

### 4.1.1 INTRODUCTION

This section describes the existing visual setting, focusing on the visual character of the project site and views from surrounding public areas, and the potential for the proposed Scott Ranch project to affect those conditions. It also presents potential impacts to aesthetics from the construction and operation of a proposed regional park trail that would extend from the western boundary of the project site to the existing Ridge Trail on Helen Putnam Regional Park (see **Section 4.1.4.4** below).

The analysis of the proposed project's potential visual effects is based on field observations of the project site and surroundings in addition to a review of the proposed project's conceptual drawings and technical data, aerial and ground-level photographs of the project area, and photo simulations of the Davidon (28-lot) Residential Project component.

### 4.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### 4.1.2.1 Regional Visual Setting

The City of Petaluma is located in the southern portion of Sonoma County (see **Figure 3.0-1, Project Location**). The furthest navigable reach of the Petaluma River ends in the City. The Petaluma River flows to the south into San Pablo Bay. To the northeast of the City is Sonoma Mountain. The City of Petaluma is bordered by the community of Penngrove to the north, Rohnert Park and Santa Rosa further to the north, with unincorporated Sonoma County land to the west, east, and south. The City is mostly built out, and development predominates the visual setting. Residential uses and open space are located throughout the City, while commercial and industrial uses exist primarily in the central portion of the City along Highway 101 and the Petaluma Slough.

#### 4.1.2.2 Project Site and Vicinity Visual Setting

##### *Existing Visual Setting*

The approximately 58-acre project site is largely undeveloped land, with limited development consisting of a barn complex (three barns and an old dairy equipment cleaning shed), an unoccupied mobile home, and the remnants of a collapsed farm house that had been destroyed by fire in the eastern portion of the site. Visual elements on the project site include large areas of grassy hillsides, a portion of Kelly Creek flowing from west to east surrounded by oak and bay trees, other drainages that are tributaries to Kelly Creek, scattered trees including a cluster of oak trees in the southwest corner, and rock outcroppings. The

barn complex consist of wooden structures painted red with white trim and a shingled roof and contribute to the visual setting as they create a rural impression that reflects the City's agricultural past. The mobile home is light yellow and placed amid the barn complex.

The project site is visible from local roadways, including Windsor Drive and D Street as well as Pinnacle Drive, which is located within an existing residential neighborhood directly to the east. Views of the northern parcel (project site north of Windsor Drive) comprise a grassy hillside and a small cluster of oak woodland. Views of the southern parcel (project site south of Windsor Drive) comprise rolling hillsides with grass cover, the tree-lined Kelly Creek corridor, and the barn complex near the corner of Windsor and D Street. The barn complex is visible from Windsor Drive and southbound D Street and is recognized by the community as contributing to a sense of place. The trees along Kelly Creek obstruct direct views of the existing barn complex when driving northbound on D Street. Views of the project site are available from the Ridge Trail located to the west of the project site on Helen Putnam Regional Park. From this vantage point, the project site consists of rolling hillside covered with grasses and the tree-lined Kelly Creek corridor.

### *Surrounding Land Uses*

As shown in **Figure 3.0-1, Project Location**, the areas to the north, northwest, and east of the project site are developed with existing single-family homes in residential subdivisions. Helen Putnam Regional Park, maintained by the Sonoma County Regional Parks Department, is located to the west of the project site. The lands to the south and southwest of the project site are in unincorporated Sonoma County and consist of land used for grazing or privately owned large parcels with rural residences.

### *Existing Light and Glare*

As the project site is largely undeveloped, there are no sources of light and glare present on the site currently. The major light sources in the project vicinity include the residential uses to the north, northwest, and east of the site, and car headlights and streetlights associated with Windsor Drive and D Street. Sources of glare include daytime reflections off structures and vehicles traveling on the roadways surrounding the site and headlights on the same roadways at night.

## **4.1.3 REGULATORY CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no federal or state regulations related to aesthetics that apply to the proposed project.

## Local Plans and Policies

### *City of Petaluma General Plan 2025*

The City of Petaluma General Plan 2025 was adopted by the City on May 19, 2008. The General Plan 2025 sets goals and policies concerning the community and gives direction to growth and development. In particular, the General Plan includes goals and policies related to the development of hillsides/ridgelines and development in the West Hills. Policies relevant to the proposed project are listed below.

#### **Land Use, Growth Management, and the Built Environment**

- Policy 1-P-3:** Preserve the overall scale and character of established residential neighborhoods.
- Policy 1-P-14:** Require provision of street trees, landscaping, parking and access features to help integrate land uses and achieve an effective transition between uses of disparate intensities.
- Policy 1-P-17:** Retain ridgelines and prominent hillsides as open space through appropriate clustering and/or transfer of density to other parts of a development site (applies to Rural and Very Low Residential areas within the West Hills, South Hills and Petaluma Boulevard North subareas only).
- Policy 1-P-18:** Maintain a permanent open space around the city by the continuation of the Urban Separator and the use of an Urban Separator Pathway, as designated.
- Policy 1-P-20:** Maintain a standard width for the Urban Separator at a minimum of 300 feet except in those areas where it may be variable due to topography, physical or ownership constraints, or is already established at more or less than 300 feet.
- Policy 1-P-21:** As development or annexation occurs, the Urban Separator and/or Urban Separator Pathway shall be dedicated to the City, at no cost for the City for the land or required interface improvements.
- A. Public access pathways and appropriate landscaping, scenic or overlook areas where appropriate, and fencing along the entire length of the urban separator shall be provided by the developer through the development review process, in concert with project design.
  - B. Maintenance, in perpetuity, shall be the responsibility of the development through a guaranteed funding source, such as a Landscape Assessment District and/or a funded trust.

**Policy 1-P-23:** Establish public scenic or overlook areas in appropriate locations within the Urban Separator concurrently with project design.

**Policy 1-P-49:** Preserve existing tree resources and add to the inventory and diversity of native/indigenous species.

### **Community, Design, Character, and Green Building**

**Policy 2-P-5** Strengthen the visual and aesthetic character of major arterial corridors.

A. Improve key arterial corridors through:

- Intensification via infilling, orientation of facades toward the street, appropriate building height, and interior parking lot configuration on the parcel;
- Prohibiting the use of soundwalls facing the roadway;
- Sidewalk improvements including trees, lighting fixtures, planters, curbs, shading devices, public and commercial-related seating, and paving materials;
- Streetscape improvements including use of planted medians, parking configuration, signage, and paving materials; and
- Creating strong streetscape elements where deemed appropriate (for example, intensely planted tree corridors could draw attention to the street itself as a green passage).

**Policy 2-P-8:** Require single-loaded streets along the Urban Separator and riparian corridors to ensure the creation of linear open space corridors with maximum public accessibility, visibility, and opportunities for stewardship.<sup>1</sup>

**Policy 2-P-60:** Provide a transition from the urban densities of Downtown to the rolling hills and agricultural lands beyond the UGB.

**Policy 2-P-61:** Protect existing agricultural uses, wildlife, historic and cultural resources, and natural vegetation.

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<sup>1</sup> A single-loaded street is a street on which homes have been built along one side of the street only with no need for access to the front yard, rear yard, or parking on the other side.

**Policy 2-P-62:** Preserve the rural aspect of the area by maintaining the existing density (Rural, Very Low and Low Residential) and land use patterns.

*A decrease in density through minimum lot sizes within the Development Code can achieve the desired transition.*

**Policy 2-P-63:** Allow for clustering of residential units in the hills, permitting smaller lot sizes where clustering and common space is maintained and proposed development corresponds to stipulated density ranges.

**Policy 2-P-65:** Require dedication of the Urban Separator and/ or Urban Separator Pathway along the western and southern boundaries of the UGB.

**Policy 2-P-67:** Create an open space network through residential areas by requiring integration of open space with public trails when properties are developed.

**Policy 2-P-68:<sup>2</sup>** Preserve the uniqueness of the property at the intersection of D Street and Windsor Drive (Scott Ranch) through incorporation of the following criteria in the future development process:

- Respect the gateway value with a minimum 100'-setback from D Street with no sound walls.
- Maintain a minimum of a 100' setback along Kelly Creek and its tributaries.
- Preserve the red barns in place, designate them historic and encourage the incorporation of a nature study area.
- Preserve and maintain habitat areas and trees.
- Avoid slide areas and minimize grading.
- Provide a minimum 300'-wide Urban Separator.
- Provide a minimum of a 3-acre park site.
- Include the provision of trailhead facilities with restrooms and parking with a connection to Helen Putnam Regional Park.

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<sup>2</sup> As described in **Section 3.4.1, General Plan Amendments**, of this document, the Scott Ranch project proposes amending this policy to allow small accessory structures, within the 100-foot setback from D Street, as part of the public park amenities. Proposed policy amendment would be also to recognize that existing barns may remain within the 100-foot setbacks from the centerline of Kelly Creek and to allow the relocation of the barns complex within the same general area for purpose of stabilization and preservation.

- Respect City hillside regulations.

### ***City of Petaluma Implementing Zoning Ordinance***

The relevant sections of the City of Petaluma Implementing Zoning Ordinance (IZO) include the following:

#### **Chapter 16 - Hillside Protection**

This chapter establishes the regulations for development and alteration of properties in hillside and ridgeline areas in order to preserve the essential scenic and natural resources that define the character of Petaluma, and to implement specific General Plan goals and policies related to scenic resources and hillside protection. This chapter also identifies 14 vantage points, including D Street in the vicinity of the City limit/Urban Growth Boundary, from which field observations are made to assess the visual impact of development within the City.

To provide a complete assessment of visual impacts of a proposed development, this chapter calls for a visual analysis. As noted in the IZO, the purpose of the visual analysis is to simulate the impact of the proposed project within the context of its surroundings. When siting and designing improvements for the project, consideration should be given to the potential visual impact of the project on community views of hillsides and ridgelines. In order to evaluate the potential impact of a project on community views, specific view platforms are identified. When selecting a view platform(s) for the visual analysis, priority should be given to those platforms that provide the greatest community view (i.e., public view) of the project. Depending on the location and visibility of the project, a visual analysis may need to be prepared from more than one view platform. A visual analysis includes site improvements (structures, roads, driveways, etc.) and site modifications (tree removal, grading, retaining walls, fences, etc.).

#### **Chapter 17 - Tree Preservation**

This chapter provides regulations for the protection, preservation, and maintenance of groves and stands of mature trees, and mature trees in general. The City's objective is to establish regulations that will result in no net loss of tree canopy in the community. It is also the intent of this chapter to promote and perpetuate the urban forest through the replacement of trees removed as a result of new development.

#### **Chapter 21 – Performance Standards**

This Chapter is intended to permit objective and precise measurement of the impact of nuisances; to establish permissible limits for each nuisance; to ensure that all industries will provide necessary control measures to protect the community from hazards and nuisances; and to protect any industry from arbitrary

exclusion. Relevant to aesthetic impacts, this chapter provides standards for minimizing direct glare and reads as follows:

*No direct glare shall be permitted with the exception that parking areas and walkways may be illuminated by luminaries so hooded or shielded that the maximum angle of the cone of direct illumination shall be sixty (60) degrees if the luminary is not less than six (6) feet above the ground. Such luminary shall be placed no higher than the principal structure on the site if attached to said structure and, if not attached to the principal structure, no higher than twenty (20) feet unless the Zoning Administrator determines that special operational circumstances of the subject property require higher light standards. The maximum illumination at ground level shall not be in excess of three (3) footcandles.*

*Indirect glare shall not exceed that value which is produced by an illumination of the reflecting surface not to exceed: 0.3 foot candles (maximum) or 0.1 foot candle (average).*

#### **4.1.4 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

##### **4.1.4.1 Significance Criteria**

In accordance with Appendix G of the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*, the impacts of the proposed project related to aesthetics would be considered significant if it would:

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

##### **4.1.4.2 Methodology**

Project conditions were evaluated against the existing visual character of the project site in the context of existing uses, vegetation, and visual character. In compliance with the City's IZO, Chapter 16-Hillside Protection, a visual analysis was prepared to simulate the visual changes of the proposed development within the context of its surroundings, and assess potential visual impacts on the surrounding views of hillsides and ridgelines. The potential impacts to the visual character of the site and surroundings were evaluated in terms of massing, size, and type of land use. The proposed project's potential to introduce

substantial new lighting and/or create new sources of glare that could affect nearby existing uses was also evaluated in order to determine potential impacts to visual resources.

#### 4.1.4.3 Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

**Impact AES-1: Development of the project would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. (Potentially Significant; Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

The General Plan 2025 does not designate any scenic vistas within the City. However, the “vistas of Sonoma Mountain to the east” are identified as an important part of the City’s form and identity. Views of Sonoma Mountain in the area of the project site would not be interrupted during construction or at buildout of the proposed project.

As described in **Section 1.2, Project History** of this document, public comments expressed concerns with the previously proposed residential development and its impact on the aesthetic resources of the project site. The proposed Scott Ranch project includes a substantially smaller residential component than the previously proposed development that would be clustered on a 15-acre portion of the 58-acre project site adjacent to existing housing subdivisions. Approximately 3 acres of the 15-acre portion would be landscaped as a common open space. The remaining 44 acres that constitute the major portion of the project site would remain undeveloped and would be improved as an extension to the Helen Putnam Regional Park. Improvements under the Putnam Park Extension Project component would include demolition of the existing unoccupied mobile home and the remnants of the collapsed farm home, restoration of the barn complex and development of a barn center, a trail network, playground, picnic areas, parking, and restrooms. The Putnam Park Extension Project component would also include new livestock fencing, enhancement to the stock pond, ephemeral drainages stabilization, riparian corridor enhancement for Kelly Creek and the D Street Tributary, and two infiltration basins. The Putnam Park Extension Project component improvements would result in minor changes to the scenic character of the 44-acre portion of the site. Although the barn complex may be relocated for stabilization and preservation purposes, it would remain in the same area; therefore, the scenic value of the project site would be maintained.

Chapter 16 of the City’s IZO establishes the regulations for development and alteration of properties in hillside and ridgeline areas in order to preserve the essential scenic and natural resources that define the character of Petaluma, and to implement specific General Plan goals and policies related to scenic resources and hillside protection. Section 16.040 identifies 14 vantage points termed “View Platforms” within the City that are to be used to assess the visual impact of development within the City (**Figure 4.1-1, Key to City Viewpoint Locations**). IZO Section 16.050.D states that “When siting and designing the improvements for the

**Figure 4.1-1 Key to City Viewpoint Locations**

*project, consideration should be given to the potential visual impact of the project on community views of hillsides and ridgelines. In order to evaluate the potential impact of a project on community views, specific view platforms have been identified. When selecting a view platform(s) for the visual analysis, priority should be given to those platforms that provide the greatest community view of the project.”*

The project site is visible from three of the 14 view platforms: “Caulfield Lane Overpass,” “D Street in the vicinity of the City limit/urban growth boundary,” and “Roof of the “C” Street parking garage.” As shown in **Figure 4.1-2, Views from Caulfield Lane and C Street**, the most prominent views from the Caulfield Lane Overpass and the roof of the C Street parking garage are long-range views of the grassy hillside. As shown in **Figure 4.1-2**, no homes would be visible from these vantage points.

The project site is located near the vantage point on D Street in the vicinity of the City limit. **Figure 4.1-3, View from D Street Facing Northwest** (near City limit), presents the view of the project site as seen from this vantage point. As the figure shows, short- to mid-range views of the project site from D Street at the City limit consists of grassy hillsides, meadows with low shrubs, mature trees, and the Victoria Subdivision in the background. **Figure 4.1-4, View D Street Facing Northwest Showing Project Buildout**, presents a photo simulation depicting how the project site would appear from this vantage point. The portion of the Davidon (28-lot) Residential Project component south of Windsor Drive would be within view. However, the barn complex on the southern portion of the project site would not be visible from this viewpoint. Although trees to be retained and new trees to be planted would minimize the appearance of change from this viewpoint, nonetheless the view from this vantage point would change compared to existing conditions. Views of the project site from points north of this vantage point would also change, with the new homes on both sides of Windsor Street prominently visible from northbound D Street.

Based on the above, the major portion of the project site that would be improved for the Putnam Park Extension Project component would not be significantly altered and the scenic value associated with the barn complex would be maintained. The Davidon (28-lot) Residential Project component would be developed on a small portion on the northwest corner of the project site and would alter the views of the site at this location. Distant views of the project site and surrounding hills from off-site locations, including the view platforms would not be adversely affected. However, the proposed project would be visible from the vantage point on D Street and would result in a potentially significant impact on scenic views from this roadway. The proposed project would be required to undergo Site Plan and Architectural Review by the Planning Commission and comply with design requirements listed in the City’s Implementing Zoning Ordinance (i.e. Hillside Protection, Tree Preservation, etc.). The project would be required to comply with design recommendations as a result of Site Plan and Architectural Review, which would ensure that the architectural design is visually unobtrusive and conform to site topography.

In addition, **Mitigation Measure AES-1a**, which places restrictions on the design of the proposed project, and **Mitigation Measure AES-1b**, which requires that architectural materials of the subdivision include natural, terrain-neutral colors, are identified to reduce the potentially significant effects of the proposed project on the views of the project area. With mitigation, the impact of the proposed project on scenic views would be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:**

**AES-1a** The following restrictions shall be placed on the design of the proposed project:

- Elements such as design, height, contouring, and massing of proposed single-family development shall comply with Hillside Protection and Tree Protection ordinances. Homes shall be designed to step with the hillside and avoid solid walls or overhangs that run against the natural slope of the site.
- Construction of Lots 1 through 10 shall be carefully evaluated during the Site Plan and Architectural Review process. These lots shall only be subdivided or developed with structures that would incorporate appropriate hillside design elements and would not substantially block or obscure views.
- The design, height, and massing of retaining walls shall be specifically reviewed during the Site Plan and Architectural Review process. Retaining walls shall not exceed 5 feet in height unless incorporating terracing with landscaping and minimum width of 3 feet. Retaining walls should conform to the slope where feasible. Treatment of retaining walls that are visible from a public street shall incorporate a veneer of natural stone, stained concrete, earth toned textured surface, or as otherwise accepted through the Site Plan and Architectural Review process such that walls blend in with the natural hillside environment and promote a rural character.
- Review during the Site Plan and Architectural Review shall include project landscape. Vegetation including woodland cover shall be reestablished on graded slopes and between existing abutting residential structures (See also **Mitigation Measure BIO-2a**). Reestablishment of vegetation near the project's residences shall conform to the requirement of the project's Fuel Management Program.

**Figure 4.1-2 Views from Caulfield Lane and C Street**

Figure 4.1-3 View from D Street Facing Northwest

**Figure 4.1-4 View D Street Facing Northwest Showing Project Buildout**

**AES 1b** The architectural elevations and materials used on the exterior of the residences (including roofing materials, exterior finishing, and trim palette) shall include natural, terrain-neutral colors and prohibit the use of brightly colored terra cotta or red clay roof tiles in order to limit potential visual contrast between the proposed development and the adjacent hillsides, as determined acceptable by the Planning Commission through the Site Plan and Architectural Review process required by Petaluma Municipal Code Section 24.010. The developer shall include Codes, Covenants, and Restrictions (CC&R) that prohibit or limit roofing color changes by future owners, in accordance with the Planning Commission Site Plan and Architectural Review approval.

**Significance after Mitigation:** Implementation of **Mitigation Measures AES-1a** and **1b** would reduce the project's impact on scenic vista to a less than significant level.

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**Impact AES-2:**                    **Development of the project site would not have an effect on scenic resources within a state scenic highway. (*Less than significant*)**

The project site is not located adjacent to a state scenic highway.<sup>3</sup> The D Street segment within the boundary of Sonoma County, which starts at the southeastern corner of the project site, is designated as a scenic corridor in the Sonoma County General Plan 2020 (Sonoma County 2016). However, in the project vicinity, the City of Petaluma 2025 General Plan does not identify D Street as a scenic roadway (City of Petaluma General Plan 2025). The Davidon (28-lot) Residential Project component would occupy a small portion on the northwestern corner of the project site while the major portion of the project site that closer to the Sonoma County boundaries and to the designated scenic corridor would be developed as an extension to the Hellen Putnam Regional Park. The Putnam Park Extension Project component would maintain the visual character of the site and would not alter the rural impression associated with the barn complex. Therefore, project development would not have a substantial effect on scenic resources within a state or local scenic highway and this impact would be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:** No mitigation measures are required.

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<sup>3</sup> Caltrans, 2019. List of Eligible and Officially Designated State Scenic Highways. <https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways>. Accessed December 23, 2019.

**Impact AES-3: Development of the project site would substantially degrade the visual character and quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. (Potentially Significant; Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

The proposed project would alter the visual character of the project site by clearing portions of the site, developing it with residential units and recreational facilities— such as a picnic areas, trails, and trailhead parking lots— and potentially relocating the barn complex in the same general location.

The General Plan does provide guidance relative to scenic resources, and for the project site, scenic resources are interpreted to include natural drainage features (Kelly Creek and its tributaries), numerous large trees, including oaks, and the cluster of barn buildings just south of the intersection of Windsor Drive and D Street. Views of these scenic resources are available from both roadways.

The design of the proposed project minimizes impacts to scenic resources by clustering development in a small portion of the project site, north of Windsor Drive and northwest of Kelly Creek, adjacent to existing residential developments. The remaining site portion of 44 acres would be developed as an extension to the Hellen Putnam Regional Park and would maintain the general rural aspect of the project site.

### ***Construction***

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the demolition of the existing mobile home and the remnants of the collapsed farm home on the project site. As described under **Impact AES-2** above, the barn complex may be relocated within the same general area as needed to protect, stabilize, and preserve the structures. The proposed project would result in grading of portions of the project site and the installation of infrastructure that includes roads, utilities, and storm water detention basins and outfalls. Some of the existing trees would be removed but the majority of the trees along Kelly Creek and in the southwestern portion of the site would remain. The hillsides where homes are planned would be graded to create building pads. Off-site transportation improvements would include construction of a roundabout at the intersection of Windsor Drive and D Street, a sidewalk extending north along the eastern side of D Street between Windsor Drive and Sunnyslope Avenue, and a trail section along the west side of D Street from the southeast corner to the northeast corner of the project site. The appearance of the project site would vary depending on the construction activities underway and equipment being used at that time. During site preparation, the development areas would be cleared, grubbed and graded. However, construction activities would be temporary (i.e., for the duration of the construction activities) and the changes similar to those commonly observed on construction sites in urban areas would be restricted to a small portion of the project site (15 acres of the 58 acres) for the residential development. Construction activities associated with the Putnam Park Extension Project component that would occupy the major portion of the project site

would result in less disturbance and smaller scale than the residential component with no major grading or new roadway construction. Due to the temporary and short duration of the changes, the visual effects would be less than significant. **Mitigation Measure AES-3a**, which would require that construction equipment staging areas utilize appropriate screening, would further reduce the less-than-significant temporary construction impact on the visual character of the project site.

### ***Project Completion and Occupancy***

Upon project completion, the long-term visual character of the project site would be established, including the final size and bulk of the new homes, the architectural finishes, and landscaping. The following provides a brief discussion of how the proposed project would alter the existing views of the project site and its surroundings, and the project's effect on visual character of the site and its vicinity.

### **Changes in Public Views**

Based on a visual reconnaissance of the project site, three primary types of public views were identified: (1) those observed from the adjacent Helen Putnam Regional Park, (2) those observed from the roadways that are adjacent to the project site, and (3) views as seen from the residential neighborhoods to the north, northwest, and east of the project site. In order to document the existing visual character of the project site and its surroundings, photographs were taken from locations where public views of the site are most attainable. **Figure 4.1-5, Key to Nearby Viewpoint Locations**, identifies the location of photograph viewpoints.

#### ***View from the Ridge Trail (View 1)***

Views of the project site from the Ridge Trail to the west currently are of grassy hillsides and mature trees lining the Kelly Creek riparian area as shown in **Figure 4.1-6, View from the Ridge Trail**. In addition, one of the smaller buildings in the barn complex is visible to the north of Kelly Creek. The single-family residences within the Victoria Subdivision to the north of the site are visible in the foreground while single-family residences within the Pinnacle Heights Subdivision to the east of the site are visible in the background. Grassy hillsides are located beyond the project site on the eastern side of D Street.

**Figure 4.1-7** presents photo simulations depicting how the project site would appear from this viewpoint (View 1). Sidewalks and landscaping such as shrubs and trees would be constructed along Windsor Drive, which would be visible from this viewpoint. The roofs of the project residences that would be located south of Windsor Drive would be visible from this location, and the roofs of the project residences north of Windsor Drive would be partially visible. If the large red barn is relocated it may remain visible from this

viewpoint. The remaining portion of the project site would remain as open space and other than enhanced plantings of native trees and vegetation there would not be changes to the views of open space lands.

*Views from Victoria Subdivision (Views 2 and 3)*

Views of the project site from within Victoria Subdivision along Windsor Drive facing southeast (View 2) and south (View 3) are currently of grassy hillsides and the top of mature trees lining the Kelly Creek riparian area as shown in **Figure 4.1-8, Views from Victoria Subdivision**. The most prominent features of the project site visible from these viewpoints are grassy hillsides. In addition to the grassy hillside, the ridgeline to the east of D Street is also visible from View 2.

**Figure 4.1-9** presents photo simulations depicting how the project site would appear from the two viewpoints within the Victoria Subdivision. The existing view of the grassy hillside south of Windsor drive in both views would be extensively modified and the view of top of the tree-lined riparian corridor (View 2) would be almost entirely obscured by the proposed residential homes.

*Views from Windsor Drive (Views 4 and 5)*

Views of the project site from Windsor Drive near the middle of the project site facing southwest (View 4) and south (View 5) are currently of grassy hillsides and mature trees lining the Kelly Creek riparian area as shown in **Figure 4.1-10, Views from Windsor Drive**. The most prominent features on the project site visible from these viewpoints include a grassy field sloping down to Kelly Creek in the foreground and the grassy hillside to the south of Kelly Creek in the background. A variety of trees line Kelly Creek and form a riparian woodland area clustered in the southern portion of the project site.

**Figure 4.1-11** presents photo simulations depicting how the project site would appear from this viewpoint. The backyards and rear of the single-family homes on the southwestern side of Windsor Drive (View 4) and portion of the sidewalk landscaping south of Windsor Drive (View 5) would be visible. The central portion of the project site along Windsor Drive would be preserved as open space. The existing view of the grassy meadow and tree lined riparian corridor would remain largely unaltered.

*Views from Pinnacle Heights Subdivision (Views 6 and 7)*

As shown in **Figure 4.1-12, Views from Pinnacle Heights Subdivision**, a grassy hillside with some mature oak trees on the ridgeline is visible on the northern portion of the site (View 6). A grassy meadow sloping downward into Kelly Creek and the barn complex and mobile home are visible on the project site to the south of Windsor Road. Behind the existing buildings, the mature trees that line Kelly Creek are visible

**Figure 4.1-5 Key to Nearby Viewpoint Locations**

**Figure 4.1-6 View from the Ridge Trail**

**Figure 4.1-7 Views from the Ridge Trail Showing Project Buildout**

**Figure 4.1-8 Views from Victoria Subdivision**

**Figure 4.1-9 Views from Victoria Subdivision Showing Project Buildout**

Figure 4.1-10 Views from Windsor Drive

**Figure 4.1-11 Views from Windsor Drive Showing Project Buildout**

**Figure 4.1-12 Views from Pinnacle Heights Subdivision**

from Pinnacle Heights Subdivision. The intersection of Pinnacle Road, Windsor Drive and D Street is located in the foreground view. Views from Pinnacle Drive to the east (View 7) towards the project site, currently consist of homes in the Pinnacle Heights Subdivision in the foreground, grassy hillsides, the Kelly Creek riparian area and the barn complex and mobile home in the mid-ground, and the Victoria Subdivision and ridgelines of hills in the background to the northwest and southwest of the project site.

**Figure 4.1-13** presents photo simulations depicting how the project site would appear from viewpoints within the Pinnacle Heights Subdivision under the proposed project. The project site to the northeast and southwest of Windsor drive would be graded and terraced as appropriate. The roundabout would be installed at the intersection of Windsor Drive and D Street and sidewalks would be added along both of these roadways including landscaping and trees, which would be visible from these viewpoints.

The Davidon (28-lot) Residential Project component and associated landscape would be visible from the Pinnacle Heights Subdivision (View 7). If the barns are relocated for stabilization and preservation purposes, they would remain visible from these locations because the barns would be relocated away from the creek but in the same general location. The portion of the project site south of Kelly Creek would remain as open space.

#### *Views from D Street (Views 8 and 9)*

Views from D Street near the intersection of Pinnacle Drive and Windsor Drive facing south (View 8) are currently of residential homes in the Pinnacle Heights Subdivision, hillsides, and meadows to the east and a low wooden fence located along the property line, the barn complex, and mature trees lining the Kelly Creek riparian area to the south as shown in **Figure 4.1-14, Views from D Street**. Views from D Street near the existing barn complex (View 9) consists of a low wooden fence located along the property line, gently sloping grassy hillsides, and mature trees.

**Figure 4.1-15** presents photo simulations depicting how the project site would appear from viewpoints along D Street. Views of the barn complex (View 8) would remain unchanged or in the event the barns are relocated, they would still be visible because they would remain in the same location and moved away from the creek bank. Sidewalk improvements along D Street including landscaping would be visible from View 8. Views from View 9 would have partial views of the roundabout, improved sidewalks, and landscape at the intersection of D Street and Windsor Drive.

#### **Change in Visual Character and Quality**

Completion of the proposed project would alter the topography of the grassy hillsides in the northwestern corner of the project site on both sides of Windsor Drive and construct a low-density residential subdivision

that would locally alter the character of the project site north of Kelly Creek. However, the areas that would be developed would appear similar to other single-family subdivisions that are adjacent to the north and west of the project site. Furthermore, the residential development would be clustered and the majority of the project site would remain substantially unaltered. Of the approximately 58-acre site, approximately 15 acres would be developed as single-family residences. The remaining approximately 44 acres, a majority of the project site, would be maintained as open space with improvements limited to the restoration of the barn complex for public use, the development of an amphitheater, group picnic area, playground, trails, public parking lots, restrooms, livestock fencing, infiltration basins and drainage features.

Except for improvements of the Putnam Park Extension Project component, the proposed project would maintain 100-foot setbacks from the centerline of Kelly Creek and D Street tributary to Kelly Creek. A majority of the project site would be preserved as open space to protect special-status wildlife species (see **Section 4.3, Biological Resources**). In addition, a 300-foot Urban Separator along the southern boundary of the project site would be maintained.

Although the proposed project would remove approximately 30 trees, it would plant 159 oak trees and introduce other landscaping.<sup>4</sup> Development of the Davidon (28-Lot) Residential Project component would result in the removal of 16 trees with 7 trees to be removed to accommodate grading for the residences and installation of a sidewalk on the south side of Windsor Drive, and 9 trees removed to construct the off-site roundabout at D Street/Windsor Drive (see **Figure 4.3-3, Tree Locations and Proposed Removal**). In addition, there may be up to three trees that would require trimming or removal for the D Street off-site sidewalk improvement. As such, the residential component would result in the removal of approximately 19 trees. The Putnam Park Extension Project component would result in the removal of 11 trees, 5 of which would be removed for the construction of the trail north and south of Kelly Creek and 6 trees would be removed for the construction of the Class I trail along the site frontage to D Street. The proposed project would replace the trees that would be removed in compliance with the City of Petaluma IZO Section 17.060 – Tree Removal. The City’s tree ordinance requires Protected Trees<sup>5</sup> determined to be in good to excellent condition to be replaced at a 1:1 trunk diameter ratio. Protected Trees determined to be in marginal to fair

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<sup>4</sup> The approximately 30 trees to be removed includes a few trees that may require trimming or removal for the D Street off-site sidewalk improvement and tree removal associated with reducing fire risk consistent with the Vegetation Management Program discussed in **Section 3.5.7**.

<sup>5</sup> As defined by the Tree Preservation Ordinance a Protected Tree is a: California native oak with a diameter at breast height (DBH) of 4 inches or greater, California buckeye with a DBH of 6 inches or greater, California bay with a DBH or 12 inches or greater, a coast redwood with a DBH of 18 inches or greater, or a tree of any species within the City right-of-way.

**Figure 4.1-13 Views from Pinnacle Heights Subdivision Showing Project Buildout**

Figure 4.1-14 Views from D Street

**Figure 4.1-15 Views from D Street Showing Project Buildout**

condition are required to be replaced at a 2:1 trunk diameter ratio. Protected Trees<sup>6</sup> determined to be in poor condition are not required to be replaced (City of Petaluma IZO Section 17.065).

The proposed project would include planting 159 Oak trees of various sizes. In addition, native trees, shrubs, and groundcover would be planted throughout the development areas. The trees would consist of varying heights and would help to soften views of the single-family homes from the surrounding roadways, including Windsor Drive, D Street, and Pinnacle Drive (as shown in **Figures 4.1-6 through 4.1-15**). There would be a period during which the newly planted trees would grow and become comparable in size to existing trees - it may take 10 to 20 years before the trees are of a similar fullness as the existing trees. However, there would be a substantially greater number of trees and shrubs planted as part of the proposed project, which would compensate for the smaller size of the new trees before they achieve full maturity. Given time to grow and mature, these new trees would also become scenic resources.

As described in **Section 4.3, Biological Resources, Mitigation Measure BIO-2c** would require the implementation of a Tree Replacement Program to provide for replacement of impacted individual native trees consistent with Petaluma Municipal Code Section 20.32.320 and Implementing Zoning Ordinance Section 17.065. The mitigation measure also requires monitoring new planted trees for a period of 5 years and replacing lost plantings on a 1:1 ratio. In addition, **Mitigation Measure BIO-2b** requires the update and refinement of the *Tree Preservation Plans* to comply with the requirements of IZO Chapter 17. The refined plan would include a mapped location of tree trunks to be preserved or removed as well as locations of tree protection zones and construction-restriction fencing. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures BIO-2b** and **BIO-2c** would provide for the protection of preserved trees and new plantings in compliance with the IZO Chapter 17. Therefore, impacts to scenic resources associated with tree removal and replacement would be less than significant with mitigation.

As noted earlier, General Plan Policy 2-P-68 is specific to the project site and requires that the gateway value and uniqueness of the project site be preserved. In addition to compliance with the current General Plan Policy 2-P-68, the project proposes to amend the policy to allow park improvements to be located within the setback requirements and to allow for the adjustment of the barns location to ensure structural stability, provide a sound foundation, and/or prevent the barns from eventually collapsing into the channel (For proposed project's policy amendments and consistency with this policy and other policies in the City's General Plan, please see **Section 4.9, Land Use and Planning**.) As discussed in **Section 4.9, Land Use and Planning**, the proposed amendments to the General Plan Policy 2-P-68 would further protect the scenic resources at the project site by clarifying the protection and preservation of the barn complex. The proposed

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<sup>6</sup> Example: A 24-inch protected tree in fair-to-marginal condition must be replaced with new trees totaling 12 inches in trunk diameter.

amendment would also further enhance the open space resources by implementing public park improvements.

Although improvements proposed as part of the Putnam Park Extension Project component such as picnic areas, trails, and new trees would not change the rural aspect of the project site, they may obstruct the views of the barn complex from the surrounding areas, which would be a significant impact. Implementation of **Mitigation Measure AES-3b**, would require the Applicants to provide site plans showing the location of the new trees to be planted and demonstrating that park amenities and landscape are designed in a manner that allows these features to blend with the surrounding built and natural environments and complement the visual landscape. **Mitigation Measure AES-3b** would also require that trees and other park features would be sited away from current or potential location of the barn complex to reduce the impact on visual quality of the site. With implementation of **Mitigation Measure AES-3b**, visual impacts associated with the relocation of the barn complex, park improvements, and landscape would not result in significant adverse impact to scenic resources.

The project would also comply with the City's hillside regulations. While a formal SPAR submittal has not been received at this time, preliminary architectural concept plans indicate that development would be similar in character to nearby residential developments in the vicinity of the project site. The single-family homes would be a maximum of two stories. Preliminary concepts indicated that the single-family homes would be constructed in a variety of architectural styles, including Spanish, Craftsman, Farmhouse or California Ranch. Architectural detailing of mosaic tiles, iron elements, front porches with railings and precast concrete would be utilized to enhance the front elevations. Exterior materials would include a mix of stucco, hardboard siding, cultured stone, and masonry. All roofs would be made of concrete tile. Building colors would be selected to complement and blend with the project environment. Additionally, **Mitigation Measures AES-1a** and **1b** would be implemented to further ensure that the homes do not contrast with the project's setting. Therefore, with implementation of **Mitigation Measures AES-1a** and **1b**, the impact of the project on visual character and quality of the site would be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

### *Conclusion*

Although the impact related to project construction would also be less than significant, a mitigation measure is set forth below to further reduce that impact.

At completion, the proposed project would be similar to adjacent residential subdivisions, would cluster residential development and preserve open space, and propose amendments to the General Plan policy provisions related to the site-specific aesthetic to further protect the open space and preserve structures at

the barns complex on the project site. Park improvements such as recreational amenities and planting of new and other landscape may result in potential obstruction of the barn complex which would degrade the visual quality of the project site. A mitigation measure is set forth below to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

**Mitigation Measures:**

**AES-3a** All construction staging shall occur within the project boundaries and on authorized road encroachment. Construction staging areas shall use appropriate screening (i.e., temporary fencing with opaque material) to screen views of construction equipment and material.

**AES-3b** Project landscaping and recreational features shall be designed and located in a manner to preserve the visual character of the project site and promote the view of the barn complex. As part of the SPAR, the Applicants shall submit to the City of Petaluma detailed landscape plans showing the location of the new trees and visual simulations demonstrating the preservation of the existing scenic view of the barn complex.

**Significance after Mitigation:** Implementation of **Mitigation Measures AES-3a, AES-3b, BIO-2b, and BIO-2c** would further reduce the project's less than significant construction-phase impact on visual quality and character of the site. Implementation of **Mitigation Measures AES-1a, AES-1b AES-3a, and AES-3b, BIO-2b**, and well as compliance the City's Site Plan and Architectural Review process would reduce the project's impacts on visual quality and character of the site at buildout to less than significant levels.

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**Impact AES-4: Implementation of the proposed project would not create new sources of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. (Less than Significant)**

While the proposed project does not include any land use or feature that would be expected to generate a large, new source of nuisance light (e.g., a stadium or sports field), development on the project site would contain lights typical for single-family residential development such as street luminaires, security lighting, landscape lighting, and interior lighting. This lighting has the potential to add multiple new visible light sources that could detract from the natural scenic vista of the northern hills. The proposed Putnam Park Extension Project component would not add new visible light sources.

Construction lighting, if warranted, would be located and aimed away from adjacent residences and would consist of the minimum wattage necessary for safety and security.

Indoor and outdoor night lighting would be installed in and around the single-family homes. Exterior lighting would also be installed around the barns for security and to discourage vandalism. Low lighting may also be installed on the pedestrian bridge, connecting the main parking lot to the playground area, to accommodate safe passage for night crossings associated with maintenance or park events. Street lighting would be installed along the new streets per City standards and would be shielded and focused on the project site to minimize potential spillover. Lighting would be solar and approved by the International Dark Sky Association. Proposed lighting would be considered as part of the Site Plan and Architectural Review (SPAR) process, which aims at protecting the "look and feel" of the City of Petaluma. In addition, the project applicant would be required to comply with Section 21-040 Article D of the IZO, which requires the following:

*No direct glare shall be permitted with the exception that parking areas and walkways may be illuminated by luminaries so hooded or shielded that the maximum angle of the cone of direct illumination shall be sixty (60) degrees if the luminary is not less than six (6) feet above the ground. Such luminary shall be placed no higher than the principal structure on the site if attached to said structure and, if not attached to the principal structure, no higher than twenty (20) feet unless the Zoning Administrator determines that special operational circumstances of the subject property require higher light standards. The maximum illumination at ground level shall not be in excess of three (3) footcandles.*

*Indirect glare shall not exceed that value which is produced by an illumination of the reflecting surface not to exceed: 0.3 foot candles (maximum) or 0.1 foot candle (average).*

Compliance with the SPAR process recommendations and conformance with the IZO would minimize light and glare associated with the proposed project. Therefore, project impacts related to light and glare would be less than significant.<sup>7</sup>

**Mitigation Measures:** No mitigation measures are required.

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#### 4.1.4.4 Regional Park Trail Impacts and Mitigation Measures

##### *Environmental Setting*

Helen Putnam Regional Park provides excellent views of Petaluma to the east and rural Sonoma County to the west (Sonoma County Regional Parks 2016). The proposed 0.5-mile-long and 4-foot-wide regional park trail would provide a scenic pedestrian route that would connect the project's multi-use trail to the existing Ridge Trail on the regional park.

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<sup>7</sup> The project's lighting impact on wildlife is addressed in **Section 4.3, Biological Resources**.

## *Impacts and Mitigation Measures*

**RPT Impact AES-1: The implementation of the proposed regional park trail project would not result in a significant impact on scenic vistas, scenic resources, visual character and quality, or light and glare. (*Less than Significant*)**

### **Scenic Vistas**

As mentioned above, the Petaluma General Plan 2025 does not designate any scenic vistas within the City, although the “vistas of Sonoma Mountain to the east” are identified as an important part of the City’s form and identity. The Sonoma County General Plan 2020 designates the open grassy hillsides and ridgelines in the hills south of Petaluma as a scenic landscape unit. The minimal construction activities and operation of the proposed regional park trail would not affect the views of Sonoma Mountain and would not degrade views of surrounding scenic hillsides as no mature trees would be removed (see below for more details) and minimal grading would be involved in constructing the regional park trail. Therefore, impact of the regional park trail on scenic vistas would be less than significant.

### **Scenic Resources**

The Sonoma County General Plan designates the portion of D Street southeast of the proposed regional park trail, in unincorporated Sonoma County, as a Scenic Corridor (Sonoma 2008). Construction of the proposed regional park trail would not alter views of the hillside as observed from the D Street corridor. Regional park trail construction would disturb approximately 0.25 acre of land and would require the removal of overhanging vegetation and branches as well as low lying saplings, weeds, and brush along the trail length. Mature trees would not be removed as part of regional park trail construction. Therefore, the proposed regional park trail would have a less than significant impact to scenic resources.

### **Visual Character and Quality**

Development of the proposed regional park trail would require minimal construction activities. Construction equipment such as trail dozers may be used for initial grading and excavation, while small construction equipment such as power wheel barrows and bob cats would be used to off haul spoils from the regional park trail construction site, if necessary. All construction-related disturbance would be nominal and temporary. Although there would be no landscaping associated with the proposed regional park trail, areas disturbed during construction would be hydroseeded with native grasses to help reestablish the vegetation and avoid erosion. Additionally, no mature trees would be removed as part of regional park trail construction. Thus, the regional park trail project would not degrade the visual character of the site, and the impact would be less than significant.

## Light and Glare

The proposed regional park trail project would not construct any buildings, and the parking lots and restrooms that may be used by the regional park trail users would be provided adjacent to D Street as part of the Scott Ranch project. Therefore, the proposed regional park trail would not create any additional light sources and the impact would be less than significant.

**Mitigation Measures:** No mitigation measures are required.

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### 4.1.4.5 Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The geographic area for the evaluation of potential cumulative visual impacts is the immediate vicinity (0.5 miles) of the Scott Ranch project site and regional park trail project. This study area was selected because other reasonably foreseeable projects that are proximate to the project site and regional park trail project would have the potential to have an additive visual effect along with the proposed project and regional park trail project.

**Cumulative Impact AES-1:**      **The proposed Scott Ranch project and the regional park trail project, in conjunction with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future development, would not result in a significant cumulative impact with regard to scenic vistas, visual character, or scenic resources. (*Less than Significant*)**

Future development in the City of Petaluma detailed in **Table 4.0-1**, including the proposed Scott Ranch project and the nearby Sunnyslope II project, along with past and present development, may result in significant cumulative impacts with regard to vistas and visual character. The Sunnyslope II project is an 18-unit subdivision located approximately 2,000 feet to the southeast of the project site. The Sunnyslope II project would not be visible within the nearby viewsheds such as D Street as it is located on the opposite side of the hill to the east of the project site. In addition, the proposed project includes mitigation measures that would reduce the visual effects of the project on scenic vistas. As stated above, due to its nature and limited ground disturbance, the proposed regional park trail project would not cause significant impacts on scenic vistas, visual character, or scenic resources. For these reasons, visual impacts of the proposed project would not combine with other existing and future development to result in a significant cumulative impact with regard to scenic vistas or visual character.

**Mitigation Measures:** Mitigation measures are not required.

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**Cumulative Impact AES-2:** **The proposed Scott Ranch project and the regional park trail, in conjunction with other past, present and reasonably foreseeable future development, would not result in significant cumulative impact with regard to light and glare. (*Less than Significant*)**

Future development in the City of Petaluma detailed in **Table 4.0-1**, including the nearby Sunnyslope II project, may result in significant cumulative impacts with regard to light and glare. The proposed project would comply with Section 21-040 Article D of the IZO, which would reduce the negative effects of project lighting. Therefore, the proposed project would not combine with other existing and future development to result in significant cumulative impacts with regard to light and glare, and the contribution of the proposed project to cumulative light and glare impacts would not be cumulatively considerable. Because the regional park trail project would not have any impacts to light and glare, no cumulatively considerable impacts would occur.

**Mitigation Measures:** No mitigation measures are required.

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#### 4.1.5 REFERENCES

- Arborwell. July 16, 2018. Arborist Letter for 28 Lot Revised Plan. Memorandum to Steve Abbs, Davidon Homes.
- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). 2007. California Scenic Highway Mapping System. Updated September 2011. [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/).
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