

## **4.1 AESTHETICS**

This chapter of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the potential aesthetics impacts associated with the adoption and implementation of the proposed project. This chapter describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions, identifies criteria used to determine impact significance, provides an analysis of the potential aesthetics impacts, and identifies proposed General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions that would minimize any potentially significant impacts.

### **4.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

#### **4.1.1.1 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

##### **State Regulations**

###### *California State Scenic Highways Program*

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the State legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment. The State laws governing the Scenic Highways Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Sections 260 through 263.

When a city or county nominates an eligible scenic highway for official designation, it must identify and define the scenic corridor of the highway. Scenic corridors consist of land that is visible from the highway right-of-way and is composed primarily of scenic and natural features. Topography, vegetation, viewing distance, and/or jurisdictional lines determine the corridor boundaries. The city or county must also adopt ordinances, zoning, and/or planning policies to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor or document such regulations that already exist in various portions of local codes. These ordinances and/or policies make up the Corridor Protection Program. The status of a proposed State scenic highway changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local governing body applies to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for scenic highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a Scenic Highway.

###### *California Building Code*

The State of California provides a minimum standard for building design through the California Code of Regulations, Title 24, Part 2, commonly referred to as the California Building Code (CBC). All of Title 24, including the CBC, is updated on a three-year cycle. The CBC is effective statewide, but a local jurisdiction may adopt more restrictive standards based on local conditions under specific amendment rules prescribed by the State Building Standards Commission. The CBC includes standards for outdoor lighting that are intended to reduce light pollution and glare by regulating light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls.

## AESTHETICS

### California Building Code: CALGreen

The California Building Standards Commission adopted the California Green Building Standards Code as Part 11 of Title 24, also known as CALGreen. CALGreen establishes building standards aimed at enhancing the design and construction of buildings through the use of building concepts that reduce negative impacts and increase positive environmental impacts by encouraging sustainable construction practices. Specifically, Section 5.106.8, *Light Pollution Reduction*, establishes backlight, uplight, and glare ratings to minimize the effects of light pollution for nonresidential development. The local building permit process enforces the mandatory provisions of CALGreen.

### *Public Resources Code Section 21099*

As described in Chapter 4.0, *Environmental Analysis*, of this Draft EIR, PRC Section 21099, commonly referred to as its legislative bill number Senate Bill 743, passed in 2013, made changes to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) for projects located in transit-oriented development areas. Among these changes are that a project's aesthetics impacts are no longer considered significant impacts on the environment if the project is a residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center project and if the project is located on an infill site within a transit priority area (TPA).<sup>1</sup> This was implemented to help the State achieve greenhouse gas reductions while prioritizing jobs and housing. As described in Chapter 4.0, and shown on Figure 4-1, *Priority Development Areas and Transit Priority Areas*, of this Draft EIR, portions of the EIR Study Area are located in three TPAs surrounding the North Santa Rosa Sonoma-Marín Area Rail Transit (SMART) station, the Downtown SMART station, and the Santa Rosa Transit Mall as identified in *Plan Bay Area*,<sup>2</sup> the guiding framework for transportation and land use planning throughout the San Francisco Bay Area, coordinated by the regional planning agencies, the Association of Bay Area Governments and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission. Therefore, within these areas where projects are infill and also a residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center project, pursuant to PRC Section 21099(d), aesthetics impacts shall not be considered significant environmental impacts.

## Local Regulations

### *Santa Rosa City Code*

The Santa Rosa City Code (SRCC) includes various directives to minimize adverse impacts to visual resources in Santa Rosa. The SRCC is organized by title, chapter, and section, and in some cases, articles. Most provisions related to aesthetics and visual resources are in Title 13, *Streets, Sidewalks, and Public Places*; Title 17, *Environmental Protection*; Title 18, *Buildings and Construction*; and Title 20, *Zoning*, as follows:

- **Title 13, *Streets, Sidewalks, and Public Places*.** Title 13 of the SRCC includes regulations that govern street encroachments, utilities, parks, and setback lines. Chapter 13-12, *Underground Utilities*, includes regulations related to aesthetics which prohibit the above-ground suspension of any wires or

---

<sup>1</sup> California Legislative Information, 2013, Senate Bill No. 743, Chapter 386, [http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=201320140SB743&search\\_keywords=](http://leginfo.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=201320140SB743&search_keywords=), accessed July 9, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Metropolitan Transportation Commission, 2021, Transit Priority Areas, <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/mapviewer/index.html?layers=370de9dc4d65402d992a769bf6ac8ef5>, accessed March 2, 2023.

## AESTHETICS

any poles designed to carry telephone, telegraph, or electric conduit. Chapter 13-28, *Setback Lines*, includes development standards related to aesthetics which authorize the City Council to determine the minimum setback distance of the street line for the erection of buildings or structures along any portion of any street in the city.

- **Chapter 17-22, *Historic and Cultural Preservation*.** The City adopted the Historic and Cultural Preservation Ordinance in 1988. This chapter outlines the methods that items can be identified and protected as cultural and historical resources.
- **Title 18, *Buildings and Construction*.** As described under State Regulations, the California Building Code (Title 24, Part 2) and CALGreen (Title 24, Part 11), both include outdoor lighting standards to regulate light pollution. The City of Santa Rosa has adopted all sections of the CBC Title 24, Part 2, in Chapter 18-16, *California Building Code*, and Chapter 18-42, *Citation of California Green Building Standards Code*, of the SRCC.
- **Title 20, *Zoning*.** The Santa Rosa Zoning Code implements the goals and policies of the General Plan by classifying and regulating the uses of land and structures within the city. In addition, the Zoning Code is adopted to protect and to promote the public health, safety, and general welfare of residents, and preserve and enhance the aesthetic quality of the city. The following provisions of the Zoning Code help minimize the visual impacts of new development projects in Santa Rosa:
  - **Section 20-28.050, *Scenic Road (-SR) Combining District*.** This section of the Zoning Code aims to preserve the natural and constructed features that contribute to the character of scenic roads. This district may be combined with any primary zoning district, provided that the standards of Section 20-28.050 shall apply only to the portions of parcels within 125 feet or less from the edge of the pavement of the designated scenic road. Portions over 125 feet in length from the edge of the pavement of the designated scenic road shall be regulated by the standards of the primary zoning district. Proposed development and new land uses shall comply with the standards, as applicable. In the event of any conflict between the standards and those of the primary zoning district, the most restrictive shall apply. The standards in this section outline ten roads in Santa Rosa and their minimum setback distances, as well as more specific requirements for each road.
  - **Chapter 20-30, *Standards for all Development and Land Uses*.** This chapter of the Zoning Code sets forth standards to address the details of site planning and project design to ensure that all development within Santa Rosa creates an environment of desirable character, is compatible with existing and future development, and protects the use and enjoyment of neighboring properties consistent with the General Plan. Section 20-30.040, *Creekside development*, requires minimum setbacks from waterways for new structures and states that these developments are required to comply with Section 4.4, *Creeks, Riparian Corridors, and Storm Drainage*, of the City's Design Guidelines. Section 20-30.080, *Outdoor lighting*, establishes maximum height standards for outdoor lighting on private property and requires the use of energy-efficient fixtures. In addition, new development is required to shield and direct lighting fixtures downward and away from adjoining properties to reduce spill-over lighting and light pollution.
  - **Chapter 20-32, *Hillside Development Standards*.** This chapter of the Zoning Code aims to preserve and enhance Santa Rosa's scenic character, conserve open spaces and significant natural features, respect natural features in the design and construction of hillside development, and design hillside development to be sensitive to existing terrain, views, and significant landforms and

## AESTHETICS

features. Section 20-32.050, *Site planning and development standards*, requires each structure shall be located in the most accessible, least visually prominent, most geologically stable, portion or portions of the site, and at the lowest feasible elevation. Structures shall also be aligned with the natural contours of the site to the maximum extent feasible. Section 20-32.060, *Hillside development permit*, outlines the review process for the City to consider the appropriateness of proposed development on hillside parcels, to ensure that a proposed project minimizes its visual and environmental impact.

- **Chapter 20-34, *Landscaping Standards*.** This chapter of the Zoning Code establishes landscape standards to mitigate the effects of urbanization on the environment and to provide for an aesthetically pleasing urban setting. This chapter is also intended to encourage optimum use of drought-tolerant plant materials in conjunction with water-conserving automatic irrigation systems. Section 20-34.050, *Landscape standards*, outlines the standards that landscaped areas are required to comply with, including height limits, landscape design, and plant materials. Section 20-34.070, *Post-installation requirements*, includes provisions for landscaping maintenance.
- **Chapter 20-38, *Signs*.** This chapter of the Zoning Code establishes regulations intended to appropriately limit the placement, type, size, and number of signs allowed within the City, and to require the proper maintenance of signs to, among others, preserve and enhance the aesthetic quality of the entire community. Section 20-38.030, *Sign Permit requirements*, requires a Sign permit prior to the installation, construction, or alteration of any sign. The review authority is required to find that the proposed sign is consistent with the Zoning Code standards, visually complementary and compatible with the scale, architectural style, and prominent natural features of its surroundings prior to approval of a Sign Permit. Section 20-38.050, *General requirements for all signs*, outlines the sign area measurement, height measurement, and locations requirements.
- **Chapter 20-39, *Objective Design Standards for By-Right Housing*.** This chapter of the Zoning Code establishes objective residential design standards that are sourced from the City's Design Guidelines. This chapter applies to all residential projects which, upon applicant request and demonstration of eligibility, qualify for streamlined and ministerial processing.
- **Section 20-52.030, *Design Review*.** This section of the Zoning Code establishes procedures for the City's review of the design aspects of proposed development in compliance with the adopted Santa Rosa Design Guidelines. Proposed development requiring a building permit and/or resulting in exterior physical changes to existing structures are subject to the City's design review process. The design review authority charged with reviewing proposed development projects varies depending on the scale of the project. Projects that involve minor improvements such as a new door or window are reviewed by the Director of Planning and Economic Development. Development projects with up to 10,000 square feet of total floor area that are not located within a historic district are reviewed by the Zoning Administrator. Development projects with 10,000 square feet or more of total floor area that are not located within a historic district or projects with 5,000 square feet or more that are located within a historic district are reviewed by the Design Review Board (DRB). The designated design review authority reviews project features such

## AESTHETICS

as building design, landscaping, site planning, and signage. The criteria for design review are as follows:

1. The design and layout of the proposed development is of superior quality, and is consistent with the General Plan, any applicable specific plan, applicable Zoning Code standards and requirements, the City's Design Guidelines, architectural criteria for special areas, and other applicable City requirements (e.g., City policy statements and development plans);
2. The design is appropriate for the use and location of the proposed development and achieves the goals, review criteria, and findings for approval as set forth in the framework of Design Review (Design Guidelines, Introduction, subsection C);
3. The design and layout of the proposed development will not interfere with the use and enjoyment of neighboring existing or future developments;
4. The architectural design of the proposed development is compatible with the character of the surrounding neighborhood;
5. The design of the proposed development will provide a desirable environment for its occupants, visiting public, and its neighbors through the appropriate use of materials, texture, and color, and would remain aesthetically appealing and be appropriately maintained;
6. The proposed development will not be detrimental to the public health, safety, or welfare or materially injurious to the properties or improvements in the vicinity; and
7. The project has been reviewed in compliance with CEQA.

### *Santa Rosa Design Guidelines*

The *Santa Rosa Design Guidelines* (Design Guidelines), adopted in 2002, supplement and enhance design concepts that promote "superior design" by exhibiting thoughtful relationships in the natural and built environment with respect to architecture, landscaping, placemaking and livability, and sustainability. The Design Guidelines provide a clear set of design policies to project sponsors such as developers, property owners, architects, designers, and public agencies and establish criteria for project review. The Design Guidelines apply to all projects that require design review, including most new buildings, subdivisions, infill development, and public improvements. The Design Guidelines represent the city's design and development pattern preferences and facilitate the city's transition to prioritize infill development and increased development in the urban core. The guidelines are organized into four sections:

- **Neighborhood Design.** Focuses on neighborhood-scale design issues.
- **Downtown Station Area.** Identifies key components to support a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented downtown and ways to encourage development.
- **Residential, Commercial, and Industrial Beyond the Core Area.** Provides goals, site planning guidelines, and building design guidelines for single-family residential, multifamily residential, retail centers and commercial districts, and business and light industrial parks and buildings.
- **Special Design Considerations.** Addresses considerations, including streetscape, historic factors, hillside development, and infill projects.

## AESTHETICS

### *Processing Review Procedures for Owners of Historic Properties*

Adopted in 2001, the Cultural Heritage Board created the *Processing Review Procedures for Owners of Historic Properties* to assist owners, designers, and citizens in the preservation of Santa Rosa's historic resources. These procedures are referenced in the Design Guidelines and apply to all historic properties in the city. The report includes background on design review including historic preservation and landmarks, the Cultural Heritage Board, CEQA compliance, and the step-by-step procedures applicants need to follow in preparing and submitting their applications for design review.<sup>3</sup> It also provides the design guidelines and review procedures for historic properties.

### *Citywide Creek Master Plan*

The Citywide Creek Master Plan, adopted in 2007 and updated in 2013, provides guidelines for the care, management, restoration, and enhancement of the network of creeks and waterways that flow through Santa Rosa, which affect the visual setting.<sup>4</sup> The plan is organized into six chapters: Introduction; Goals, Objectives, and Policies; Plan Concepts; Watershed-Specific Recommendations; Implementation Strategy; and References. Each chapter provides guidelines to aid the City's decision-making when planning creek enhancement and restoration activities, coordinating and expanding creekside trail systems, making broader land use planning decisions concerning creeks, and in the development approval process for projects proposed adjacent to waterways.

### *Sebastopol Road Urban Vision and Corridor Plan*

The *Sebastopol Road Urban Vision Plan*, adopted in 2007 after intensive community outreach, envisions development along the stretch of Sebastopol Road between Dutton Avenue and Stony Point Road in the Roseland community. The plan establishes guidelines for land use concepts, urban design criteria, streetscape elements, and a neighborhood center concept for Roseland Village Shopping Center and Dutton Plaza. It rearranges land uses to stimulate economic revitalization with additional opportunities for commercial and residential uses; provides more green spaces; facilitates pleasant and safer pedestrian connectivity; aims to decongest traffic with new alternative routes; and provides public spaces for socializing and a large community gathering space for special events.

### *Street Light Design Standards*

Adopted in November 2011, the Street Light Design Standards establish uniform standards in accordance with City standards and policies for streetlights on public streets.<sup>5</sup> All street lighting projects are subject to approval by the City Engineer. The Street Light Design Standards includes requirements for lateral light distribution based on location.

---

<sup>3</sup> Santa Rosa Cultural Heritage Board, 2001, *Processing Review Procedures*, accessed on May 30, 2023, <https://www.srcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/3259/Processing-Review-Procedures-for-Owners-of-Historic-Properties---PDF?bidId=>.

<sup>4</sup> City of Santa Rosa, County of Sonoma, and Sonoma County Water Agency, August 2013, *Santa Rosa Citywide Creek Master Plan*, accessed April 5, 2023, <https://www.srcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/13792/Santa-Rosa-Citywide-Creek-Master-Plan-PDF>.

<sup>5</sup> City of Santa Rosa, November 15, 2011, *Street Light Design Standards*, <https://www.srcity.org/DocumentCenter/View/9814/Street-Light-Standards>, accessed April 7, 2023.

## **4.1.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **Visual Character**

The city of Santa Rosa is a visually and culturally rich community situated in central Sonoma County on the Santa Rosa Plain. The downtown area serves as the city's primary activity node and consists of mixed office and retail uses. Local attractions such as the Old Courthouse; Santa Rosa Plaza, an indoor mall; and Railroad Square, a retail and hotel hub, are in the downtown area. Surrounding the downtown area are several historic districts, whose structures lend a sense of historic character to the city. The city's residential neighborhoods are diverse, ranging from the traditional grid street patterns and moderately high densities to low density hillside neighborhoods.

### **Scenic Vistas, Corridors, and Roads**

Scenic corridors are considered an enclosed area of landscape, viewed as a single entity that includes the total field of vision visible from a specific point, or series of points along a linear transportation route. Public view corridors are areas in which short-range, medium-range, and long-range views are available from publicly accessible viewpoints, such as from city streets. However, scenic vistas are generally interpreted as long-range views of a specific scenic feature (e.g., open space lands, mountain ridges, bay, or ocean views). The city is bounded by the foothills of the Sonoma Mountains to the east and Laguna de Santa Rosa to the west. Long-range views of the Sonoma Mountains are predominantly visible from locations in the flatland areas of the city. Views of the natural hillsides and natural ridgelines such as Taylor Mountain and Bennet Mountain are important scenic vistas in the EIR Study Area. While there are no officially designated scenic vistas in the EIR Study Area, the City has officially designated the listed roadways in Santa Rosa as scenic roads in the General Plan. A scenic road is defined as a highway, road, drive, or street that provides opportunities for the enjoyment of natural and human-made scenic resources, in addition to its transportation function. Scenic roads direct views to areas of exceptional beauty, natural resources or landmarks, or historic or cultural interest.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. Melita Road   | 12. Chanate Road (from Mendocino Avenue to Fountaingrove Parkway)                                 |
| 2. Los Alamos Road   | 13. Petaluma Hill Road (from Colgan Avenue to the Urban Growth Boundary)                          |
| 3. Calistoga Road (north of Badger Road)                     | 14. Highway 101 (contiguous from northern to southern city limit)                                 |
| 4. Highway 12 (from Highway 101 west to Fulton Road)         | 15. Los Olivos Road   |
| 5. Highway 12 (from Farmers Lane to Calistoga Road)          | 16. Manzanita Avenue  |
| 6. Highway 12 (from Calistoga Road to Oakmont)               | 17. Newanga Avenue  |
| 7. Montecito Avenue (north of Norte Way to Chanate)          | 18. Francisco Avenue  |
| 8. Brush Creek and Wallace Roads                             | 19. Channel Drive   |
| 9. Fountaingrove Parkway                                     | 20. Wright Road South   |
| 10. Bennett Valley Road (south of Farmers Lane)              | 21. Ludwig Avenue   |
| 11. Montgomery Drive (from Mission Boulevard to Melita Road) | 22. Burbank Avenue (from the northerly boundary of Roseland Creek Community Park to Hearn Avenue) |

## AESTHETICS

### State Scenic Highway

Caltrans has designated the section of State Route (SR) 12 within the EIR Study Area as “eligible” for a State Scenic Highway designation.<sup>6</sup> A portion of SR 12 has also been “officially designated” as a State Scenic Highway, starting from Danielli Avenue in eastern Santa Rosa, to London Way near Agua Caliente. Approximately 2.5 miles of the officially designated State Scenic Highway are within the EIR Study Area.

### Light and Glare

Light pollution refers to all forms of unwanted light in the night sky around and above developed urban areas, including glare, light trespass, sky glow, and can also be visually disruptive to humans and nocturnal animal species, and often reflects an over lighting. Views of the night sky are an important part of the natural environment. Light pollution has the potential to become an issue of increasing concern as new development contributes additional outdoor lighting installed for safety and other reasons.

The EIR Study Area includes several urbanized areas with a variety of residential, commercial, and public uses. Existing sources of light and glare in the EIR Study Area are similar to those that would be found in any urbanized area, and include streetlamps, parking lot lighting, storefront and signage lighting, car headlamps, and interior lighting visible through windows. Light pollution is primarily limited to urban areas of the EIR Study Area and is restricted primarily to street lighting along major arterial streets, US Highway 101, SR 12, and to night-time illumination of commercial buildings, shopping centers, and industrial buildings. Light spillage from residential areas, particularly older neighborhoods, is mostly well screened by trees.

### Transit Priority Areas

As described in Section 4.1.1.1, *Regulatory Framework*, the TPAs surrounding the North Santa Rosa SMART station, the Downtown SMART station, and the Santa Rosa Transit Mall are areas where no aesthetic impact findings can be made for future environmental analysis where projects are infill and also a residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center project, pursuant to PRC Section 21099(d).

## 4.1.2 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Implementation of the proposed project would result in a significant aesthetic impact if it would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
2. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

---

<sup>6</sup> California State Scenic Highways Map, <https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca>, accessed October 14, 2022.



## AESTHETICS

3. If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.
5. In combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, result in a cumulative impact with respect to aesthetics.

With respect to standard number three, the complete question in the CEQA Guidelines is “In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?” PRC (CEQA) Section 21071, *Urbanized Area Definition*, has several metrics by which a city can be defined as an urban area. CEQA Section 21071(a)(1) states that a city can be classified as an urban area if the city has a population of at least 100,000 people. According to the State of California Department of Finance, the population of Santa Rosa in 2019 was 174,885.<sup>7</sup> Therefore, Santa Rosa is considered an urban area under CEQA Guidelines Section 21071, and impact discussion AES-3 as shown in the list of standards is based on the second part of the question.

### 4.1.3 IMPACT DISCUSSION

This section analyzes the proposed project’s potential impacts to aesthetics. The evaluation of aesthetics and aesthetic impacts is highly subjective. It requires the application of a process that objectively identifies the visual features of the environment and their importance. Aesthetic description involves identifying existing visual character, including visual resources and scenic vistas unique to Santa Rosa (see Section 4.1.1.2, *Existing Conditions*). Changes to aesthetic resources due to implementation of the proposed project are identified and qualitatively evaluated based on the proposed modifications to the existing setting and the viewer’s sensitivity. Project-related aesthetic impacts are determined using the threshold criteria discussed in Section 4.1.2, *Standards of Significance*.

---

<b>AES-1</b>	<b>Implementation of the proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.</b>
--------------	--

---

Future development under the proposed project would have the potential to affect scenic vistas/corridors if new or intensified development blocked views of areas that provide or contribute to such visual resources. Potential effects could include blocking views of a scenic vista/corridor from specific, publicly accessible vantage points or the alteration of the overall scenic vista/corridor itself. Such alterations could be positive or negative, depending on the characteristics of individual future developments and the subjective perception of observers.

---

<sup>7</sup> State of California, Department of Finance, May 2021, *E-5 Population and Housing Estimates for Cities, Counties and the State: 2011-2020 with 2010 Census Benchmark*, <https://dof.ca.gov/forecasting/demographics/estimates/estimates-e5-2010-2020/>, accessed March 10, 2023.

## AESTHETICS

For the purposes of this analysis, the scenic vistas and corridors are limited to those listed in Section 4.1.1.2, *Existing Conditions*, under the subheading “Scenic Vistas and Corridors” and considers the sections of SR 12 that are officially designated and eligible for listing as an official scenic highway. Long-range views of the scenic vistas are generally seen from the flatland areas of the city, and the vistas would be affected if views of these resources were blocked by potential future development. Another effect that could occur is if potential future development altered areas surrounding the officially designated scenic roads. Such alterations could be positive or negative, depending on the characteristics of individual future developments and the subjective perception of observers.

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, of this Draft EIR, potential future development from implementation of the proposed project is expected to occur in the proposed General Plan 2050 Areas of Change and would be concentrated in the form of infill/intensification on sites either already developed and/or underutilized, and/or in close proximity to existing development, where future development would have a lesser impact on scenic vistas and corridors. The proposed General Plan 2050 reinforces existing uses, heights, and densities in most locations, with allowances for greater intensity at locations that support the goal of a more sustainable, less auto-oriented city. Specifically, areas of concentrated growth would occur in areas such as the Mendocino Avenue/Santa Rosa Avenue Corridor Priority Development Areas (PDA), North Santa Rosa SMART station PDA and TPA, Downtown Station Area PDA and TPA, Sebastopol Road Corridor PDA, Roseland PDA, and Santa Rosa Transit Mall TPA. As shown on Figure 3-3, *Proposed General Plan 2050 Land Use Map*, and Figure 3-6, *Proposed General Plan 2050 Areas of Change*, in Chapter 3 of this Draft EIR, land uses that could generate denser and potentially taller buildings are primarily limited to the existing built environment where buildings of a variety of heights partially obstruct views from the public viewing locations that are at the pedestrian-level. In addition, as described in Chapter 3 of the Draft EIR, nearly all of the land use designations would remain unchanged under the proposed project. Therefore, similar views would continue to be visible between elements of the built environment and over lower-intensity areas, and no new impacts to views of the existing scenic resources described in Section 4.1.1.1 under subheading “Scenic Vistas and Corridors” would occur under the proposed General Plan 2050.

All potential future development in Santa Rosa that is subject to discretionary approval within the city limits would be required to comply with SRCC regulations described in Section 4.1.1.1, *Regulatory Framework*. Specifically, the SRCC includes a Scenic Road Combining District to preserve the natural and constructed features that contribute to the character of scenic roads. The *Santa Rosa Design Guidelines* would also apply to all projects that require design review, including most new buildings, subdivisions, infill development, and public improvements. Potential future development in the city would also be subject to the various planning documents that govern scenic quality in the city, as described in Section 4.1.1.1. These include the *Citywide Creek Master Plan*, *Sebastopol Road Urban Vision and Corridor Plan*, and *Street Light Design Standards*. The environmental and design review process for project-specific development serves to preserve and enhance views from other buildings and public property, thereby reducing the risk of potential future development blocking public views of significant visual resources.

Furthermore, Chapter 3, *Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, and Greenhouse Gas Reduction*, and Chapter 4, *Urban Design, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Historic Preservation, and Art and Culture*, of the proposed General Plan 2050 contain goals, policies, and actions that require local planning and

## AESTHETICS

development decisions to consider aesthetic impacts to scenic resources. The following goals, policies, and actions would serve to minimize impacts related to scenic vistas and/or corridors:

- **Goal 3-2:** Provide a safe and accessible active and public transportation network that emphasizes active transportation connections and service to Equity Priority Areas and Areas of Change.
  - **Policy 3-2.4:** Identify, preserve, and enhance City-designated scenic roads throughout Santa Rosa in both rural and developed areas, to encourage bicycle commuting and recreation.
    - **Action 3-2.25:** Provide bicycle lanes along scenic roads where right-of-way exists.
    - **Action 3-2.26:** Discourage on-street parking along scenic roads; bus stops or scenic overlooks may be provided at appropriate intervals
    - **Action 3-2.27:** Ensure that the size, amount, and placement of signage along scenic roads does not detract from the area's scenic character.
    - **Action 3-2.28:** Update the Zoning Code to develop standards for scenic roadways identified in the General Plan that do not have corresponding development standards in the Zoning Code, including:
 

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Highway 12 (from Highway 101 west to Fulton Road)</li> <li>▪ Highway 12 (from Farmers Lane to Calistoga Road)</li> <li>▪ Fountaingrove Parkway</li> <li>▪ Bennett Valley Road (south of Farmers Lane)</li> <li>▪ Montgomery Drive (from Mission Boulevard to Melita Road)</li> <li>▪ Chanate Road (from Mendocino Avenue to Fountaingrove Parkway)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Petaluma Hill Road (from Colgan Avenue to the Urban Growth Boundary [UGB])</li> <li>▪ Highway 101 (contiguous from northern to southern city limit)</li> <li>▪ Newanga Avenue</li> <li>▪ Channel Drive</li> <li>▪ Wright Road South</li> <li>▪ Ludwig Avenue</li> <li>▪ Burbank Avenue</li> </ul>
--	--
- **Goal 4-1:** Preserve and enhance Santa Rosa's community character through attractive urban and environmental design and intentional development.
  - **Policy 4-1.1:** Preserve and enhance the visual beauty and value of the city's natural waterways, hillsides, historic districts, buildings, structures, and landscapes.
    - **Action 4-1.1:** Maintain view corridors from public vantage points to natural ridgelines and natural landmarks, such as Taylor Mountain and Bennett Mountain.
  - **Policy 4-1.2:** Strengthen and emphasize community focal points, visual landmarks, and features that contribute to the identity of Santa Rosa by applying the design concepts and standards of the Zoning Code, Design Guidelines, Historic Combining Districts, Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan, and the Citywide Creek Master Plan.

## AESTHETICS

- **Action 4-1.3:** Update the City’s Design Guidelines, Objective Design Standards, and/or Zoning Code, as appropriate, to:
  - Expand and refine objective design standards for residential development in compliance with State requirements and to create objective measures that relate to site context and promote livable environments.
  - Require landscape design to relate to the natural setting. Minimize grading for new development and revegetate graded areas around structures with native plants, as fire resistance allows.
  - Require structures in new developments to step with the slope of the site and its topography through use of split-level designs.
- **Policy 4-1.3:** Enhance and strengthen the visual quality of major entry routes into the city and major corridors that link neighborhoods with downtown.
  - **Action 4-1.4:** Develop and implement a strategy for gateways, depicted in Figure 4-2, that enhances their visual quality and supports placemaking, economic development, active transportation, and other, complementary City goals.
  - **Action 4-1.7:** Require landscape screening for all development, redevelopment, and rehabilitation of properties along Highway 101 to create a visual buffer between the highway and other uses.

Proposed General Plan 2050 Action 3-2.28 requires the City to update the Zoning Code to develop standards for scenic roadways identified in the General Plan that do not have corresponding development standards in the Zoning Code, and Action 4-1.3 requires the City to update the City’s Design Guidelines, Objective Design Standards, and/or Zoning Code to ensure that design standards relate to site context and the natural setting, including the slope, which would ensure scenic vistas and/or corridors would not be adversely impacted by potential future development over the course of the General Plan 2050.

In summary, the location of more intense development combined with the established design review procedures for potential future development would limit the significant adverse impact that potential future development could have on a scenic vista or corridor. Implementation of the proposed General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions identified above would further ensure views of scenic vistas and/or corridors would be protected. Therefore, impacts to scenic vistas from implementation of the proposed project would be *less than significant*.

**Significance without Mitigation:** Less than significant.

---

<b>AES-2</b>	<b>Implementation of the proposed project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.</b>
--------------	---

---

As described in Section 4.1.1.2, *Existing Conditions*, Caltrans has designated the section of SR 12 within the EIR Study Area as “eligible” for a State Scenic Highway designation and a portion of SR 12 has been “officially designated” as a State Scenic Highway, starting from Danielli Avenue, in eastern Santa Rosa, to London Way, near Agua Caliente. Approximately 2.5 miles of the officially designated State Scenic Highway

## AESTHETICS

are within the EIR Study Area. Implementation of the proposed project would damage scenic resources along these sections of SR 12 if views of the scenic resources were blocked by development from the proposed project.

Impacts to state scenic highway SR 12 in the EIR Study Area are described under impact discussion AES-1 along with the City's locally designated scenic roadways. Because scenic roads, including SR 12, carry vehicles through areas of notable beauty and/or with natural resources, landmarks, historic features, or cultural interest points, the City has regulations in place to protect and enhance the aesthetic values of scenic routes by governing the development of property and placement of outdoor advertising. As described under impact discussion AES-1, Chapter 3, *Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, and Greenhouse Gas Reduction*, and Chapter 4, *Urban Design, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Historic Preservation, and Art and Culture*, of the proposed General Plan 2050 contains goals, policies, and actions that require local planning and development decisions to consider aesthetic impacts to scenic resources along the sections of SR 12 that are officially designated and eligible to be designated as a state scenic highway. Specifically, proposed Action 3-2.28 requires the City to update the Zoning Code to include development standards for scenic roadways identified in the General Plan that do not have corresponding development standards in the Zoning Code, which includes a section of SR 12 from Farmers Lane to Calistoga Road that is designated as an "eligible" state scenic highway. Accordingly, compliance with SRCC regulations and Design Review requirements along with implementation of the proposed General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions, would ensure any impacts to scenic roads and/or state designated scenic highways would be *less than significant*.

**Significance without Mitigation:** Less than significant.

---

<b>AES-3</b>	<b>Implementation of the proposed project would not conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.</b>
--------------	---

---

The proposed General Plan 2050 is the primary planning document for the City of Santa Rosa. The proposed update is intended to ensure consistency between the General Plan, Zoning Code, and State law. Because the proposed General Plan 2050 is the overriding planning document for the City, and because the proposed General Plan 2050 involves amending the General Plan 2035 and the Zoning Code to improve consistency, adoption and implementation of the proposed project would have no impact with respect to being inconsistent with policies or regulations governing scenic quality.

As described under impact discussion AES-1, potential future development that is subject to design review would be required to adhere to the standards and guidelines of the Design Guidelines, which apply to all projects that require design review, including most new buildings, subdivisions, infill development, and public improvements.

Furthermore, as described under impact discussion AES-1, Chapter 4, *Urban Design, Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources, Historic Preservation, and Art and Culture*, of the proposed General Plan 2050 includes a goal, policies, and actions that require local planning and development decisions to consider impacts to aesthetic impacts, including consistency with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality. Specifically, proposed Action 3-2.28 and Action 4-1.3 direct the City to update the Zoning Code,

## AESTHETICS

City's Design Guidelines, and/or Objective Design Standards, as appropriate, to be consistent with the goals and policies of the proposed General Plan 2050.

While development resulting from implementation of the proposed project could potentially impact visual character or quality of public views in the EIR Study Area, such development would be required to adhere to existing regulations, along with the proposed General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions. Accordingly, implementation of the proposed project would not conflict with applicable zoning or other regulations governing scenic quality and impacts would be *less than significant*.

**Significance without Mitigation:** Less than significant.

---

<b>AES-4</b>	<b>Implementation of the proposed project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.</b>
--------------	---

---

Nighttime illumination and glare impacts are the effects of a development's exterior lighting on adjoining uses and areas. Nighttime uses associated with potential future development may increase light intensity levels and may have the potential to affect existing and future nearby sensitive receptors. If lighting in new development is not designed to reduce upwardly directed light, nighttime lighting could obscure views of the night sky or intrude into neighboring properties. Potential future development would also incrementally increase glare due to exterior glazing (e.g., windows and doors) of new building surfaces, parked cars, and solar photovoltaic panels and site planning (i.e., landscaping and solar photovoltaic panel placement) are not carefully considered. Light and glare impacts are determined through a comparison of the existing light sources with the lighting plans or policies incorporated in development proposals.

Currently, the EIR Study Area contains many existing sources of nighttime illumination. These include street and parking area lights, building-mounted lights, illuminated signage, security lighting, and interior and exterior lighting on existing residential, commercial, and institutional buildings. Glare is primarily from building materials, solar photovoltaic panels, and parked cars. Additional on-site light and glare is caused by surrounding land uses and traffic on SR 12 and US Highway 101.

Future development and activities under the proposed project could intensify lighting sources throughout the EIR Study Area. Future lighting would involve uses similar to the existing land uses in the EIR Study Area and sources of light and glare associated with these uses would be similar in intensity and nature to the existing source of light and glare. In addition to new lighting for buildings, security, and parking areas, the proposed General Plan 2050 encourages the use of solar photovoltaic panels through proposed Action 3-7.13 and Action 3-7.16 in Chapter 3, *Circulation, Open Space, Conservation, and Greenhouse Gas Reduction*. The potential for glare impacts as a result of solar photovoltaic panels would depend on the placement and angle of the panels, and the materials with which the panels are composed.

Nighttime uses associated with potential future development may increase light intensity levels in development areas and may have the potential to affect existing and future nearby sensitive receptors. If lighting from new development is not designed to reduce upwardly directed light, nighttime lighting could obscure views of the night sky or intrude into neighboring properties. Potential future development would

## AESTHETICS

also incrementally increase glare from new building surfaces, parked cars, and solar panel if exterior glazing (i.e., windows and doors), and site planning (i.e., landscaping and solar panel placement) are not carefully considered.

As described in Section 4.1.1.1, *Regulatory Framework*, in addition to general best management practices that require lighting that is context sensitive in style and intensity required under CALGreen, potential future development, including the installation of solar photovoltaic panels, would have to comply with the City's lighting standards as outlined in the SRCC, Street Light Design Standards, and other adopted plans (e.g., Citywide Creek Master Plan, Sebastopol Road Urban Vision and Corridor Plan). Potential future development would be reviewed for consistency with the lighting standards regarding the appropriate use of lighting and avoidance of glare from lighting and other sources.

Compliance with these standards to reduce light spill and glare would ensure potential future development does not generate excessive light levels or glare. Therefore, the lighting and glare from implementation of the proposed project would not substantially increase nighttime light or glare within the EIR Study Area or its surroundings. Impacts would be *less than significant*.

**Significance without Mitigation:** Less than significant.

---

<b>AES-5</b>	<b>Implementation of the proposed project, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, would not result in less-than-significant cumulative impacts with respect to aesthetics.</b>
--------------	---

---

As discussed in Chapter 4.0, *Environmental Analysis*, of this Draft EIR, the cumulative setting includes growth within the EIR Study Area in combination with projected growth in the rest of Sonoma County and the surrounding region. The cumulative setting for visual impacts includes potential future development under the proposed project, combined with effects of development on lands adjacent to the EIR Study Area. Significant impacts, including those associated with scenic resources, visual character, and increased light and glare, would generally be site specific and would not contribute to cumulative impacts after implementation of the General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions.

Compliance with the SRCC regulations, *Santa Rosa Design Guidelines*, along with implementation of the proposed General Plan 2050 goals, policies, and actions, would ensure any impacts to scenic vistas and/or corridors would be less than significant. Potential future development within 125 feet or less from the edge of the pavement of a designated scenic road would be required to comply with the regulations of the Scenic Road Combining District as outlined in the SRCC as well as the Sonoma County General Plan and Design Review requirements. The proposed project is intended to ensure consistency between the General Plan, Zoning Code, and State law; therefore, implementation of the proposed project would not conflict with applicable zoning or other regulations governing scenic quality. Light and glare from potential future development under the proposed project would be regulated through the City's lighting standards in the SRCC, the *Santa Rosa Design Guidelines*, and other adopted plans.

## AESTHETICS

With adherence to existing local and regional regulations, potential future development under the proposed project would not create substantial impacts to visual resources in Santa Rosa or the surrounding communities. Therefore, the proposed project would not result in a cumulatively considerable impact to aesthetic resources and cumulative impacts would be *less than significant*.

**Significance without Mitigation:** Less than significant.