

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

This section provides a discussion of the existing visual and aesthetic resources in the City and the environmental effects of implementing the proposed Sustainable Santee Plan: The City's Roadmap to Greenhouse Gas Reductions ("Sustainable Santee Plan" or "proposed project") with regard to visual quality, views, and light and glare.

The analysis of aesthetics addresses the proposed project's visual relationship with existing and future known land uses in the surrounding area. The analysis of views focuses on the extent to which the proposed project may interfere with visual access to aesthetic features from nearby public vantage points or corridors.

### 4.1.1 Scope Process

The IS prepared for the proposed project indicated that the proposed project could have potential impacts related to the visual character within the City and from sources of light and glare. Therefore, this topic is analyzed further in this EIR.

The IS determined the proposed project would have no impact on scenic vistas or designated scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway; therefore, these topics are not analyzed further in this EIR. Please refer to Appendix A, IS/NOP, for additional discussion.

The City distributed the NOP for the EIR from August 17 to October 2, 2017. Fifteen comment letters were received in response to the NOP. No issues related to visual resources were raised in those comment letters.

### 4.1.2 Methodology

This section assesses the aesthetic compatibility of the proposed project with the surrounding area and potential impacts to any sensitive views and visual character that may exist in the City's vicinity. The assessment of aesthetic impacts is subjective by nature. This analysis attempts to identify and objectively examine factors that contribute to the perception of aesthetic impacts. Potential aesthetic impacts of the proposed project can be evaluated by considering such factors as the scale, mass, proportion, orientation, landscaping, setbacks, and construction materials associated with the design of a project. The City has not adopted defined standards or methodologies for the assessment of aesthetic impacts.

The analysis of light and glare identifies the locations of light-sensitive land uses and describes the existing ambient conditions in the City's vicinity. The analysis describes the proposed project's proposed light and glare sources and the extent to which proposed project lighting would spill onto adjacent light-sensitive areas. The analysis also considers the potential for sunlight to reflect off of surfaces (glare) and the extent to which such glare would interfere with the operation of motor vehicles, aviation, or other activities. Glare can also be produced during evening and nighttime hours by artificial light sources, such as illuminated signage and vehicle headlights. Glare-sensitive uses generally include residences and transportation corridors (i.e., roadways).

### 4.1.3 Existing Environmental Setting

#### 4.1.3.1 Regional Visual Character

The proposed project would apply to the entire 16.5 square miles within the limits of the City of Santee. Santee’s location on the fringe of the San Diego metropolitan area gives it visual access to open space beyond its borders. On a clear day, El Capitan Reservoir Recreation Area is well within view and the peaks of the Laguna Mountains are visible in the distance. In addition, Santee is almost completely surrounded by undeveloped land. Mission Trails Regional Park abuts the City on the west and southwest as well as being partially within Santee, providing recreational opportunities as well as a scenic backdrop to the west. Marine Corps Air Station Miramar, which includes thousands of acres of undeveloped land, borders the City to the west and northwest. The County’s Sycamore Open Space Preserve and the Goodan Ranch, comprising more than 2,000 acres of natural land, are immediately north of Santee. A low-density portion of the Lakeside community is to the east, with El Capitan Reservoir and the Peninsular Ranges farther in the distance. Gillespie Field, immediately to the south of the City and within El Cajon, constitutes a large open space area necessary for aviation and public safety. The airfield provides a buffer between Santee and industrial areas within El Cajon.<sup>1</sup>

#### 4.1.3.2 Project Site Visual Character

Two main topographic features exist within the City of Santee: the coastal plain of the Coastal Province and the foothills of the Peninsular Range Province. The narrow coastal plain, which is dominated by terraces or mesas and dissected by the San Diego River, occupies the majority of the City. This area, located in the center of the City, is characterized by relatively flat topography. Within the north and southeastern portions of the City are the foothills of the Peninsular Range where the topography is generally steeper.<sup>2</sup>

Some areas are urbanized while peripheral areas still offer a rural setting. Commercial buildings and homes are lower profile, typically two stories or less. Neighborhood cohesiveness is apparent in the mature landscaping and well-kept homes throughout the City. The City has a wealth of physical features that establish community identity:

- San Diego River and other waterway corridors;
- Undeveloped hillsides and ridgelines;
- Town Center;
- Santee Lakes and Mission Trails Regional Parks; and
- San Diego Trolley.

**Housing.** Newer tract housing (single-family detached) is predominant north of the San Diego River. These homes are typically located on standard subdivision 6,000-square foot or greater lots with

<sup>1</sup> City of Santee. 2003. *General Plan Conservation Element*. August. Page 6-14. <http://cityofsanteeca.gov/home> (accessed September 6, 2017).

<sup>2</sup> City of Santee. 2003. *General Plan Conservation Element*. August. Page 6-6. <http://cityofsanteeca.gov/home> (accessed September 6, 2017).

improvements typical of urban development (curb and gutter, sidewalks, underground utilities, storm drains, etc.).

Multiple-family units (apartments, townhomes, and condominiums) predominate along the City's major roads including Mission Gorge Road, Carlton Hills Boulevard, and Magnolia Avenue. As is the case with the City's single-family housing stock, the more recent multiple-family residential developments feature more coordinated site planning and greater amenities (pools, landscaping, open space, etc.).

Mobile homes are located for the most part south of Mission Gorge Road, within self-contained mobile home parks. Mobile homes are distinct elements of the residential development within Santee. They are located in self-contained mobile home parks that function as "micro-neighborhoods." Perimeter design treatments typically include landscaping and block walls. The site layout is typically a grid system of internal roads. Design treatment success is varied among the mobile home parks. Some provide community recreational facilities, adequate street setbacks, and distinctive landscaping and others do not.

The internal organization of Santee's older residential areas is not distinctive and clear delineation of neighborhoods and districts is not often apparent. This has been attributed to the rapid housing expansion that started in the mid-1950s. Strong demand led to the construction of single-family detached tract housing developments, which were built not as an extension of historical settlement patterns but as an economic response to housing market forces. Consequently, residential district boundaries are defined by physical barriers that exist in the City such as SR-67, SR-52, and SR-125, major roads, the San Diego River, Forester Creek, Santee Lakes, and steep topography.

The older housing stock in the south/central part of the City exhibits the highest concentration of units in need of upgrading (1999 Citywide Housing Condition windshield survey). Mobile home parks as a group are well maintained (City of Santee 2003), although some are now quite old. Curbside appeal is an indicator of the level of stewardship in a neighborhood. Negative features that affect this "appeal" include inoperable vehicles, dilapidated fences and walls, front yard encroachments of temporary structures such shade awnings/canopies and weed growth on vacant lots and parkways. Additionally, slopes adjacent to streets may be neglected behind privacy fences. Slopes with public exposure, such as the north side of Mast Boulevard, can be difficult to access and maintain. The City has proactively planted and maintained trees along some of these areas located along very visible major roads.

**Commercial Development.** Commercial land uses in Santee function as activity centers for residents and visitors. Since these areas are highly visible along major streets, they play an important role in image and identity.

#### Town Center

The City's primary commercial node is Town Center, the City's 706-acre master-planned city center. Virtually all the significant commercial and office land inventory is located within Town Center. Large tracts of vacant land in the Town Center have been developed as retail "power centers" anchored by big box retailers such as Walmart, Costco, and Home Depot. Santee Trolley Square added over 440,000 square feet of commercial space to the inventory in 2002–2003, offering general

merchandise and other comparison goods shopping and restaurants. These developments differ from the City's older commercial areas in that they exhibit coordinated site designs, including reciprocal access and parking, consistent, high quality architecture, and a high level of amenities such as water fountains, plazas, and enriched building materials. As an example, an amphitheater with an interactive fountain at the terminus of the Trolley line serves as a focal gathering place in the Trolley Square development.

The City adopted the Town Center Specific Plan in October 1986, which established design standards for site planning, public area site improvements, gateway identification, pedestrian and bike paths, street furniture, and signs. Consequently and deliberately, the Town Center has established a commercial identity, consistent with the Town Center Specific Plan, which sets the standard for new development. Recurring architectural elements and site features include stucco, terracotta roof tiles, tile accents, decorative railings, water features, shaded seating areas, and pedestrian promenades. Additionally, reciprocal access, public seating areas, and pedestrian linkages among shopping, residential, and recreational uses have been established.

#### Mission Gorge Road

The City's principal east-west commercial thoroughfare is Mission Gorge Road, which is characterized in by a mixture of older, independently developed commercial properties and retail stores on single sites with newer commercial development such as Santee Trolley Square and the Marketplace at Santee. Recognizing the prominence of Mission Gorge Road and its role in establishing an image for Santee, in March 1987, the City adopted the Mission Gorge Road Design Standards to establish specific design guidelines for this local scenic road. Existing architectural elements formed the basis for the creation of architectural themes for the various segments of the street. Additionally, standards were established for reciprocal access, streetscape landscaping, signage, and pedestrian and bicycle improvements. Over the past 15 years, the Mission Gorge Road Standards have promoted innovative site design and infused architectural interest on a street that was devoid of distinction.

#### Other Commercial Strips and Nodes

The principal north-south commercial street is Cuyamaca Street, characterized by independently developed commercial lots offering single destination services (banking, automobile, medical services) and products. Other strip commercial outlets exist along Magnolia Avenue, Mast Boulevard, Carlton Hills Boulevard, and Woodside Avenue. Where these streets intersect, neighborhood shopping centers have developed. The neighborhood shopping center is typically either a freestanding entity (e.g., Santana Village, Carlton Oaks Plaza) or a combination of separate convenience uses. The neighborhood commercial nodes throughout the City provide convenience goods and personal services that meet the daily needs of the immediate neighborhood.

#### Commercial Design

Over time, Santee businesses have evolved from predominantly independent "mom & pop" stores to corporate outlets within the strip commercial developments along Mission Gorge Road (Vons, Petco, Henrys, Pep Boys, etc.). Neighborhood commercial areas still retain some individual-owned businesses anchored by convenience markets/gas stations.

Commercial centers are subject to the City's development standards that regulate building placement, height, required parking, signs, and landscaping. Comprehensive sign programs for commercial centers have successfully reduced sign clutter and improved signage design. Streetscape landscaping helps contribute to a positive image. Much of the streetscape landscaping in the City's commercial core is maintained through Landscape Maintenance Districts. These publicly operated districts ensure a consistent level of maintenance on the most highly visible landscaped areas.

**Industrial Development.** Santee's industrial uses are well established along the Woodside Avenue/SR-67 and Prospect Avenue corridors. The City's industrial development is characterized primarily by warehousing, light manufacturing, assembly, and distribution uses. Along the Prospect Avenue corridor between Magnolia Avenue and Cuyamaca Street, industrial uses are intermixed with commercial and nonconforming residential development. In the Woodside Avenue/SR-67 corridors, recent industrial development has occurred in comprehensively planned industrial parks. There are three master planned industrial parks in Santee: Wheatlands, Maderalado (adjacent to Wheatlands), and the Prospect Business Parks.

The Prospect Avenue industrial area offers a wide variety of building styles, lot configurations, and site features east of Cuyamaca Street, and more cohesive development in an industrial park setting west of Cuyamaca Street. Many of the industrial uses on Prospect Avenue east of Cuyamaca Street were established before incorporation. Uses include contractor storage yards, automobile repair and sales, a Caltrans Maintenance Facility, and vacant parcels within the Gillespie Field Runway Protection Zone. The Prospect Avenue industrial corridor is characterized by a mixture of older smaller individually owned businesses and more recent industrial developments.

The Woodside Avenue/SR-67 area exhibits a more consistent planned industrial park concept where building styles, access, and landscape treatments act as unifying elements. The relatively recent construction of comprehensively planned industrial park development in areas along Woodside Avenue and Prospect Avenue (West of Cuyamaca Street) shows consistently well maintained industrial uses.

**Roadways/Streetscapes.** Mission Gorge Road establishes the basic primary east-west framework for organization and visual identity for the City and influenced the initial development areas in the City south of the San Diego River. Other major east-west streets include Mast Boulevard and Prospect Avenue. The major north-south streets that cross the San Diego River are Cuyamaca Street, Magnolia Avenue, Carlton Hills Boulevard, and West Hills Parkway.

SR-67 trends north-south along the eastern portion of the City and establishes a very strong visual and physical barrier between the Rattlesnake Mountain area and the rest of the City. The extension of SR-52 from Fanita Drive eastward to SR-67 will extend the regional east-west connection through the City, with freeway connections to local streets at Mast Boulevard, Mission Gorge Road, Fanita Drive, Cuyamaca Street, and Magnolia Avenue.

Direct freeway-to-freeway ramp connections to SR-125 and SR-67 are planned. SR-125 enters the City from the south and runs parallel to Fanita Drive, terminating at Mission Gorge Road.

Mission Gorge Road is a wide traffic corridor providing three lanes of service in each direction. Magnolia Avenue and Cuyamaca Street also provide regional connections to the south in addition to serving local, in-city traffic. The remaining major roads and collectors in Santee carry local traffic within and between neighborhoods. As a result, their scale is local and not regional in nature.

State Routes 67 and 125 have peripheral locations in the City. SR-52 currently terminates at the west end of the City. The extension of SR-52 through the remainder of the City will have a significant visual effect.

State Routes 67 and 125 exhibit grade separations, with minimal interface with local streets. The design of SR-52, which will extend from Fanita Drive to SR-67 includes ramps for local street interface and will be elevated from SR-125 east to its terminus at SR-67. It will introduce ramps, retaining walls, bridge overpasses, and slopes through the southern part of the City. This alignment will not only introduce a significant visual barrier, it will also represent a physical barrier between those areas of the City north and south of the freeway.

Mission Gorge Road traverses the City at grade. It is a wide corridor with landscaped medians from its west entry to Fanita Drive, and between Town Center Parkway and Civic Center Drive. Streetscape features such as landscaping, street furniture, thematic signage, and enriched paving have been added to significant stretches of this corridor as opportunities have arisen.

Landscaped streetscapes and pedestrian improvements have established a pedestrian-friendly feeling for much of Mission Gorge Road. The older areas of Mission Gorge Road do not feature an inviting pedestrian scale.

Class 1 bikeways are designated along portions of Mission Gorge Road, Town Center Parkway, Cuyamaca Street, and Civic Center Drive. Given the large traffic volumes and narrow cross-section on Mission Gorge Road, bike travel is difficult along this corridor. The establishment of a combined sidewalk and bike path within landscaped corridors provides alternative facilities for pedestrians and cyclists on Mission Gorge Road and other streets within Town Center.

Major entry points to the City are provided from the west by Mission Gorge Road and from the east via SR-67 and Woodside Avenue. The west entry along Mission Gorge Road creates a positive statement as the roadway descends into the Santee Valley. The statement is one of an open, rural feeling, utilizing open space and the hillsides as a scenic backdrop. The entry from the east is off SR-67 southbound at Woodside Avenue, where the setting is industrial or northbound at Prospect Avenue where the setting is a mix of industrial and commercial uses. Secondary entry points to the City include Fanita Drive, Cuyamaca Street, and Magnolia Avenue from the south, and El Nopal from the east. As a group, these entryways are undefined.

**Scenic Highways.** The State's Scenic Highway Program was established in 1963 to protect and enhance California's natural scenic beauty and to protect the social and economic values provided by the State's scenic resources. While scenic highways have traditionally run through open space areas, they can include routes that pass through interesting or unique urban sites. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the

traveler's enjoyment of the view. The City does not contain any officially designated existing State Scenic Highways within its boundaries.

To pursue an official State designation for SR-67 and SR-52, the City would first adopt a scenic corridor protection program and then apply to California department of Transportation ("Caltrans") for scenic highway approval. SR-52, from post mile 9.5 (near Santo Road) to post mile 13.0 (near Mast Boulevard) in the vicinity of Santee, has been designated by the State as State Scenic Highway. The section of SR-52, in Santee between Mast Boulevard and SR-67 is listed by the State as an "unconstructed but eligible" road segment although this segment has been operating since 2011.<sup>3</sup>

**Historic Structures.** The Edgemoor "Polo Barn" and the Mission Dam Historic site (adjacent to the City) are two significant man-made features illustrative of the Santee community heritage. The green and white "Polo Barn" dates back to 1893 and is considered to be of significant architectural design and a design resource of the community.

The Granite House, or James Love House, is a historic resource of local significance, located in the City's maintenance yard. It was constructed in 1934 using granite quarried from the Coyote Hill quarry. Relocation of the Granite House is necessary with the Forester Creek channel improvements. As such, its preservation either through reconstruction or use of original materials from the structure at a different location or by other symbolic means is important to the City.

The Mission Dam, in the Mission Trails Regional Park, is a registered historic site (National Register of Historic Places, National Historic Landmark, and California Register of Historical Resources) just outside the western City limits. It is a significant design resource documenting the heritage of the region and is an example of the historic uses of the San Diego River.

**Open Space.** Open space in Santee is predominantly composed of large tracts of undeveloped hillside areas (Fanita Ranch, Rattlesnake Mountain, and hillsides in the southwest portion of the City), land in the San Diego River corridor, and large centrally located vacant parcels in Town Center. Additional open space is provided by parkland (including that associated with school sites) and interspersed vacant parcels.

In summary, open space in Santee provides a number of community design resources:

- Panoramic hillside views and backdrops;
- Visual relief to the intensive developed areas;
- Visual and physical links to the San Diego River and its tributaries (Sycamore Creek and Forester Creek);
- Opportunity areas for new high quality development; and
- Opportunity for recreational activities that reinforce the environmental setting such as hiking trails.

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<sup>3</sup> California Department of Transportation List of scenic highways. <http://www.dot.ca.gov/design/lap/livability/scenic-highways/> (Accessed February 2, 2019).

The City of Santee is also a participant in the Multiple Species Conservation Program (MSCP) through its Subarea planning efforts. Once adopted, implementation of the City's Subarea Plan will ultimately preserve approximately one fourth of the total area of the City in permanent open space.

**Landforms and Views.** Encompassed within the landforms of Santee are the flat San Diego River Valley and the gently sloping areas that transition to the steeply sloped hillsides associated with major ridgeline systems. The dramatic hillsides, ridgelines, and rock outcrops form a significant design resource.

The orientation of the San Diego River corridor creates impressive long views within Santee and to the surrounding ridgelines and mountains (including El Capitan). The elevated western entry to the City along Mission Gorge Road also affords an opportunity for scenic views along the San Diego River corridor.

The numerous topographic features of Santee and the surrounding vicinity provide distinctive views and vistas from within the developed portions of the City. This provides residents with scenic backdrops and visual relief from developed portions of the City. The major ridgeline and hillside systems provided by the undeveloped areas of the northern portion of the City, including the Fanita Ranch, present a large portion of these views and vistas. The Rattlesnake Mountain and Mission Trails Regional Park also provide significant views from within Santee.

**Surface Water.** Surface water resources are composed of three major elements: the San Diego River, Sycamore Creek/Santee Recreational Lakes, and Forester Creek. Secondary elements include Woodglen Vista Creek and Big Rock Creek. This surface water system provides continuous, linear features that not only convey runoff and floodwater but also offer scenic, recreational, habitat preservation, and open space opportunities.

The most significant surface water element in the City is the San Diego River, which flows east to west through the central portion of the City. The river corridor has been maintained and enhanced in accordance with the City's 1984 Santee River Park Plan (discussed in greater detail in the City's General Plan Recreation Element), which seeks to establish a linear rustic park in its urban core, with trails, wildlife interpretation signs, parks, and passive open space.

The Sycamore Creek/Santee Lakes Regional Park provides a strong linear water element/open space corridor that links to the San Diego River corridor from the northern part of the City. The Sycamore Creek/Santee Lakes Regional Park supports recreational activities including picnicking, walking and biking, fishing, and camping.

Forester Creek is currently an unimproved stream that flows into the San Diego River corridor from the south (El Cajon). From a concrete-lined channel in El Cajon, its natural course meanders through a variety of land uses and vacant land, and provides an informal pedestrian link between Cuyamaca Street and Mission Gorge Road. With the completion of the planned Forester Creek Improvement Project, this creek will fulfill its potential as a recreational water element/open space link to the San Diego River.



#### 4.1.4 Regulatory Setting

##### 4.1.4.1 Federal Policies and Regulations

No federal policies or regulations pertaining to aesthetics are applicable to the proposed project.

##### 4.1.4.2 State Policies and Regulations

As described in the IS/NOP, there is no designated State Scenic Highway located within the City. However, a designated State Scenic Highway is located immediately west of the City. SR-52, from post mile 9.5 (near Santo Road) to post mile 13.0 (near Mast Boulevard) in the vicinity of Santee, has been designated by the State as State Scenic Highway on February 2, 2016. However, all of SR-52 has been characterized as eligible for scenic designation. This section of SR-52 within the City of Santee has commercial, industrial, and residential development on both sides. As of February 2019, there are no City plans to pursue scenic designation of SR-52 with its jurisdictions.

The section of SR-52 that has been designated as a scenic highway is located in the City of San Diego, is surrounded by land under the land use control of the City of San Diego, is located to the northwest of the City of Santee, is approximately 0.45 miles from the closest Santee boundary, and portions of Santee are shielded from the roadway by intervening hills. Based on the above, the proposed project would not have a significant impact on scenic highways. Therefore, these regulations are not applicable.

##### 4.1.4.3 Local Policies and Regulations

**City of Santee General Plan, Community Enhancement Element.** The goal of this element is to respect and integrate the natural and man-made environments of Santee to enhance the quality of life, revitalize older neighborhoods and community places, and sustain a beautiful, distinctive and well organized community for the City's citizens (Santee, 2003). The following objectives related to visual resources are presented in the Conservation Element:

- Objective 2: Strengthen neighborhood identity.
- Objective 5: Improve or remove negative visual elements within residential areas.
- Objective 6: Improve the appearance and condition of commercial facilities in the City.
- Objective 8: Improve the appearance and function of existing and planned industrial areas.
- Objective 9: Provide a unifying and distinctive streetscape system throughout the City.
- Objective 11: Remove visually disruptive elements from the street system.
- Objective 15: Maintain and enhance existing scenic views.
- Objective 16: Utilize the natural design elements presented by the river/creek system within the City.

**City of Santee Municipal Code.** Title 17, Zoning, of the Santee Municipal Code (SMC) includes site development criteria, as well as design guidelines, for development projects within the City. Among the aspects of development regulated by the SMC are types of allowable land uses, setback and height requirements, solar, landscaping, walls, fencing, signage, access, parking requirements,

storage areas, and trash enclosures. The SMC also provides development review criteria and procedures to determine the development projects’ consistency with zoning code, municipal code, and the General Plan.

**Town Center Specific Plan.** In October 1986, the City of Santee completed a focused effort to plan for the development of property in its geographic core. The Town Center Specific Plan establishes guidelines for creating a people- and transit-oriented hub for commercial, civic, and residential uses along the San Diego River. The Santee Town Center Specific Plan is designed to protect and enhance the natural features of the Town Center site, especially the San Diego River. The Specific Plan is oriented toward establishing a land use and design framework that can cohesively tie the new downtown together. The plan establishes a river and water-oriented theme with landscaped boulevards, biological preserves, and defined scale and bulk of buildings.

#### 4.1.5 Proposed Sustainable Santee Plan – Goals and Measures

The following proposed goals and measures from the Sustainable Santee Plan are applicable to the analysis of aesthetics:

- *Community GHG Reduction Strategies and Emission Reductions.*
  - Goal 1: Increase Energy Efficiency in Existing Residential Units.
    - 1.1: Energy Efficiency Education and Best Practices
    - 1.2: Increase Community Participation in Existing Energy Efficiency Opportunities
    - 1.4: Residential Home Energy Renovations
  - Goal 2: Increase Energy Efficiency in New Residential Units.
    - 2.1: Energy Efficient Homes
  - Goal 3: Increase Energy Efficiency in Existing Commercial Units.
    - 3.1: Energy Efficiency Training, Education, and Recognition in the Commercial Sector
    - 3.2: Increase Business Participation in Existing Energy Efficiency Programs
    - 3.4: Non-Residential Retrofits
  - Goal 4: Increase Energy Efficiency in New Commercial Units.
    - 4.1: Energy Efficient Businesses
  - Goal 5: Increase Energy Efficiency through Water Efficiency
    - 5.1: Increase Energy Efficiency through Enhanced Implementation SBX7-7
  - Goal 6: Decrease Energy Demand through Reducing Urban Heat Island Effect.
    - 6.1: Tree Planting for Shading and Energy Efficiency
    - 6.2: Light-reflecting Surfaces for Energy Efficiency
  - Goal 10: Decrease GHG Emissions from New Development through Performance Standards.

## 10.1: Screening Tables

- *Municipal GHG Reduction Strategies and Emission Reductions.*
  - Goal M-1: Participate in Education, Outreach, and Planning Efforts for Energy Efficiency.

### M-1.1: Increase Energy Savings through the SDG&E Energy Efficiency Partnership

#### Potential Impacts

Measures and Actions to promote and to educate the public on energy efficiency and savings programs (Measures 1.1, 1.2, 1.4, 3.1, 3.2, and 3.4) may generate an expanded demand to install roof-top solar photo voltaic panels on the top of existing homes and businesses. Similarly, Measures 2.1, 4.1, 6.2, and 10.1 may require roof top or ground mounted solar photo voltaic panels and light reflecting surfaces for new development. Measures 5.1 and 6.1 would have the impact of planting more and different types of trees within the City.

#### 4.1.6 Impact Significance Criteria

The thresholds for aesthetic and light and glare impacts used in this analysis are consistent with Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines*. The effects of the proposed project on aesthetics are considered to be significant if the proposed project would:

- Threshold 4.1.1:** Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- Threshold 4.1.2:** Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State Scenic Highway.
- Threshold 4.1.3:** Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- Threshold 4.1.4:** Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area.

The IS, provided in Appendix A and as expanded upon above under State policies section, substantiates the determination that the proposed project would not result in impacts associated with Thresholds 4.1.1 and 4.1.2. As a result, these thresholds are not considered any further in the analyses of the potential impacts of the proposed project related to aesthetics.

#### 4.1.7 Project Impacts

**Threshold 4.1.3:** *Would the project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?*

The Sustainable Santee Plan does not propose specific development. However, it has measures that encourage clean energy, energy-saving retrofits to existing buildings, and the planting of new types and increased numbers of trees that would have potential impacts on visual character. Types of development and retrofits encouraged by the Sustainable Santee Plan could include incorporation of renewable energy-generating systems in new construction, such as solar panels, photovoltaic arrays, and energy-saving components such as cool roofs and cool pavement. Solar photovoltaic panels would likely be visible to visitors, employees, and residents, and screening would inhibit

energy production. Depending on the size, mass, and color of these renewable energy-generating and energy-saving components, future redevelopment or development could result in changes to the visual character and quality of an individual site and its surroundings.

However, the incorporation of solar roof-to photo-voltaic systems in buildings is becoming more commonly accepted by the community. Both public high schools in Santee, Santana High School and West Hills High School, have constructed photo-voltaic systems over portions of their respective parking lots. These structures generate renewable energy and act as a shade structure, keeping cars cool in the summer. A similar structure was constructed over the parking lot at the Sports-Plex in Town Center Community Park in Santee. This is in addition to the hundreds of roof-top photo-voltaic systems that have been installed on single-family homes in Santee. Target in Town center has installed a roof-top solar photo-voltaic system behind its parapet was that has helped the building achieve Energy Star Award.

New development projects require a discretionary review under the Santee Municipal Code. These new projects would be required to evaluate their energy efficiency under Measure 10.1 (Screening Tables) and be subject to CEQA review. Discretionary review process would evaluate the Screening Table implementation to ensure that energy efficiency methodology is compatible with the structure and surrounding development. The General Plan, Land Use Policy 11.1 requires the City to ensure that all requirements set forth within the Community Enhancement Element are implemented during the development review process. This includes the Policies of 6.1, 8.2, and 8.4 of the General Plan, Community Enhancement which are designed to create and maintain a positive visual identify for the City. Light reflecting cool roofs and cool pavement would also be evaluated during this discretionary review.

Energy retrofits on existing structures and installation of solar photo-voltaic systems on rooftops of buildings would not substantially degrade the visual quality or character of the City, as future projects are required to comply with the Municipal Code and be consistent with General Plan policies and measures. Technology of roof-panel has improved that steep and obvious mounting angles for such panels is no longer necessary. In fact solar photo-voltaic technology is being incorporated in modern structure's building materials, as per the Tesla solar roof (2019) in which the roof tiles collect the solar energy. Additionally, any energy efficiency device would have to comply with the Santee Municipal Code with regard to height, setbacks, etc. Specifically, Section 17.06.100 Small Residential Rooftop Solar Energy Systems, requires that the panel or module array does not exceed the maximum legal building height as defined by the City.

The project Measure 5.1 and 6.1 would introduce new types and greater number of trees to Santee. Trees reduce the ambient temperatures, create shade, and sequester carbon. Planting trees is consistent with Policy 9.2 of the General Plan, Community Enhancement Element. Trees provide relief from the built environment.

Overall, the impact of the project on Threshold 4.1.3 is less than significant.

**Threshold 4.1.4:** *Would the project create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area?*

Implementation of the Sustainable Santee Plan could result in construction of energy-generating facilities such as solar panels and photovoltaic arrays that would primarily be installed on rooftops of new or existing buildings. These energy-generating structures would not generally include lighting and, therefore, there would be no increased sources of light as a result of implementation of the proposed project.

Glare results from sharply reflected light caused by sunlight or artificial light reflecting from highly finished surfaces such as window glass or brightly colored surfaces. The types of land uses that are typically sensitive to excess glare include homes, hospitals, senior housing, and other types of uses where excessive glare may disrupt sleep. In addition, glare may interfere with the vision of drivers and as discussed in Section 4.5, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, create aviation hazards by interfering with the vision of pilots.

Implementation of the Sustainable Santee Plan could result in energy-generating rooftop structures such as solar panels and photovoltaic arrays, which could introduce substantial new sources of glare. Rooftop solar panels or photovoltaic arrays, to be effective, must be oriented to maximize solar radiation absorption. If these structures were to be constructed adjacent to residential uses or sensitive receptors, the impact from increased glare would be potentially significant. However, solar panels and photovoltaic arrays are designed to maximize sunlight absorption and are generally constructed of dark, light-absorbing materials and are composed of a minimum of reflective surfaces. Modern photo-voltaic systems reflect as little as 2% of incoming sunlight, about the same as water, and less than soil or wood shingles.<sup>4</sup> Therefore, it is not anticipated that solar panels or photovoltaic arrays would result in an increased amount of glare even if they were oriented in such a way as to face sensitive receptors or drivers/pilots.

General Plan policies related to improving visual appearance and neighborhood identity are contained in the Community Enhancement Element. Although none of these policies specifically addresses light and glare effects, and it is unknown at this time where or how many such structures would be constructed under the Sustainable Santee Plan. Each discretionary project pursuant to the Sustainable Santee Plan would be required to undergo individual design and environmental review to develop appropriate mitigation measures particular to each project site. In addition, the following mitigation measure shall be implemented for all discretionary projects under the Sustainable Santee Plan to reduce glare impacts.

With implementation of **MM 4.1-1**, impacts of glare from implementation of the proposed project would be reduced to less than significant by ensuring that energy-generating structures do not pose a safety risk to drivers, adversely affect sensitive receptors, or result in aviation hazards.

#### 4.1.8 Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation

Prior to mitigation, energy-generating structures could result in glare resulting in a potentially significant impact. All other potential impacts related to aesthetics would be less than significant.

<sup>4</sup> Sunshot/U.S. Department of Energy <http://solaroutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Solar-PV-and-Glare-Final.pdf> (Accessed February 27, 2019)

#### 4.1.9 Mitigation Measure

**MM 4.1-1** All proposed energy-generating structures shall be constructed utilizing non-reflective materials to the maximum extent feasible. If a reflective material is used, appropriate shielding shall be placed or the structure relocated to reduce the amount of visible glare. The City shall review all discretionary projects prior to issuance of building permits to ensure that appropriate shielding and placement of such structures are included in design plans.

#### 4.1.10 Level of Significance after Mitigation

Implementation of MM 4.1-1 will ensure impacts from glare are mitigated to a less than significant level. There would be no significant unavoidable adverse impacts of the proposed project related to aesthetics.

#### 4.1.11 Cumulative Impacts

The geographic context for this cumulative analysis is the City and the view from beyond the City. Due to the City's location where certain areas are bounded by hills, the affected area is not highly visible from surrounding areas nor would the Sustainable Santee Plan have an influence on surrounding areas. Since the Sustainable Santee Plan covers the entire City, cumulative impacts would be same as the impacts identified above for the proposed project. All future development would be required to comply with proposed policies that regulate the design of new buildings as well as protect the existing visual quality of the City. All development or redevelopment projects would also undergo further environmental and development review on a project-by-project basis to ensure that the visual quality of the surrounding environment is not substantially compromised. Therefore, on a cumulative level, implementation of the proposed project would not substantially degrade the visual quality or character of the City, and the cumulative impact would be less than significant.

Impacts from light and glare are generally localized and site-specific; therefore, the context for an analysis of cumulative impacts from light and glare would be geographically limited to the City. Cumulative development in this geographic area has resulted in moderate to high levels of ambient light and glare typical of urban areas in the more developed areas, and lower levels of light and glare near City boundaries. Future development in this geographic context would further increase sources of light and glare, which could be potentially significant if future projects introduce light and glare into areas of the City that have lower levels of ambient lighting. The proposed project would not result in new sources of substantial light, since future energy-generating structures would generally not be lighted. Therefore, the proposed project would not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to any cumulative light impact. The proposed project could result in localized increases sources of glare. However, implementation of project-level mitigation measures and **MM 4.1-1** would reduce any localized glare impact to less than significant and the project would not make a cumulatively considerable contribution to any cumulative glare impact. The cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

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