IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS B. AESTHETICS

INTRODUCTION

This section of the Revised Draft EIR provides a description of aesthetics within the City of Healdsburg, information on regulations and agencies with jurisdiction over the Project area, proposed General Plan policies relevant to aesthetics, and an analysis of potential impacts related to aesthetics resulting from implementation of the proposed General Plan. Information used to prepare this section was taken from field visits, the *Healdsburg 2030 General Plan Background Report* (January 2009 Draft), and the *Sonoma County General Plan 2020 EIR*, *Visual Resources Element* (2008).

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Physical Setting

Scenic Resources

The City of Healdsburg is located in a small, flat valley that runs roughly north to south following the Russian River and surrounded by gently rolling hills covered with swaths of oak trees, grassland, and other vegetation. Healdsburg is one of several municipalities along the U.S. Highway 101 corridor, which also follow this north-south valley through the Coast Range; the City of Cloverdale is roughly 18 miles north of Healdsburg, the City of Windsor is four miles south, and Santa Rosa is 12 miles south. The other relatively small municipalities in the Project region maintain a careful transition between urban development and the surrounding picturesque rural countryside.

Views of wooded ridges and hillsides, the Russian River, and adjacent agricultural valleys which provide a classic California "wine country" landscape are the primary scenic resources that enhance Healdsburg's setting. These scenic resources play a major role in Healdsburg in being an attractive place to live for local residents and as a destination for tourists.

Views of the Russian River within city limits are relatively limited. The river is visible from U.S. Highway 101 and the Healdsburg Avenue bridges, Veterans Memorial Beach Park, and one block each of Front Street and Kennedy Lane. The river is also visible from certain sections of Fitch Mountain Road outside of city limits where it winds around Fitch Mountain.

Scenic Ridgelines

Major scenic ridgelines as designated by the current General Plan are shown in Figure IV.B-1; no changes to these designations are proposed by the proposed General Plan. Fitch Mountain is the most visible scenic landmark in the Planning Area, rising just to the east of the central part of the city. While this mountain includes some low-density residential development on its flanks, the higher portion remains open space that is permanently protected by a conservation easement.

Figure IV.B-1	Major	Scenic	Ridge	lines
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Other scenic ridges adjoin the city to the northeast and north, including Healdsburg Ridge (Reservoir Hill) in Sub-Area B (see Figure III-7 Development Sub-Areas), an area that is outside city limits but is within the Planning Area. Many of these ridgelines are open space permanently protected by the Sonoma County Agricultural and Open Space District through outright ownership or conservation easements (see Figure IV-B-2). Scenic wooded ridges also exist in Sub-Area A, an area that was annexed into Healdsburg in 1994, and in Sub-Area C, just to the north of Sub-Area A and outside city limits.

Scenic Roads/Highways

The current General Plan requires the protection and enhancement of the viewsheds along the following highways, roads, and streets:

- U.S. Highway 101 Entire length within the Planning Area
- Healdsburg Avenue North of Chiquita Road
- Alexander Valley Road Entire length within Planning Area
- Dry Creek Road West of U.S. Highway 101
- North Fitch Mountain Road East of Benjamin Way
- South Fitch Mountain Road East of Heron Drive
- Westside Road/West Dry Creek Road Entire length within the Planning Area
- Healdsburg Avenue South of Memorial Bridge

Of these designated scenic roadways, only "Healdsburg Avenue/North of Chiquita Road", and "Healdsburg Avenue/South of Memorial Bridge," are entirely within existing city limits. All or most of the other designated scenic roadways are within the portion of the Planning Area that remains under County jurisdiction. The proposed General Plan proposes to delete Alexander Valley Road, Dry Creek Road and Westside Road as scenic roads for this reason (see Figure IV B-3, Scenic Highways, Roads and Streets). No roadways within the Planning Area are designated as scenic highways by Caltrans. Existing viewsheds along the City's designated scenic roads are described below.

U.S. Highway 101 offers views across both nearby vineyards and hillsides, particularly north of Dry Creek Road where the freeway grade is higher than most of the city. As a scenic corridor, U.S. Highway 101, which skirts most of the city lying to the east, is enhanced by mature redwood plantings which partially screen neighboring urban development, including various industrial and commercial uses, the Harvest Grove apartments, the back side of the Vineyard Plaza shopping center, and Presidential Estates.

Caltrans, California Scenic Highway System, website: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/cahisys.htm, October 1, 2007.

Figure IV.B-2 Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space Holdings

Figure IV.B-3 Scenic Highways, Roads and Streets

Views of the city from U.S. Highway 101 southbound are of the relatively new Parkland Farms development at the far north end of town. The view from this section of the highway also includes the recently cleared and currently vacant site of a former lumber processing facility between the highway and Healdsburg Avenue as well as the site of the recently-approved Saggio Hills project. A concrete divider in the middle of the freeway blocks the view of this area for south-bound motorists.

Views of the city from U.S. Highway 101 northbound include the Russian River towards two old truss bridges with a background featuring Fitch Mountain and the Mayacama Mountains, forming a memorable first impression and entry to the city.

Fitch Mountain Road within the county offers a scenic route that follows a dramatic bend of the Russian River around the east side of Fitch Mountain. The scenery is enhanced by lush vegetation varying from redwoods on the north side of the mountain to more open oak woodland on the south side. Some sections of this road are also lined with older homes and residential enclaves that were originally developed as seasonal or vacation homes and are now mostly used year round.

Alexander Valley Road, Westside Road, and West Dry Creek Road provide direct access into scenic "wine country" valleys that are situated to the north, northwest, and southwest, respectively, of Healdsburg. All three of these roads are also designated scenic corridors under the Sonoma County General Plan.

Visual Character

The built environment of Healdsburg has many urban design features that are attractive and communicate a sense of place. Beyond the influences of topography, the features that have shaped the growth and pattern of the city include the central plaza and grid of streets comprising the oldest part of town, the railroad, U.S. Highway 101, and the Russian River.

In terms of types of built environments, Healdsburg can be very broadly divided into five categories: a) downtown, b) surrounding older, mostly-residential neighborhoods, c) major arterial corridors (mostly highway commercial) outside the downtown area (i.e., Healdsburg Avenue, Dry Creek Road), d) industrial areas (light and heavy, older and newer), and e) outlying neighborhoods. The approximate boundaries of the downtown area and older residential neighborhoods are shown in Figure IV.B-4. The city's industrial areas are located mostly between U.S. Highway 101 and the railroad. The newer neighborhoods include all those areas designated as Residential in the original 1987 General Plan beyond the older residential area.

Each of these areas has its own set of distinctive visual attributes and qualities which are described briefly below. General views of the Planning Area are shown in Figures IV.B-5 through IV.B-10.

Figure IV.B-5 Views of the Healdsburg Area, Views 1-3

Figure IV.B-6 Views of the Healdsburg Area, Views 4-6

Figure IV.B-7 Views of the Healdsburg Area, Views 7-9

Figure IV.B-8 Views of the Healdsburg Area, Views 10-12

Figure IV.B-9 Views of the Healdsburg Area, Views 13-15

Figure IV.B-10 Views of the Healdsburg Area, Views 16-18

Downtown

The historic center of Healdsburg is situated around a central plaza that provides a vibrant, green and attractive visual focus for the downtown area. This plaza, with its towering old trees, benches, and gazebo, is surrounded by one- and two-story buildings, many of which were built in the 19th century. These elements together lend an historic feel to the area. Healdsburg Avenue is the historic main street of the city and runs along the west side of the plaza. A relatively dense array of mostly commercial uses comprising the downtown area extends further north and south along this main street, as well along nearby blocks of Center Street, Plaza Street, Matheson Street, and North Street. Views of the downtown area are shown in Figure IV.B-5 (Views of the Healdsburg Area, Views 1-3) and Figure IV.B-6 (Views of the Healdsburg Area, Views 4-6).

While the downtown area was beginning to deteriorate in the 1960s and 70s, a series of planning efforts helped to set the stage in transforming the downtown area into what it is mostly today: renovated, historic buildings; a pedestrian scale enhanced by subsequently implemented streetscape improvements; and a lively commercial center dominated by mostly small specialty shops, restaurants, and other commercial establishments geared to serving tourists as well as local residents.

The western edge of the downtown area includes the Vineyard Plaza Shopping Center, which provides important services to residents. At the north end of downtown is the Mitchell Center, which is also primarily resident-oriented and includes a movie theater. Both of these shopping centers are more auto-oriented than the rest of downtown, with parking located in front of buildings in contrast with buildings directly fronting the street as found in the city's older commercial core.

Older Neighborhoods

On a grid of streets extending beyond the downtown area predominantly to the north, and east, (due to historic patterns of flooding along Foss Creek and Norton Slough to the west, and the railroad and adjacent, early industrial areas to the south) are the oldest residential neighborhoods in the city (see Figure IV.B-7, Views of the Healdsburg Area, View 7). Along Healdsburg Avenue north of the downtown area, between Powell and Grant Streets, many of the older homes have been converted to offices or apartments.

Along with the Grove Street area, which was an early suburb of the city that remained until recent times outside city limits, these older neighborhoods contain many historic buildings representing a broad range of architectural styles, including Queen Anne, Italianate, Homestead, Greek Revival, and Neo-classical. This older residential zone just outside of the downtown area includes the two City designated historic districts that encompass several blocks of Matheson Street and all of Johnson Street.

This area also includes most of the city's bed and breakfast inns, as well as a few of the condominium developments and small apartment buildings, mostly built in the 1950s to 1980s, that replaced single-family homes or occurred as infill development. Attributes of this area include architectural variety

developed over many years, and the presence of many heritage trees, small gardens and mature street trees.

Newer Neighborhoods

In contrast, many newer neighborhoods in the city tend to have less variety of architecture and lot size because of mass production of housing within relatively shorter time periods. After World War II, new neighborhoods comprised primarily of single-family homes, along with a strip of apartments along March Avenue, were developed in subdivisions that relied on a street pattern typified by more curvilinear, loop and cul-de-sac streets, rather than extensions of the older grid pattern. As a result, many of these newer neighborhoods are linked to the older core of the city by collector or arterial streets only. Subdivisions constructed in the 1960s and 1970s are typified by medium size lots (i.e., approximately 6,000 square feet), with mostly one-story homes and two-car garages. As shown in Figure IV.B-7 (Views of the Healdsburg Area, View 8), some of these newer neighborhoods lack street trees, and the streetscape is more likely to include large expanses of driveways and building facades dominated by garage doors in comparison to older neighborhoods.

In the 1970s, many small- to medium-sized planned unit developments were built on the outskirts of the city, such as River View on the south side of South Fitch Mountain Road and Fitch Mountain Villas. These typically feature townhouses or small homes on relatively small lots, along with relatively narrow streets and shared open space areas maintained by a homeowner association.

An example of more recent large-scale residential development can be found in the Parkland Farms subdivision in Sub-Area A (shown in Figure III-3 [Development Sub-Areas]), an area that was annexed at the north end of the city in 1994. This development is visually separated from the rest of the city by a low, wooded ridge. Many of the homes in this area were built on relatively small lots compared to previous single-family home development, and in accordance with design standards in the Specific Plan adopted by the City for this area. In contrast to earlier suburban development, most of the new homes are two-story rather than one-story due to escalating land costs and a trend toward smaller lots. As a result of the small lots in combination with relatively large homes, the density of this area appears in strong contrast to surrounding or remaining open space. With landscaping and street trees maturing in this area, this contrast is expected to soften over time.

This area also contains three affordable housing projects that consist of apartments or ownership townhomes that visually fit well with surrounding single-family homes. The nearby Oak Grove apartments on north Grove Street also provide a recent example of what has been built in the north end of the city, and are significant in being both the first three story residential development ever built in the area as well as being highly visible from U.S. Highway 101.

Major Arterial Corridors

Healdsburg Avenue functions as the main street in the city and as such provides a corridor that sets the stage for viewing the city on a daily basis for both residents and visitors. The character of Healdsburg

Avenue changes abruptly just north of Grant Street, where it includes many older homes that are now mostly used as professional offices, as well as some infill apartments. This character changes once again north of Powell Avenue. Although vacant areas and residential uses are prominent along much of the east side of the street, most of Healdsburg Avenue in this area is dominated by strip commercial uses such as car dealerships, gas stations, and various small commercial and/or office developments. In contrast to the downtown area, each of these uses typically has its own parking lot, usually fronting the street. This area does not have an environment conducive to pedestrian activity. Street trees are either immature or lacking in some areas, and there is no sense of intimacy, landmarks or scale that would invite pedestrian traffic or activity.

As shown in View 9 (North of Dry Creek Road) of Figure IV.B-7, the character of Healdsburg Avenue changes again as it brushes against the low, mostly wooded, ridges that separate Central Healdsburg from the north end that includes the recent Parkland Farms residential development and Sub-Area C (shown in Figure III-3 [Development Sub-Areas]). After several more highway commercial-type uses, the west side is dominated by large trees in the vicinity of the Simi Winery, while new residential development is visible on the east side in Sub-Area A, either fenced off and landscaped, or directly fronting the street. Other than some landscaped strips adjacent to new development in Sub-Area A, Healdsburg Avenue lacks street trees along much of this section.

South of downtown, Healdsburg Avenue between Mill Street and U.S. Highway 101 includes a mix of commercial and industrial uses that lack visual coherence. Currently, the City is examining how this section of Healdsburg Avenue could be visually improved. A roundabout is being considered for the intersection of Healdsburg Avenue, Mill Street and Vine Street in which visual improvement is one of the goals of the proposed Project as shown in Figure IV.B-5 (Views of the Healdsburg Area, View 1).

Dry Creek Road, between Healdsburg Avenue and U.S. Highway 101 is another arterial that provides a main entry into Healdsburg from U.S. Highway 101. After exiting from U.S. Highway 101, initial views include a motel, restaurant and gas station on the south, and a car and truck parking lot for a local car dealership to the north. This shifts to highway commercial uses as well as an undeveloped property on the north just west of the railroad tracks.

Industrial Areas

The city has several light and heavy industrial areas that are predominantly located west of the railroad and adjacent or relatively close to U.S. Highway 101. Depending upon the use and when built, some of these areas are attractively landscaped or screened, while other areas lack landscaping and screening, with some sites visible from designated scenic highways such as U.S. Highway 101 (as discussed above) or Healdsburg Avenue south of the Russian River Bridge as shown in Views 10 and 11 in Figure IV.B-8 (Views of the Healdsburg Area).

The oldest industrial area exists in the immediate vicinity of the railroad and railroad station southeast of downtown (see Figure IV.B-8, Views of the Healdsburg Area, View 12). Since several parcels in this area include vacant buildings or are otherwise underutilized, and because this area is close to both

downtown and older, residential neighborhoods, it has potential for redevelopment involving new businesses, housing, or mixed use.

Another light industrial area exists between U.S. Highway 101 and the downtown area. It includes the Foss Creek Circle area and light industrial complexes west of City Hall. Much of this area consists of more recent development and is relatively attractive. The city's main heavy industrial area is located on the east side of the Russian River and is dominated by Syar Industries sand and gravel processing plant. Many of the parcels in this area remain vacant or underutilized due to a lack of City water and sewer service.

Light and Glare

Due to the current built-out nature of the city, there is a considerable amount of ambient light resulting from urban uses. Sources of light and glare include neon signs, reflective building facades, streetlights, parking lot lighting and automotive headlights.

Regulatory Setting

Federal

No federal plans, policies, regulations or laws related to aesthetics are applicable to the proposed Project.

State

No state plans, policies, regulations or laws related to aesthetics are applicable to the proposed Project.

Regional

Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District

In 1990, Sonoma County residents voted to create the Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District to preserve lands across the county. With funds generated from a voter-approved quarter-cent sales tax, the county has preserved almost 70,000 acres of open space and agricultural land. The District's holdings near Healdsburg are shown in Figure IV.B-2. Located east of Healdsburg, Fitch Mountain is one of the most prominent peaks in the area. An easement over the property was executed to retain the vista for city residents and travelers on U.S. Highway 101. The 182-acre property overlooks the Russian River and the City of Healdsburg. The Healdsburg Ridge Open Space Preserve, located northeast of Healdsburg, is owned by the District and includes 161 acres. It is bordered to the south by the Callahan conservation easement-protected property that covers 106 acres.²

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² Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District, website: http://www.sonomaopenspace.org/, October 17, 2007.

Sonoma County General Plan 2020

The Sonoma County General Plan 2020 recognizes the need to protect visual resources and includes policies that would do so through designating scenic lands as Community Separators, Scenic Landscape Units or Scenic Corridors (see Figure IV B-11). The County has established Community Separators in areas surrounding Healdsburg to protect areas that could otherwise be developed in the future. The Sonoma County General Plan 2020 also includes policies that would reduce impacts on views resulting from lighting and glare.

The Sonoma County General Plan 2020 Open Space Element designates Scenic Landscape Units around much of the city. According to the Element, certain landscapes are of special importance to Sonoma County and preservation of these scenic resources is important to the quality of life of county residents and the tourists and agricultural economy. Other features provide scenic backdrops to communities. As the county urbanizes, maintenance of the openness of these areas provides important visual relief from urban densities. These landscapes have little capacity to absorb very much development without significant visual impact.

The Open Space Element identifies the protection of the agricultural Alexander and Dry Creek Valleys scenic beauty, located north and west of the city, as not only important from an aesthetic standpoint, but also from an economic one as agricultural marketing is closely tied to the area's scenic image. The hills along U.S. Highway 101 and above the valley floor are also particularly sensitive. The hills east of Windsor, located southeast of the city, are also identified as a Scenic Landscape Unit because they provide a scenic backdrop to the Santa Rosa Plain and form part of the Healdsburg-Windsor Community Separator.

The Open Space Element's objectives and policies directed at preserving the qualities of the Scenic Landscape Units include:

- avoiding amendments to increase residential density in excess of one unit per ten acres
- avoiding commercial and industrial uses other than those which are permitted by the agricultural or resource land use categories
- siting new structures below exposed ridgelines
- screening new structures with natural landforms and existing vegetation, and with native, fire retardant plants on exposed sites
- discouraging cuts and fills
- · screening driveways from public view
- undergrounding utilities where economically practical
- establishing building envelopes for structures
- limiting building height

Figure IV.B-11 Sonoma County General Plan Community Separators

- clustering buildings
- locating building sites and roadways to preserve significant existing tree stands and significant oak trees

City of Healdsburg Zoning Ordinance

The City of Healdsburg Zoning Ordinance includes the following policies related to aesthetics and visual resources.

Article 21 Environmental Performance Standards

Article 21 of the City's Zoning Ordinance ensures that all properties, operations and processes are maintained in a healthful and safe manner and do not interfere with public health, safety, or welfare. The article's performance standards for glare mandate that indirect or diffuse lighting shall be directed away and/or shielded to minimize spillage onto adjacent properties. Lighting for outdoor courts or field games shall require approval of a conditional use permit by the Planning Commission.

Article 26 Design and Architecture Review

The purpose of Zoning Ordinance Article 26 is to preserve the community's natural beauty and improve its appearance through design review. Article 26 specifies applications that are subject to design review and requirements and procedures for applicants. Design review is required for all commercial, office, and industrial projects, and projects involving more than one residential unit. Additionally, design review is required for single-family dwellings in certain specific plan areas (i.e., Planning Sub-Area A and the Grove Street Neighborhood Plan area). Design review is required for the construction, certain alterations, and demolition of any designated historic building and for any structure within a designated historic district resulting in a permanent physical change to the building. The article also requires that all applicable policies and requirements of the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance are met prior to design application approval.

City of Healdsburg Design Review Manual

It is the purpose of the Design Review Manual to establish the guidelines to be used by the Planning Commission in evaluating design proposals. It is intended that these standards will assist in providing adequate direction for the project owner or professional designer in establishing parameters for their projects. The following general policies are the underlying basis of the specific guidelines and criteria:

Design Review Policies

- 1. It is the duty and function of the Planning Commission to preserve natural beauty, promote attractive developments of land and, where possible, improve the appearance of the community.
- 2. The Planning Commission's concern shall be the site and architectural design of any land use and structures permitted by the building and zoning regulations insofar as such features affect the

public interest and have [an] impact on the use and enjoyment of other properties. The Planning Commission shall also review any change in use on an existing developed property.

- 3. In granting approvals, the Planning Commission shall attempt to prevent the indiscriminate clearing of property, the unnecessary destruction of trees and shrubs and the gross alteration of the natural topography and drainage.
- 4. The Planning Commission will promote projects that will stimulate new uses and structures that are compatible with the standards herein.
- 5. Signs which are unsightly or obnoxious in appearance, which are not properly related to the site or use or not harmonious with adjacent uses shall be prohibited.
- 6. The Planning Commission shall attempt to obtain the best possible traffic circulation in the project area.
- 7. Features which are ugly, inharmonious to the site or neighborhood, or monotonous shall be prohibited. Originality in site design, architectural design and landscape design shall be encouraged.

Adopted Specific and Area Plans

The City of Healdsburg has adopted a number of plans to guide the development of specific areas of its Planning Area.

Specific Plan for Area A

The Specific Plan for Area A provides a framework for development of approximately 230 acres at the north end of the city (Sub-Area A). The Plan contains a Community Design Element with policies and objectives that provide for the protection of important topographic and vegetative features as visual resources and promotes the design of development that blends with the area's natural features.

11.3 Grading

Policy

• Grading shall respect and emulate the natural topography by blending the surrounding terrain, and shall not contribute to erosion.

Objective

• Grading should project important topography features containing sensitive natural resources and scenic qualities.

11.4 Design of Development

11.4.2 Ridgelands

Policy

Use design guidelines to make new development less visually apparent. Development
will blend with the existing natural features through careful siting, grading and building
design...Design guidelines and standards for materials and construction will further
reinforce the Ridgelands' rural character.

11.4.5 Parks and Stormwater Detention

Policy

• Integrate natural features into the design of parks and detention facilities...Natural features should be integrated with their overall design.

Ridgeline North Area Plan

The Ridgeline North Area Plan encompasses 98 acres of the northern portion of Sub-Area B. Although the Plan includes a Design Element chapter that includes policies, objectives and standards for the siting and design of development in the plan area, the entire plan area has since become part of the Healdsburg Ridge Open Space Preserve owned by the Sonoma County Agriculture and Open Space Preservation District. The District adopted a management plan in 2006 for the entire 150-acre Healdsburg Ridge Open Space Preserve.

Grove Street Neighborhood Plan

The Grove Street Neighborhood Plan encompasses an approximately 104-acre area generally located on the east and west sides of Grove Street between Dry Creek Road and Foss Creek Circle. The purpose and intent of preparing a Neighborhood Plan for the Grove Street area is to provide a cohesive planning framework that both recognizes and attempts to retain or enhance the neighborhood's distinctive and positive qualities. Objectives and policies of the Plan related to aesthetics and visual character include the following:

Objectives

- Maintain a sense of place and preserve the unique identify of the Grove Street/W. Grant Street neighborhood through streetscape, street lighting and other improvements.
- Encourage building design that is in scale with adjacent development and that harmonizes with surrounding development.
- Encourage a mix of architectural styles and discourage uniformity in any major new residential development.

 Protect large mature trees close to Grove Street and W. Grant Street and require new street tree planting that will result in the creation of new or enhanced tree canopies over streets.

- Ensure that any new commercial or office type uses in the Grove Street/W. Grant Street
 mixed use zone are visually compatible with and subordinate to existing and future
 adjoining residential uses.
- Maintain and enhance scenic viewsheds toward distant hills and ridges, Dry Creek Valley, other areas of Healdsburg, riparian woodlands along Foss Creek and Norton Slough, and the open space of the detention basin, particularly from streets and other public vantage points.
- Protect and enhance the viewshed of the plan area from Highway 101.
- Avoid or mitigate the aesthetic impact of sound walls if needed to protect residential development from traffic noise.
- Eliminate existing and unsightly overhead utility lines, if financially feasible.

Policies

- All new development shall be subject to design review to ensure that consistent
 application of these design standards will maintain the intended design character of the
 area.
- Sound walls shall not be allowable along Grove Street; instead, other measures such as acoustical building design shall be used to mitigate traffic noise impacts where required.
- Sound walls along Highway 101 shall be discouraged; if unavoidable, aesthetically
 pleasing design and eventual full landscape screening shall be required. Sound wall
 proposals will require design review and approval by the Planning Commission.

Saggio Hills Area Plan

The Saggio Hills Area Plan is intended to ensure that the future annexation and subsequent development of a 258.5± acre unincorporated property located east of Healdsburg Avenue just north of Parkland Farms and the existing city limits will be consistent with the City of Healdsburg's General Plan goals and policies and to minimize potential environmental impacts resulting from future development within the Plan Area. This document contains a number of policies and objectives that are intended to minimize the aesthetic and visual impacts of the project, including the following:

Objective D-2 Achieve a cohesive architectural aesthetic for all Visitor Accommodation and Very Low Density Residential land uses appropriate to the Plan Area's natural woodland hillside/meadow setting.

Policy D-2.1	Separate resort building elements into small clusters and set them into the hillside environment in order to create a sense of a village. (See Figure 17: Cluster Concept Plan)
Policy D-2.2	Building forms and masses shall be scaled to the natural topography and shall complement the natural ridgelines.
Policy D-2.3	Materials, colors and patterns such as wood, stucco and stone shall be used in order to minimize the visibility of the buildings from off-site viewpoints and to be compatible with natural site features and aesthetic qualities.
Policy D-2.4	Site elements such as light fixtures, signage, fences and walls shall complement the existing landscape character.
Policy D-2.9	Buildings shall be fitted to the contours of the site. Cuts shall be minimized and, where necessary, contoured, retained or landscaped to effect a natural transition to the surrounding site.
Policy D-2.10	The visual impact of buildings shall be subordinate to the surrounding landscape.
Policy D-2.11	Building massing shall be designed to insure that buildings blend and are harmonious with their surroundings.
Policy D-2.12	Roof materials shall be non-reflective and, in general, be of darker colors that blend with the surrounding vegetation.
Policy D-2.13	Exterior colors shall be compatible with the natural environment.
Policy D-2.14	Exterior surfaces should be able to withstand climate extremes and weather gracefully.
Policy D-2.15	Exterior surfaces shall include materials that are native to, or harmonize with, the rural landscape.
Objective D-3	Achieve a cohesive architectural aesthetic for all development within the Medium High Density Residential land use area.
Policy D-3.1	Incorporate features such as balconies, cantilevers, dormers, bay windows, patios, entries and accent materials, to provide articulation and interest.
Policy D-3.2	Avoid buildings with a massive appearance. Articulate form and visually divide buildings into design components that break down the scale. All buildings shall be "4-sided" architecture.
Policy D-3.3	Utilize color and multiple wall materials to reduce the appearance of building mass.
Policy D-3.4	Design carports or garages to architecturally relate to the main building(s).

Policy D-3.6	Utilize neutral earth tone exterior wall and trim colors.
Policy D-3.7	Utilize non-reflective roof materials of darker colors for primary as well as accessory structures.
Policy D-4.4	Site plantings in disturbed areas and in all major open space areas to be in naturalistic patterns and densities to blend with existing vegetation.
Policy D-4.5	Ornamental and agricultural plantings, where appropriate, shall follow patterns established in the local natural and vernacular landscapes.

PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES

Proposed General Plan policies and implementation measures that affect or pertain to aesthetics or visual resources are listed below.

Policies

- LU-C-1: Only low-intensity urban development and open space land uses shall be allowed in
 areas characterized by steep slopes, environmental hazards, scenic ridgelines and hillsides.
 Clustering of development in these areas shall be encouraged to preserve open space, meet the
 policies of the General Plan concerning natural hazards and scenic resources and minimize the
 costs of infrastructure improvements.
- *LU-D-1:* The downtown shall be defined by identifiable boundaries. Land use designations shall reinforce the distinction between the downtown and surrounding areas. Landscaping, street furniture, special paving, lighting and street trees shall be used to reinforce the distinction between the downtown and adjacent districts.
- *LU-D-2*: The ground floor of buildings fronting on the historic Plaza should be occupied by activities of visual interest to pedestrians.
- *LU-D-3*: Formula businesses are prohibited on properties around the historic Plaza in order to preserve its character of small, unique businesses that are attractive to residents and visitors.
- *LU-D-5*: Large single-tenant commercial buildings around the Plaza shall be regulated to minimize aesthetic, economic and traffic impacts.
- *ED-B-3:* Formula businesses shall be prohibited on properties around the Plaza in order to support local- and independently-owned businesses and protect and enhance Healdsburg's unique character.
- *ED-B-4*: Large single-tenant commercial buildings around the Plaza shall be regulated to minimize aesthetic, economic and traffic impacts.

• *T-A-2*: Streets shall be dedicated, widened, extended, and constructed according to the street cross-sections as shown in General Plan Figure 6, Street Standard Cross-Sections with the following exceptions:

- (c) In order to preserve neighborhood character, enhance pedestrian use and/or protect significant trees, dedication and improvement of full rights-of-way as shown in the Street Standards may not be required in the following road segments: Healdsburg Avenue between Exchange Avenue and Front Street, University Street, Matheson Street, South Fitch Mountain Road, Grove Street between Grant Street and Dry Creek Road, Chiquita Road between Grove Street and Highway 101, and any other segments where the City Council determines that full improvements would adversely affect neighborhood character, pedestrian use and/or significant trees.
- *T-A-14*: The City will work towards renovating or replacing the Russian River bridge with a sound structure that is aesthetically-pleasing and meets the needs of vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle traffic.
- *NR-B-2:* Large, mature trees that contribute to the visual quality of the environment or provide important wildlife habitat shall be protected.
- *NR-B-6:* The use of large-scale trees in new development is encouraged where adequate space can be provided for the trees' ultimate size, such as in open space areas, parks, large lots, and wide parkway strips, to visually blend new development with the older parts of the city.
- *NR-C-1:* The City will protect its existing natural features to give shape and form to Healdsburg. To this end, new development shall not be allowed to breach the Urban Growth Boundary except under the exceptional circumstances allowed by this General Plan.
- *NR-C-2*: The City will encourage Sonoma County to retain surrounding lands in very low-density residential, agricultural, open space and natural resource uses that provide contrast to urbanized Healdsburg.
- *NR-C-3*: Development shall be allowed only in a manner that protects important views and landmarks such as Fitch Mountain, Russian River, and the foothills to the north, west and east of the city.
- *NR-C-4*: The top of Fitch Mountain shall remain in open space to preserve its natural environment, scenic beauty and use for public trails.
- *NR-C-5*: Major scenic ridgelines designated on General Plan Figure 7 [Figure IV.B-1] and highly visible hillsides shall be protected from visually obtrusive development.
- *NR-C-6*: Protection of distinctive natural vegetation such as oak woodlands, riparian corridors, and mixed evergreen forest is encouraged.

• *NR-C-7:* The viewshed along scenic highways, roads and streets shall be protected and enhanced. The following road segments are declared scenic roads for the purposes of the Healdsburg General Plan and City land use regulations as depicted on General Plan Figure 8 [Figure IV.B-2]:

- (a) Highway 101 Entire length within the Planning Area
- (b) Healdsburg Avenue North of Grove Street
- (c) North Fitch Mountain Road East of Benjamin Way
- (d) South Fitch Mountain Road East of Heron Drive
- (e) Healdsburg Avenue South of the Russian River Bridge
- NR-C-8: City scenic road and street efforts shall be coordinated with the County's scenic highway program.
- *CD-A-1*: The City will encourage building design that is in scale with adjacent development and which harmonizes with surrounding development.
- *CD-A-2*: The City will encourage and support the efforts of individual business owners and business associations to improve the visual appearance of commercial development.
- *CD-A-3*: The City will encourage and support the efforts of individual homeowners and homeowner and neighborhood associations to improve the visual appearance of residential neighborhoods.
- *CD-A-4*: The City will discourage visual clutter.
- *CD-A-5*: City project approvals and other actions relating to physical development shall be consistent with design guidelines set forth in the Design Review Manual, in addition to General Plan policies, the Zoning Ordinance and any specific plan design guidelines.
- *CD-A-6*: Revitalization of city entryways from Highway 101 and Healdsburg Avenue is among the City's top priorities for upgrading the visual and aesthetic character of Healdsburg.
- *CD-A-7:* The City will require the undergrounding of utilities as new development occurs to the extent that this does not adversely impact trees or cause similar undesirable consequences.
- *CD-A-8*: Development along Healdsburg Avenue between Grant Street and Grove Street shall be designed to emphasize nodes or clusters of development and to avoid the appearance of strip development.
- *CD-A-9:* The existing low-profile character of Healdsburg Avenue between Powell Avenue and Grant Street shall be preserved, and new development in the area shall be in keeping with the scale and appearance of existing development.
- *CD-A-10:* The integrity of distinct and identifiable neighborhoods and districts shall be preserved and strengthened.

• *CD-A-11:* Landscaping shall be used in public and private development projects to enhance the city's visual qualities, provide shade and minimize glare.

- *CD-A-12:* Gates controlling access to residential subdivisions and multi-family residential development are discouraged.
- *CD-A-13:* Property owners shall maintain their property in a manner that avoids an unsightly appearance and reflects the desirable visual qualities of Healdsburg.
- CD-B-1: The Plaza shall be preserved, reinforced and enhanced as the historic and cultural center
 of Healdsburg.
- *CD-B-2*: Parking lots in the downtown shall be located and designed to avoid interrupting facade continuity and dispersed to promote pedestrian access to downtown.
- *CD-B-3*: The visual enhancement of the downtown area is among the City's top priorities in order to protect its critical role in the community.
- *HCR-A-1*: The City will promote the protection and enhancement of Healdsburg's historically significant districts, buildings and landscape features.
- *HCR-A-3*: The City will support the efforts of property owners to preserve and renovate historically significant structures. Where such buildings cannot be preserved intact, the City shall seek to preserve the building facades.

Policy Implementation Measures

- *LU-8:* Continue to collaborate with Sonoma County, Sonoma LAFCO, the Sonoma County Agricultural Preservation and Open Space District and other agencies to ensure that unincorporated areas within the Healdsburg Planning Area and in proximity to it are primarily non-urban uses such as rural residential, agricultural and open space.
- LU-10: Continue to implement the land use and development regulations that protect hillsides and ridgelines as contained in the Zoning Ordinance, the Design Review Manual and in adopted specific, area and neighborhood plans.
- LU-13: Continue to implement the improvements contained in the Downtown Streetscape Plan.
- *LU-16*: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to:
 - (a) Regulate formula businesses for properties around the Plaza. Prohibit big box retail businesses and outlet malls throughout the city.
 - (b) Prohibit big box retail businesses and outlet malls throughout the city.
 - (c) Regulate large single-tenant commercial buildings around the Plaza.
 - (d) Ensure that development outside of the downtown complements, but does not compete with, its role as the city's commercial core.

(e) Replace the Highway Commercial zoning district with a Mixed Use Commercial zoning district to be more responsive to market demand and to promote mixed commercial and residential uses at higher densities

- (f) Combine the industrial zoning districts and revise the list of allowed and conditionally-permitted uses to reflect changes to the local economy and regulate uses that generate significant off-site impacts or have an extraordinarily high impact on city sewer, water or electric services
- (g) Set standards for what qualifies as a subordinate use when associated with mixed-use and other types of development.
- *ED-10*: Amend the Zoning Ordinance to:
 - (a) Prohibit formula businesses on properties fronting the Plaza
 - (b) Ensure that development outside of the downtown complements, but does not compete with, its role as the city's commercial core
 - (c) Regulate large single-tenant commercial buildings around the Plaza
- NR-7: Require a visibility analysis for the creation of new lots, new structures or significant additions and other projects over which the City exercises discretionary authority located within 200 feet on either side (based on a horizontal projection) of the center line of major scenic ridgelines as shown on General Plan Figure 7, Major Scenic Ridgelines. Only developments that are shown to be unobtrusive based on this analysis may be approved. Structural projections above the ridgeline shall not be allowed unless it can be demonstrated that existing natural features will screen the projection.
- *NR-8*: Continue to implement the Hillside Residential Development Design Standards of the Design Review Manual for new residential development in hillside areas.
- *CD-1*: Continue to apply the City's design review guidelines by requiring their incorporation into the design of development projects.
- *CD-2*: Revise and update the City's design review guidelines.
- *CD-3*: Aggressively enforce City regulations regarding abandoned vehicles, outdoor storage, and substandard or illegal structures or signs.
- *CD-4*: Work towards the removal of all billboards within the city.
- *CD-5*: Require the undergrounding of utilities by new development while seeking to avoid adverse impacts on trees or similar undesirable consequences.
- *CD-6*: The perimeter and interior of parking lots shall be landscaped with shrubs and shade trees selected from a City-approved list of trees to improve aesthetics and to provide relief from solar radiation, heat and glare.

• *CD-7*: Prepare and adopt a master street tree plan for the city's primary streets.

- *CD-8*: Periodically review and update the Master Tree List.
- *CD-9*: Require the planting of street trees as a part of all development projects, guided by the Master Tree List.
- *CD-10*: Continue to apply Design Review Manual guidelines promoting the preservation of natural site amenities, including mature trees, on development sites and their incorporation into development projects.
- *CD-11*: Continue to implement the improvements called for by the Downtown Streetscape Plan, including intersection "bulb-outs," landscaped parking bays, street trees, street lights, signage and street furniture.
- *CD-12*: Establish a proactive program to ensure that property owners maintain their property in good condition and remediate unsightly conditions.
- *CD-14*: Develop a plan for undergrounding utilities in Healdsburg to enhance the aesthetic character of its downtown and other commercial areas, neighborhoods and entryways.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

Methodology

Impacts associated with aesthetic resources were evaluated based on the information found within the *Healdsburg 2030 General Plan Background Report*, the *Sonoma County General Plan 2020 EIR, Visual Resources Element* and the *Saggio Hills Project EIR*. Site visits confirmed the existing visual character described in this section. The analysis of visual impacts (including light and glare) focuses on the nature and magnitude of changes to the visual character of the City as a result of buildout under the proposed General Plan. The analysis also considered vantage points within the Planning Area that would be affected by development.

Thresholds of Significance

In accordance with Appendix G to the CEQA Guidelines, the proposed Project would have a significant impact related to aesthetics if it would:

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

Project Impacts

Impact IV.B-1: The proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

As discussed above, primary scenic vistas that exist within the City of Healdsburg are of wooded ridges and hillsides and the Russian River. The geography in the eastern side of the city is defined by hills and ridges with the highest point, Fitch Mountain, in the southeast portion of the city. The Russian River is mostly visible from bridges and parks that front the River and views are relatively limited within the city.

Buildout under the proposed Project would mostly be dispersed throughout the city as infill. However, as shown in Figures IV.B-1 (Major Scenic Ridgelines) and III-3 (Development Sub-Areas), there is a potential for development on designated scenic ridgelines in Development Sub-Areas A, B, C, E, and H. In addition, construction in other Development Sub-Areas could obscure views from within the city. Therefore, buildout under the proposed Project could negatively affect scenic vistas and obscure scenic vistas within the city.

However, the implementation of local regulations and adopted specific and area plans, as well as policies included in the proposed General Plan listed earlier in this section, would reduce impacts to less-than-significant levels. Policy NR-7 requires a visual analysis for any development proposed within 200 feet on either side (based on a horizontal projection) of the centerline of major scenic ridgelines as shown in Figure IV.B-1. Such analysis must demonstrate that proposed development will be unobtrusive and that any structural projections above the ridgeline will be screened by existing natural features. Either cross-section drawings at 500-foot intervals perpendicular to the ridgeline or computer-simulated photomontages showing before and after views of the ridgeline from pertinent vantage points are required for this visual analysis. This requirement has been implemented for homes proposed within designated scenic ridgelines in Sub-Areas A and C, and will be a primary design factor in selecting the location of any development in nearby Sub-Area B, just east of the present city boundaries.

Additionally, Policy NR-8 requires the implementation of the Hillside Residential Development Design Standards of the City of Healdsburg Design Review Manual for new residential development in hillside areas. Furthermore, Article 26 of the City's Zoning Ordinance not only maintains the city's natural resources through design review and visibility analysis requirements for proposed development, but also requires that development adheres to all applicable policies and regulations found in the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. In addition, proposed General Plan Policies LU-A-6, LU-C-1, T-A-14, PS-H-7, NR-B-2, and NR-C-1 through NR-C-6 will ensure that land use respects natural constraints and conditions, projects are aesthetically pleasing, open space and natural settings are protected and enhanced, and scenic resources are protected from obtrusion from development by requiring a visibility analysis for new development.

The Saggio Hills Project EIR determined that views of the project site during construction would affect a relatively small number of existing residences and would be partially shielded by varying topography and vegetation for a temporary period. Operational views from U.S. 101 (a designated County and City scenic

corridor), Healdsburg Avenue (a designated City scenic corridor), Barbieri Brothers Park, and nearby existing residences would either be limited or would not be substantially degraded, as views of residences and recreation area elements would be relatively well screened and existing utility poles would be undergrounded. In addition, views of the community park would be consistent with the existing park uses at Barbieri Brothers Park. However, one proposed resort residence (lot A-6) within view from Barbieri Brothers Park and some private residences would project above the dense tree canopy of a protected hillside ridgeline, which the City's general plan specifically prohibits. Although this impact was considered significant, Mitigation Measure 3.1-1 was adopted as part of the EIR's certification that reduced the potential impacts on scenic vistas to less than significant.

Therefore, through the implementation of proposed General Plan policies, impacts on scenic vistas resulting from the proposed Project would be *less than significant*.

Impact IV.B-2: The proposed Project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within [the viewshed of] a state scenic highway.

According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) there are no state designated scenic highways within the City of Healdsburg. Therefore, *no impact* would result.³

Impact IV.B-3: The proposed Project would not significantly degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

Some of the development under the proposed Project would be dispersed throughout the city in areas that have an established and recognized character such as the downtown plaza and commercial area, the old and historic neighborhoods near downtown, the newer single- and multi-family unit residential developments in outlying areas of the city, and established industrial sectors. In addition, development would be dispersed throughout areas that contain elements that contribute to the city's character such as hills and ridgelines, mature landscaping and trees, and parks and open space. Development within the city could diminish or alter these neighborhoods and elements, which would, in turn, degrade the city's visual character.

Although the potential exists for buildout of the proposed General Plan to result in degradation of the city's visual character, local regulations and area plans, as well as proposed General Plan policies would reduce impacts to levels that are less than significant. For example, Article 26 of the City's Zoning Ordinance not only promotes the maintenance of the city's natural resources through design review of proposed developments, but also requires that developments adhere to all applicable policies and standards found in the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. In addition, Policies LU-A-1 and LU-

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³ Caltrans, California Scenic Highway System, website: http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/cahisys.htm, October 1, 2007.

C-1 will ensure that developments respect natural constraints and conditions within the Urban Growth Boundary. Policies LU-D-1 through LU-D-3, LU-D-5, ED-B-3, and ED-B-4 will promote the maintenance of downtown Healdsburg's character and aesthetics.

Policies T-A-2, PS-H-7, NR-B-2, NR-B-6, and NR-C-1 through NR-C-8 will protect the city's open space, natural and scenic resources, viewsheds from City-designated scenic roadways, and mature trees from development and encroachment, and require new development to plant large scale trees to match the surrounding landscape. Policy T-A-14 will require the replacement of the Russian River bridge to be aesthetically pleasing. Policies CD-A-1 through CD-A-12, and CD-B-1 through CD-B-3 will preserve and enhance the most desirable qualities of the city's built environment including the downtown area and the Healdsburg Plaza. Policies HCR-A-1 and HCR-A-3 will preserve historically-significant landscape and structures that contribute to Healdsburg's visual identity. Policy NR-C-7 lists scenic roads that are to be protected and enhanced. The current General Plan's list of scenic roadways has been revised to delete those located outside of the Planning Area. However, all of those within the Planning Area are proposed to be maintained.

Therefore, through implementation of the proposed General Plan policies, the proposed Project would not significantly degrade the existing visual character or quality of the city and impacts would be *less than significant*.

Impact IV.B-4: The proposed Project would create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Buildings, outdoor playing fields, parking lots, and other structures resulting from buildout under the proposed General Plan would increase outdoor lighting. Increased light and glare could also result from reflective building exteriors and an increase in automobile headlights generated by increased automobile traffic. As a result, lighting and glare associated with increased development would affect day or nighttime views for land uses neighboring new development.

Development under the proposed General Plan would occur in infill areas where lighting from urban uses already exists. Residential development in Sub-Areas B and C, previously undeveloped segments of the Planning Area, would potentially result in significant new sources of light or glare affecting day and nighttime views. In areas of infill, it is possible that new industrial and commercial development would be located adjacent to residential land uses. Lighting associated with industrial and commercial buildings, headlights from additional traffic, and glare from reflective building exteriors could adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Article 21 of the City's Zoning Ordinance provides environmental performance standards that prohibit lighting from spilling onto adjacent properties. As discussed in Impact IV.B-1, Article 26 of the City's Zoning Ordinance not only maintains the city's natural aesthetic through design review of proposed developments, but also requires that developments adhere to all applicable policies and standards found in the City's General Plan and Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, proposed General Plan Policies LU-A-6

and LU-C-1 will restrict development on Fitch Mountain and areas characterized by scenic ridgelines and hillsides which will maintain current light levels in those areas. Policy CD-A-1 will encourage the design of buildings that are in scale and harmony with surrounding development. Policy CD-A-5 requires that developments be consistent with the City's design guidelines, proposed General Plan policies, Zoning Ordinance and specific plan design guidelines. Furthermore, Policy CD-A-11 requires that landscaping be used in developments to minimize glare. Despite these measures to reduce lighting impacts associated with development, the overall added glare and skyglow may be considered significant.

The Saggio Hills project, which includes a community park, is part of the buildout that could occur under the proposed Project. The light and ambient glare from the proposed field lights at the community park would increase the potential for significant impacts related to views from Healdsburg Avenue and Parkland Farms residences. Specifically, drivers on Healdsburg Avenue approaching the "entrance" to the city would view the Saggio Hills project community park's proposed 70-foot lights within their direct field of vision for approximately 30 seconds. The glare and ambient light (average 33.8–34.1 Footcandles) from the proposed sports field lights would be as close as 130 feet to Healdsburg Avenue (with a direct line of sight for southbound drivers viewing these lights for approximately 30 seconds) and 700 feet from the nearest residence in Parkland Farms, in addition to impacts from glare from added street lights and parking lights especially late at night. Mitigation measures were included in the Saggio Hills project to reduce impacts from sports field lighting including preparation of a lighting plan to shield lighting from residential areas and motorists, use of timers and dimming devices, and planting of landscaping to provide vegetative buffers. However, while these mitigation measures would reduce the impact of light and glare including skyglow effects, these measures would not fully reduce the impact of light and scattered glare from the sports fields to a less than significant level.

Therefore, the proposed Project would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area by creating a new source of substantial light or glare, and impacts would be *significant and unavoidable*.

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The geographic context for cumulative aesthetic resources impacts is Sonoma County. The Sonoma County General Plan 2020 recognizes the need to protect visual resources and includes policies that would do so through designating scenic lands as Community Separators, Scenic Landscape Units, or Scenic Corridors (Figure IV B-11). The Sonoma County General Plan 2020 includes policies that would reduce impacts on views resulting from light and glare. In addition, the above-mentioned policies in the proposed General Plan would reduce some impacts related to aesthetics. However, even with implementation of mitigation measures, light and ambient glare from the field lights at the community park approved for the Saggio Hills project would result in significant unavoidable impacts related to light and glare.

Therefore, cumulative impacts regarding aesthetic resources would be *significant and unavoidable*.

MITIGATION MEASURES

With implementation of the applicable regulations and the proposed General Plan policies and implementation measures listed above, no mitigation measures would be required for Impacts IV.B-1 through IV.B-3. Although mitigation measures are provided for the Saggio Hills project in the certified EIR for that project, there are no additional feasible mitigation measures available to reduce Impact IV.B-4 to a less than significant level. Additionally, no feasible mitigation measures are available to reduce cumulative impacts related to light and glare to a less than significant level.