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AESTHETICS

# CHAPTER THREE

## SETTING, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

### 3.1 *Aesthetics*

#### 3.1.1 SETTING

This section of the Draft EIR addresses the aesthetic impacts of the proposed Knighton and Churn Creek Commons Retail Center on the surrounding area. Aesthetic impacts are considered to be those issues and impacts which can be objectively analyzed and quantified. These include light pollution, glare production, reflectivity, change in visual character, and impacts to a scenic vista. The analysis does not include subjective measures of aesthetics, such as the attractiveness of design, the color of buildings, or other matters of opinion or preference. The analysis focuses only on those impacts which are objectively significant to the environment.

During the Knighton and Churn Creek Commons Retail Center EIR scoping meeting on February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2009, comments were made regarding concerns over the scenic value of the Churn Creek bottom area, and the impact the retail center will have on the visual character of the area. In addition, concerns regarding lighting for the proposed center were noted. During the Notice of Preparation period, comments were received from private citizens regarding concerns similar to those mentioned during the scoping meeting.

#### ***Environmental Setting***

The project site topography is relatively flat with ruderal vegetation dominated by non-native grasses and forbs. Visual resources are the natural and cultural features of the landscape that can be seen and that contribute to the public's enjoyment of the environment. Visual resource or aesthetic impacts are generally defined in terms of a project's physical characteristics and potential visibility, and the extent to which the project's presence will change the perceived visual character and quality of the environment in which it will be located.

There are no designated scenic highways or roads in the area. In Figure SH-1 of the Scenic Highways Element of the *Shasta County General Plan*, the portion of the Interstate 5 (I-5) corridor that includes the project site is labeled as a "corridor in which natural and man-made environment contrast." Due to the relatively flat topography, the project site is visible from I-5 and from surrounding properties in the immediate vicinity of the project site.

#### REGIONAL SETTING

The project area is located within Shasta County, equidistant from the city limits of Redding and Anderson, in the northeast corner of the I-5/Knighton Road interchange. Other populated areas nearby include Red Bluff, Chico, and Sacramento, located 29-, 62-, and 159-miles to the southeast, respectively.

Shasta County is situated where the Central Valley of California meets the convergence of the Klamath and Coastal Mountain Ranges to the northwest and west, with the Cascade Mountain range to the northeast and east. Coniferous forest is the predominant vegetation in the mountainous regions of the County. Other areas of the County are characterized by cultivated and pasture lands, oak woodlands, and grasslands. The major wildlife resources of the County include deer, waterfowl, and fish, which are discussed in detail in Section 3.4 of this EIR.

**AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

***Sensitive Viewing Areas***

An assessment was made of the visual quality of the landscape potentially affected by the project. A discussion of the views seen from vantage points includes ratings of the visual quality of the landscapes. These ratings were developed based on a series of in-field observations carried out during the site reconnaissance, review of photos of the area, review of local planning documents, and review of methods for assessment of visual quality. The final assessment of the visual quality of the views from each vantage point was made based on Quad Knopf’s professional judgment, taking into consideration a broad spectrum of landscape assessment factors in a comprehensive manner. Factors considered include an evaluation of:

- Natural features, including topography, water courses, rock outcrops, and natural vegetation
- Positive and negative effect of man-made alternations and structures on visual quality
- Visual composition, including assessment of the complexity and vividness of patterns in the landscape.
- Spatial organization, including assessment of criteria such as perceived accessibility, enclosure, scale, image, refuge, and contemplation

The relevance of these factors for landscape evaluation has been established by landscape perception and assessment research. Based on these considerations, a group of landscape scholars at Virginia Technical University (Buhyoff et al., 1994) developed landscape quality ratings, specifically, the six landscape quality classes listed in [Table 3.1-1](#). This scale provides a strong framework for qualitative ratings because it is based on findings of the full range of available research on the ways in which the public evaluates visual quality. In addition, the scale has a common-sense quality and is easily understood because it defines landscape quality in relative terms, contrasting landscapes that are low, below average, average, above average, high, and outstanding in visual quality.

**Table 3.1-1  
Landscape Visual Quality Scale Used In Rating Project Area Viewsheds**

| <b>Rating</b>              | <b>Explanation</b>  |
|----------------------------|---|
| Outstanding Visual Quality | A rating reserved for landscapes with exceptionally high visual quality. These landscapes are significant nationally or regionally. They usually contain exceptional natural or cultural features that contribute to this rating. They are what we think of as “picture post card” landscapes. People are attracted to these landscapes to view them. |

| <b>Rating</b>                  | <b>Explanation</b>  |
|--------------------------------|---|
| High Visual Quality            | Landscapes that have high quality scenic value. This may be due to cultural or natural features contained in the landscape or to the arrangement of spaces contained in the landscape that causes the landscape to be visually interesting or a particularly comfortable place for people. These are often landscapes which have high potential for recreational activities or in which the visual experience is important. |
| Moderately High Visual Quality | Landscapes which have above average scenic value but are not of high scenic value. The scenic value of these landscapes may be due to man-made or natural features contained within the landscape, to the arrangement of spaces in the landscape or to the two-dimensional attributes of the landscape.   |
| Moderate Visual Quality        | Landscapes that have average scenic value. They usually lack significant man-made or natural features. Their scenic value is primarily a result of the arrangement of spaces contained in the landscape and the two-dimensional visual attributes of the landscape.   |
| Moderately Low Visual Quality  | Landscapes that have below average scenic value but not low scenic value. They may contain visually discordant man-made alterations, but the landscape is not dominated by these features. They often lack spaces that people will perceive as inviting and provide little interest in terms of two-dimensional visual attributes of the landscape.   |
| Low Visual Quality             | Landscapes with low scenic value. The landscape is often dominated by visually discordant man-made alterations; or they are landscapes that do not include places that people will find inviting and lack interest in terms of two dimensional visual attributes.   |

Note: Rating scale based on Buhyoff et al., 1994.

## PROJECT SITE SETTING

The 92-acre project area is currently undeveloped fallow agricultural land, with the exception of a Christmas tree farm and nursery located on the site. The project site is bordered to the west by I-5 and Churn Creek Road, a two lane road bordering the site to the east. The Pacheco Elementary School is located approximately 300-feet to the south of the project site at 7430 Pacheco School Road, east of the TA Travel Center, which includes a truck service and travel center. East Niles Road and Thistle Lane are near the northern boundary of the project site. The surrounding landscape consists of small-scale agriculture with scattered rural residences, a service station, mini mart and truck stop, and an elementary school. [Table 3.1-2](#) describes sensitive viewing areas within the vicinity of the project site.

**Table 3.1-2**  
**Sensitive Viewing Areas**

| <b>Vantage Point/Photo Plate</b> | <b>Views Toward Project Site</b>                           | <b>Views Away from Project Site</b>                                   |
|----------------------------------|--|---|
| Knighton Road                    | Agricultural field   | TA Travel Center truck stop   |
| Interstate 5                     | Southeastern boundary, agricultural fields, existing trees | Low-density residential, some views of Coastal Range                  |
| Churn Creek Road                 | Agricultural fields, nursery, coast range peaks            | Northeast towards Cascade Mountain Range, north towards Knighton Road |

The location at which each sensitive viewing area photo was taken is shown in [Figure 3.1-1](#). The photographs are described in detail below and included as [Figure 3.1-2](#).

### ***Knighton Road***

The southern boundary of the project site borders Knighton Road. Adjacent to the proposed project site main entrance is the TA Travel Center (see [Figure 3.1-2](#)). Views north of the TA Travel Center towards the proposed project entrance show a vacant field, Gold Leaf Nursery, and various grasses, shrubs and trees. The view at the southern project boundary is considered to be of Low Visual Quality.

### ***Interstate 5***

The project site will be accessible at the Knighton Road/I-5 Interchange (see [Figure 3.1-2](#)). The western boundary of the project site is bordered by I-5. Views along the I-5 corridor do not depict viewsheds of scenic quality; however, the Coastal Mountain Range is visible to the west and the Cascade Mountain Range to the northeast and this corridor proximate to the proposed project site on the west is considered to be of Moderate to Moderately Low Visual Quality.

### ***Churn Creek Road***

The project site is bounded to the east by Churn Creek Road, which runs in a north-south direction roughly parallel to I-5 (see [Figure 3.1-2](#)). The westerly view from Churn Creek Road across the project site is of predominately agricultural uses, with views of the Coastal Mountain Range beyond. The easterly view is towards scattered rural residential uses, with the Cascade Mountain Range beyond. The residences to the east of the project site which have views of the Coastal Mountain Range may have obstructed viewsheds as a result of the proposed project. Southerly views along Churn Creek Road show the project site bounded by existing trees and this corridor proximate to the proposed project site on the east is considered to be of Moderate Visual Quality.

## **PROPOSED PROJECT**

The proposed project is a conventional modern shopping center. [Figure 3.1-3](#) provides a conceptual schematic of the proposed center looking northwest from the intersection of Knighton and Churn Creek Roads. The design layout will feature a signature entry feature, landscaped meandering interior travel-ways, low profile downward-directed lighting, a seasonal water feature designed for storm water conveyance along the east and southern boundaries of the site and a perimeter landscape buffer.

A sign plan and lighting plan specifying the number, type, height, and location of proposed signs and exterior lighting fixtures will be required for the project. The project lighting plan will comply with the California Energy Commission's 2005 Building Energy Standards. Predicted footcandle values of light at grade, or the amount of lighting at a given location, will be presented in the lighting plan. Lighting for the project will include directional fixtures to avoid glare, and low overall footcandle levels. A footcandle is a unit of illumination on a surface that is equal to one lumen (one foot from a uniform point source of light of one candle) per square

foot. The lighting plan will be designed to reduce light pollution to off-site land uses. Light pollution is a potential impact from the operation of any light source at night. Proper light shields, lighting design, and landscaping are commonly used to reduce light pollution generated from lighting by blocking the conveyance of light upwards and horizontally. The result is that the lights are less visible from above, and do not add significant ambient light to the nighttime sky.

## **Regulatory Setting**

### **FEDERAL**

There are no specific federal regulations applying to visual resources.

### **STATE**

There are no specific state regulations applying to visual resources.

### **LOCAL**

#### ***Shasta County General Plan***

Objectives and policies of the *Shasta County General Plan* relevant to the proposed project are listed below. This plan sets forth policies dictating conditions under which development in the County may occur, including standards for production of light, visual intrusion, and other aesthetic factors.

Policy SH-a: To protect the value of the natural and scenic character of the official scenic highway corridors and the County gateways dominated by the natural environment, the following provisions, along with the County's development standards, shall govern new development:

- setback requirements;
- regulations of building form, material, and color;
- landscaping with native vegetation, where possible;
- minimizing grading and cut and fill activities;
- requiring use of adequate erosion and sediment control programs;
- siting of new structures to minimize visual impacts from highway;
- regulation of the type, size, and location of advertising signs;
- utility lines shall be underground wherever possible; where undergrounding is not practical, lines should be sited in a manner which minimizes their visual intrusion

Policy SH-b: The type, size, design, and placement of signs within an official corridor shall be compatible with the visual character of the immediate surroundings.

[Table 3.1-3](#) provides a discussion of the proposed project's consistency with applicable portions of Shasta County General Plan Policies related to aesthetics.

**Table 3.1-3  
General Plan Consistency – Aesthetics**

| <b>Policy No.</b> | <b>Finding</b> | <b>Discussion</b>  |
|-------------------|----------------|--|
| SH-a              | Consistent     | The project site is not located within the vicinity of an officially designated scenic highway, nor has the County identified it as a “gateway” per Policy SH-a. |
| SH-b              | Consistent     | Project signage will comply with current Shasta County Zoning Plan Section 17.84.060 through 17.84.065.  |

**Shasta County Zoning Ordinance**

The guidelines regarding lot size, structure height, lighting, landscaping, parking, walls, outdoor trash storage, and design guidelines are delineated in Section 3.9, Land Use of this DEIR.

**3.1.2 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Impacts to aesthetic and visual resources will be assessed based on the following thresholds of significance. The project is considered to have a significant impact on the environment if it will:

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

**3.1.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

***Impact #3.1-1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista or substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.***

**Discussion/Conclusion:** State and County governments designate scenic vistas; however, there are no designated scenic vistas in the vicinity of the project site. The General Plan does not designate the project site as scenic or as an area having highly-valued scenic resources. Existing views of the project site and surrounding areas are depicted in Figure 3.1-2.

The proposed project will alter the rural character of the site to one dominated by commercial use, which would include a number of single-story retail structures. The existing site does not present unique natural elements or scenic qualities, and presently includes a nursery with associated buildings and a Christmas tree farm. The project site is located to the east of I-5 and north of a truck service/travel plaza.

The proposed site development is consistent with commercial structures south of the site; however, the project is not consistent with the majority of surrounding residential and other structures. The project design includes landscaping, open-space and landscape buffers that will reduce potential visual impacts. Due to the project site's visibility from I-5, Knighton Road and Churn Creek Road, development of the project will alter viewsheds from surrounding areas. This is considered a *potentially significant* impact

Implementation of the proposed project, which will include buildings up to 40 feet in height and portions of buildings and architectural features that will exceed 40 feet, will limit the field of vision from the west towards the north, northeast, and east with viewsheds of the Cascade Mountain Range. Residents on the north, northeast, and east will have limited views of the Coastal Mountain Range.

To reduce visual impacts of the project site on surrounding land uses, the project proponent has proposed a landscaped setting that would provide a perimeter buffer, separation of interior spaces, visual interest and shading to reduce visual impacts at the boundary of the project site. However, the project design will not reduce visual impacts to less than significant.

### ***Mitigation Measures***

Implementation of the following mitigation measure will reduce visual impacts, but not to a less-than-significant level. Substantial alteration to the existing visual character of the project area will result in this impact being *significant and unavoidable*.

#### ***Mitigation Measure #3.1-1:***

*Project signs shall be constructed to a height of not more than 40 feet at the Knighton Road entrance and along Churn Creek Road. Additional signs shall be constructed to heights approved in the Planned Development Zone. Sign lighting shall conform to the criteria in the Planned Development Ordinance for this project.*

***Impact #3.1-2: Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.***

**Discussion/Conclusion:** The proposed project is not located within a state designated scenic highway. There is *no impact*.

### ***Mitigation Measures***

No mitigation measures are required.

***Impact #3.1-3: Creation of a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect nighttime views in the area.***

**Discussion/Conclusion:** The project will include installation and operation of outdoor lighting throughout parking areas and on building exteriors. Light production will occur from within the buildings through windows and glass doors which will be visible from adjacent areas. Project lighting has the potential to create light pollution in the vicinity of the project site, especially in the residential areas. Light pollution is a *potentially significant* impact from the operation of light sources associated with the project at night.

Shasta County Zoning Ordinance requirements (Section 17.84.050) pertaining to light and glare reduction to surrounding properties (lighting to be directed inward and downward on the developed property) will be applicable to the proposed project.

### **Mitigation Measures**

In combination with County Zoning Ordinance Section 17.84.050 requirements designed to reduce light and glare impacts, the following mitigation measure will reduce impacts associated with light pollution to *less-than-significant*.

#### **Mitigation Measure #3.1-3:**

*Outdoor lighting shall be controlled by timers, which will include shutting off on-site lighting, with the exception of security lighting located at on-site buildings. Security lighting shall account for no more than 20 percent of total on-site exterior lighting (watts per square foot of outdoor area). All outdoor lighting shall be directed downward to prevent unwanted spill, and away from I-5, other public roadways, and all adjoining properties. Exterior lighting shall be limited to a maximum of 0.5 horizontal foot candles (HFC) at a distance of 25 feet beyond the property lines, and shall use “cutoff” light fixtures.*

#### **Impact #3.1-4: Creation of a new source of glare.**

**Discussion/Conclusion:** The proposed project will include buildings constructed to a height of 40 feet, potentially with portions of buildings and some architectural features that will exceed 40 feet. Light reflecting off surfaces during daylight hours has the potential to create a source of glare in the vicinity of the project site. On-site landscaping will help reduce glare from car windshields and other glass surfaces. However, depending on the building materials used, project structures will have the potential to create glare; therefore, this impact is considered *potentially significant*.

### **Mitigation Measures**

Implementation of the following mitigation measure as well as Mitigation Measure #3.1-1 will reduce the impact to a *less-than-significant* level.

**Mitigation Measure #3.1-4:**

*The project design shall maximize to the extent feasible the use of glare-reducing materials, including non-reflective paints and building materials, to reduce the amount of glare created by the project structures.*