



5.3 Aesthetics and Light/Glare



5.3 AESTHETICS AND LIGHT/GLARE

5.3.1 PURPOSE

This section identifies the existing aesthetic and light/glare conditions within the Study Area and provides an analysis of potential impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan Update. Potential impacts are identified and mitigation measures to address potentially significant impacts are recommended, as necessary.

Because of its inherent subjectivity, difficulties arise in the evaluation of visual quality and the degree of impact that may result from visual change. Additionally, there are limited objectives or quantitative standards to analyze visual quality and individuals respond differently to changes in the visual environment. What may be considered an adverse visual condition to one person may represent an improved visual condition to another.

5.3.2 EXISTING REGULATORY SETTING

STATE

California Scenic Highways and Historic Parkways Program

The California Scenic Highways and Historic Parkways Program was created in 1963 to preserve and protect highway corridors located in areas of outstanding natural beauty from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of the adjacent lands. The State of California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) maintains its State Scenic Highways and Historic Parkways Program, through which segments of the State highway system are designated as being of particular scenic value or interest. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. Interstates, State highways, byways, and parkways are eligible for designation or for recognition as eligible for designation. The Program is governed by the regulations found in the California Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq.

California Streets and Highway Code Section 261 requires local government agencies to take the following actions to protect the scenic appearance of the scenic corridor:

- Regulate land use and density of development;
- Provide detailed land and site planning;
- Prohibit offsite outdoor advertising and control of on-site outdoor advertising;
- Pay careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping; and
- Scrutinize the design and appearance of structures and equipment.



California Streets and Highway Code Section 263 allows the California State Legislature the authority to identify highways as eligible for designation as a scenic highway. The government with jurisdiction over land abutting a highway considered to be scenic is required to adopt a "scenic corridor protection program" that restricts development, outdoor advertising, and earthmoving activities along the affected segment or corridor ("Corridor Protection Program"). Caltrans must also indicate that the highway segment meets established criteria for the roadway or segment to be designated as scenic.

LOCAL

City of Rancho Santa Margarita General Plan

The City of Rancho Santa Margarita recognizes the valuable scenic resources located near and within City limits and has established General Plan goals and policies to protect and maintain these resources. The General Plan Land Use Element provides four open space land use designations to provide for a variety of passive and active recreational opportunities while preserving natural resources that add to the character of the community. The General Plan land use map designates approximately 4,900 acres of the land area within the City for some form of passive open space or active park use. The General Plan also includes goals and policies for resource protection.

Rancho Santa Margarita Municipal Code

While the General Plan provides long-range and broad categories for land use, *Rancho Santa Margarita Municipal Code Title 9, Planning and Zoning*, also known as the Rancho Santa Margarita Zoning Code (RSMZC), provides specific development standards that influence the City's scenic views, visual character, and restrict lighting. The RSMZC implements the General Plan goals and policies by classifying and regulating the specific uses of land and structures within the City. The RSMZC establishes development standards that include, but are not limited to:

- Minimum lot size;
- Maximum lot coverage;
- Maximum building height;
- Building setbacks;
- Parking and garage/carport placement;
- Landscaping and screening requirements; and
- Lighting requirements.



5.3.3 EXISTING ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

SCENIC HIGHWAYS

Although there are no State-designated scenic highways within or near Rancho Santa Margarita, the General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element identifies Landscape and Viewscape Corridors designated in the County of Orange's *Scenic Highways Plan*, included in the County of Orange General Plan Transportation Element; refer to [Exhibit 5.3-1, *Scenic Highways*](#). Viewscape Corridors are defined as a route that traverses a corridor within which unique or unusual scenic resources and aesthetic values are found. The designation is intended to minimize the impact of the highway and land development upon the significant scenic resources along this route.

Viewscape Corridors are located outside of and within the City limits, providing varying views that include water features, lush trees and vegetation, and expansive views of canyon areas, ridgelines, and hillsides located within and that surround the area. Rancho Santa Margarita's Viewscape Corridors are:

- Santa Margarita Parkway, between Melinda Road and Avenida Empresa;
- Plano Trabuco Road, south of Santa Margarita Parkway and north of Robinson Ranch Road; and
- Trabuco Canyon Road between Live Oak Canyon Road and Plano Trabuco Road.

Landscape Corridors are defined as a corridor that traverses developed or developing areas and has been designated for special treatment to provide a pleasant driving environment as well as community enhancement. Landscape Corridors also extend through and outside of the City limits providing lush landscaping and buffering from developed areas. Rancho Santa Margarita's Landscape Corridors are:

- Santa Margarita Parkway between Avenida Empresa and Plano Trabuco Road;
- Antonio Parkway between Oso Parkway and Avenida Empresa; and
- Avenida Empresa between Santa Margarita Parkway and Antonio Parkway.

SCENIC VISTAS

Ridgelines which can be viewed from the City include Trabuco Canyon, Live Oak Canyon, Plano Trabuco, Ashbury Canyon, Cochise Canyon, and Bell Canyon. In addition, sections of O'Neill Regional Park reside within the City limits providing open space access and views. The topography of the area allows for expansive views of the surrounding communities, as well as the Santa Ana Mountains and Cleveland National Forest. Views are afforded from many of the residential areas in the City. No scenic vistas are designated in the 2002 General Plan.



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NATIVE VEGETATION

There are several plant communities within Rancho Santa Margarita which add to the natural character of the City including chaparral, marsh, riparian, scrub, and woodland habitats; refer to [Section 5.12, *Biological Resources*](#). These natural environments and habitat contribute to the scenic and open space character of the area.

WATERCOURSES

Surface water sources within and around Rancho Santa Margarita include Lake Santa Margarita, Upper Oso Reservoir, and Portola Reservoir, as well as Tijeras Canyon Creek, Trabuco Creek, Aliso Creek, Canada Chiquita Creek, and Bell Canyon Creek; refer to [Exhibit 5.3-2, *Surface Water Sources*](#). The creeks are located within canyon areas surrounded by open space and natural habitat that provide views of the natural setting of the area.

LIGHT/GLARE

Lighting affects are associated with the use of artificial light during the evening and nighttime hours. There are two primary sources of light: light emanating from building interiors passing through windows and light from exterior sources (i.e., street lighting, building illumination, security lighting, parking lot lighting, and landscape lighting). Light introduction can be a nuisance to adjacent residential areas, diminish the view of the clear night sky, and if uncontrolled, can cause disturbances. Uses such as residences and hotels are considered light sensitive since occupants have expectations of privacy during evening hours and may be subject to disturbance by bright light sources. Light spill is typically defined as the presence of unwanted light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated. With respect to lighting, the degree of illumination may vary widely depending on the amount of light generated, height of the light sources, presence of barriers or obstructions, type of light source, and weather conditions.

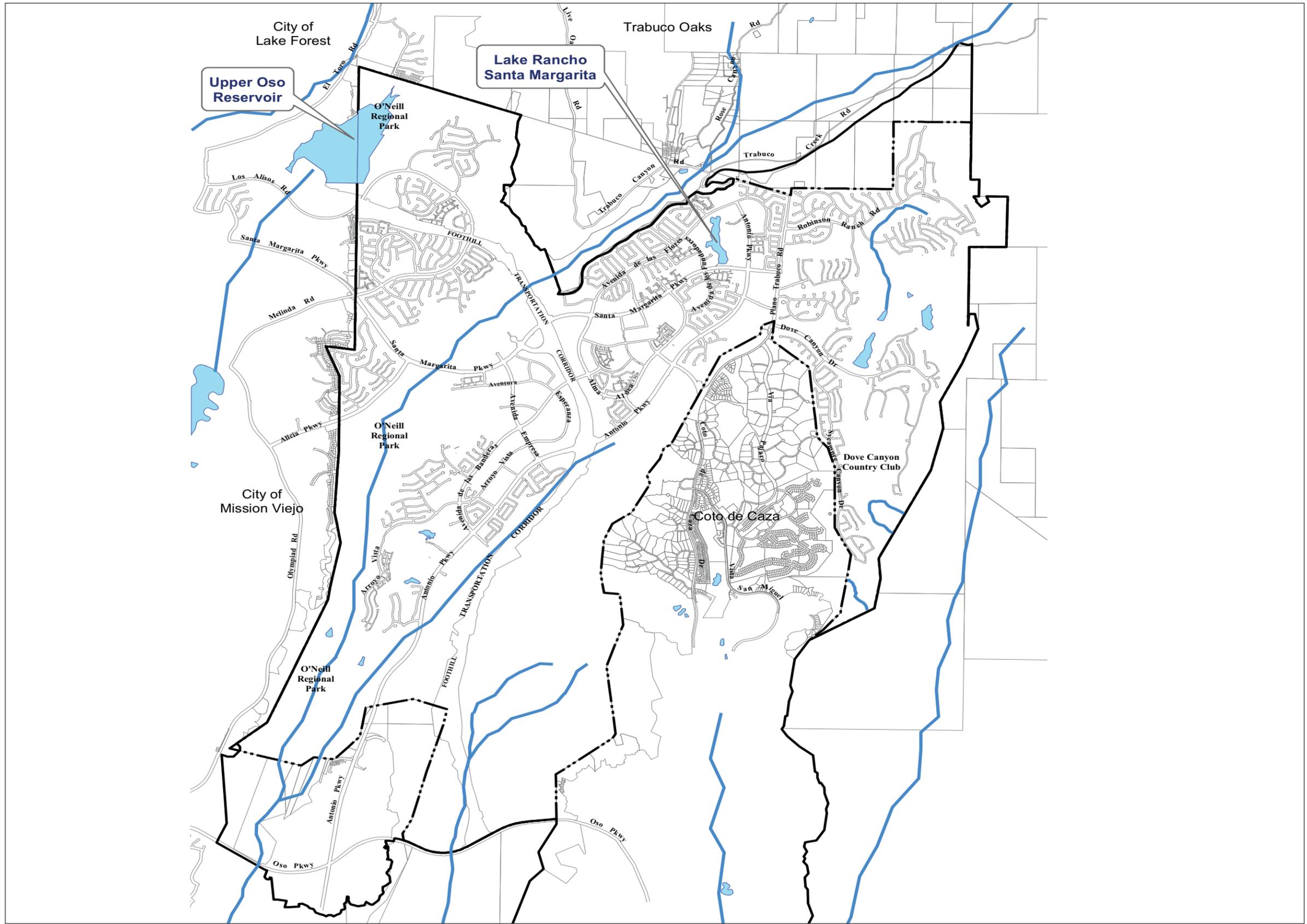
Glare is primarily a daytime occurrence caused by the reflection of sunlight or artificial light by highly polished surfaces such as window glass or reflective materials and, to a lesser degree, from broad expanses of light-colored surfaces. Perceived glare is the unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation as observed by a person as they look directly into the light sources of a luminaire. Daytime glare generation is common in urban areas and is typically associated with buildings with exterior facades largely or entirely comprised of highly reflective glass. Glare can also be produced during evening and nighttime hours by the reflection of artificial light sources such as automobile headlights. Glare-sensitive uses include residences, hotels, transportation corridors, and aircraft landing corridors.

Sensitive light and glare receptors in and around the City are generally represented by residential uses, natural wildlife habitat areas (i.e., the Arroyo Trabuco, Saddleback Meadows area, the area north of Oso Reservoir, and Live Oak Canyon), and open space lands adjacent to existing or planned development.

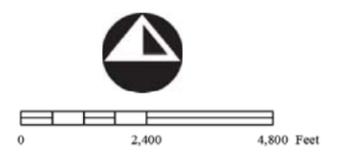


Within the City of Rancho Santa Margarita, existing light sources generally include buildings, recreational facilities (i.e., sports fields), and nighttime safety lighting along roadways and parking lots. Interior light emanating from a structure; exterior light sources (i.e., security lighting); or, lighting to illuminate features for safety or decorative purposes may be visible within the existing landscape.

Sunlight reflecting off a reflective surface can result in glare effects and unsafe visual conditions that may interfere with the vision of motorists operating vehicles in the proximity or that may otherwise generally degrade scenic views. Few structures within the Study Area presently exhibit highly reflective materials (i.e., taller buildings with extensive glazing), and therefore, potential glare effects are not considered to be of major concern under existing conditions.



- LEGEND**
- Water Features
 - Streams
 - City Boundary
 - Sphere of Influence



Sources: Orange County Local Area Formation Commission, 2013 and City of Rancho Santa Margarita, 2016.



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5.3.4 SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLDS AND CRITERIA

Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines contains the Initial Study Environmental Checklist, which includes questions relating to aesthetics and light/glare. The issues presented in the Initial Study Environmental Checklist have been utilized as thresholds of significance in this section. Accordingly, a project may create a significant environmental impact if it would:

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

Based on these standards and significance thresholds and criteria, the General Plan Update's effects have been categorized as either "no impact," a "less than significant impact," or a "potentially significant impact." Mitigation measures are recommended for potentially significant impacts. If a potentially significant impact cannot be reduced to a less than significant level through the application of mitigation, it is categorized as a significant unavoidable impact.

5.3.5 PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

SCENIC VISTAS

- **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON A SCENIC VISTA.**

Impact Analysis: The 2002 General Plan does not designate any official scenic vistas in Rancho Santa Margarita. However, as stated, ridgelines which can be viewed from the City include Trabuco Canyon, Live Oak Canyon, Plano Trabuco, Ashbury Canyon, Cochise Canyon, and Bell Canyon. In addition, sections of O'Neill Regional Park reside within the City limits providing open space access and views. The topography of the area allows for expansive views of the surrounding communities, as well as the Santa Ana Mountains and Cleveland National Forest. Views are afforded from many of the residential areas in the City.

As indicated in Section 3.0, Project Description, the City of Rancho Santa Margarita is largely built out with relatively little land available for new development. Nonetheless, project implementation could increase residential densities and non-residential land use intensities in specific areas and may occur in proximity to designated scenic vistas.



Areas of potential development may occur within the Northeast Future Planned Community and Chiquita Ridge property, while redevelopment and infill development, including the potential for future mixed-use development, may also occur. The Northeast Future Planned Community designation applies to land located within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI) northeast of the City's existing boundary. Future development occurring within the Future Planned Community area could include a mixture of residential, commercial, community facility, recreation and open space uses.

The City also owns an approximately 92-acre property known as Chiquita Ridge on the east side of Antonio Parkway just south of Cañada Vista Park. While future development could occur within 55 acres of the property, a minimum of 37 acres is required to be preserved for natural habitat as part of the 2009 Settlement Agreement which transferred the property to the City. The City is currently considering options for development of Chiquita Ridge.

Although the General Plan Update does not propose to designate any property within the City as Mixed-Use, the Mixed-Use designation would likely be applied to sites that have proximity to major employment centers, be located near the City center or existing commercial centers with enough surrounding density to support retail and promote walkability. Thus, it is anticipated that future Mixed-Use development accommodated by the General Plan Update be located in infill development areas.

Development occurring within these areas would be subject to detailed planning to ensure that it is complementary and compatible with the master planned development of Rancho Santa Margarita. Development within the Northeast Future Planned Community would be reviewed for its interface with Trabuco Canyon and development of Chiquita Ridge would be reviewed to ensure it is compatible with the community and its surroundings. The City would also review any request for Mixed-Use development to ensure the location meets the optimal site conditions and characteristics for a Mixed-Use development and the development would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

All future development would be subject to conformance with applicable RSMZC requirements and be guided by relevant General Plan Update policies. For example, Conservation/Open Space Element Policies 1.1 through 1.6 encourages the preservation and enhancement of ecological and biological resources within and surrounding communities as open space. Conservation/Open Space Element Policy 2.1 calls for the maintenance of scenic resources, including the City's hillsides, ridgelines, and surface water resources as open space. As indicated above, the RSMZC Article III, *Base Districts*, would regulate maximum building height, building setbacks, parking and garage/carport placement, landscaping and screening requirements, and other development characteristics in place for each zoning district to protect scenic vistas. Pursuant to RSMZC Section 9.08.220, *Environmental Review Procedures*, all future land use and development review applications would undergo environmental review on a project-by-project basis prior to consideration by the decision-making authority. If necessary, mitigation would be recommended to reduce potential impacts to scenic vistas to a less than significant level. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update is not anticipated to significantly impact the City's scenic vistas. Impacts would be less than significant in this regard.



Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies:

CONSERVATION/OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Goal 1: Protect and enhance the ecological and biological resources within and surrounding the community.

Policy 1.1: Preserve ecological and biological resources by maintaining these resources as open space.

Policy 1.2: Continue to preserve the coast live oak woodlands in the City by retaining the habitat as open space.

Policy 1.3: Protect and enhance the creeks and adjacent wetlands for their value in providing visual amenity, habitat for wildlife, and recreational opportunities.

Policy 1.5: Adopt open space management and park maintenance and development practices that minimize negative impacts to the natural environment.

Policy 1.6: Continue to preserve and maintain the Upper Oso Reservoir Habitat Restoration site and consider opportunities for expansion of this area.

Goal 2: Maintain community character and identity by protecting the City's scenic resources and vistas

Policy 2.1: Maintain scenic resources, such as the City's hillsides, ridgelines, and surface water resources as open space.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is required.

Level of Significance: Less Than Significant Impact.

STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY/SCENIC CORRIDORS

- **IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY DAMAGE SCENIC RESOURCES, INCLUDING, BUT NOT LIMITED TO, TREES, ROCK OUTCROPPINGS, AND HISTORIC BUILDINGS WITHIN A STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY.**

Impact Analysis: There are no officially designated State Scenic Highways that traverse Rancho Santa Margarita. However, the General Plan Conservation/Open Space Element identifies County-designated Landscape Corridors and Viewscape Corridors; refer to [Exhibit 5.3-1](#). Landscape Corridors are defined as a corridor that traverses developed or developing areas and has been designated for special treatment to provide a pleasant driving environment as well as community enhancement. Landscape Corridors also extend through and outside of the City limits providing lush landscaping and buffering from developed areas. Viewscape Corridors are defined as routes that traverse a corridor within which unique or unusual scenic resources and aesthetic values



are found and is intended to minimize the impact of the highway and land development upon the significant scenic resources along these routes. Viewscape Corridors are located outside of and within the City limits, providing varying views that include water features, lush trees and vegetation, and expansive views of canyon areas, ridgelines, and hillsides located within and that surround the area.

Although the General Plan Update does not propose any changes to the City's designated Landscape and Viewscape Corridors, future development could occur adjacent to the Landscape and Viewscape Corridors depicted on [Exhibit 5.3-1](#). Areas of potential development would primarily occur as part of the Northeast Future Planned Community and Chiquita Ridge property, while redevelopment and infill development could occur as part of the proposed Mixed-Use designation. As depicted on [Exhibit 5.3-1](#), Trabuco Canyon Road serves as the southwest boundary of the Northeast Future Planned Community and is designated a Viewscape Corridor by the County. In addition, Antonio Parkway serves as the western boundary of the Chiquita Ridge Property and is designated as a Landscape Corridors by the County. Antonio Parkway also bisects the City's Business Park area, which could accommodate future development, including the potential for mixed-use.

Development occurring within these areas would be subject to detailed planning requirements to ensure development does not impact County-designated Landscape and Viewscape Corridors. Future development would be subject to conformance with applicable RSMZC requirements and be guided by relevant General Plan Update policies. Conservation/Open Space Element Policy 2.1 calls for the maintenance of scenic resources, including the City's hillsides, ridgelines, and surface water resources as open space. As indicated above, the RSMZC Article III, *Base Districts*, would regulate maximum building height, building setbacks, parking and garage/ carport placement, landscaping and screening requirements, and other development characteristics in place in each zoning district to protect the City's Landscape and Viewscape Corridors. Pursuant to RSMZC Section 9.08.220, all future land use and development review applications would undergo environmental review on a project-by-project basis prior to consideration by the decision-making authority. If necessary, mitigation would be recommended to reduce potential impacts to scenic corridors to a less than significant level. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update is not anticipated to significantly impact the City's Landscape and Viewscape Corridors. Impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies:

CONSERVATION/OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Goal 2: Maintain community character and identity by protecting the City's scenic resources and vistas

Policy 2.1: Maintain scenic resources, such as the City's hillsides, ridgelines, and surface water resources as open space.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is required.



Level of Significance: Less Than Significant Impact.

VISUAL CHARACTER – SHORT-TERM

- **CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE COULD SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER OR QUALITY OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.**

Impact Analysis: Construction activities for future development accommodated through implementation of the General Plan Update could degrade the visual character and quality of the respective development site and/or its immediate surrounding. Visible features associated with construction activities would include exposed building pads and staging areas for grading, excavation, and construction equipment. In addition, temporary structures could be located on the respective development site during various stages of construction, within materials storage areas, or associated with construction debris piles on site. Exposed trenches, roadway bedding, spoils/debris piles, and steel plates would be visible during construction of street and utility infrastructure improvements. These materials could temporarily degrade the existing visual character and quality of the respective development sites and surrounding areas.

Construction-related impacts to visual character and quality would be short-term and would cease upon construction completion. Mitigation Measure AES-1 would require preparation of a Construction Management Plan, which, at a minimum, indicates equipment and vehicle staging areas, materials stockpiling areas, fencing, , and construction worker parking. Mitigation Measure AES-1 would require construction staging areas to be sited and/or screened to minimize public views to the maximum extent practicable. Construction worker parking would be selected to minimize impacts to sensitive land uses. Implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1 would reduce construction-related impacts to visual character to less than significant.

Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies: No goals or policies within the General Plan Update pertain specifically to visual character during construction.

Mitigation Measures:

AES-1 Prior to issuance of a grading permit for a project subject to California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) review (meaning, non-exempt projects), and located on or immediately adjacent to a residentially zoned property, a Construction Management Plan shall be prepared for review and approval by the City of Rancho Santa Margarita City Engineer and/or Development Services Director. At a minimum, the Construction Management Plan shall indicate equipment and vehicle staging areas, materials stockpiling areas, fencing types, and construction worker vehicle parking. All equipment and vehicle staging areas shall be sited and/or screened to minimize public views to the maximum extent reasonably possible.

Level of Significance After Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated.



VISUAL CHARACTER – LONG-TERM

- **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT SUBSTANTIALLY DEGRADE THE EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER OR QUALITY OF THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.**

Impact Analysis: As indicated in Section 3.0, implementation of the General Plan Update would accommodate a maximum of 528 additional dwelling units and 3,085,014 additional square feet of non-residential uses by 2040. Although no changes to existing permissible FAR or densities are proposed, the General Plan Update would support additional development beyond existing conditions. This development could increase residential densities and non-residential land use intensities in specific areas and could impact the City's visual character over the long-term.

The General Plan Update would also introduce a new Mixed-Use designation that could be applied to individual development sites subject to approval of a General Plan Amendment. The City would review any request for mixed-use development to ensure the development is compatible with the surrounding area and is designed to enhance the community's character. Additionally, development occurring as part of the Northeast Future Planned Community and Chiquita Ridge property would be subject to separate City review to ensure development is complementary to the master planned development of Rancho Santa Margarita and would not degrade visual character over the long-term.

It is noted that the General Plan Update incorporates consistent and compatible development intensities that would maintain and enhance the overall visual character/quality of the City. Specifically, the Land Use Element includes text, maps, and diagrams to control and direct the general distribution, location, and extent of land uses within the City. Guiding future growth and development based on the City's Land Use Element would ensure future development complements and protects the quality of the existing environment.

All future development would be subject to conformance with applicable RSMZC requirements and be guided by relevant General Plan Update policies. For example, Conservation/Open Space Element Policy 2.1 calls for the maintenance of scenic resources, including the City's hillsides, ridgelines, and surface water resources as open space. Conservation/Open Space Element Policy 2.2 would ensure the City's high-quality architectural and landscaping design is maintained to preserve the community's visual character. Land Use Element Policy 2.1 would ensure that new development is complementary to the existing small-town village character of the City. Land Use Element Policy 2.3 would ensure that the architecture and other physical characteristics of new development and land uses is consistent and compatible in scale and style with existing development, surrounding land uses, and available infrastructure. Further, RSMZC Article III, *Base Districts*, would regulate maximum building height, building setbacks, parking and garage/carport placement, landscaping and screening requirements, and other development characteristics in place in each zoning district to protect the City's long-term visual character. Pursuant to RSMZC Section 9.08.220, future land use and development review applications would undergo environmental review on



a project-by-project basis prior to consideration by the decision-making authority. If necessary, mitigation would be recommended to reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update is not anticipated to significantly impact the City's visual character over the long-term. Impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies:

CONSERVATION/OPEN SPACE ELEMENT

Goal 2: Maintain community character and identity by protecting the City's scenic resources and vistas.

Policy 2.1: Maintain scenic resources, such as the City's hillsides, ridgelines, and surface water resources as open space.

Policy 2.2: Encourage and maintain high-quality architectural and landscaping design to preserve the community's visual character.

LAND USE ELEMENT

Goal 2: Control and direct future land use so that the community is protected and enhanced.

Policy 2.1: Ensure that new development is complementary to the existing small-town village character of the City.

Policy 2.2: Annex land within the Sphere of Influence prior to its development to ensure that new development is compatible with existing development in Rancho Santa Margarita.

Policy 2.3: Ensure that the architecture and other physical characteristics of new development and land uses are consistent and compatible in scale and style with existing development, surrounding land uses, and available infrastructure.

Policy 2.7: Enhance the character of the community by modernizing and upgrading the quality of development and improving the quality of the public realm.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is required.

Level of Significance: Less Than Significant Impact.



LIGHT AND GLARE

- **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE WOULD NOT CREATE NEW SOURCES OF SUBSTANTIAL LIGHT OR GLARE, WHICH WOULD ADVERSELY AFFECT DAY OR NIGHTTIME VIEWS IN THE AREA.**

Impact Analysis: Future development accommodated through implementation of the General Plan Update could introduce new sources of light or glare with the potential to adversely affect day or nighttime views. Light and glare impacts could result from new light sources such as street lighting, interior and exterior building lighting (including for safety purposes), vehicle headlights, illuminated signage, traffic signals, and new glare sources such as reflective building materials, roofing materials, and windows. These new sources of light and glare would be most visible from development along adjacent roadways, and to receptors such as residents and traveling motorists.

All lighting installed as part of the General Plan Update would be subject to conformance with applicable Municipal Code requirements and guided by General Plan Update Land Use Element Policy 2.6. Land Use Element Policy 2.6 would ensure new development preserves the nighttime sky by reducing excessive artificial lighting and off-site lighting impacts. Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 9.05.080, *Lighting*, all exterior lighting would be shielded or recessed so that direct glare and reflections are contained on-site. Municipal Code Section 9.05.080 would also ensure exterior lighting is directed downward and away from adjoining properties and public rights-of-way. Pursuant to Municipal Code Section 9.08.220, all future land use and development review applications would undergo environmental review on a project-by-project basis prior to consideration by the decision-making authority. If necessary, mitigation would be recommended to reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update is not anticipated to result in adverse light and glare impacts. Impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies:

LAND USE ELEMENT

Goal 2: Control and direct future land use so that the community is protected and enhanced.

Policy 2.6: Preserve the nighttime sky by reducing excessive artificial lighting and off-site lighting impacts while maintaining nighttime safety and security.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation is required.

Level of Significance: Less Than Significant Impact.



5.3.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

- **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GENERAL PLAN UPDATE COULD RESULT IN CUMULATIVELY CONSIDERABLE AESTHETIC AND LIGHT/GLARE IMPACTS.**

Impact Analysis: Cumulative aesthetic impacts are analyzed in terms of impacts within the City of Rancho Santa Margarita, as aesthetic impacts are confined to localized areas. As discussed, the City is largely built out with relatively little land available for new development with the exception of the potential for new development on the Chiquita Ridge property and in the Northeast Future Planned Community. As a result, it is anticipated that the majority of future development accommodated through the General Plan Update would primarily consist of infill development. Areas surrounding the City of Rancho Santa Margarita include the cities of Mission Viejo and Lake Forest to the west and unincorporated Orange County to the north and south. These areas are largely developed with similar density and character as the City of Rancho Santa Margarita.

Future development accommodated through the General Plan Update could alter the City's existing visual character/quality and impact scenic resources. Future development, however, would be subject to conformance with relevant Municipal Code requirements (e.g., Municipal Code Article III, *Base Districts*, and Section 9.05.080, *Lighting*) to ensure adverse impacts related to aesthetics and light/glare are reduced to a less than significant level. Further, the General Plan Update includes goals and policies that would improve the City's visual character and aesthetic quality. New development would also be reviewed at the project-level pursuant to Municipal Code Section 9.08.220 to ensure that new development does not significantly impact scenic vistas or scenic corridors and would not degrade visual character/quality or result in substantial light and glare impacts. If necessary, mitigation would be recommended to reduce potential impacts to a less than significant level. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Update would not result in cumulatively considerable aesthetic impacts.

Proposed General Plan Update Goals and Policies: Refer to the General Plan Update goals and policies cited above.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Mitigation Measure AES-1.

Level of Significance After Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact With Mitigation Incorporated.

5.3.7 SIGNIFICANT UNAVOIDABLE IMPACTS

Aesthetics impacts associated with implementation of the General Plan Update would be less than significant with implementation of the identified mitigation measure. No significant unavoidable aesthetics impacts would occur as a result of the General Plan Update.



5.3.8 SOURCES CITED

City of Rancho Santa Margarita, *City of Rancho Santa Margarita Municipal Code*.

City of Rancho Santa Margarita Website, *Chiquita Ridge*, <https://www.cityofrsm.org/540/Chiquita-Ridge>, accessed August 16, 2018.