by rural estate development. The combination of low noise levels, a dark night sky and abundant open space distinguishes this area from the urbanized development to the west and east. The Elfin Forest-Harmony Grove community is located in the San Dieguito community, within the General Plan Update planning area. This area is rural in nature, extremely quiet, peaceful, and generally remains in its natural state. Large areas of vacant land remain in Elfin Forest. The area contains mostly two and four-acre minimum parcel sizes. There is no street lighting, lighted signs or traffic signals in Elfin Forest, making the dark night an important aesthetic resource (County of San Diego 2011).

### North County Metro Community

Approximately one quarter of the NC Metro community is located within the General Plan Update boundary. The unincorporated NC Metro community is characterized by a low density single family development pattern. The steep slopes that have constrained development in this area provide scenic rugged terrain. The community is predominately rural residential in nature but also provides multi-family uses. High density development is found closer the urban areas of the surrounding cities. The area does not have a significant amount of commercial and industrial uses because these uses are generally found within the neighboring cities. Hidden Meadows is a semi-rural area within NC Metro, north of the City, with an established village core. The community is also known for the numerous rock outcrops that have been integrated into the development of the community. The Twin Oaks area is northwest of the City. Much of the land uses in this area consist of avocado fields, nurseries, and tree farms that contribute to the scenic visual character. Harmony Grove Village is an approved specific plan in NC Metro community adjacent to the southwest edge of the City. The area has a rural and equestrian character with single family residential development and large areas of open space.

### Valley Center Community

The unincorporated Valley Center community is characterized as a scenic, rural community with a combination of agricultural uses, riparian valleys, open space and rolling hills scattered throughout the community area. A rural residential pattern of development, with scattered agricultural and livestock uses, predominates the valley. Two-lane roads follow the natural topography, many of which are

bordered with oak canopies. The rural character of the community has retained a dark nighttime sky which is considered an important resource due to the proximity of the Palomar Mountain Observatory, as discussed in the following section.

#### **4.1.1.4 Dark Skies**

The maintenance of dark skies in San Diego County is vital to Palomar Observatory, a world-class observatory in north San Diego County that depends on them for astronomical research. Palomar Observatory is located at the top of Palomar Mountain (5,500 feet elevation) in northern San Diego County, approximately 10 miles northeast of the General Plan Update boundary. It is privately owned and operated by the California Institute of Technology (Caltech) and is used to support some of the U.S. and California's premier scientific research programs (County of San Diego 2011).

Nighttime light is produced primarily by upward pointing or upward reflected light from outdoor lighting. This type of lighting illuminates the nighttime sky from below, just as the sun does from above in the daytime, and can be detrimental to astronomical observations by impacting dark skies. Nighttime light that spills outside its intended area can be annoying to neighbors and potentially harmful to motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. Further, the health of natural wildlife can also be adversely affected from nighttime lighting. Nighttime lighting in excess of what is necessary for its purpose is called light pollution.

Some land uses tend to have a greater impact on night lighting than others. Commercial land uses tend to have lighted parking lots and signs at night, and use more lighting for nighttime security. Residential nighttime lighting is generally limited to security lighting and street lights. The urban core of the City currently generates substantial nighttime light from signs, street lights and traffic lights, and security lighting. Nighttime light is reduced toward the northern and eastern edges of the planning area. The residential neighborhoods outside of the urban core utilize less lighting than the commercial and retail centers in the City's downtown. The large open spaces on the edge of the City, such as Lake Wohlford and Daley Ranch, generate very little light for security purposes.

### **4.1.2 Regulatory Framework**

#### **4.1.2.1 Regional/Local**

The following County of San Diego regulations apply only to the portions of the General Plan Update planning area that are under the jurisdiction of the County Sphere of Influence (SOI) and unincorporated areas). This section is based on the EIR prepared for the County of San Diego General Plan Update (County of San Diego 2011).

#### **Certificate of Appropriateness**

In order to maintain the integrity of the historical districts, every property owner within the Old Escondido Historic District or Downtown Historic District is required to obtain a Certificate of Appropriateness (COA) prior to initiating any exterior improvements or change, including painting, window replacement, and fence installation. A COA is required for any new construction, modification, and alteration that would affect the exterior appearance of a designated historical resource, a property

located within a historical district, or a property located within the Downtown SPA, including rear and side elevations, as well as the street façade, even when a building permit is not otherwise required. This requirement applies to all homes, whether or not the home is on the historical register. As part of the COA process, homeowners in the Old Escondido Historic District are required to comply with the City of Escondido Design Guidelines for Homeowners of Historic Resources.

## City of Escondido Zoning Ordinance

Chapter 33 of the Escondido Municipal Code contains the Escondido Zoning Ordinance. The Zoning Ordinance contains several articles that pertain to aesthetic character and resources, which are summarized below.

### Article 5 – Open Space Development Standards

The Open Space Development Standards establish standards for the development of lands identified as having open space value to the community and its citizens in one or more of the following categories: slopes greater than 15 percent, vegetation conservation areas, and natural drainage courses not otherwise defined as floodways. All developments proposed on these lands must demonstrate compliance with the following development standards:

- a) Natural features such as rock outcroppings, creeks and other natural drainage courses, and wooded areas shall be protected and preserved;
- b) Unless cleared for agricultural purposes, natural vegetation shall remain undisturbed except as necessary to construct improvements and to eliminate hazardous conditions, unless replanted with native or fire-retardant materials including groundcovers, shrubs and trees;
- c) Grading shall not alter the natural contours of the terrain except as necessary for building sites or to correct unsafe conditions. The locations of buildings and roads shall be planned to follow and conform to existing contours;
- d) Lot coverage shall not exceed 20 percent on land consisting of moderate slopes (16 to 30 percent) or 10 percent on land consisting of steep slopes (31 percent or greater). Lot coverage shall include all buildings which extend more than three feet above the surface of the ground level; and
- e) No alteration of natural features identified for preservation and protection shall be permitted prior to approval of a development permit.

### Article 35 – Outdoor Lighting

This article, referred to as the Escondido Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, is intended to minimize unnecessary glare for the benefit of citizens and astronomical research at Palomar Observatory. The ordinance includes the following requirements for outdoor lighting:

- a) Use outdoor light fixtures with good optical control to distribute the light in the most effective and efficient manner;
- b) Use the minimum amount of light to meet the lighting criteria;
- c) Use shielded outdoor light fixtures;
- d) Use low-pressure sodium outdoor light fixtures where required;

- e) Use automatic timing devices to energize outdoor light fixtures only when necessary; and
- f) Turn off certain outdoor fixtures between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and sunrise.

#### **Article 40 – Historical Resources**

A purpose of this article is to enhance the visual character of the city by encouraging the preservation of unique and established architectural traditions. This article requires a COA for any new construction, and/or alteration that would affect the exterior appearance of an historical resource, as described above. It also requires the owner or lessee of a historical property to maintain the property in good repair.

#### **Article 55 – Grading and Erosion Control**

The purpose of the Grading and Erosion Control article is to assure that development occurs in a manner which protects the natural and topographic character and identity of the environment, the visual integrity of hillsides and ridgelines, sensitive species and unique geologic/geographic features, and the health, safety, and welfare of the general public by regulating grading on private and public property and providing standards and design criteria.

Section 33-1066 establishes design criteria for grading designs for private and public development projects to protect the critical landforms and natural resources. Proposed grading designs are compared to these criteria during the project approval process. According to the ordinance, grading designs should avoid extensive slope areas which are easily visible from outside the development, fill slopes that block views from surrounding properties, and grading features which may intrude into or disturb surrounding property. This section also includes guidelines for slope height and slope ratios to minimize impacts on adjoining properties and views from public streets. Slopes should be designed and constructed so as to conform to the natural contours of the landscape.

Additionally, the article recommends that grading designs be sensitive to natural topographic, cultural, or environmental features, as well as mature and protected trees, by preserving the following features in permanent open space easements, or such other means which will assure their preservation: undisturbed steep slopes (over 35 percent); riparian areas, mitigation areas, and areas with sensitive vegetation or habitat; unusual rock outcroppings; other unique or unusual geographic features; and significant cultural or historical features.

Section 33-1067 includes additional design guidelines for areas in the hillside and ridgeline protection overlay (HRO) District. The HRO District is defined on the hillside and ridgeline overlay map, which is on file at the City. The overlay district generally encompasses parcels that have a slope of 15 percent or greater on any portion of the parcel, and/or are located in proximity to an identified intermediate or skyline ridge, and are located in an area that has not been developed to its full potential. In this district, all development should avoid dislocation of any unusual rock formations or any other unique or unusual geographic features; natural drainage courses should be preserved, enhanced, and incorporated as an integral part of the project design to the extent possible; and grading should be limited to the extent possible and designed to retain the shape of the natural landform. Grading must be designed to preserve natural features such as knolls or ridgelines. In no case should the top of a prominent hilltop, knoll, or ridge be graded to create a large building pad. Architectural treatment should be provided on all sides of the structure visible from adjacent properties, roadways, or public rights-of-way. Building

materials and color schemes should blend with the natural landscape of earth tones for main and accessory structures, fences, and walls. Reflective materials or finishes should not be used.

Development in proximity to skyline ridges should retain the ridgelines' natural contour and vegetation and maintain an undisturbed minimum setback of 200 feet measured horizontally from the center of the ridgeline, or 50 feet measured vertically on a cross section. Areas along a skyline ridge should be dedicated to the City as a scenic easement not intended for public access in conjunction with any development which may occur on the property.

As part of the project approval process, applications for developments in the HRO District must include a slope analysis; an overlay of the slope analysis and the proposed development; location of significant geological features, including ridgelines and other significant natural features specified in the open space element of the General Plan; and location of all existing mature and/or protected trees. Upon initial review of the proposed project, a visual analysis may be required that includes panoramic photographs, cross sections, and/or any other materials necessary to demonstrate the visual impact of the development. The ordinance includes guidelines for visual analyses which state that points of view shall generally be taken along major roads and major public open space areas and the distance of the viewpoints from the ridgeline shall generally be no more than five miles and no less than 0.5 mile. Additionally, all of the following findings must be made prior to Planning Director approval of a project in the HRO district:

- a) The bulk, scale, density, and overall character of the proposed development is compatible with the surrounding neighborhood and with the natural, cultural, scenic and open space resources of the area;
- b) The location and design of the proposed development respects and preserves the natural landform, vegetation, and wildlife of the project site;
- c) The location and design of the development does not substantially alter the natural appearance and land form of the hillsides and ridges; and
- d) The location and design of the proposed development will protect the safety of current and future residents, and will not create a significant threat to life and property due to slope instability, fire, flood, mud flow, erosion, or other hazards; and
- e) All grading associated with the project has been minimized to the extent possible, preserving the character of the property while utilizing appropriate erosion control practices as determined by the City Engineer to avoid erosion, slides, or flooding, in order to have as minimal an effect on the environment as possible.

#### **Article 65 – Old Escondido Neighborhood**

Article 65 defines the boundaries of and outlines the permitted uses in the Old Escondido Historic District. It requires that all new construction and all external modifications and changes to structures and sites within the Old Escondido Neighborhood conform to the City's Design Guidelines for Homeowners of Historic Resources.

#### **Article 75 – San Dieguito River Valley Focus General Plan Update Area**

This article outlines the finding for approval of any development in the San Dieguito River Valley Focus General Plan Update Area. The required findings include: 1) the development is in conformance with

the goals and objectives of the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Park Focused Planning Area and HRO District; 2) the intensity and character of the proposed development is compatible with the natural, cultural, scenic and open space resources of the area; 3) all grading associated with the project has been kept to a minimum and the location and design of the proposed development respects and preserves the natural landform, geologic features, existing streambeds, vegetation, significant tree cover and wildlife of the area; and 4) the location and design of the development maintains the natural rural character of the area as viewed from adjoining properties and the valley floor.

### **County of San Diego Code of Regulatory Ordinances Sections 59.101-59.115, Light Pollution Code**

The Light Pollution Code (LPC), or the Dark Sky Ordinance, was adopted to minimize light pollution for the enjoyment and use of property and the night environment by the citizens of San Diego County and to protect the Palomar and Mount Laguna observatories from the effects of light pollution that have a detrimental effect on astronomical research by restricting the permitted use of outdoor light fixtures on private property. The LPC regulates applicants for any permit required by the County for work involving outdoor light fixtures, unless exempt. The LPC designates all areas within a 15-mile radius of each observatory as Zone A, with all other areas designated as Zone B. Zone A has more stringent lighting restrictions due to its proximity to the observatories, including limits on decorative lighting.

### **County of San Diego Code of Regulatory Ordinances Sections 86.601-86.608, Resource Protection Ordinance**

The Resource Protection Ordinance (RPO) protects a variety of resources, including steep slopes. The ordinance limits development on steep slopes through encroachment minimums, density restrictions on steep slope lands, and through requirements for steep slope areas to be placed in easements. The requirements of this ordinance often result in the protection of slopes in their natural state, which provides the added benefit of protecting a potential aesthetic resource. Other provisions of the RPO require preservation of sensitive habitat, floodplains, wetlands, and historic and cultural resources. In terms of the preservation of aesthetic resources, this policy encourages the preservation of the existing natural terrain, established vegetation, and visually significant geologic displays.

### **Escondido Master Plan for Parks, Trails, and Open Space**

The Master Plan for Parks, Trails, and Open Space serves as a guide for the City in developing a comprehensive and integrated open space system to achieve the quality of life standards set forth in the General Plan. The Master Plan was last updated in 1999. The purpose of the Master Plan is to effectively chart the course of park and trail development, as well as open space preservation, as the City grows. An integral purpose of this Master Plan is to coordinate open space, parks, and trails in an effort to enhance the aesthetic qualities of the community. The following goals of the Master Plan pertain to aesthetics:

- Serve to protect the City's distinctive landscape character by guiding the pattern of future development in the rural-urban fringe; and
- Propose a greenbelt around the City, discouraging urban sprawl and forming a buffer between Escondido and future regional development.

## **I-15 Corridor: Scenic Preservation Guidelines**

Scenic preservation guidelines have been established to help preserve viewsheds in five communities within the unincorporated county along the I-15 corridor. These communities are Rainbow, Fallbrook, Bonsall, Valley Center, and NC Metro. The guidelines seek to balance protection of scenic resources within the I-15 corridor area while accommodating development which harmonizes with the natural environment. The guidelines establish standards to regulate the visual quality and environmental integrity of the entire corridor and encourage scenic preservation and development practices compatible with the goals and policies of the five communities when appropriate.

## **San Diego County Zoning Ordinance**

The San Diego County Zoning Ordinance contains several ordinances that pertain to aesthetic character and resources. These are summarized below.

### **San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, Sections 5200-5212, Scenic Area Regulations**

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance Sections 5200-5212 serve to regulate development in areas of high scenic value in order to exclude incompatible uses and structures, and preserve and enhance the scenic resources in adjacent areas. The regulations apply to areas of unique scenic value, including, but not limited to, scenic highway corridors designated by the County General Plan; critical viewshed and prime viewshed areas as designated on the Local Coastal Program Land Use Plan; and areas adjacent to significant recreational, historic, or scenic resources, including, but not limited to, federal and state parks.

### **San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, Section 6320, Amended by Ord. No. 9620 (New Series), Humidity, Heat, Cold, and Glare**

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance Section 6320 has performance standards for glare for all commercial and industrial uses in residential, commercial, and identified industrial zones. All commercial and industrial uses subject to this section shall be operated in a manner that does not produce glare, which is readily detectable without instruments by the average person beyond the stated zones in this section.

### **San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, Section 6322, Amended by Ord. No. 7110 (New Series), Outdoor Lighting**

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance Section 6322 controls excessive or unnecessary outdoor light emissions which produce unwanted illumination of adjacent properties by restricting outdoor lighting usage.

### **San Diego County Zoning Ordinance, Section 6324, Amended by Ord. No. 9690 (New Series), Lighting Permitted in Required Yard**

San Diego County Zoning Ordinance Section 6324 establishes limitations upon lighting permitted in required yards by Section 4835; of particular importance is the limitation upon light trespass.

## 4.1.3 Analysis of Project Impacts and Determination of Significance

### 4.1.3.1 Issue 1: Scenic Vistas

#### Guidelines for Determination of Significance

Based upon Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and existing City policies and regulations, the proposed project would result in a significant impact if it would obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a scenic vista, skyline ridge or intermediate ridge that is visible from a public viewpoint, such as a roadway, recreational area, designated trail or scenic vista or highway. Skyline ridges include those which define the horizon. Intermediate ridges include those with visible land behind them which creates a backdrop to the ridge as viewed from the valley floor.

#### Impact Analysis

##### General Plan Update

Ridgelines are considered the most important views from scenic vistas in the General Plan Update planning area, but views also include valleys, natural vegetation, historic or unique structures, agricultural lands, rivers and lakes, rock outcroppings, and large open spaces. The City does not specifically designate scenic vistas; however, Section 33-1076.F of the Municipal Code, Design Guidelines for the HRO District, identifies major roadways and public open space areas that should be considered as points of view in a visual analysis. Major roads include I-15, Del Dios Highway, Centre City Parkway, Bear Valley Parkway, North Broadway, El Norte Parkway, and Valley Parkway and major public open space areas include Lake Hodges Reservoir, Lake Wohlford, Lake Dixon, and Kit Carson Park. Numerous views are available from these streets and open space areas, as well as from other public streets and public trails throughout the City.

There are no officially designated or eligible highways in the General Plan Update planning area; however, the City designates several scenic roadways, many of which overlap with the HRO District Guidelines. These scenic roadways include:

- 1) I-15 through the entire planning area;
- 2) Del Dios Highway from the planning area boundary to Via Rancho Parkway;
- 3) Via Rancho Parkway from Del Dios Highway to Bear Valley Parkway;
- 4) Bear Valley Parkway from Via Rancho Parkway to Valley Parkway;
- 5) Valley Parkway from Bear Valley Parkway to Lake Wohlford Road;
- 6) Lake Wohlford Road from Valley Parkway to the General Plan Update planning boundary;
- 7) South Citrus Avenue from Bear Valley Road to San Pasqual Valley Road;
- 8) San Pasqual Valley Road/SR-78 from Bear Valley Parkway to General Plan Update eastern boundary; and
- 9) San Pasqual Road from Bear Valley Parkway to San Pasqual Valley Road.

Roadway segments 2 through 6 form a continuing scenic roadway that extends from the southwest corner of the planning area to the northeast corner of the planning area. Prominent views along all of the roadways are typical of scenic views in the City and include panoramic views of the valley floor,

surrounding ridges, parks, water resources and visually dominant features such as undisturbed hillsides or steep slopes with rock outcroppings. The existing General Plan identifies scenic views within the I-15 corridor, defined as the area within 1,750 feet of the freeway. Prominent views along I-15 include outstanding continuous, panoramic views of the valley floor, surrounding ridges and Lake-Hodges Reservoir.

The General Plan Update proposes land use designations that have the potential to result in new development. The 2035 buildout conditions for the General Plan Update planning area would accommodate an additional 2,226 single family residential units, 7,656 multi-family residential units, 5,035,000 square feet (sf) of commercial/retail uses, 5,537,000 sf of office uses, and 3,078,000 sf of industrial/other uses. New development could obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a scenic vista. For example, a new housing development would have the potential to interrupt the view of a large open space area from an existing roadway. If future development or redevelopment is inconsistent with the surrounding landscape, it would detract from the scenic elements of a vista. For example, new residential development in the eastern area of the City would have the potential to be located near ridgelines and detract from views of these resources. The majority of growth under the General Plan Update would be concentrated in the existing development core, which would minimize new view obstructions. However, some development would occur on the edge or outside of the urban core where new development is more likely to adversely impact a scenic vista. For example, the currently undeveloped Nutmeg Street Study Area is located on either side of I-15 at Nutmeg Street, which is considered by the City to be a scenic roadway. Views along Nutmeg Street currently include open space, hillsides, and distant ridgelines. This study area is proposed to accommodate multi-family residences and office development, which would have the potential to obstruct existing scenic views from Nutmeg Street and I-15. Therefore, development allowed under the proposed General Plan Update would have the potential to significantly impact scenic vistas in the General Plan Update planning area.

#### **Downtown Specific Plan Update**

The Downtown SPA is currently developed with a mix of residential and commercial land uses; however, the Specific Plan Update would allow for greater building heights and intensities in the downtown area of the City. In general, the Downtown Specific Plan Update would add acreage to the previous SPA boundary; expand the existing buildout of the SPA by 1,350 to 3,275 dwelling units; and increase building heights up to 85 feet (previously ranging from 35 to 75 feet). Although scenic views in this area are currently limited by existing development, the increase in building heights and density would have the potential to impact views of the ridgelines surrounding the City. In addition, this area includes the historic downtown district. The Downtown Specific Plan Update would allow for greater building densities in the historic district, which would have the potential to block views of the scenic historic resources within the district. Therefore, development allowed under the Downtown Specific Plan Update would have the potential to significantly impact scenic vistas in the downtown area of the City.

#### **Escondido Climate Action Plan**

Some reduction measures identified in the E-CAP encourage the construction or expansion of roadways or transit facilities, including Measure R2-T2, Bicycle Master Plan, and Measure R2-T3, Transit Improvements. New bicycle facilities would not block views from any scenic vistas. However, new transit facilities would have the potential to block views in the immediate area surrounding the facility. Therefore, impacts related to implementation of the E-CAP measures would be potentially significant.

### **Federal, State, and Local Regulations and Existing Regulatory Processes**

As noted above in Section 4.1.2, Regulatory Framework, there are a number of local regulations currently in place that protect visual resources. The City's Zoning Ordinance contains several regulations that pertain to aesthetic character and resources. In general, these regulations protect scenic resources from modifications that would adversely impact them. Impacts to scenic resources are addressed in Section 4.1.3.2, Issue 2: Scenic Resources on page 4.1-23. The City's Grading and Erosion Ordinance includes requirements for development on steep slopes that would protect views of skyline ridgelines and intermediate ridgelines from obstruction, interruption, and detracting. As described above in Section 4.1.2, Regulatory Framework, Section 33-1066 establishes design criteria for grading designs for private and public development projects to protect critical landforms and natural resources. Proposed grading designs are compared to these criteria during the project approval process. Section 33-1067 includes additional design guidelines for areas in the HRO District. Grading must be designed to preserve natural features such as knolls or ridgelines. Development in proximity to skyline ridges should retain the ridgelines' natural contour and vegetation and maintain an undisturbed minimum setback of 200 feet measured horizontally from the center of the ridgeline, or 50 feet measured vertically on a cross section. As part of the project approval process, applications for developments in the HRO District must include a slope analysis. Upon initial review of the proposed project, a visual analysis may be required to demonstrate the visual impact of the development.

### **Proposed General Plan Update Policies**

The proposed General Plan Update contains several goals and policies to protect scenic vistas by requiring development to preserve existing views and be sensitive to visual impacts. The Resource Conservation Element includes Goal 3, which is the preservation of significant visual resources such as ridgelines, hillsides, and viewsheds that serve as a scenic amenity and contribute to the quality of life for residents. The policies that support this goal that are relevant to visual resources are Policies 3.2, 3.4, and 3.6. Policy 3.2 requires new development to avoid obstructing views of significant visual resources through creative site planning; integration of natural features into the project; appropriate scale, materials, and design; clustering of development; minimal disturbance of topography; and creation of contiguous open space networks. Visual Resources Policy 3.4 prohibits development on skyline ridges and requires the City to obtain scenic easement dedications for these areas. Visual Resources Policy 3.6 requires development proposals within the I-15 scenic corridor to include a visual assessment and conform to the community design policies.

Additionally, the Land Use and Community Form Element includes Residential Clustering Policy 5.4, which ~~requires sites that~~ prohibits sites with clustered residential lots from significantly changing the character of the area by blocking scenic views or extensively grade the site. This Element also includes Environmental Review Policies 18.1 through 18.4, which require project conformance with CEQA, the General Plan, facilities plans, and quality of life standards; mitigation of environmental impacts; and an update of environmental thresholds in sensitive areas.

### **Proposed Downtown Specific Plan Update Policies**

The Downtown Specific Plan Update includes design principles, guidelines, and standards to direct future land use development in the SPA. The Planning Principles and Guidelines section includes guidelines that protect scenic views within the SPA. These guidelines promote project design that encourages views to important spaces and buildings.

## Proposed Escondido Climate Action Plan Reduction Measures

The proposed E-CAP does not include any reduction measures related to visual resources.

### Summary

The land use designations and accompanying future development based on those designations proposed in the proposed project would have the potential to result in the obstruction, interruption, or detracting of a scenic vista as a result of future development activity. Implementation of the City's existing Grading and Erosion Ordinance would protect views of ridgelines by requiring development to comply with grading design guidelines for development on all steep slopes, and require slope analyses and visual analyses for development near skyline ridges. Compliance with existing regulations would continue to protect ridgelines from grading that would obstruct, interrupt, or detract from a view of the ridgelines. Therefore, compliance with existing regulations and proposed General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update policies would reduce impacts related to obstruction, interruption, or detracting of skyline and intermediate ridgelines to below a level of significance.

## 4.1.3.2 Issue 2: Scenic Resources

### Guidelines for Determination of Significance

Based upon Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and existing City policies and regulations, the proposed project would result in a significant impact if it would remove or substantially adversely change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of a state scenic highway, or localized area, including but not limited to, landmarks (designated), historic resources, trees, and rock outcroppings.

### Impact Analysis

#### General Plan Update

The General Plan Update planning area contains many scenic resources including hillsides and ridgelines, valleys, natural vegetation, historic or unique structures, agricultural lands, rivers and lakes, rock outcroppings, and large open spaces. However, no designated state scenic highways are located within the planning area. Scenic resources throughout the General Plan Update planning area are summarized above in Section 4.1.1, Existing Conditions.

Scenic resources are often found in parks, habitat preserves, reservoirs, and Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) areas, but are also found in areas available for development. Natural scenic resources, including ridgelines, rock outcroppings, and large open spaces, are generally found outside the City's urban core, along the northern and eastern boundaries of the planning area. These areas are currently developed with low density residential uses. Scenic agricultural lands are also found in these areas due to availability of larger lots suitable for agricultural activities. Some scenic resources are located within SPAs, such as the Rancho San Pasqual SPA along the southeastern edge of the City, which include areas of residential development along with large areas of open space in conservation easements.

### ***Impacts to Natural Scenic Resources***

The General Plan Update focuses on development of vacant lots in outlying areas at existing densities, and revitalization of existing neighborhoods in the developed areas of the City, rather than the intensification of densities in the existing rural areas on the edges of the City. Future growth accommodated by the General Plan Update would generally be limited to lower density uses outside of the central portion of the City. The northern and eastern portions of the General Plan Update planning area are designated for low density residential use, with a maximum density of one dwelling unit per acre closer to I-15, and one dwelling unit per four acres surrounding Lake Wohlford and Daley Ranch. Low density development would reduce the potential for adverse impacts to natural scenic resources, including those in views from I-15 and the ~~Lake~~-Hodges Reservoir corridor (Valley Center Road and Bear Valley Parkway). However, individual developments near ridgelines, in existing open space areas, or otherwise near a scenic natural resource would have the potential to result in adverse impacts to scenic resources if the developments do not include appropriate design measures to minimize visual impacts. Impacts would be potentially significant.

### ***Impacts to Study Areas***

As discussed in the previous paragraph, most of the City contains established development areas and the General Plan Update does not propose significant changes to the majority of existing land uses. However, portions of the community have been identified as study areas where land use changes are anticipated. Some of the study areas are located within the urbanized area of the City that does not contain many scenic natural resources. However, several areas include large tracts of open space, including the Nutmeg Street Study Area, I-15/Felicita Road Corporate Office Target Area, Imperial Oakes SPA, and ERTC SPA. The Nutmeg Street Study Area is currently undeveloped and surrounded by undeveloped land along the northern edge of the City. Although the southern portion of the Nutmeg Street Study Area is graded, the northern portion contains native vegetation that continues into the surrounding area. This study area is planned for office space or residential development under the proposed General Plan Update. Due to this study area's proximity to I-15 in the northern part of the City, as well as a large open space area, development of Nutmeg Street Study Area would have the potential to result in a significant adverse impact to scenic natural resources visible from I-15.

The I-15/Felicita Road Corporate Office Target Area includes agricultural operations and open space areas with trees and riparian vegetation that may be considered scenic at the localized level from major roadways such as Felicita Road and Citracado Parkway. The Imperial Oakes SPA includes the 18-acre Rod McLeod Community Park and vacant parcels. Many parcels have been graded and do not contain any potentially scenic resources, but some include mature trees that may be considered localized scenic resources. The Felicita Corporate Office Target Area and Imperial Oakes SPA are employment opportunity areas proposed for increased employment densities. Increased building heights and intensities in these areas would be located closer to the freeway and distanced from existing lower density residential areas with appropriate buffers to ensure compatibility. However, removal of trees and open space or riparian areas would have the potential to adversely impact localized scenic resources. Impacts would be potentially significant.

The ERTC SPA is partially developed under an existing plan, but the remaining undeveloped portions do not have an adopted plan. This area includes a natural, unchannelized portion of Escondido Creek. The General Plan Update requires the future SPA to include provisions for the enhancement of riparian areas and for the incorporation of the Escondido Creek trail system into the ultimate development plans while minimizing impacts to sensitive resources. The riparian areas are the dominant visual resource in this

SPA. Therefore, because riparian areas would be preserved, impacts to scenic resources in this SPA would be less than significant.

### ***Impacts to Specific Plan Areas (Non-study Areas)***

Several SPAs exist within the General Plan Update planning boundary have adopted plans and contain existing development, such as the Emerald Heights SPA, Rancho San Pasqual SPA, Rancho Vistamonte SPA, and Hidden Trails SPA. These SPAs are located on the outskirts of the northwestern and eastern City limits and include low density residential development. The Northeast Gateway SPA has an adopted SPA and is partially developed. The Lomas Del Lago SPA is located in the southwest area of the City and is developed with single family residences and a neighborhood commercial center. As discussed above in Section 4.1.1, Existing Conditions, conservation easements or open space preservation have been incorporated into these established SPAs. The General Plan Update does not propose any changes to these adopted SPAs. Impacts that would occur as a result of additional development under the adopted specific plans, such as in the partially completed Northeast Gateway SPA, would be the result of the previously adopted plan and would not result from implementation of the General Plan Update. The potential environmental impacts of these specific plans were addressed as part of the plan approval process. Therefore, no impacts to scenic resources would occur to these adopted SPA areas as a result of implementation of the proposed project.

Other SPAs within the General Plan Update planning boundary have guidelines for development but do not have an adopted plan. These SPAs include Sager Ranch SPA and Valley View. The Sager Ranch SPA is currently undeveloped and no plan has been adopted. It is located in the northeastern portion of the planning area, primarily accessed from Valley Center Road, near Daley Ranch. A portion of the Daley Ranch SPA is located outside of the City limits in the unincorporated Valley Center community. Although the City owns a portion of the land within this SPA, there are also private properties under the jurisdiction of the County of San Diego. The City proposes to limit private development in the SPA to low density rural and estate residential uses due to the SPA's proximity to Daley Ranch. The General Plan Update includes a requirement for development in the Sager Ranch SPA to minimize grading requirements and avoid development on steep slopes and ridgelines. The portion of the SPA within the unincorporated area would not be subject to these requirements unless this area was annexed into the City. The County proposes rural residential development for this area, consistent with Escondido's Rural land use designations. Impacts that would occur as a result of development under County's General Plan would be the result of the County's adopted plan and would not result from implementation of the Escondido General Plan Update. The potential environmental impacts of the County's land use designations were addressed in the EIR prepared for the recent County General Plan Update (County of San Diego 2011). The City is currently considering annexing this area; however, the annexation process has not been initiated. The City's proposed requirements for the SPA would minimize adverse impacts to ridgelines; however, due to the SPA's proximity to Daley Ranch, other natural scenic features may be adversely impacted by development in this area. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would result in a potentially significant impact to the portion of the SPA under the City's jurisdiction.

The portion of the Valley View SPA that does not have an adopted SPA is located in the southeastern area of the General Plan Update planning boundary, outside of the City limit and SOI boundary in the unincorporated area. As such, this area would not be subject to the City's proposed requirements for the Valley View SPA unless this area was included in Escondido's SOI and annexed into the City. The County proposes rural residential development for this area and portions of the Valley View SPA are within the County's adopted MSCP. Impacts that would occur as a result of development under

County's General Plan would be the result of the County's adopted plan and would not result from implementation of the proposed Escondido General Plan Update. The potential environmental impacts of the County's land use designations were addressed in the EIR prepared for the recent County General Plan Update (County of San Diego 2011). The City's General Plan Update vision for this area is a large lot single family residential community, potentially including a rural resort, organized around a comprehensively-planned open space system. The General Plan Update requires that the future proposed Specific Plan limit the number of residential units in the SPA based on the steepness of slopes, prohibit development on slopes greater than 35 percent, and coordinate development and open space areas with the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park. This requirement would minimize adverse impacts to ridgelines; however, due to the SPA's proximity to the San Dieguito River Valley and the fact that portions of the SPA are located within an MSCP area, other natural scenic features may be adversely impacted by development. Therefore, a potentially significant impact would occur if this area was included in the City's SOI, annexed into the City and developed pursuant to the SPA.

### ***Impacts to Manmade Scenic Resources***

In addition to natural scenic resources, the General Plan Update planning area also includes designated landmarks and mature ornamental trees in existing neighborhoods. Designated landmarks in the City include the Old Escondido Historic District, the historic downtown area, and Grape Day Park. The City's historic downtown area and Grape Day Park are discussed below under the Downtown Specific Plan Update. The Old Escondido Historic District is bounded by 4th Avenue on the north, 13th on the south, Escondido Boulevard to the west and Chestnut on the east. It is located adjacent to the South Escondido Boulevard/Centre City Parkway Target Area. This area would continue to be designated for residential use in General Plan Update and the General Plan Update does not include any goals for intensification in this area. However, future redevelopment may occur in this area under the General Plan Update. Redevelopment would have the potential to result in adverse impacts to the visual appearance of the district. Therefore, new development or redevelopment under the General Plan Update would have the potential to adversely impact man-made scenic resources, including street trees and historical landmarks.

Roadway improvements and redevelopment would have the potential to remove mature trees throughout the General Plan Update area, including Centre City Parkway and Bear Valley Parkway. Centre City Parkway runs through or adjacent to the following General Plan study areas that are proposed for land use changes and intensified uses: Downtown SPA, Imperial Oakes SPA, Hwy-78 at Broadway Target Area, South Escondido Boulevard/Centre City Parkway Target Area, South Escondido Boulevard/Felicita Avenue Target Area, and Centre City Parkway/Brotherton Road Target Area. Bear Valley Parkway runs through the East Valley Parkway Target Area and Westfield Shoppingtown Target Area, which are also proposed for intensified development. Development in these areas would have the potential to remove mature trees, which could result in a significant impact to natural visual resources.

### **Downtown Specific Plan Update**

The Downtown SPA is currently developed with a historic walkable retail and service core around Grand Avenue with suburban-style shopping centers on the western and northern sides. The Old Escondido Historic District is a residential neighborhood that borders the downtown area on the south, while office and retail development border the downtown area to the east. The area does not include any natural open space resources; however, the historic downtown area is a localized scenic resource, and Escondido Creek traverses a portion of the SPA. The vision for the area is a dynamic, attractive, economically vital city center providing social, cultural, economic, and residential focus while respecting

its historic center. It also encourages strengthening the Escondido Creek path connection and expanding Grape Day Park. The area surrounding Escondido Creek is currently developed with multi-story residences. Redevelopment of the area with new residential land use, office, or neighborhood commercial development would not adversely impact public views of Escondido Creek because views are currently obstructed by development. Grape Day Park is an existing park with developed recreational areas, a turn-of-the-century working barn, Santa Fe Railroad depot, blacksmith shop, and other historic buildings, museums, and monuments. The park's historic features are a registered landmark. The expansion of Grape Day Park proposed in the Downtown Specific Plan Update would enhance the existing park setting by providing an additional setback from development. The increased park size would enhance the park as a landmark and aesthetic resource in the downtown area. Therefore, the Downtown Specific Plan Update would not result in adverse scenic impacts to Grape Day Park. However, the updated SPA would also accommodate additional residential, office, and commercial development and increased building heights in the Historic Downtown District. Growth accommodated by the proposed land use designations would have the potential to adversely affect the historic exterior appearance of the existing historic buildings and the district as a whole. Impacts would be potentially significant.

### **Escondido Climate Action Plan**

Some reduction measures identified in the E-CAP encourage the construction or expansion of roadways or transit facilities, including Measure R2-T2, Bicycle Master Plan, and Measure R2-T3, Transit Improvements. Construction of these facilities would have the potential to result in the removal of localized scenic resources, such as mature trees. Therefore, impacts related to implementation of the E-CAP measures would be potentially significant.

### **Federal, State, and Local Regulations and Existing Regulatory Processes**

There are several existing local regulations in place to protect scenic resources from adverse changes. As described above in Section 4.1.3.1, Issue 1: Scenic Vistas, the City's Grading and Erosion Ordinance includes design requirements for development on steep slopes. Proposed grading designs are compared to these criteria during the project approval process. As part of the project approval process, applications for developments in the HRO district must include a slope analysis. Upon initial review of the proposed project, a visual analysis may be required to demonstrate the visual impact of the development.

The City's Zoning Ordinance also includes protections for scenic resources besides ridgelines. Article 5, Open Space Development Standards, includes design features to protect open space from adverse modification. Article 75, San Dieguito River Valley Focus Planning Area, outlines findings for approval that must be made for development in this area to ensure development is in conformance with the goals and objectives of the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Park. Included is a requirement that grading respects and preserves the natural landform, geologic features, existing streambeds, vegetation, significant tree cover and wildlife of the area.

Additionally, the City's COA requirement protects historic landmarks from adverse exterior impacts. A COA is required for any new construction, modification, and alteration that would affect the exterior appearance of a designated historical resource, a property located within a historical district, or a property located within the Downtown SPA, even when a building permit is not otherwise required. This requirement applies to all homes in the Old Escondido Historic District, whether or not the home is on the historical register.

### **Proposed General Plan Update Policies**

The General Plan Update Resource Conservation Element includes Visual Resources Policies 3.1 through 3.4 that protect scenic resources. These policies would encourage preservation of significant visual resources in a natural state; require new development to avoid obstructing views of visual resources; require development to maintain density and development standards designed to protect significant visual resources; require development to minimize visual impacts of grading and structures; and prohibit development on skyline ridges. Additionally, Visual Resources Policy 3.5 requires the City to regulate development on intermediate ridges, hilltops, and hillsides, and minimize impacts to slopes greater than 15 percent.

Water Resources and Quality Policies 6.2 and 6.7 through 6.10 in the Resources Conservation Element also protect scenic resources. These policies would protect surface water resources in the City including Lake Wohlford, ~~Lake Dixon-Lake~~, ~~Lake-Hodges Reservoir~~, Escondido Creek, and other waterways; maintain natural and improved drainages as permanent open space; prohibit development in the areas around Lake Wohlford, ~~Lake Dixon-Lake~~, or ~~Lake-Hodges Reservoir~~ that would detract from their use as watershed areas or as visual and recreational amenities; maintain Escondido's natural creek system in an undisturbed state; conserve and restore creeks to their natural states whenever possible; and require that drainage channels be designed to accommodate riparian vegetation growth.

Additionally, the Land Use and Community Form Element includes Planned Development Policy 6.3, which requires that planned development proposals be located and designed in consideration of visual impacts; minimize grading and removing native vegetation; comply with grading, erosion control and revegetation/landscaping requirements; preserve creeks and their adjoining vegetation in a natural state; and implement appropriate techniques to protect and manage areas of rare and endangered plant and animal species. This element also includes Environmental Review Policies 18.1 through 18.4, which require project conformance with CEQA, the General Plan, facilities plans, and quality of life standards; mitigation of environmental impacts; and an update of environmental thresholds in sensitive areas.

Finally, the Mobility and Infrastructure Element includes Storm Drainage Policy 14.6, which requires new development to minimize alterations to natural landforms, encourage implementation of low impact development measures, and implement maximum use of natural drainage ways.

### **Proposed Downtown Specific Plan Update Policies**

The Downtown Specific Plan Update includes Historic Preservation Standards and Guidelines to protect scenic historic buildings. The overriding principle of design for historic buildings is to be consistent with the significant architectural style of the building. The Historic Design Guidelines focus on historic commercial structures and adaptive re-use of historic residential structures for commercial uses; however, the guidelines can also be applied to historic residential structures. The guidelines include requirements for repairing damaged structures, additions to historic buildings, facades, and awnings. In addition, the specific plan includes the Historic Downtown District Development Standards that establish development standards for all development in the historic district, and development standards for the Parkview District of the SPA, which includes Grape Day Park. Development standards include maximum building heights, setback requirements, open space requirements, and sign requirements.

### **Proposed Escondido Climate Action Plan Reduction Measures**

The proposed E-CAP does not include any reduction measures related to scenic resources.

## **Summary**

The land use designations and accompanying future development based on those designations proposed in the proposed project would have the potential to result in adverse changes to scenic resources as a result of future development activity. Implementation of the City's Grading and Erosion Ordinance and General Plan Update policies in the Resource Conservation Element would protect views of ridgelines by requiring development to comply with grading design guidelines for development on all steep slopes, requiring slope analyses and visual analyses for development near skyline ridges, and prohibiting development on skyline ridges. Therefore, compliance with existing regulations and General Plan Update policies would continue to protect ridgelines from development impacts that would result in substantial adverse changes to scenic ridgelines. The City's COA requirement protects historic districts and the resources within them from adverse exterior impacts. Therefore, impacts related to adverse changes to historic districts would be less than significant. The proposed General Plan Update includes policies to protect other scenic resources, including water bodies, rock outcroppings, and areas of native vegetation. Additionally, the General Plan Update includes requirements for future SPAs to protect scenic resources. These policies are intended to ensure that significant adverse changes to scenic resources would not occur. Therefore, compliance with existing regulations and the proposed General Plan Update would ensure that impacts to scenic resources are less than significant.

### **4.1.3.3 Issue 3: Visual Character or Quality**

#### **Guidelines for Determination of Significance**

Based upon Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and existing City policies and regulations, the proposed project would result in a significant impact if it would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the planning area and/or its surroundings. A degradation of existing visual character or quality would occur by introducing features or land uses that would detract from or contrast with important visual elements that currently enhance the character of or define an existing neighborhood, community, or localized area, or by being inconsistent with applicable design guidelines. Important visual elements include features such as topography, vegetation, man-made structures, community design, community organization, scale of development, and relationship between built environment and natural setting.

#### **Impact Analysis**

##### **General Plan Update**

As discussed above in Section 4.1.1, Existing Conditions, the natural environment of the planning area is characterized by hills and mountains surrounding an open valley bisected by Escondido Creek. The community's character is derived from its varied lakes and natural habitat areas, visually distinctive historic and cultural resources, views of hillsides and ridgelines, and agricultural groves that surround the valley. Escondido's urbanized core surrounds downtown within the "valley floor" of the City. Expanding out from its historic downtown and urban core with their traditional street grid patterns are established single and multi-family neighborhoods. Densities and intensities diminish toward the outer area of the city, where there are also several large natural expanses of preserved open space. The

community's primary employment area parallels Highway 78 and the ~~Sprinter~~SPRINTER commuter rail line, which traverses the City along Mission Avenue west of I-15, and along Santa Fe Avenue east of I-15.

Implementation of the General Plan Update would maintain the overall character of the City by focusing growth in underdeveloped and vacant areas in the urban core. As described in the Land Use and Community Form Element, the General Plan Update would apply smart growth principles to guide future development patterns, population growth, and infrastructure investments primarily toward the City's downtown area and urbanized sectors along key transportation corridors. The overall land use strategy is to preserve single family residential densities and development patterns in established neighborhoods and accommodate long term growth. The General Plan Update would maintain low density rural and estate residential land use designations surrounding the urban core, consistent with existing development, including agriculture. The large expanses of open space in the city's outer area would continue to be protected, including Daley Ranch and the Lake Wohlford area. As discussed above in above in Section 4.1.3.1, Issue 1: Scenic Vistas, and Section 4.1.3.2, Issue 2: Scenic Resources, existing regulations are in place to protect the ridgelines that characterize the city, the Old Escondido historic neighborhood, and the historic downtown area. Future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development guidelines which would ensure that quality development is constructed, as discussed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would not degrade the existing character or quality of the city as a whole. Localized impacts related to the General Plan study areas, SPAs for which changes are proposed, and the unincorporated communities within the General Plan Update area, are described below.

### ***Imperial Oakes SPA***

The Imperial Oakes SPA is characterized by the 18-acre Rod McLeod Community Park, vacant parcels, general retail uses and single family residences. Under the General Plan Update, this area would be redeveloped with new office and industrial uses. The existing residences in the western portion of the SPA would be phased out by new development. The General Plan Update would change the character of this area away from residential uses to office park uses. However, no cohesive visual theme currently exists in the area besides the existing community park. The community park would remain under the General Plan Update and would continue to be the focal point of the SPA. Therefore, redevelopment would not result in the removal of key buildings or features that contribute to the visual quality of the area. Future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure the construction of high quality development, as discussed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. The General Plan Update vision for this area is master planned architecture, coordinated building materials, cohesive landscaping, and trail system connections to the park. Increased building heights and intensities would be focused along I-15 and in areas more distanced from surrounding residential neighborhoods to ensure compatibility. Clusters of tall buildings have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, ~~s~~Specific attention would be given to achieving compatibility with semi-rural residential areas near Iris Lane by incorporating lower intensity land uses, building materials, heights, orientation, colors, screening, landscaping, lighting and signage. Therefore, although new development would be accommodated in the Imperial Oakes SPA which would change the existing undeveloped and low density visual character of the area, future development would be required to comply with planning, architectural and landscaping standards and maintain Rod McLeod Community Park, which would ensure compatibility and consistency with the existing character of the area. Implementation of the General Plan Update would not substantially degrade the visual character

of this study area because it would not allow the introduction of features or land uses that would detract from or contrast with the important visual elements that currently define the existing SPA. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

### ***SR-78 / Broadway Target Area***

The SR-78/Broadway Target Area has a commercial and industrial character and is almost completely developed with low intensity general and auto-related retail, restaurants, office and commercial services and supply. The General Plan Update proposes to maintain the employment-focused land uses of this area, but would accommodate further intensification of land uses. No cohesive visual theme exists in the area, including landscaping, signage, or building materials. Therefore, redevelopment would not result in the removal of key buildings or features that contribute to the visual quality of the area. Future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality development, as discussed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. Consistent with the existing commercial and industrial character of the area, no residential uses would be permitted under the General Plan Update. Sidewalks are currently installed in the area, but would be upgraded as part of redevelopment in the area. The General Plan Update envisions high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly streets, and access to transit and urban trails for the area. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would enhance the existing visual character of this study area and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***Transit Station Target Area***

The Transit Station Target Area currently has a low-intensity industrial and commercial character and is mostly developed. The General Plan Update envisions redevelopment in this area, including a phase out of incompatible land uses. The phase out of incompatible uses would strengthen the character of the area and create a more cohesive visual quality. Land uses accommodated by redevelopment would include commercial, office, and a regional destination entertainment/attraction area that would include a residential component with up to 640 new multi-family residential units in areas east of Reidy Creek. The General Plan Update would change the character of this area from industrial to a higher intensity commercial character; however, it would generally maintain a non-residential character because the new residential units would be incorporated into the destination entertainment/attraction area (mixed use). Additionally, no cohesive visual theme currently exists in the area. Therefore, redevelopment would not result in the removal of key buildings or features that contribute to the visual quality of the area. The development of destination entertainment/attraction area and multi-family residential units would have the potential to substantially increase building heights in this target area and impact visual quality. Clusters of tall buildings have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure the construction of high quality development, as discussed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. The General Plan Update envisions high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly streets, and transit focused development. Therefore, although new development would be accommodated in the Transit Station Target Area which would change the existing visual character of the area, future development would be required to comply with planning, architectural and landscaping standards, which would ensure compatibility and consistency with the existing low-intensity industrial and

commercial character of the area. Implementation of the General Plan Update would not substantially degrade the visual character of this study area because it would not allow the introduction of features or land uses that would detract from or contrast with the important visual elements that currently define the existing study area, or the General Plan vision for the target area. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

### ***South Quince Street Target Area***

The South Quince Street Target Area is developed with a mix of land uses including multi-family and single family residences, low-intensity general retail, office, restaurant, and small scale industrial and manufacturing services. The General Plan Update proposes the same land use designations for this area, and emphasizes residential, mixed use residential, commercial office, research and development, and professional services. No cohesive visual theme exists in the area, including landscaping, signage, or building materials. Therefore, redevelopment would not result in the removal of key buildings or features that contribute to the visual quality of the area. New mixed-use development would have the potential to substantially increase building heights in this target area and impact visual quality. Clusters of tall buildings have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, Future-future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure the construction of high quality development, as discussed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. The General Plan Update envisions high quality architecture and landscaping, transit-focused development, and pedestrian friendly streets in the study area. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would enhance the existing visual character of this study area and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***South Escondido Boulevard/Felicita Road Target Area***

The South Escondido Boulevard/Felicita Road Target Area currently has a residential character and is developed with mid-range density multi-family residential development, low intensity suburban shopping, general retail, office, restaurant, and small scale services. A portion of the Old Escondido Historic District is located adjacent to this study area. The General Plan Update proposes similar retail, multi-family residential, commercial, and office development in this area, but would also accommodate intensified commercial and residential development. Therefore, the General Plan Update proposes land uses that would be compatible with the existing character of the area. New urban development in this area would have the potential to substantially increase building heights in this target area and impact visual quality. Clusters of tall buildings have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, Future-future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality development, as discussed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. The General Plan Update envisions high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly streets, and access to transit and urban trails for the area. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with

existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would enhance the existing visual character of this study area and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***South Escondido Boulevard/Center City Parkway Target Area***

The South Escondido Boulevard / Center City Parkway Target Area is characterized by a suburban shopping area, single family and multi-family housing and small scale commercial services. The General Plan Update land uses proposed for this area also include retail, multi-family, commercial, and office uses. The General Plan Update would strengthen this area as a regional commercial destination by accommodating intensified commercial use, mixed use development, and a new ~~Sprinter~~SPRINTER light rail station. Mixed use development would be consistent with the existing multi-family housing provided in the area. New urban development in this area would have the potential to substantially increase building heights in this target area and impact visual quality. Clusters of tall buildings have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, futureFuture development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality development, as discussed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. The General Plan Update envisions high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly streets, and access to transit and urban trails for the area. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would enhance the existing visual character of this study area and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***Centre City Parkway / Brotherton Road Target Area***

The Centre City Parkway/Brotherton Road Target Area is an established neighborhood with mid-range density mixed use development, low intensity suburban shopping, general retail, office, and small scale services. Homes are set back from Centre City Parkway and Escondido Boulevard, with the shopping areas located along the major roadways, which establishes the area's commercial character. The General Plan Update would accommodate intensified commercial land uses along Centre City Parkway and Escondido Boulevard, consistent with the existing commercial character of the area, including mixed use development that would transition into the existing residential area. New urban development in this area would have the potential to substantially increase building heights in this target area and impact visual quality. Clusters of tall buildings have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, futureFuture development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality development, as discussed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. Within this study area, the General Plan Update envisions a gateway element for the city, aesthetic enhancements along Centre City Parkway, strong connections to transit, integration of public/private recreational space, and features to ensure pedestrian safety in this area. A mixed use overlay with increased density and intensity in close proximity to transit and services would ensure compatibility with adjacent lower density residential uses with appropriate building heights, intensities, and buffers. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would enhance the existing visual character of this study area and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***I-15/Felicita Road Corporate Office Target Area***

The I-15/Felicita Road Corporate Office Target Area is characterized by vacant properties dotted with low intensity medical offices, single family residences, churches, and agricultural uses, including groves and field crops. The General Plan Update identifies this area as a new employment-focused area, including commercial and medical offices, research and development offices, and professional services. Therefore, the General Plan Update would accommodate some land uses similar to existing land uses, but would change the low density character of this area to higher-intensity office uses. Future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality, visually appealing development, as discussed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. The General Plan Update envisions high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly streets, and compatibility with surrounding residential uses in the area. Appropriate height limits and setbacks would ensure compatibility with existing residential land uses. Therefore, although new development would be accommodated in the I-15/Felicita Road Corporate Office Target Area which would change the existing low-intensity commercial/residential/agricultural visual character of the area, future development would be required to comply with planning, architectural and landscaping standards, which would ensure compatibility and consistency with the existing natural character of the area. Implementation of the General Plan Update would not substantially degrade the visual character of this study area because it would not allow the introduction of features or land uses that would detract from or contrast with the important visual elements that currently define the existing study area. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

### ***Westfield Shoppingtown Target Area***

The Westfield Shoppingtown Target Area is located at the I-15 and Via Rancho Parkway interchange and characterized by a multi-story regional shopping center that is also a gateway to the community. The General Plan Update proposes land uses that would support the shopping center as the key element in the study area by accommodating additional retail and office uses, and mixed use development. The General Plan Update would also support new transit connections to the area to enhance it as a regional gateway destination. The General Plan Update envisions high quality architecture and landscaping, pedestrian friendly streets, and access to transit and trails. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would enhance the existing visual character of this study area and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***East Valley Parkway Target Area***

The East Valley Parkway Target Area is a suburban shopping area developed with low intensity general retail and residential development. The existing Palomar Hospital is a unique feature in this area and is surrounded by medical support offices. This area is considered to be a gateway into Escondido from SR-78 but does not include any gateway signage or landscaping. The General Plan Update proposes intensified retail, commercial, general office, educational, and professional service uses in this study area, including the development of an urban village along Ash Street, between Washington Avenue, Grand Avenue, Cedar Street, and Ohio Avenue that would allow mixed use residential, retail, and offices uses. Residential development would not be accommodated outside of the urban village in order to preserve the existing retail and office uses in the study area and encourage future educational uses. The proposed intensified retail and office land use development would be consistent with existing lower intensity retail development. The Palomar Hospital site is envisioned to be redeveloped as a mixed use residential, retail, medical and educational facility. Therefore, a unique feature in this study area

(hospital) would be redeveloped. However, the hospital is not considered to be a visual resource. The area surrounding the hospital would maintain its suburban retail and office character even after the hospital site is redeveloped. The General Plan Update envisions better connections with the SR-78, the Escondido Creek Trail, Washington Park, and the downtown area; high quality architecture and landscaping; and pedestrian-friendly, transit-focused development. Enhanced bus service would be encouraged in this area to support development. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would enhance the existing visual character of this study area and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***Nutmeg Street Study Area***

The Nutmeg Street Target area is located along the northern boundary of the city east of the I-15, north and south of Nutmeg Street. This area is undeveloped and characterized by native vegetation and steep topography north of Nutmeg Street, and a graded area south of Nutmeg Street. Under the General Plan Update, this area is proposed for new office and professional services or medium density residential land use. The site is currently undeveloped; therefore, the General Plan Update would result in change in the character of the site. However, the site is approximately 500 feet north and east of residential development in the City, adjacent to the I-15, and would serve as a new gateway to the City. Medium-density residential or office use would be compatible with existing lower density residential development located south and west of the site, given the site's separation from surrounding land uses. Additionally, a portion of the developable area of the site is currently graded. The steep slope and sensitive habitat areas surrounding the graded area are considered undevelopable. Therefore, development under the General Plan Update would not result in the removal of unique natural features that contribute to the visual quality of the area. Future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality development, as addressed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. The General Plan Update envisions high quality architecture and landscaping in this area. Therefore, although new development would be accommodated in the Nutmeg Street Study Area which would change the existing undeveloped visual character of the area, future development would be required to comply with planning, architectural and landscaping standards and provide open space areas within the study area, which would ensure compatibility and consistency with the existing natural character of the area. Implementation of the General Plan Update would not substantially degrade the visual character of this study area because it would not allow the introduction of features or land uses that would detract from or contrast with the important visual elements that currently define the existing study area. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

### ***Promenade Retail Center and Vicinity Target Area***

The Promenade Retail Center and Vicinity Target Area is a retail shopping center that also includes a middle school, and multi-family development. The area is mostly built out with relatively new development. Most residences are less than 25 years old. The General Plan Update proposes new retail, commercial, and office land uses integrated with residential development, which would be compatible with and similar to existing land uses. New urban development in this area would have the potential to substantially increase building heights in this target area and impact visual quality. Clusters of tall buildings have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, future development would be required to comply with the

General Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality development, as discussed below under the heading Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. The General Plan Update envisions high-quality architecture and landscaping and transit-focused pedestrian-friendly development in this area. Enhanced bus service would be encouraged in this area to support development. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would enhance the existing visual character of this study area and impacts would be less than significant.

#### ***Escondido Research Technology Center North SPA***

The ERTC North SPA is mostly developed and is characterized by industrial and commercial uses, an SDG&E power plant, the new Palomar Medical Center West hospital campus, and a ~~Sprinter~~SPRINTER station. Some established single family homes are located in the northern portion of the SPA. As discussed above in Section 4.1.1.3, Community Character, no cohesive visual theme exists in the area. This area is bisected by Escondido Creek and contains undulating topography. The General Plan Update proposes new commercial uses, office uses and limited low scale medical employee housing, specifically for the medical and research and development industries. Land uses would be intensified along Auto Parkway between the transit station and Palomar Hospital, due the area's proximity to the ~~Sprinter~~SPRINTER transit station, SR-78 and I-15. Therefore, the General Plan Update would accommodate land uses similar to some of the existing land uses in the study area. However, existing, single family residential land uses would be phased out. These land uses are currently incompatible with the existing SPA development, which does not have a residential character. Additionally, increased building heights and intensities would be focused along Citracado Parkway, Auto Park Way, and in areas more distanced from residences west of the SPA to ensure compatibility. Increased building heights would have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality development, as discussed below under the heading Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. Specific attention would be given to achieving compatibility with semi-rural residential areas outside of the SPA to the west by incorporating lower intensity land uses, building materials, heights, orientation, colors, heights, screening, lighting and signage along the edge of the SPA to create a buffer between the two land use types. The General Plan Update envisions high-quality architecture and landscaping and transit-focused pedestrian-friendly development in this area. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would enhance the existing visual character of this study area and impacts would be less than significant.

#### ***Escondido Research Technology Center South SPA***

The ERTC South SPA is mostly undeveloped but does contain a small number of established single family residences. As discussed above in Section 4.1.1.3, Community Character, no cohesive visual theme exists in the area. This area is bisected by Escondido Creek and contains undulating topography. Similar to the ERTC North SPA, increased building heights and intensities would be focused along Citracado Parkway and in areas more distanced from residences to ensure compatibility. Increased building heights would have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, future development would be required to comply with the General

Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality development, as discussed below under the heading Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. Specific attention would be given to achieving compatibility with semi-rural residential areas along the edges of the SPA by incorporating lower intensity land uses, building materials, heights, orientation, colors, screening, lighting and signage that are compatible with the Harmony Grove community. Development would include trail connections to Escondido Creek, which would remain a dominant visual feature in the area. Existing grading regulations would minimize changes to the undulating topography in the SPA. Additionally, approximately 70 percent of the site is considered undevelopable in order to maintain open space areas that contain habitat. This open space would preserve some natural, undulating topography and provide an additional buffer to residences outside the SPA. Therefore, development under the General Plan Update would not result in the removal of buildings or features that contribute to the visual quality of the area. Future development would be required to comply with the General Plan Update development policies which would ensure construction of high quality development, as addressed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies. The General Plan Update envisions master planned architecture to ensure quality design in this area. Therefore, although new development would be accommodated in the ERTC South SPA which would change the existing low density residential visual character of the area, future development would be required to comply with planning, architectural and landscaping standards and provide open space areas within the SPA, which would ensure compatibility and consistency with the unique natural features in the area. Implementation of the General Plan Update would not substantially degrade the visual character of this study area because it would not allow the introduction of features or land uses that would detract from or contrast with the important visual elements that currently define the existing SPA. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

### ***Sager Ranch SPA***

The Sager Ranch SPA is currently undeveloped and no specific plan has been adopted for this area. It is located in the northeastern portion of the planning area, primarily accessed from Valley Center Road, near Daley Ranch. It is characterized by open space, natural vegetation, steep slopes and scenic ridge lines. As discussed above in Section 4.1.3.2, Issue 2: Scenic Resources, a portion of this SPA is located in the unincorporated area and is currently under the land use jurisdiction of the County. The City initiated the annexation process for the Sager Ranch SPA as part of a larger annexation in October 2011. The annexation is pending at time of this EIR document; however, future development in this area would not exceed the amount currently allowed by the General Plan Update. The City's vision for this SPA would only apply upon completion of the annexation process and approval of additional necessary approvals. Any development that would occur in this area under the County's current land use designation would not be considered an impact of the proposed Escondido General Plan Update. Under the Escondido General Plan Update, the vision for the entire SPA is for rural and estate development or rural resort development. Up to a maximum of 100 residential units and/or non-residential use could be accommodated, provided the development is compatible with surrounding uses, including Daley Ranch. The General Plan Update also includes conditions for development on Sager Ranch that would ensure visual compatibility with the existing rural character of the area. The design of all development would be subject to consistently applied architectural review to avoid adverse visual impacts. Measures would be implemented to minimize grading requirements and avoid development on steep slopes and ridge lines. Therefore, new development would be accommodated in the Sager Ranch SPA; however,

development would be required to be consistent with the natural character of the area. Implementation of the General Plan Update would not substantially degrade the visual character of this SPA and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***Valley View SPA***

A portion of the Valley View SPA in the eastern portion of the planning area has an adopted specific plan and is developed with single family homes. The remaining undeveloped portion of the SPA does not have an adopted plan and is currently undeveloped. This area is characterized by steep slopes and open space that connects to the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park. As discussed above in Section 4.1.3.2, Issue 2: Scenic Resources, this SPA is located in the unincorporated area, outside the City's SOI, and is currently under the land use jurisdiction of the County. Therefore, the City's vision for this SPA would only apply if this area were included in Escondido's SOI and annexed into the City. Development that would occur in this area under the County's current land use designation would not be considered an impact of the proposed General Plan Update. The Escondido General Plan Update envisions this area as an upscale, large lot single family residential community, organized around a comprehensively planned open space system. The aesthetic and rural character of the area would be maintained in accordance with strict site planning, architectural, and landscaping standards. Additionally, the General Plan Update states that development would not be permitted until a specific plan is adopted and establishes requirements for the SPA, including setting a maximum development limit of 800 dwelling units. No development would be permitted on slopes greater than 35 percent, which would be preserved as open space. The future specific plan is required to contain a system of open spaces, including recreation areas, trails, and permanent open space areas and appropriate mechanisms to develop and maintain the open space system. Additionally, the specific plan is required to contain development standards and guidelines to minimize grading requirements, to prohibit development on steep slopes and skyline ridges, and include landscaping guidelines that maximize the use of native vegetation. Development and open space areas would be coordinated with the San Dieguito River Valley Regional Open Space Park and appropriate regional open space planning efforts (MSCP). Although new development would be accommodated in the Valley View SPA which would change the existing undeveloped visual character of the area, future development would be required to comply with planning, architectural and landscaping standards and provide open space areas within the SPA, which would ensure compatibility and consistency with the existing natural character of the area. Implementation of the General Plan Update would not substantially degrade the visual character of this study area because it would not allow the introduction of features or land uses that would detract from or contrast with the important visual elements that currently define the existing SPA. In addition, future development in the SPA would be consistent with applicable design guidelines. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

### ***San Dieguito Community***

The unincorporated San Dieguito area, including the Elfin Forest-Harmony Grove community, is characterized by natural open space with rural single family and agricultural development. The Elfin Forest/Harmony Grove Town Council submitted comments on the NOP circulated for the Draft EIR that expressed concern over potential visual character and quality impacts to the unincorporated communities of Eden Valley and Harmony Grove within the General Plan Update planning area. This area is located west of the ERTC North and South SPAs. The Town Council was concerned that development under the General Plan Update would conflict with the rural and agricultural nature of the area and scenic views within the community. Only 500 new homes would be accommodated in the City's SOI, which includes, but is not limited to, the San Dieguito community. Development in the San

Dieguito area would continue to be designated for low density rural development, including the Elfin Forest—Harmony Grove area. Any development under the General Plan Update would be required to comply with City regulations and General Plan Update policies that protect open space and scenic views, particularly scenic slopes. Additionally, as discussed under the analysis for the ERTC North and South SPAs above, these areas would concentrate development along Auto Park Way, Citracado Parkway, the immediate vicinity of Palomar Hospital, and in areas more distanced from residential uses to ensure compatibility with existing residences. Approximately 70 percent of the ERTC South SPA would remain in open space, which would provide a buffer between new land uses and existing residences in the San Dieguito area. The ERTC North SPA is currently mostly developed and the amount of new development would not substantially alter the existing condition. New development in either area would give specific attention to achieving compatibility with semi-rural residential areas along the edges of the SPAs by incorporating lower intensity land uses, building materials, heights, orientation, colors, screening, landscaping, lighting and signage. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would not substantially degrade the visual character of the NC Metro area, including the Eden Valley and Harmony Grove communities, and impacts would be less than significant.

### ***North County Metropolitan Community***

The unincorporated NC Metro area is characterized by single family development. The steep slopes that have constrained development in this area provide scenic rugged terrain. Under the General Plan Update, the NC Metro area would continue to be designated for low density rural residential development. The NC Metro area is located outside of the City's urban core and study area. As discussed under impacts to the San Dieguito community, only a limited amount of new development would be accommodated within the City's SOI (500 residential units) and development in the NC Metro area would continue to be designated for low density rural uses. Therefore, only a limited amount of new residential development would be accommodated in the NC Metro community and development would be consistent with existing single family residences. Additionally, as addressed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies, the General Plan Update includes a policy to maintain the existing character of communities annexed into the City. Therefore, impacts to the visual character of this area would be less than significant.

### ***Valley Center Community***

The unincorporated Valley Center community is characterized as a scenic, rural community with a combination of agricultural uses, riparian valleys, open space and rolling hills scattered throughout the plan area. The dark nighttime sky is considered an important visual resource. Valley Center is located to the east of the City boundary. The portion of Valley Center within the General Plan Update planning area boundary is proposed for low density rural residential development or open space preserve. Therefore, the General Plan Update proposes land uses that would maintain the existing visual character of these areas of Valley Center, including a dark nighttime sky. As discussed above in the analysis of the NC Metro community, only 500 new homes would be accommodated in the City's SOI which includes, but is not limited to, the Valley Center community. Therefore, only a limited amount of new development would be accommodated in Valley Center. Upon annexation of this area to the City, development would be required to comply with the City's existing regulations including the grading ordinance that would restrict development of the steep slopes in the community. Additionally, as addressed below in the discussion of Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies, the General Plan Update includes a policy to maintain the existing character of communities annexed to the City. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would not substantially degrade the visual character of the Valley Center Community and impacts would be less than significant.

### Downtown Specific Plan Update

The existing Downtown SPA is partially developed with a historic, walkable retail and service core, single family and multi-family residences, shopping centers on the western and northern ends, and office and retail to the east. Grape Day Park and the historic downtown area are key visual elements in the SPA. The Downtown Specific Plan Update envisions a compact, walkable downtown, with high quality architecture and landscaping, and access to transit and urban trails. The plan would accommodate retail, mixed use multi-family residential, commercial, and office land uses. Therefore, the proposed land uses are generally the same as existing land uses; however, the density would be intensified under the proposed specific plan update. For example, an existing low intensity commercial development in the northern area of the SPA would remain a commercial use but be intensified under the specific plan update. The development of new urban uses in this SPA would have the potential to substantially increase building heights and impact visual quality. Clusters of tall buildings have the potential to create ground winds, obscure access to sunlight, and create shading on adjacent buildings. However, New-new development and redevelopment would be required to comply with the development standards and guidelines proposed in the General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan, which would ensure the construction of high quality facilities and would not allow the degradation of the existing visual quality of the area. The General Plan Update and Specific Plan Update envision an extension of Grape Day Park to the north to provide the urban trails to connect the existing and future shopping areas in the city. The plans also propose increased residential densities and increased allowable building heights surrounding the park. This development pattern and park extension would provide additional focus on Grape Day Park as a visual resource, which would enhance the existing character of the area. Additionally, a COA would continue to be required for any physical changes to buildings in the historic downtown district. The purpose of the COA is to ensure that the historical character of the area is not adversely affected by new development. Projects would be subject to design review by the City, which would ensure that adverse impacts such as ground winds, shading, and sunlight obstruction would be minimized in order to maintain consistency with existing development and support the General Plan vision for this area. Therefore, the Downtown Specific Plan Update would not substantially degrade the existing character or quality of the SPA and impacts would be less than significant.

### Escondido Climate Action Plan

By itself, the E-CAP does not propose any land use changes or development in the project planning area. The E-CAP greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction measures would be implemented concurrent with future development consistent with the General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update. However, the E-CAP measures do encourage new development projects to incorporate external project features to reduce GHG emissions, such as onsite solar photovoltaic systems. Solar panels would generally be consistent with industrial development and office development because solar panels have a similar appearance to the window expanses that are common in office and industrial buildings. Additionally, as discussed above under impacts related to the General Plan Update, growth would be concentrated in the study areas, most of which do not currently have a cohesive visual theme. The high quality development encouraged under the General Plan Update would change the visual character in some study areas, but would not result in adverse changes. Redevelopment under the General Plan Update would seek to create more unified architectural themes within these study areas. Solar panels would be incorporated into new building design in accordance with the General Plan Update policies described below, and would be subject to design review under the zoning ordinance.

The exception would be in historic areas, where the modern solar panels would potentially conflict with the historical theme of the area. While modern elements such as solar panels would not be consistent

with existing development within the Old Escondido neighborhood area and the historic downtown area in the Downtown SPA, these areas are currently surrounded by newer residential and commercial uses, which would be compatible with newer modern elements and would not detract from its existing character. A COA would be required for any changes to the historical buildings themselves and may not allow for the addition of modern elements. Additionally, as discussed below under Federal, State and Local Regulations and Downtown Specific Plan Update Policies, design review is required by the City's zoning ordinance, and is specifically required for all solar panels proposed in the Downtown SPA. Therefore, with proper review and consistency with applicable regulations, impacts to visual character from implementation of the E-CAP would be less than significant.

### **Federal, State, and Local Regulations and Existing Regulatory Processes**

Visual character and quality is currently addressed through many of the same regulations and processes described above in Section 4.1.3.1, Issue 1: Scenic Vistas, including the City's Zoning Ordinance and Grading and Erosion Control Ordinance. For visual character, the regulations that relate to preservation of the natural environment have greater relevance in the lower density areas of the General Plan Update planning area and less in the urban core. However, natural features may still be key components of the visual character or quality in developed areas. The regulations that relate specifically to the built form of a community (such as design review designators and guidelines) are directly relevant to visual character and quality. The City's Zoning Ordinance contains additional controls beyond those discussed above in Section 4.1.3.1, Issue 1: Scenic Vistas, related to visual character, including density, size, massing, coverage, scale, color, architecture, and building materials requirements. For example, Section 33-344 of the Zoning Ordinance pertains to the conversion of automobile dealerships converting to a different use. The ordinance requires design approval and establishes development standards to ensure that new development does not have a negative impact on the physical or visual character of the area in which it is located. Additionally, Section 33-1357, Design Review Standards, establishes general development standards for the entire City and requires design review by ~~the a design review board or City staff~~. Section 33-1357(9) of the Design Review Standards requires screening for rooftop equipment, which would include rooftop solar panels.

### **Proposed General Plan Update Policies**

In addition to the goals and policies described above in Section 4.1.3.1, Issue 1: Scenic Vistas, and Section 4.1.3.2, Issue 2: Scenic Resources, which would protect scenic resources and vistas, the General Plan Update includes goals and policies to protect the existing visual character or quality of areas within the General Plan Update boundary. The Land Use and Community Form Element includes community Character Goal 1, which supports a community composed of distinct residential neighborhoods, business districts, and employment centers, whose urban form reflects the natural environmental setting.

This goal is supported by Community Character Policies 1.1 through 1.8, 1.12, and 1.15 through 1.17 related to this issue. These policies encourage development to reinforce the city's present development pattern; require that the densities and intensities for new development be based on their compatibility with existing surrounding land uses; focus development into areas where land use changes achieve the community's long term goals; require the City to consider the appropriateness of alternative methodologies; assess the environmental impacts of projects that further Escondido's smart growth objectives; maintain Escondido's single family residential character; maintain a variety of land use categories to achieve the General Plan vision; encourage incorporation of iconic signage, artwork, landscaping and/or architecture characterized as uniquely Escondido at gateway locations; require

development projects to locate and design buildings to enhance community livability and economic vitality; prohibit development on slopes greater than 35 percent and in natural 100-year floodways; recognize community plans approved by the Board of Supervisors within Escondido's General Plan Update area and coordinate land use and design guidelines to minimize impacts in areas where City/County lands transition; encourage collaboration with annexing property owners to retain desired components of their community plans by considering appropriate zoning overlay designations in the event of annexation; require the City to notify and coordinate with surrounding property owners and resident groups when conducting land use studies affecting residents of unincorporated communities; and support the formation of Homeowners' Associations or annexation into the City Landscape Maintenance District to maintain private streets, common open space areas, and landscaping.

Additionally, the Land Use and Community Form Element includes several policies to ensure high-quality development. Residential Development Policy 3.9 requires that new residential subdivisions, multi-family projects, and development in Mixed Use Overlay areas be designed in accordance with smart growth principles. Neighborhood Maintenance and Preservation Policy 4.3 encourages working with residents to enhance existing neighborhood character and aesthetics. Residential Clustering Policies 5.3 and 5.4 require the City to ensure that the portion of the site to be developed for clustered residential lots maintains the character of the surrounding area and does not block scenic views. Mixed Use Overlay Policy 7.4 requires the review of proposed projects in mixed use overlay districts to ensure the project incorporates architectural elements or themes from the surrounding neighborhood; provides appropriate transitions between land use designations to minimize compatibility conflicts; and ensures quality architecture, landscaping and onsite open space. Industrial Land Use Policy 10.3 requires that projects located within the Industrial Office classification be designed to be aesthetically attractive and compatible with adjoining land uses. Environmental Review Policies 18.1 through 18.4 require project conformance with CEQA, the General Plan, facilities plans, and quality of life standards; mitigation of environmental impacts; and an update of environmental thresholds in sensitive areas.

The Economic Prosperity Element also includes policies to encourage high-quality development. Employment Acreage Policy 1.4 promotes quality economic development that fosters job availability, economic revitalization, and tax revenues. Long-Term Economic Wellbeing Policy 8.5 would require the City to facilitate and work with property owners and area residents to redevelop and reinvigorate older neighborhood shopping centers that are in decline. In appropriate locations, these centers can be transformed into high quality and dynamic retail/mixed use commercial areas that also provide a gathering place and sense of community for the neighborhood.

### **Proposed Downtown Specific Plan Update Policies**

The vision statement for the Downtown Specific Plan Update is a dynamic, attractive, economically vital city center providing a social, cultural, economic, and residential focus while respecting its historic character. The Downtown Specific Plan Update provides site development standards that establish minimum regulations for all development to ensure high-quality development within the SPA, including general development standards and specific design guidelines for the individual districts in the SPA. The Implementation and Administration section of the specific plan requires projects in the SPA to undergo design review by City staff or planning commission, and specifically requires review of solar panels.

The Specific Plan Update includes strategic goals related to visual character and quality which would strengthen the character of downtown with new development that is architecturally compatible with the existing urban fabric, maintain the character of downtown by preserving historically significant sites

and structures, and reinforce and expand the unique character of Grand Avenue’s retail core area by promoting pedestrian-oriented, ground-floor, specialty retail and restaurant uses.

The Specific Plan Update also includes design principles, guidelines and standards to preserve the character of downtown Escondido, along with the area’s overall vision. Proposed projects are encouraged to preserve, respect and promote the existing character of the historically significant downtown; maintain visibility of significant historic facades; retain the appearance of the original use during adaptive reuse; design landscaping, lighting, signage, parking, and other exterior structural additions/modifications to avoid impacts to surrounding residential uses; recognize local character; and reflect and reinforce the scale, mass, proportion, rhythm, and attention to detail that are established by existing well-designed building facades along the street. Buildings should contribute to the public realm and the neighborhood. Alterations and/or additions to existing buildings should improve the character of the building and its relationship to historic character, as well as be compatible in scale, materials and character with the main structure.

#### **Proposed Escondido Climate Action Plan Reduction Measures**

The proposed E-CAP does not include any reduction measures related to visual character or quality.

### **Summary**

Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update includes land use designation changes and increases in land use densities that would allow for additional development within the General Plan Update planning boundary which would have the potential to affect the existing visual character or quality of communities within the planning boundary. However, existing City policies and regulations such as the Zoning and Grading and Erosion Ordinances, proposed General Plan Update design principles and policies, and proposed Downtown Specific Plan Update goals and policies are intended to protect visual character and quality. These policies establish guidelines for high-quality development consistent with existing visual character, and require design review of new development. Therefore, with implementation of existing City policies and regulations, the proposed General Plan Update, and the Downtown Specific Plan Update, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact to visual character or quality.

### **4.1.3.4 Issue 4: Light or Glare**

#### **Guidelines for Determination of Significance**

Based upon Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines and existing City policies and regulations, the proposed project would result in a significant impact if it would create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area, conflict with the City’s Outdoor Lighting Ordinance or conflict with operations at the Palomar Mountain Observatory.

#### **Impact Analysis**

Growth under the proposed Downtown Specific Plan Update would be consistent with the growth identified for the General Plan Update; therefore, the following analysis pertains to both the General Plan Update and the Downtown Specific Plan Update. Impacts related to implementation of the E-CAP are discussed separately below.

### **General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update**

The proposed General Plan Update would have the potential to result in new sources of light or glare from new development or redevelopment that requires night lighting, such as security lighting in commercial areas, or from the use of materials that would result in glare, such as expanses of glass on office buildings. Building materials and outdoor lighting used in the development or redevelopment of residential, commercial, office, and industrial uses would have the potential to result in new sources of glare and/or lighting. Of particular concern are new sources of night lighting that would have the potential to cause light trespass and light pollution which would affect the Palomar Mountain Observatory.

#### ***Glare***

Glare is a continuous or periodic intense light that is greater than the luminance to which the eyes are adapted and would have the potential to cause annoyance, discomfort or visual impairment, and can be a nuisance or hazard. Glare commonly occurs when an object is significantly brighter in contrast to the rest of the viewshed. Glare can occur from light reflecting off an expanse of glass, such as those that are found in commercial or industrial developments or in solar panel installations. Potentially reflective exterior building materials can affect motorists, cyclists, pedestrians or other persons within sight of the project depending on the position of the sun, outdoor lighting and/or building materials. Future development or redevelopment consistent with the proposed General Plan Update would cause glare impacts if it would result in the installation of highly reflective building materials that create glare or would not conform to applicable regulations related to glare. Reflective building materials such as large expanses glass are commonly used in office professional land uses to provide office windows and commercial land uses to display goods or advertisements in storefronts; however, reflective materials have the potential to be used in any type of development. New and intensified office, industrial, and commercial land uses would be concentrated in many study areas, including the Imperial Oakes SPA, Nutmeg Street Study Area and I-15/Felicita Road Corporate Office Target Area. Individual project development would have the potential to result in substantial glare; therefore, a potentially significant impact would occur.

#### ***Lighting***

Daytime lighting would not result in a substantial new source of light or result in light pollution or light trespass because these conditions do not normally occur during the day when light is plentiful. However, excessive nighttime lighting would have the potential to result in light pollution, also called skyglow, which is the haze of light that surrounds highly populated areas and is the result of brightening of the night sky from both artificial (outdoor) and natural (atmospheric and celestial) light. Skyglow reduces the ability to see stars and other features of the nighttime sky, which is of particular importance to the Palomar Mountain Observatory. Light pollution interferes with operation of the observatory telescopes. Excessive lighting would also have the potential to adversely impact wildlife, which is discussed in Section 4.4, Biological Resources.

Artificial lighting components that can contribute to skyglow include roadway/walkway lighting, security lighting, decorative and landscape lighting, building lighting (including residential, commercial, and industrial), and site lighting. Lighting of vertical surfaces such as billboards, signs, buildings, and landscaping is especially problematic, because the light is often emitted upward into the atmosphere, resulting in uplight and ultimately increased skyglow. The General Plan Update planning area contains large areas of open space that provide dark skies, particularly in the northeast near Daley Ranch. Areas

with rural and low density residential development would have the least lighting footprint of the developed areas within the General Plan Update boundary because night lighting would be limited to security or ornamental lighting on houses and other structures, which would be spaced far apart. The highest lighting footprint currently occurs in the City's urban core because this area contains a concentration of lighted signs, street lights, nighttime security lighting and a large number of residential units with nighttime lighting. Due to its developed nature, the urban core is currently a source of substantial nighttime lighting. Under the proposed General Plan Update, existing rural and semi-rural areas would generally continue to provide low density development. Higher density development would be located in the study areas, some of which already contain higher intensity development, such as the Downtown SPA and ERTC North SPA. New development and redevelopment in the highly developed study areas would not result in a net increase in nighttime light sources. However, other study areas are undeveloped or are currently developed with low density uses, such as the Imperial Oakes SPA, ERTC South SPA, and the Nutmeg Street Study Area. These areas are located adjacent to the urban core where substantial existing nighttime lighting sources currently exist. While new nighttime lighting sources in these study areas would be compatible with the nighttime lighting in adjacent areas, they would still introduce a new source of substantial night lighting. In addition, the growth and new development accommodated by the General Plan Update in rural areas would be characterized by dark skies and would result in a small increase in nighttime lighting. Therefore, the proposed project would have the potential to result in significant skyglow or light trespass from increased nighttime lighting. These issues are discussed below.

Of particular concern are the land uses in closest proximity to the Palomar Mountain Observatory. The observatory is located approximately 10 miles northeast of the General Plan Update planning boundary. According to the County of San Diego, a 15 mile buffer around the observatory, referred to as Light Zone A, represents the area most critical for light pollution to be minimized (County of San Diego 2011). The northeastern portion of the General Plan Update area outside of the City boundary (near Lake Wohlford), and a portion of the Daley Ranch area, are located within Light Zone A. Under the General Plan Update, most of this area would remain as open space, including Daley Ranch and land surrounding Lake Wohlford. New development would be limited to low density housing, which would generate minimal nighttime lighting, as described above. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would not result in a substantial new source of nighttime lighting in Light Zone A.

New sources of light would also have the potential to also result in light trespass, which is a result of spill light shining in undesirable locations, such as a neighbor's backyard or bedroom window. Spill light is light cast beyond the parameters of useful light or the intended area to be lit, and would have the potential to be a nuisance or hazard to neighboring uses. Typical examples include streetlights or floodlights that are not angled or shielded correctly and invade areas on a neighbor's property that are desired to be kept darker. The General Plan Update proposes land uses that are generally consistent with existing land uses throughout the City; therefore lighting for the proposed uses would be compatible with the existing setting. However, individual developments would have the potential to result in a nuisance or hazard to surrounding uses. Impacts would be potentially significant.

Additionally, the City's SOI areas within the NC Metro and Valley Center communities have identified dark skies as part of their community character. As described above in Section 4.1.3.3, Issue 3: Visual Character or Quality, General Plan Update goals and policies would be implemented to maintain community character in these areas. Any new development in these areas would be limited to rural or semi-rural residences that would not be substantial sources of nighttime lighting. Therefore,

implementation of the General Plan Update would result in less than significant nighttime lighting impacts to the City's SOI areas.

### **Escondido Climate Action Plan**

The E-CAP does not include any policies that would encourage new sources of nighttime lighting. However, E-CAP measures R2-E-1 and R2-E-2 do encourage new development projects to incorporate external project features, including reflective surfaces, to encourage energy efficiency. Developments are not required to include reflective surfaces; rather, it is one option among many that may be selected to reduce energy use for an individual project. However, new development that would incorporate new reflective surfaces in order to meet the energy efficiency requirements in the E-CAP would result in a potentially significant impact related to new sources of glare and would be subject to separate environmental analysis at the time of the project application submittal.

### **Federal, State, and Local Regulations and Existing Regulatory Processes**

Article 35 of the City's Zoning Ordinance, referred to as the Escondido Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, is intended to minimize unnecessary nighttime lighting and glare for the benefit of the citizens of the city and astronomical research at Palomar Mountain Observatory. The ordinance includes requirements for outdoor lighting such as shielding and automatic timing devices. Shielding would also minimize nuisance light to neighboring land uses. Additionally, zoning codes for specific land uses include requirements to minimize light and glare, such as Article 26, which pertains to industrial zones.

### **Proposed General Plan Update Policies**

The Land Use and Community Form Element includes policies to ensure new sources of glare and nighttime lighting would not adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. Community Character Policy 1.10 requires development to reduce light pollution and preserve views of the night sky through the design and siting of light fixtures to minimize light spill-over onto adjacent properties. Community Character Policy 1.11 requires new development to implement design features that avoid incompatible glare. This Element also includes Environmental Review Policies 18.1 through 18.4, which require project conformance with CEQA, the General Plan, facilities plans, and quality of life standards; mitigation of environmental impacts; and an update of environmental thresholds in sensitive areas.

### **Proposed Downtown Specific Plan Update Policies**

The Architectural Principles and Guidelines in the Downtown Specific Plan Update include the following guidelines to ensure new sources of glare and nighttime lighting would not adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area: 1) use well-designed and appropriate exterior lighting; 2) use indirect lighting to minimize glare; 3) prohibit blinking or otherwise distracting lighting, 4) utilize cutoff shields or other appropriate measures to conceal the light source from adjacent uses and rights-of-way; 5) use indirect lighting that hides the light source from direct pedestrian and/or motorist view; and 6) install only clear and non-reflective glass on ground floors.

Additionally, the following Sign Criteria and Guidelines would limit lighting from new signs in the downtown area: 1) position flood lights so that none of the light shines directly onto an adjoining property or into the eyes of motorists or pedestrians; 2) conform to the City's Outdoor Lighting Ordinance (Article 35 of the Zoning Code); and 3) turn off signs between the hours of 11:00 p.m. and sunrise unless the business is open to the public between those hours.

### **Proposed Escondido Climate Action Plan Reduction Measures**

The proposed E-CAP does not include any reduction measures related to light and glare.

## **Summary**

Implementation of the proposed General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update would have the potential to result in increased light and glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views within the City's urban core. However, future development would be required to comply with the City's outdoor lighting ordinance. Additionally, the General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update include policies that require new development, including development that would install reflective surfaces as part of E-CAP implementation, to avoid light and glare impacts, including spillover light and incompatible glare. New development would be required to comply with City and General Plan Update policies, as well as Downtown Specific Plan policies, if applicable. Compliance with all applicable regulations and policies would reduce proposed project impacts related to light and glare to below a level of significance.

## **4.1.4 Cumulative Impacts**

The geographic scope of the cumulative impact analysis for aesthetics includes the immediate vicinity of view corridors, view sheds, or scenic resources in the General Plan Update planning area as well as areas in the vicinity of existing community development and areas surrounding Palomar Observatory.

### **Issue 1: Scenic Vistas**

Cumulative projects located in the Escondido region would have the potential to result in a cumulative impact to scenic vistas if, in combination, they would result in the obstruction, interruption, or detraction from a scenic vista. Adjacent jurisdictions, including incorporated cities and the County of San Diego, have general plan policies, zoning and other ordinances or regulations in place to protect scenic vistas within their jurisdictions. Cumulative projects within these jurisdictions would be required to comply with applicable regulations pertaining to scenic vistas. Additionally, due to the valley shape of the City and the fact that growth would be concentrated on the valley floor, new development in the City under the General Plan Update would not substantially interfere with views from adjacent jurisdictions. Additionally, views from the City to outside jurisdictions are already limited due to this topography. Existing City regulations such as the Grading and Erosion Ordinance would continue to prohibit development on ridgelines that would be visible from outside the General Plan Update planning area boundary. As described above in Section 4.1.3.1, Issue 1: Scenic Vistas, the land use designations proposed in the General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update would not result in the significant obstruction, interruption, or detraction of a scenic vista as a result of future development activity due to compliance with existing regulations and General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update policies. The E-CAP would not result in any additional impacts to scenic vistas beyond the impacts identified for development allowed under the General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update. The proposed project, in combination with other cumulative projects, would result in a less than significant cumulative impact.

## Issue 2: Scenic Resources

Cumulative projects located in the Escondido region would have the potential to result in a cumulative impact to scenic resources if, in combination, they would result in the removal or substantial adverse change of one or more features that contribute to the valued visual character or image of a neighborhood, community, State scenic highway, or localized area, such as a landmark (designated), historic resource, tree, or rock outcropping. Adjacent jurisdictions, including incorporated cities and the County of San Diego, have general plan policies, zoning, and other ordinances and regulations in place to protect scenic resources within their jurisdictions. Cumulative projects within these jurisdictions would be subject to applicable regulations pertaining to scenic resources. As described above in Section 4.1.3.2, Issue 2: Scenic Resources, existing City regulations and the proposed General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan policies are intended to ensure that impacts to significant visual resources do not occur. The E-CAP would not result in any additional impacts to scenic resources beyond those impacts identified for development allowed under the General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update. Therefore, with compliance with local regulations and proposed General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan policies, the proposed project, in combination with other cumulative projects, would not result in a significant cumulative impact to scenic resources.

## Issue 3: Visual Character or Quality

Cumulative projects located in the Escondido region would have the potential to result in a cumulative impact to visual character or quality if, in combination, they would introduce features that would detract from or contrast with the existing visual character and/or quality of a neighborhood, community, or localized area. Adjacent jurisdictions have general plan policies, zoning ordinances, other ordinances, and additional regulations/policies, such as design guidelines, in place to protect visual character and quality within their jurisdictions. Cumulative projects within these jurisdictions would be subject to the applicable regulations pertaining to visual character and quality. Additionally, impacts related to visual character or quality would generally be localized to the community immediately surrounding the project and would not be cumulative in nature. As described above in Section 4.1.3.3, Issue 3: Visual Character or Quality, implementation of the proposed General Plan Update would have the potential to change, but not substantially degrade, the existing visual character or quality in the General Plan Update area. The City has existing regulations in place and the General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update propose new policies to ensure future projects would be cohesive, high-quality development that would not degrade existing visual character and quality. With proper review and consistency with applicable regulations, impacts to visual character or quality from implementation of measures E-CAP reduction measures would be less than significant. The proposed project, in combination with other cumulative projects, would result in a less than significant cumulative impact.

## Issue 4: Light or Glare

The construction and operation of cumulative projects located in the Escondido region would have the potential to result in a new source of glare from new development or redevelopment that requires night lighting, such as security lighting in commercial areas, or is constructed with materials that would result in glare, such as expanses of glass on office buildings. Impacts from glare are localized and not cumulative in nature; therefore, a significant cumulative impact related to glare would not occur. However, new sources of nighttime light pollution in the region would result in a potential lighting impact to the Palomar Mountain Observatory. Despite lighting ordinances and other regulations pertaining to night lighting and mitigation measures that would reduce light pollution on a project by project basis, the combined effect of all cumulative projects in the region would be a cumulative

increase in light pollution. Therefore, the cumulative projects in the region would have the potential to result in a significant cumulative impact associated with nighttime lighting. However, as discussed above in Section 4.1.3.4, Issue 4: Light or Glare, the proposed project would not result in substantial new sources of nighttime lighting outside of the City's urban core, including the area within Light Zone A of the Palomar Mountain Observatory. This area would be developed only with rural and semi-rural residences, which would not create a substantial source of nighttime light. However, the City's urban core is currently a substantial source of nighttime lighting. Redevelopment and infill within this area in compliance with City's Zoning Ordinance and the proposed General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update policies would incrementally increase light and glare but would not result in a substantial increase in nighttime lighting compared to existing conditions. The E-CAP does not include any policies that would encourage new sources of nighttime lighting. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to a significant cumulative impact associated with night lighting.

## 4.1.5 Significance of Impact Prior to Mitigation

The proposed project would result in less than significant direct and cumulative impacts to scenic vistas, scenic resources, visual character or quality, and light and glare.

## 4.1.6 Mitigation

### Issue 1: Scenic Vistas

No significant impacts would occur; therefore, no mitigation is required.

### Issue 2: Scenic Resources

No significant impacts would occur; therefore, no mitigation is required.

### Issue 3: Visual Character or Quality

No significant impacts would occur; therefore, no mitigation is required.

### Issue 4: Light or Glare

No significant impacts would occur; therefore, no mitigation is required.

## 4.1.7 Conclusion

The discussion below provides a synopsis of the conclusion reached in each of the above impact analyses.

### Issue 1: Scenic Vistas

Development allowed under the proposed project would not result in the significant obstruction, interruption, or detracting of a scenic vista. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant.

Additionally, the proposed project, in combination with the cumulative projects, would result in a less than significant cumulative impact.

## **Issue 2: Scenic Resources**

Implementation of the proposed project includes policies intended to ensure that adverse impacts to scenic resources do not occur. In addition, existing City regulations protect ridgelines and other scenic resources from adverse changes. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact to scenic resources. Additionally, the proposed project would result in a less than significant cumulative impact.

## **Issue 3: Visual Character or Quality**

Implementation of the proposed project would allow increased development densities to occur in some areas. However, development consistent with the General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update would be high quality development designed to be compatible with existing adjacent land uses. Visual character or quality would change in some study areas, but would not be degraded. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact to visual character and quality. Additionally, the proposed project would result in a less than significant cumulative impact.

## **Issue 4: Light or Glare**

The proposed project would have the potential to result in an incremental increase in light and glare from new development. However, the City's Zoning Ordinance and the proposed General Plan Update and Downtown Specific Plan Update policies require development to avoid glare impacts and minimize nighttime lighting. Requirements are included to avoid nuisance nighttime lighting. No new substantial sources of nighttime lighting would be accommodated within Light Zone A of Palomar Mountain Observatory. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant. Additionally, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to a significant cumulative impact.