

CHAPTER 3 EFFECTS NOT FOUND TO BE SIGNIFICANT

3.1 Effects Not Found Significant as Part of the EIR Process

3.1.1 Aesthetics

This section addresses the potential aesthetics and visual resources impacts associated with implementation of The Villages – Escondido Country Club Project (Project). The analysis is based on a review of existing resources, technical data, and applicable laws, regulations, and guidelines. The information presented in this section was collected from a number of sources, including the *City of Encinitas Escondido General Plan* (General Plan) and visual simulations prepared for the Project.

Visual Definitions

Scenic Vistas. Scenic vistas are singular vantage points that offer unobstructed views of valued viewsheds, including areas designated as official scenic vistas along major highways or designated by the City as visual resources.

Visual Character. The visual character of a site is defined by physical characteristics such as landform, vertical relief, type of vegetation, textures, and patterns; the presence of clear or cascading water; the range of color in the soil, rock, vegetation, or water; the variety in landscape; built structures that are visually different from the natural environment; and other visually distinguishing elements.

Visual Quality. The visual quality of a site results from the interpretation of physical features determined by the viewer's perception. Perceptual quality factors include vividness, intactness, unity, visual organization, scarcity, adjacent scenery, and cultural modifications. A high visual quality would include a balanced composition of line, form, color, and texture; striking visual patterns or the presence of distinct focal points; enhancement from the adjacent scenery; and overall compatibility with the character of the landscape setting. A low visual quality usually has a chaotic appearance, elements that appear random with no perceivable patterns, adjacent scenery that detracts or has little influence on the scenic quality, and cultural modifications that detract from the setting.

Views. Views are composed of three distinct parts: the viewing scene itself; the viewing location from which an individual sees the viewing scene; and the view corridor, which is the volume of space between the viewing scene and the viewing location.

Viewing Distance. The viewing distance, or distance between a site and the location from which it is viewed, includes a foreground, mid-ground, and background. Foreground views encompass

views within less than 0.25 miles, mid-ground views encompass views from 0.25 to 3 miles, and background views encompass views beginning at a distance of 3 miles and beyond.

Viewer Sensitivity. Viewer sensitivity is ranked as high, medium, or low, and generally is determined based on the following thresholds: types of use, amount of use, public interest, adjacent land uses, and special areas. Sensitive viewpoints generally include surrounding residences, recreational areas, and designated scenic roads.

Viewshed. The viewshed is the area visible from an observer's viewpoint, including the screening effects of intermediate vegetation and structures. The most comprehensive viewsheds generally are from scenic viewpoints, which are singular vantage points that offer an unobstructed view of expansive visible landscape components. Viewshed components include the underlying landform/topography (e.g., foothills, mountains, flatlands) and the overlaying landcover (e.g., water features, vegetation, cultural sites, and buildings).

3.1.1.1 Existing Conditions

This section provides a regional overview and site description of the Project, including a description of the existing visual character and quality.

3.1.1.1.1 Environmental Setting

Historic Land Uses

In 1963, the Royart Corporation bought two large tracts of land from local landowners and built a nine-hole golf course that was to be part of a senior citizens' development. The development was named Golden Circle, homes were built on residential lots, and the public course was opened in 1964. Later in the 1960s the second nine holes of the course were added and additional residential development was approved. In 1967, Royart entered bankruptcy and the course was acquired by the lender, Prudential Savings & Loan. Prudential obtained permission from the City to turn the public course into a private members-only country club. In 1971, Prudential conveyed the country club and undeveloped residential lots to Unger Pacific, but Prudential foreclosed on the properties 2 years later. In 1973, Prudential deeded the country club and the undeveloped residential lots to Escondido Golf & Land Company, which in turn conveyed the Project site to David Price, a principal of American Golf, in 1985. During this period, numerous housing projects were approved and built around the golf course.

After years of financial difficulties experienced by the operator of the country club, a private residential developer acquired the Project site in 2012. The golf course stopped operating in April 2013. The closure and proposed residential development prompted the Escondido Country Club (ECC) Community to submit an initiative to the Escondido City Council seeking to amend

the General Plan to change the ECC's land use designation from "Urban I" to "Open Space-Park." The City Council unanimously adopted the initiative on August 14, 2013. In turn, the private residential developer filed a lawsuit against the City challenging the adopted initiative as invalid and a regulatory "taking."

During the lawsuit's pendency in the trial court, the private residential developer submitted a ballot initiative titled, Proposition H that would authorize a specific plan (called the Lakes Specific Plan) for the development of the ECC. The Lakes Specific Plan proposed to develop the property into 430 dwelling units, a community center with an Olympic-sized pool, and 27 acres of open space. The Lakes Specific Plan would have required amending the General Plan's land use designation from "Open Space-Park" to "Specific Plan Area #14." The City's electorate rejected Proposition H in November 2014.

In March 2015, the trial court overturned the City Council's August 2013 adoption of the previous initiative that designated the property as Open Space-Park. In October 2015, the trial court entered a final judgment in the lawsuit, incorporating its invalidation of the August 2013 initiative and restoring the Project site's Urban I: up to 5.5 dwelling units/acre, residential land use designation.

Visual Character and Quality

Community Overview

The City of Escondido (City) is characterized by hills and mountains surrounding an open valley, bisected by the Escondido Creek. Expanding out from the City's historic downtown and urban core are established single and multi-family neighborhoods that have replaced agricultural groves. Densities and intensities diminish toward the outer areas of the City, where streets follow topographic contours in outlying areas as the community transitions to higher elevations and existing agricultural operations remain or open space areas are preserved. Significant visual resources include ridgelines; hillsides; unique landforms such as rock outcroppings, creeks, lakes, and natural open space areas; and viewsheds that serve as a scenic amenity and contribute to the quality of life for City residents (City of Escondido 2012).

Surrounding Land Uses

The surrounding land uses consist of single-family residential development that includes detached residences on a variety of lot sizes, attached residences (duplexes) of several different densities, and several common-interest developments; see Chapter 1, Project Description, for Figure 1-9, Surrounding Land Uses.

Planned development projects to the northwest of the Project site resulted in residential development of detached single-family homes on lots approximately 4,000 square feet to 6,000 square feet. Further north are detached single-family homes on approximately 5,000-square-foot lots that typically average from 40 to 45 feet in width. A smaller residential development that abuts the Project site to the north consists of duplex residential units on 2,000-square-foot lots ranging. Located central to and north of the Project site are detached single-family homes on approximately 7,000-square-foot lots.

As the topography rises to the north of the Project site, another residential development project adjacent to the former golf course is composed of duplex dwelling units on lots that are approximately 4,000 square feet. Another smaller residential development that protrudes into the Project site has duplex dwelling units on 2,000-square-foot lots.

To the south of the Project site, several residential developments were constructed with duplex units on 2,000-square-foot lots and detached single-family homes on lots ranging from 2,000 square feet to 7,000 square feet, which average about 40 feet in width; see Figure 1-9.

A large mobile-home park is located to the south on El Norte Parkway within the City of San Marcos. The City of San Marcos boundary is approximately 0.2 miles to the southwest of the Project site.

The location, density, and intensity of suburban-style development within the surrounding communities have mainly developed through planned residential development, and are generally characterized by low-density single-family neighborhoods with pockets of medium-density single-family development (duplex units and small detached homes).

Project Site Viewshed

The Project site was originally developed as an 18-hole golf course and, as previously described, is completely surrounded by residential development. The Project site viewshed is largely defined by the surrounding residences. Topographically, most of the Project site is relatively low-lying and level, with slight undulations used to define the previous golf holes. The site is typically at a lower elevation than the surrounding residential development. The main topographic feature of the Project site is San Marcos Creek, which flows from northeast to southwest through the former golf course.

Viewer Groups and Viewer Response

Groups afforded views to the Project Area consist of motorists on Country Club Road as it traverses the Project Area and residents in the surrounding communities.

Motorists

Travelers along West Country Club Lane, Gary Lane, Nutmeg Street, La Brea Street, or Golden Circle Drive constitute the largest viewer group within the Project Area. Motorists on West Country Club Lane, Gary Lane, and La Brea Street are afforded views of the former ECC golf course and the surrounding residential developments, set against the backdrop of the hill to the north. Motorists traveling along Nutmeg Street just outside of the Project boundaries are afforded views primarily of the surrounding residential communities, as well as the hill to the north. Motorists traveling along Golden Circle Drive have views of the residential developments west of the Project site as well as residential development to the south.

Residents

Generally, the Project site is visible to the immediate surrounding residential communities to the north, south, east, and west. The views of residents are considered to be of a long-term duration and exposure due to the stationary nature of residential land uses. It should be noted, however, that impacts to private views (i.e., views from private property) generally are not considered significant under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Outside of the immediate surrounding residences, views of the Project site are obstructed by the intervening residential development, private yard landscaping, and street trees located within the neighborhoods.

Scenic Vistas

The Project site is primarily surrounded by residential development with private views of distant mountains and the former ECC Golf Course. The City does not specifically designate scenic vistas. Major roads in the City 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 including Lake Hodges Reservoir, Lake Wohlford, Lake Dixon, and Kit Carson Park. Due to its distance and lower elevation, the Project site is not visible from any of these major roads or open space areas. The Project site is not located near any official scenic vistas.

Scenic Highways

There are no officially designated or eligible highways within the City. The closest State Scenic Highway is State Route 78 (SR-78) through the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, approximately 35 miles east of the City. The City has identified several scenic roadways in the City; however, none of these roadways are located within the Project area, nor can they be viewed from the Project site.

Light and Glare

Upward-pointing or upward-reflected light from outdoor lighting is a significant source of nighttime light. Nighttime light that spills outside of the intended area, as well as lighted signs, can

be annoying to neighbors and potentially harmful to motorists, cyclists, and pedestrians. Nighttime lighting can result in skyglow (the brightening of the night sky) and light trespass (a result of spill light shining in undesirable locations). Nighttime lighting in excess of what is necessary for its purpose is called light pollution. Light pollution cannot completely be eliminated, but it can be minimized to help create dark skies and to decrease energy consumption. There are no existing sources of nighttime lighting within the boundary of the Project Area, as the golf course is no longer operating.

Glare is the result of sharply reflected light caused by sunlight or artificial light reflecting from highly finished surfaces such as windows or brightly colored surfaces, and from the direct view of a bright, unshielded light source. Glare can be uncomfortable (discomfort glare) or disabling (disability glare). Glare decreases visibility, but the level of receptor sensitivity to glare can vary widely. There are no existing sources of glare at the Project site, as the golf course is no longer operating.

3.1.1.1.2 *Regulatory Setting*

State

California Environmental Quality Act

Primary environmental legislation in California is found in CEQA and its implementing guidelines (CEQA Guidelines), which require that projects with potential adverse effects (or impacts) on the environment undergo environmental review. Adverse environmental impacts are typically mitigated as a result of the environmental review process in accordance with existing laws and regulations.

California Scenic Highway Program

Created by the Legislature in 1963, the California Scenic Highway Program includes highways designated by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) as scenic. The purpose of this program is to preserve and protect the scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through conservation and land use regulation. For a highway to be included in the program, it must first be nominated by the specific city or county where it is located. The nomination/eligibility process also entails that the city/county identify and define the scenic corridor of the highway to better understand the extent of visual resources requiring conservation. For an eligible highway to be officially designated and included in the program, the local government with jurisdiction over lands abutting the highway must implement a scenic highway corridor protection program that safeguards the scenic appearance of the corridor. Corridor protection may be achieved through a variety of means, including regulation of land uses and intensity of development, detailed land and Site planning, control of outdoor

advertising, consideration of earthmoving and landscaping, and the design and appearance of structures and equipment. If the local Caltrans district and State Scenic Highway Coordinators determine that the corridor protection program meets the five legislatively required elements discussed above, a recommendation to designate the highway as scenic is forwarded to the Caltrans Director. The Caltrans Director may revoke scenic highways that no longer comply with the program. There are no designated scenic highways located in the Project's vicinity.

California Street and Highways Code

The California Street and Highways Code established standards for undertaking the development and designation of official scenic highways and assigns responsibility for the development of scenic highways to local jurisdictions. It establishes the State Scenic Highway system by designating highways that are either eligible for designation as a State Scenic Highway or have been designated as such. The code defines the thresholds under which freeways may be designated a California Historic Parkway as a part of the overarching State Scenic Highway system.

Designated 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 Caltrans or are eligible for such designation.

Local

City of Escondido Municipal Code

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

Open Space Development Standards

Article 5, the Open Space Development Standards of the City's Zoning Ordinance, establishes 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%, vegetation conservation areas, and natural drainage courses not otherwise defined as floodways. All developments proposed on these lands must demonstrate compliance with certain development

standards, including protecting natural features such as rock outcroppings, creeks and other natural drainage courses, and wooded areas; and grading for buildings and roads to follow existing site terrain contours, except as necessary for safety.

Outdoor Lighting Ordinance

Article 35 of the City's Zoning Ordinance, referred to as the Escondido Outdoor Lighting Ordinance, is intended to minimize unnecessary glare, light trespass, and artificial sky glow for the benefit of the citizens of the City and astronomical research at Palomar Mountain Observatory. In Section 33-713, the ordinance defines requirements for outdoor lighting, such as shielding, automatic timing devices, and requiring that certain outdoor light fixtures and lamps be turned off at night.

Grading and Erosion Control

The purpose of Article 55, the Grading and Erosion Control article of the City's Zoning Ordinance, is to assure that development occurs in a manner that 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 thresholds. In addition to establishing design thresholds for grading on steep slopes and ridgelines, 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 that will assure their preservation: undisturbed steep slopes (over 35%); 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.

Protected Trees

Section 33-1052 of the City's Municipal Code includes definitions for a "mature tree" and a "protected tree" (refer to Section 3.3.2.3 of the Code). Section 33-1068 of the City's Municipal Zoning Code establishes regulations and standards for the preservation, protection, and selected removal of mature and protected trees. Pursuant to Section 33-1069, every feasible effort and measure to avoid damage to existing trees to remain on site must be taken by the owner and developer during clearing, grading, and construction activities. Section 33-1069 also includes replacement ratios for mature and protected trees. If mature trees cannot be preserved on site, they shall be replaced at a minimum ratio of 1:1. If protected trees cannot be preserved on site they shall be replaced at a minimum ratio of 2:1. However, the number, size, and species of replacement trees can be determined on a case-by-case basis by the City's Director of

Community Development. As discussed in Section 2.2, Biological Resources, of this EIR, the Project would affect protected and mature trees.

City of Escondido General Plan

The Resource Conservation Element of the General Plan identifies the visual importance of preserving scenic open space features such as ridgelines, unique landforms, and steep slopes in the City's viewshed. The Land Use and Community Form Element prioritizes preserving the unique community character of the City, including the historic downtown, agricultural areas, valleys, and mountains. The Land Use and Community Form Element also addresses the issues of light pollution and glare. The applicable goals and policies from these elements are identified below.

Land Use and Community Form Element

1. Community Character

Goal 1: A community composed of distinct residential neighborhoods, business districts, and employment centers, whose urban form reflects the natural environmental setting.

Community Character Policy 1.1: New development should serve to reinforce the city's present development pattern of higher-intensity development within the downtown area and lower-intensity development in outlying areas. As a guide toward accomplishing this objective, new development projects shall be at an appropriate density or clustered intensity based upon their compatibility with the majority of the existing surrounding land uses. This policy shall limit density transfers from constrained portions of a property as defined in the land use and open space goals.

Community Character Policy 1.3: Focus development into areas where land use changes achieve the community's long term goals. Facilitate development that is consistent with the build out vision for each area through incentive programs and efficient administrative and discretionary approval processes for plot plans, Planned Developments, Area Plans, Specific Plans, and Zoning Overlays.

Community Character Policy 1.5: The city should maintain its single-family residential development pattern, except in locations such as the downtown, along major transportation corridors, and around commercial and public activity centers, where higher densities are more appropriate.

Community Character Policy 1.10: 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: Encourage new development to minimize the creation of incompatible glare through development design features (e.g., minimizing use of certain types of exterior building materials).

3. Residential Development

Residential Development Policy 3.10: Encourage proportionate numbers of two-story dwelling units within single family detached subdivisions to promote variety and avoid monotonous streetscapes and visual impacts.

5. Residential Clustering

Goal 5: Clustering of single family residential units to maintain site topography, protect natural resources, and avoid hazards.

Residential Clustering Policy 5.2: Clustering is not intended to maximize the density or yield, or to circumvent the existing zoning. It shall be utilized as a tool to preserve slopes, ridgelines and sensitive habitat or provide a community benefit.

Residential Clustering Policy 5.4: When utilizing cluster provisions, a project shall not have an adverse visual impact on the surrounding areas by blocking scenic views, by resulting in a scale of development incompatible with the setting, by siting buildings that project above the ridgeline, or by extensive grading, cutting and filling, or by terracing that disrupts the natural shape and contour of the site.

Residential Clustering Policy 5.10: When clustering, the portion of the site to be developed for residential purposes shall not significantly change the character of the surrounding area.

Resource Conservation Element

3. Visual Resources

Goal 3: 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.

Visual Resources Policy 3.1: Preserve significant visual resources that include unique landforms (e.g., skyline ridges, intermediate ridges, hilltops, and rock outcroppings), creeks, lakes, and open space areas in a natural state, to the extent possible.

Visual Resources Policy 3.2: Require new development to avoid obstructing views of, and to minimize impacts to, significant visual resources through the following: creative

site planning; integration of natural features into the project; appropriate scale, materials, and design to complement the surrounding natural landscape; clustering of development to preserve open space vistas and natural features; minimal disturbance of topography; and creation of contiguous open space networks.

Visual Resources Policy 3.3: Maintain density and development standards designed to protect significant visual resources such as existing terrain, steep slopes, floodways, habitat areas, and ridgelines, and to minimize visual impacts of grading and structures.

3.1.1.2 Analysis of Project Effects and Determination as to Significance

3.1.1.2.1 Guidelines for the Determination of Significance

For purposes of this EIR, Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines (14 CCR 15000 et seq.) will apply to the direct, indirect, and cumulative impact analyses. A significant impact to aesthetics and visual resources would result if the Project would:

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

3.1.1.2.2 Analysis

A. Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

The General Plan emphasizes the protection of viewsheds that serve as a scenic amenity and contribute to the quality of life for City residents. Valuable scenic vistas include those of hillsides, ridgelines, unique landforms, open space, agricultural areas, and bodies of water. The City does not specifically designate scenic vistas. Although not officially designated, major roads in the City 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 including Lake Hodges Reservoir, Lake Wohlford, Lake Dixon, and Kit Carson Park. Due to its distance and lower elevation, the Project site is not visible from any of these major roads or open space areas. Additionally, these roadways or open space areas are not located within the Project area, and the Project would not obstruct views of these areas. There are no scenic highways in the proximity of the Project site.

Most of the Project site is relatively level and typically at a lower elevation than the surrounding residential development. The pad elevations for the new residential development have been designed to be lower than the existing development in most areas so that existing near views of the golf course are replaced by views of the landscaped Greenbelt/Open Spaces. The Greenbelt/Open Space areas would enhance the screening and buffering of views from surrounding residences and roadways (namely West Country Club Lane, La Mirada Street, La Brea Street and Portola Avenue). Additionally, the Project would be designed to maintain a relatively low profile and would be similarly scaled to residential development in the area. The surrounding land uses consist of single-family residential development that includes detached residences on a variety of lot sizes, attached residences (duplexes) of several different densities, and several common-interest developments; see Figure 1-9. The Project would not substantially interrupt or obstruct available views from any scenic vistas. No designated scenic vistas would be impacted by the Project. Thus, impacts to scenic vistas would be **less than significant**.

B. Would the Project substantially damage scenic resources including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

There are no officially designated or eligible highways within the City. The closest State Scenic Highway is SR-78 through the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, over 30 miles east of the City. Therefore, **no impacts** to scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway would occur.

C. Would the Project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

Construction

Construction of the Project is anticipated to occur over approximately 66 months, but the ultimate phasing schedule will also be based on the market, which progressively commences with Village 1 in the first phase. Construction activities associated with the Project would temporarily introduce heavy equipment to the area and as a result of ground disturbance and landform alteration, would create new forms, lines, and textures on the Project site that would be visible to surrounding residences. Motorists' views of construction occurring on the Project site would be temporary and short in duration while driving along West Country Club Lane, Gary Lane, and La Brea Street. Motorists traveling along Nutmeg Street just outside of Project boundaries would be afforded views primarily of the surrounding residential communities, as well as the hill to the north. Motorists traveling along Golden Circle Drive would have views of the existing residential developments west of the Project site, as well as residential development to the south. Motorists generally have a low to moderate sensitivity based on duration of view and visual focus on the roadway; therefore, impacts on these viewers would be less than significant.

Additionally, the Project site is a former golf course that closed in early 2013 and was vacant for approximately 4 years. Although the former golf course provided views of the fairways and greens, the golf course is currently closed and unattended. The closed golf course has ongoing challenges with maintenance (e.g., overgrowth and abatement). As a result, the visual quality of the site is characterized as low because the property's condition has deteriorated, with elements that appear random, having no perceivable patterns, where adjacent scenery detracts or has little influence on the scenic quality.

Outside of the immediate surrounding residences, views of the Project site are obstructed by the intervening residential development, private yard landscaping, and street trees located within the neighborhoods. As such, impacts to the existing character and quality of the site and surroundings during construction activities would be **less than significant**.

Operation

The approximately 109-acre Project involves construction of three interrelated villages with a total of 392 residential homes with associated resident amenities and development of approximately 48 acres as a permanent Open Space System. In addition to open space development, the Project would develop a greenbelt, parks, and recreation, social, and community amenities (Figure 1-5, Open Space, Trails, and Parks Plan). The Project viewshed is largely defined by the existing, shuttered golf course and associated vegetation, surrounding residential communities, and distant hills.

The Project's Specific Plan contains a distinct set of architectural design requirements for each of the three villages (Craftsman, Western Cottage, and Spanish Monterey), thereby ensuring that all housing types have a superlative architectural design.

The Spanish Monterey architectural style of homes would create the individual character for Village 1. Village 1 has a total of 155 homes. This architectural style for the homes will complement the Spanish Monterey architectural style used for the Village Center, which is located at the primary entry for Village 1. An architectural design element that typifies Spanish Monterey is a rectangular plan where a second-story balcony projects beyond the first story below. Roofs would have lower pitches with gables. Barges tend to be flush or very short, while eave overhangs would be medium length to long, with exposed rafter tails. Wall materials would be light color stucco with high contrast trim or other architectural details. Windows would be vertical rectangular with simple panel designs. Village 1 walls would be finished with light-colored stucco and terra cotta caps in keeping with the Spanish Monterey architecture, while fences would be darker stained wood.

The architectural theme of Village 2 is Craftsman. The Craftsman style dates from the early 1900s and is a response to the Arts and Crafts movement. Craftsman architecture stressed the

importance of simplicity, and of adapting form to function. The building design combined both the incorporation of craftsmanship and siting through its ground-hugging massing and relationship to dominant roof lines and distinct connection to the base of the building and to the ground plane surrounding landscape. Stone walls and lighter-colored painted wood fences would be more prevalent in Village 2 to be compatible with the Craftsman architectural style.

The architectural theme of Village 3 is Western Cottage. Both neighborhoods in this Village would be located on the south side of West Country Club Lane. San Marcos Creek flows in an above-grade biofiltered channel through the Greenbelt Open Space that separates and buffers the neighborhood east of La Brea Street from West Country Club Lane. This neighborhood has 146 homes with access from both La Brea Street and Nutmeg Street. The neighborhood west of La Brea Street has primary access from West Country Club Lane. The Western Cottage style emphasizes function and relies minimally on stylistic effects to define its character. The Western Cottage style borrowed design characteristics from Stick, Arts and Crafts Bungalow, Colonial Revival, and various European Farmhouse architectural styles. Its strength comes from using simple massing and forms, as well as ornamentation that are primarily utilitarian rather than decorative. “Cottage” exemplifies the key design characteristic. Roofs would be simple and higher pitched with strong use of gables. Village 3 would use painted metal fences and simple, stacked boulder walls to follow the Western Cottage theme. Village 3 also includes a housing type consisting of either four or six homes located on a common residential lot. The common lot with six units is designed to have the single-story detached single-family unit in the portion of the common parcel that is adjacent to the greenbelt that buffers the existing residences from these six-unit clustered homes. Therefore, although the common lot is unique to Village 3 within the Project site, the stepped-back design is visually consistent with the other homes both proposed and existing in the surrounding area. There is also a series of single-story lots along the southeastern portion of Village 1.

Additionally, per mitigation measure **M-N-4** described in Section 2.6, Noise, of the EIR, certain home lots in the eastern portions of Villages 2 and 3 would require a noise barrier to comply with the City’s 60 A-weighted decibel Community Noise Equivalent Level (dBA CNEL) exterior noise standard; see Table M-N-1, Barrier Heights at Rearyard Boundaries, and Figure 2.6-3, Noise Barrier Mitigation, for details. The noise barriers shall be either solid masonry walls or tongue-and-groove walls with 1-inch-thick lumber. Such walls are not out of character for a residential neighborhood.

Key Viewing Locations

Eight key observation viewpoints were used in this aesthetics assessment. The locations of selected key observation viewpoints are presented on Figure 3.1.1-1, Key View Locations. Figures 3.1.1-2 through 3.1.1-9, Key Views 1 through 8, present static images of the Project site

from the selected public key viewing locations in the surrounding area where conditions generally afford clear visibility to the Project site or development areas. Visual simulations also are included on Figures 3.1.1-2 through 3.1.1-9. These figures present 3-D computer simulations of the Project as it is anticipated to be experienced by viewers in the Project vicinity. The visual simulations are provided to analyze bulk, mass, and scale of the Project. Please refer to the Specific Plan pages 40, 42, and 44 (New Urban West Inc. 2017), for more detailed examples of the architectural style and colors. An evaluation of the existing visual character and anticipated Project effects is provided by key view location below.

These eight key viewing locations (key views) in the surrounding area were selected to document existing visual conditions and to illustrate anticipated visual change. Key views represent the views available to viewer groups (including motorists, pedestrians, bicyclists, and residents) in the surrounding area and document the range of viewing distances, viewing angles, and screening elements currently available in the Project vicinity. Key views were submitted to the City Planning Staff for review and approval. Once the City Planning Staff approved the use of these key views in this analysis, Dudek visual simulation lead Paul Caligiuri visited the key view locations on April 13, 2017, and photo-documented existing views to the Project site. Visibility conditions to the Project site were clear and multiple photos were taken from each key view to document the existing visual resources that occur in the normal field of vision of viewer group.

The locations of the key views are depicted on Figure 3.1.1-1.

Key View 1

Key View 1 is located on Golden Circle Drive, looking south towards the Project site; see Figure 3.1.1-2. Viewers from this location would be motorists traveling along Golden Circle Drive, as well as pedestrians and bicyclists along Golden Circle Drive looking south. Currently at Key View 1, viewers can see the former golf course and associated vegetation, the abutting residential community, and a backdrop of distant hills. Once developed, views would consist almost entirely of new residential development as well as a new trail. The proposed trees and vegetation would be consistent with current conditions at Key View 1; however new residential development would replace views of the former golf course. The Project site would transition from slightly chaotic (former golf course site that has been vacant and unmaintained for approximately four years) to orderly. The view conditions with the Project would, in effect, make the view along Golden Circle Drive by adding additional residences to the existing view of residences. The Project residences would be consistent in height, bulk, and scale with the surrounding existing residences. The duration of this view is relatively brief. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site at Key View 1.

Key View 2

Key View 2 is located at the intersection of West Country Club Lane and Golden Circle Drive, looking northeast; see Figure 3.1.1-3. Viewers from this location would consist of passengers in vehicles traveling along Country Club Lane as well as northbound along Golden Circle Drive looking north. Viewers are afforded views of the former clubhouse, residential development, and a backdrop of distant hills. In the immediate foreground are large trees, unkempt weedy vegetation, and chain-link fencing, which abut West Country Club Lane. Once developed, views from Key View 2 would be moderately improved. The former clubhouse would be redeveloped with a single-story building that has a color scheme nearly identical to the clubhouse. The visual quality of the site would be enhanced and reinvigorated. Rustic posts and rail fencing would be installed along Country Club Drive, in place of the existing dilapidated chain-link fencing. Low, weedy vegetation in the foreground would be removed and replaced with new landscaping that matches the surrounding areas. Views of residential development would be replaced by views of the new development, and would not substantially alter the visual character. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site at Key View 2.

Key View 3

Key View 3 is located at the corner of La Brea Street and West Country Club Lane, looking northeast; see Figure 3.1.1-4. Viewers from this location would be passengers in vehicles, pedestrians, and bicyclists, traveling eastbound on Country Club Lane as well as northbound on La Brea Street. Currently at Key View 3, viewers are afforded views of a small one-story, concrete masonry unit building on West Country Club Lane and a moderately vegetated hillside with residences sparsely mixed in. As proposed, the existing building would be removed and replaced by new two-story residences, an 8-foot-tall sound wall, and landscaping. The noise wall would be partially screened by landscaping and is not out of character for a residential neighborhood. Given the limited distribution of the noise wall (see Figure 2.6-3), it would temporarily occupy the views of motorists and pedestrians as they travel along West Country Club Lane. As shown on Figure 3.1.1-4, views of the hillside would be partially obstructed by these residences. However, the proposed development would be constructed with a similar color scheme as the existing building, and the right-of-way adjacent to West Country Club Lane would be revegetated to achieve a consistent landscape theme. This would result in a more aesthetically appealing foreground at Key View 3, and thus would improve the visual quality of the site.

Key View 4

Key View 4 is located on La Brea Street just north of Portola Avenue, looking southwest. Viewers from this location would mainly be pedestrians, bicyclists, and passengers in vehicles traveling

southbound along La Brea Street; see Figure 3.1.1-5. Currently at Key View 4, viewers can see the former golf course and associated vegetation, as well as trees that line fairways and adjacent residences. Surrounding the former golf course is the abutting residential community, with a backdrop of hills. Once developed, views at Key View 4 primarily would be of residential development associated with the Project. Given the depressed elevation, the proposed homes are lower in elevation than the roadway and therefore the scale is reduced. The new landscaping in the foreground would replace the current weedy, untidy grass. Additionally, this view to motorists along La Brea Street is brief and after they travel past the site, the road is bordered by residential development of similar bulk, scale, and architectural character. Therefore, the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site.

Key View 5

Key View 5 is on West Country Club Lane, approximately 700 feet west of the intersection at West Country Club Lane and Nutmeg Street; see Figure 3.1.1-6. Viewers from this location would consist of pedestrians and passengers in vehicles traveling west on West Country Club Lane. Currently, viewers at Key View 5 are afforded views of an overgrown, unkempt vegetated hillside, residential development in the foreground, and a backdrop of a distant hill. Trees dot the immediate foreground landscape and densely line hillside residential properties to provide a visual buffer from the adjacent former golf course property. Once developed, the existing unkempt grasses in the foreground would be removed, new trees and landscaping would be installed, the hillside would be graded, and new shrubs would be placed along the hillside. The character and landscaping would more closely match the surrounding visual character of residential neighborhoods. Additionally, views of the existing development in the immediate foreground would be reduced due to the placement of more trees. As viewed from Key View 5, Project development would be compatible with existing residential development in the immediate area and would result in a more aesthetically appealing site than what currently exists.

Key View 6

Key View 6 is the view looking southwest from the intersection of West Country Club Lane and Nutmeg Street; see Figure 3.1.1-7. Viewers from this location would consist of pedestrians and passengers in vehicles traveling west on West Country Club Lane, as well as residences located at the intersection. At Key View 6, viewers (motorists and pedestrians) are afforded views of a row of large gum trees (*Eucalyptus* spp.) that line the Project site along West Country Club Lane and Nutmeg Street. Existing homes and landscaping are visible through the trees and beyond the Project site. Once developed, the views at Key View 6 would remain largely unaltered. The vacant former golf course site would be developed with two-story residences, which would block the existing residences from view. The new residential structures and proposed 6-foot noise wall would be largely screened by existing gum trees, which would remain in place. Given the

limited distribution of the noise wall (see Figure 2.6-3), it would temporarily occupy the views of motorists and pedestrians as they travel along Nutmeg Street. The new development would be consistent with the visual character of the existing residences, as the architectural style would be similar and the color scheme would consist of earth tones. As previously indicated, the gum trees at the forefront of the view would remain in place and would not be affected by the Project. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site.

Key View 7

Key View 7 is the view looking northeast toward the Project site, approximately 0.1 miles north of the intersection of Gary Lane and West Country Club Lane; see Figure 3.1.1-8. Viewers from this location would mainly be pedestrians or passengers in vehicles traveling north on Gary Lane. Viewers at Key View 7 are afforded views of large trees, the former golf course, and residences surrounding the former golf course in the forefront. The backdrop is made up of residential development, as well as a hill that is largely developed with more residences. Once developed, the views at Key View 7 would primarily consist of housing associated with the Project. Additionally, trees in the forefront at Key View 7 would be removed, and replaced with new vegetation and several trees shielding the proposed homes. The Project conditions would improve upon the existing vegetation, which consists of unkempt grasses, palms, a single jacaranda and tall eucalyptus trees. Implementation of the Project's Specific Plan landscape design would achieve a coherent and consistent landscape theme and new residences would be visually compatible with existing residences that border the Project site. Motorists along Gary Lane Drive would be afforded views of the site for a brief duration and the views would be similar to those further along the road because the Project is consistent in bulk, scale, and architecture with existing surrounding residences. The Project would be consistent with the existing visual character and would not substantially alter views at Key View 7. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site.

Key View 8

Key View 8 is the view looking east toward the Project site, approximately 600 feet north of the intersection of Golden Circle Drive and West Country Club Lane; see Figure 3.1.1-9. Viewers from this location would be located at the former clubhouse on the Escondido Country Club golf course. Key View 8 consists entirely of the vacant former golf course and residential development that abutted the golf course. In the forefront are large trees, weedy unkempt vegetation, and a poorly maintained access road, as well as a single residential unit to the south. The backdrop consists entirely of large trees and residences. Once developed, viewers would be afforded views primarily of new residences, partially screened by proposed landscaping, and a large pocket of vegetation in the forefront with proposed shrubs lining the road. The newly

planted trees would match the landscape character in the surrounding areas. Therefore, implementation of the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site.

Summary

The significance determination as to whether the Project would result in substantial degradation of visual character and quality is based on the previously described analysis of the eight key views, as well as assessment of the overall character and visual quality of the site, and the surrounding area. As noted earlier in this section, the neighborhood in the immediate vicinity is unique in character and shares similar development patterns. The area is characterized by low-density, single-family residential uses on small lots and a variety of duplex and condominium complexes. The homes are largely characterized by tract-built homes with uniform styles and materials typical of the 1970s to the 1990s.

The Project includes a Specific Plan proposal and detailed design guidelines, which provide a framework for requiring the development to be context sensitive and be appropriately sited, scaled, and designed to complement the existing environment. The design guidelines require that the Project be designed to relate to community character, design context, and site design. The Project would not conflict with any applicable land use plan or policy. Refer to Appendix 3.1.5-1, Consistency Analysis Table, for a detailed discussion of Project consistency with the City's General Plan.

The analysis of visual impacts was completed based on site visits and a photo survey. Through application of various village neighborhood and housing prototypes, the Project would retain the character surrounding each village and would be compatible with surrounding land uses. Under the proposed Specific Plan, the Project accommodates new housing as expressively permitted by the General Plan in terms of height and bulk to that of the surrounding existing residences. However, the Specific Plan's intent is to supplement the City-wide zoning standards to respond to the neighborhood character and be compatible with community's specific setting. The proposed Specific Plan would achieve this goal by regulating passive and active open space; as well as site density, lot size, percent building coverage allowance, building setbacks, etc. New design guidelines would ensure appropriate scale of development and an aesthetically pleasing architectural character.

In consideration of the above, it was determined that for all key views, the Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site, and in some cases (such as Key Views 3 and 5) the Project would improve the existing visual quality of the site compared to what exists today. Therefore, the Project would not adversely affect public views. In many areas, the site is set back at an appropriate distance and shielded by vegetated slopes or context

sensitive landscaping. Implementation of the Project's Specific Plan landscape design would achieve a coherent and consistent landscape theme and new residences would be visually compatible with existing residences that border the Project site. Therefore, impacts relative to the substantial degradation of visual character and quality as a result of implementation of the Project would be **less than significant**.

D. Would the Project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

The Project site currently contains the former Escondido Country Club building, which is non-operational, and no lighting currently is used on site. The Project would demolish the Escondido Country Club building and build 390 residential units. Nighttime exterior lighting would be provided at the Project site for safety, security, and circulation purposes. Consistent with Article 35 of the Zoning Ordinance, all exterior lighting fixtures, with the exception of street lamps, would be aimed or shielded so that unnecessary nighttime lighting and glare would be reduced for the benefit of City residents and astronomical research at Palomar Mountain Observatory. Additionally, the Project's Specific Plan contains lighting guidelines designed to meet all city requirements and be sensitive to the existing "night skies" conditions. In accordance with Zoning Ordinance Section 33-713, street lighting installed on the private streets would comply with the City's Engineering Design Standards and Standard Drawings. Moreover, the Project proposes a lower-profile lighting plan than what would otherwise be provided through standard residential construction. Windows on the proposed residences and associated cars have the potential to create new sources of glare. However, these uses and glare sources would not be inconsistent with the surrounding land uses, as the Project site is surrounded by residential development to the north, south, east, and west. Also, the Project would not use highly reflective materials. Therefore, impacts due to new sources of light and glare would be **less than significant**.

3.1.1.3 Cumulative Impact Analysis

Figure 1-10, Cumulative Projects, and Table 1-3, Cumulative Projects, identifies the projects generally considered for the cumulative analysis. More specifically, the geographic scope for analyzing cumulative impacts related to aesthetics focuses on lands in proximity to the Project area and within the surrounding viewshed that would have views of the site from public locations (e.g., public roadways).

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 detracting from a scenic vista. As described in Section 3.1.1.1, Environmental

Setting, the City does not specifically designate scenic vistas. Due to its distance and lower elevation, the Project site is not visible from any major roads or open space areas; see Section 3.1.1.2.2, Analysis, for details. There are no scenic highways in the proximity of the Project site. As seen in Figure 1-10, there are no cumulative projects located in close proximity to the Project site, which would be visible from public roadways or vantage points near the Project site. Cumulative projects within these jurisdictions would be required to comply with applicable regulations pertaining to scenic vistas, including the City's General Plan Resource Conservation Element Goal 3 and Visual Resources Policies 3.1 through 3.3. Therefore, the Project **would not contribute to a cumulatively considerable impact** relative to scenic vistas.

Scenic Highways

State Scenic Highways are those highways that are either officially designated as State Scenic Highways by Caltrans or are eligible for such designation. There are no officially designated or eligible highways within the City. The closest State Scenic Highway is SR-78 through the Anza-Borrego Desert State Park, approximately 35 miles east of the City. Thus, **no cumulative impact** to a State Scenic Highways would occur.

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. However, impacts related to visual character or quality generally are localized to the community immediately surrounding the Project. The Project is located in a heavily developed area of the City and is surrounded by existing residential uses. As illustrated in Figure 1-10, there are no cumulative projects in close proximity to the Project site or within the surrounding viewshed. Additionally, any future and proposed projects seeking the City's approval would be subject to compliance with the local and regional plans, programs, and policies described in this section; would be reviewed for visual character and quality impacts; and would be required to mitigate for those impacts.

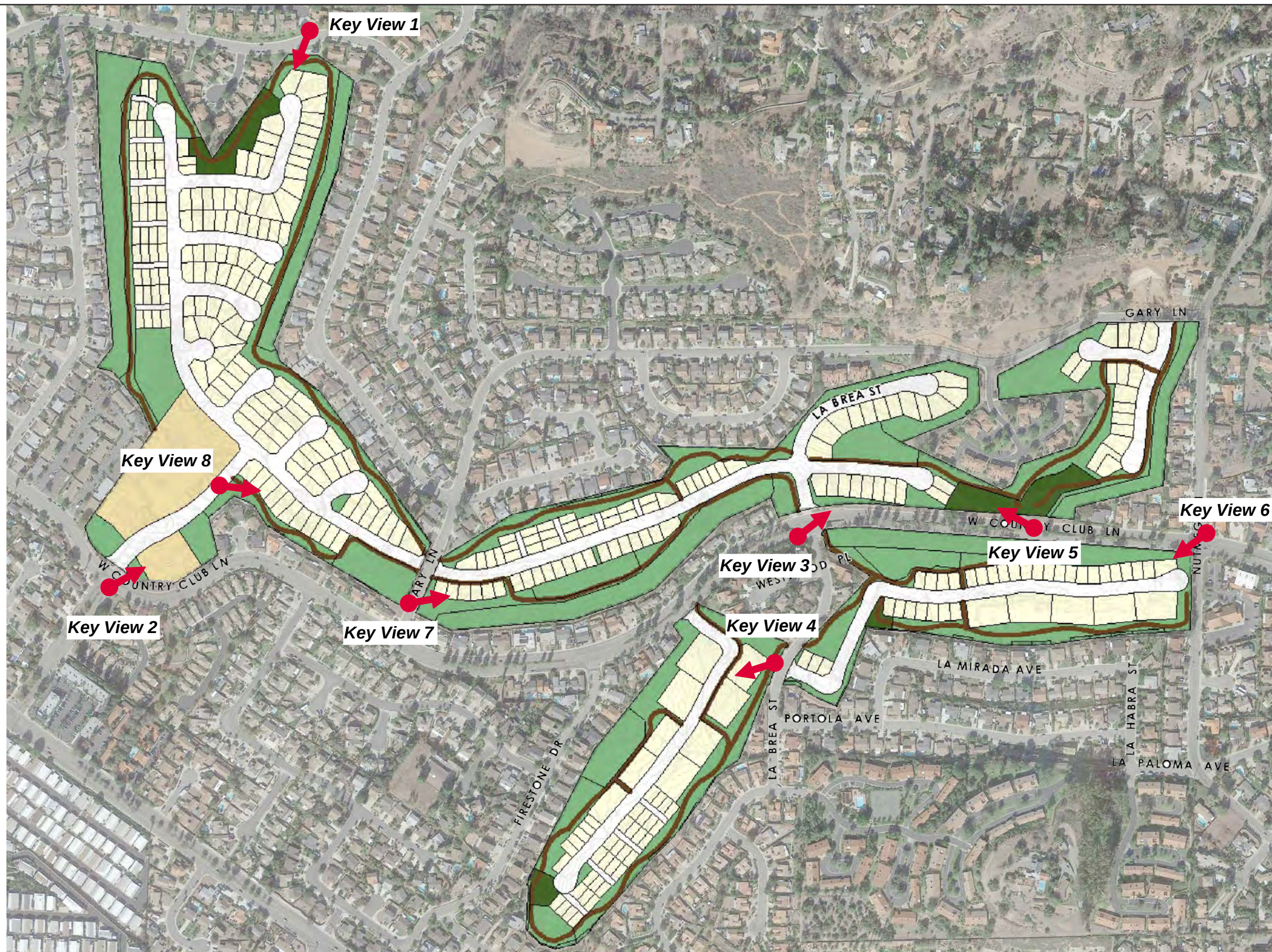
The Project would be designed to be compatible with existing adjacent land uses. As discussed previously, visual character or quality would change in some of the key views observed (Figures 3.1.1-2 through 3.1.1-9), but would not be substantially degraded. Because the Project would result in a less than significant impact to visual character and quality, and when viewed in light of the surrounding development, the Project would result in a **less than significant** cumulative impact on visual character or quality.

Light or Glare

The Project would have the potential to result in an incremental increase in light and glare associated with the new development. However, the City's Zoning Ordinance and the proposed General Plan policies require new development to avoid glare impacts and minimize nighttime lighting. Specific Plan requirements are included to avoid nuisance nighttime lighting. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant and the Project **would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact** related to light and glare.

3.1.1.4 Conclusion

The Project would result in **less than significant** impacts relative to scenic vistas, scenic resources within a scenic roadway, visual character and quality, and light and glare.



SOURCE: Dudek (2017)

DUDEK

The Villages – Escondido Country Club EIR

FIGURE 3.1.1-1
Key View Locations

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Key View 1 - Existing Conditions



Key View 1 - Proposed Conditions

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Key View 2 - Existing Conditions



Key View 2 - Proposed Conditions

Key View 2: View Looking Northeast from Golden Circle Drive to Project Site

SOURCE: Dudek (2017)

FIGURE 3.1.1-3

The Villages – Escondido Country Club EIR

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Key View 3 - Existing Conditions



Key View 3 - Proposed Conditions

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Key View 4 - Existing Conditions



Key View 4 - Proposed Conditions

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



Key View 5 - Existing Conditions



Key View 5 - Proposed Conditions

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



Key View 6 - Existing Conditions



Key View 6 - Proposed Conditions

INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK



Key View 7 - Existing Conditions



Key View 7 - Proposed Conditions

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Key View 8 - Existing Conditions



Key View 8 - Proposed Conditions

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