

---

---

## IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS

### B. AESTHETICS

---

---

#### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

##### Scenic Vistas

A view or vista refers to direct and unobstructed line-of-sight to an on- or off-site aesthetic resource, which may take the form of panoramic viewpoints from particular vantages. The available viewshed or visible landscape within a given field of view is defined by physical elements that occupy a viewer's line-of-sight from a particular location. Existing views may be obstructed or blocked by modifications of the environment (e.g., grading, landscaping, building construction, etc.). Conversely, modifications to the existing environment may create or enhance view opportunities.

For purposes of this analysis, only public views are being considered. Public views are those which can be seen from vantage points that are publicly accessible, such as streets, freeways, public parks, and vista points. These views are generally available to a greater number of persons than are private views. Private views, in contrast, are those that are only available from vantage points located on private property. Unless specifically protected by an ordinance, private views are not protected from developments that occupy airspace directly above private property. Therefore, private views are not considered to be impacted if an adjacent land use blocks such views.

The rugged topography of the surrounding mountains is the predominant natural and visual resource in the Project area. Surrounding major physical and topographical features include the Tres Cerritos Foothills immediately north of the Project site, the Lakeview Mountains to the west and northwest, and the San Jacinto Mountains to the east. The San Jacinto Mountains contain San Jacinto Peak, which at 10,805 feet above mean sea level is the highest peak visible from the Project site. The Lakeview Mountains are characterized by rocky outcroppings that slope gently to the west. The highest peak of the Lakeview Mountains is 2,673 feet above mean sea level. One notable peak of the Lakeview Mountains is Mt. Rudolph, which lies at an elevation of 2,649 feet above mean sea level. These mountains provide a natural scenic backdrop to the Project area and the City. The heights of the surrounding mountains ensure that they will remain a scenic backdrop to the City without detriment from anticipated development in the northwestern portion of the City, which includes the Project site.

##### Scenic Resources

The closest State-designated scenic highway is State Route 74 (SR-74), from the west boundary of the San Bernardino National Forest to State Route 111 in Palm Desert.<sup>1</sup> There are no State of California

---

<sup>1</sup> *State of California, Department of Transportation, California Scenic Highway Program, website: [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/index.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm), accessed August 12, 2013.*

---

---

State-designated scenic highways or scenic parkways located adjacent to the Project site. However, according to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Scenic Highway Program, SR-74 (also known as Florida Avenue), which forms the Project site's southern boundary, is listed as an "Eligible State Scenic Highway – Not Officially Designated." The City of Hemet has not submitted an application to Caltrans to designate the portion of Florida Avenue (SR-74) that traverses the City as an officially designated scenic highway. However, as described in greater detail below (see discussion of Municipal Code Section 90-1124), the City of Hemet has adopted an ordinance to preserve the quality of the Florida Avenue (SR-74) scenic corridor. Therefore, for purposes of this analysis, Florida Avenue (SR-74) will conservatively be considered a scenic highway.

## **Visual Character**

### ***Project Site***

The Project site is undeveloped and contains highly disturbed ruderal land. Historically, the majority of the site has been primarily used for growing field crops. There are no structures within the confines of the Project site. A portion of the southeast corner of the site is fenced in and currently used for storage. This storage area comprises several mature eucalyptus trees, wooden boxes and plastic barrels/containers, and inoperable agricultural vehicles and equipment. Utility lines on wooden poles run east-west through the northern portion of the site, along the northeastern boundary, and in the adjacent roadways. A water pump and its associated aboveground pipes, which were used for agriculture, are located in the northwestern portion of the Project site near the Devonshire Avenue/Old Warren Road intersection. The San Diego Aqueduct traverses the site approximately 14 feet below ground in a southwesterly-northeasterly direction along a 160-foot-wide easement for public utilities. The aqueduct is owned and operated by Metropolitan Water District of Southern California. A portion of the southwest corner of the Project site contains an isolated, highly disturbed vernal pool. The Project site is generally flat and ranges in elevation from approximately 1,502 feet above mean sea level in the northern portion of the Project site to 1,507 feet above mean sea level in the southern portion. (Refer to Section II, Environmental Setting, Figures II-4 through II-5, for photographs of the Project site.)

The existing zoning of the Project site is Heavy Agriculture (A-5), Single-Family Residential (R-1-6), General Commercial (C-2), and Heavy Manufacturing (M-2). The General Plan land use designation for the portion of the Project site between Florida Avenue and Devonshire Avenues is Mixed Use #1, which allows a mixture (vertical or horizontal mixture) of residential, commercial, and office uses that provide opportunities to live, work, and shop within a compact area. The portion of the Project site between Devonshire Avenue and Celeste Road is designated Low-Density Residential (LDR), which allows 2.1 to 5.0 dwelling units per acre.

---

---

### ***Surrounding Uses***

The Project site is surrounded by a variety of land uses. South of the site, across Florida Avenue, are vacant land, the Hemet West Mobile Home Park, the Hemet Auto Mall, and a gas station. The Hemet-Ryan Airport is located one-half mile southeast of the site. East of the Project site, across Myers Street, land uses include vacant land consisting of open space and previously tilled agricultural land, as well as the Florida Promenade Shopping Center. North of the Project site, across Celeste Road, are the Tres Cerritos Foothills, and the future residential communities of Tres Cerritos East and Tres Cerritos West. The residential community of Montero is located northwest of the Project site, across Old Warren Road. West of the site, across Old Warren Road, is vacant land consisting of previously tilled agricultural land. Devonshire Avenue traverses the northwestern and northeastern portions of the Project site. (Refer to Figures II-8 through II-10 in Section II [Environmental Setting] for photographs of the area surrounding the Project site.)

The zoning of the properties surrounding the Project site include Tres Cerritos Specific Plan (SP-90-009) to the north; Heavy Agricultural (A-5) and Florida Promenade (SP-06-4) to the east; General Commercial (C-2), Hemet Auto Mall (SP 87-28), and Hemet Marketplace (SP 89-19) to the south; and General Commercial (C-2), Heavy Agricultural (A-5), and Single-Family Residential (R-1-7) to the west. The General Plan designates the areas directly north of the site for Low Density Residential (LDR) uses; High Density Residential (HDR), Very High Density Residential (VHDR), and Community Commercial (CC) uses to the east; Low Density Residential (LDR) and Regional Commercial (RC) land uses with one parcel (currently a gas station and carwash) designated for CC uses to the south; and Mixed Use (MU) with a Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) overlay designation to the west.

### ***Light and Glare***

“Light spill” is typically defined as the presence of unwanted and/or misdirected light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated. Perceived glare is the unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation as observed by a person when looking directly into the light source of a luminaire fixture. Glare also results from sunlight when reflected off flat building surfaces, with glass typically contributing the highest degree of reflectivity.

Currently there is no source of light or glare on the Project site, as the site consists of vacant, undeveloped land. Existing lighting within the Project area is characteristic of interior and exterior lighting from surrounding commercial and residential land uses. Headlights or windshields of vehicles traveling on surrounding streets also contribute to light and glare. Daytime sources of glare in the surrounding area include reflections from light-colored surfaces, windows, and metal details on cars.

---

---

## REGULATORY SETTING

### State

#### *California Scenic Highway Program*

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the State Legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to protect and enhance California's natural scenic beauty by preserving and protecting scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways.

A highway may be designated as scenic depending on 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 State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as a scenic highway or have been so designated. The status of a State scenic highway changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local jurisdiction adopts a scenic corridor protection program (ordinance), applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, and receives notification from Caltrans that the highway has been designated as a scenic highway. Official scenic highway status places no restrictions for making improvements on scenic highways. However, Caltrans works with appropriate agencies to coordinate transportation proposals and maintenance activities and to ensure the protection of scenic corridors to the maximum extent feasible. There are minimum requirements for scenic corridor protection:

1. Regulation of land use and density of development;
2. Detailed land and site planning;
3. Control of outdoor advertising (including a ban on billboards);
4. Careful attention to and control of earthmoving landscaping; and
5. Careful attention to design and appearance of structures and equipment.

### Local

#### *City of Hemet General Plan*

The following are policies contained within the City's General Plan that are relevant to the Project:

#### GOAL CD-1

**Enhance Hemet's sense of place and local identity to develop community pride and expand tourism and investment.**

**CD-1.1 Unique Sense of Place:** Require quality site, architectural, and landscape designs that incorporate those qualities and characteristics that make Hemet a desirable place to live

and work including: walkable blocks, distinctive parks and open space, tree-lined streets, and varied architectural styles.

**CD-1.2 Hemet's Visual Image:** Reinforce and boost Hemet's visual image by protecting its legendary views of the surrounding mountains.

**CD-1.5 Design Excellence:** Require design excellence and compatibility in site planning, architecture, landscape design, and signage.

#### **GOAL CD-2**

**Use gateway markers, monuments, community signage, and landscaping to portray a positive visual entry into the City and to key locations.**

**CD-2.2 Neighborhood Identification:** Entry nodes should be established in neighborhoods to provide neighborhood identity and pride of community.

**CD-2.3 Community Landscape:** Require developers of residential subdivisions and commercial or industrial centers to submit a streetscape plan that defines a program of trees and plantings that uniquely identifies streets, principal entries and intersections, and activity centers such as parks and community centers within the development.

#### **GOAL CD-3**

**Develop a streetscape system that provides cohesive design, enhances community image, incorporates green street concepts, and develops an attractive identify for the various City districts.**

**CD-3.2 Residential Subdivisions:** Require residential subdivisions to provide a 15-foot wide landscape setback adjacent to the public right-of-way when perimeter walls or fences are constructed and access to residential units is interior to the subdivision. Landscaped setbacks shall be a separate lettered lot and maintained by a property owners association or maintenance district.

**CD-3.10 Scenic Highway Landscaping:** Require implementation of the scenic highways setbacks and landscaping pursuant to the Community Design Element and the City's adopted Scenic Highway Setback Manual.

#### **GOAL CD-5**

**Protect attractive community design to make Hemet a more desirable place to live.**

**CD-5.1 Complete and Well-Structured Neighborhoods:** The City shall promote the design of complete and well-structured neighborhoods whose physical layout and land use mix

---

---

promote walking to services, biking, and transit use, foster community pride, enhance neighborhood identity, ensure public safety, and address the needs of all ages and abilities.

**CD-5.2**      **Scale and Character of Development:** New development should reflect the scale and character of the community as a whole, individual neighborhoods, street, site, and surrounding buildings.

**CD-5.5**      **Specific Plans:** Require specific plans to promote cohesive and integrated patterns of development for large undeveloped areas, especially areas designated for mixed use.

**CD-5.8**      **Lighting Aesthetics:** Reduce light pollution by requiring new developments to install suitable new fixtures and existing fixtures to be upgraded upon repair and maintenance, as appropriate.

**CD-5.10**     **Residential Variety:** Encourage a variety of residential development types which display attractive design features and amenities, and are physically and functionally compatible with surrounding neighborhoods.

#### **GOAL CD-8**

**Facilitate good community design featuring pedestrian access and amenities that offer a pleasurable walking environment, and encourages residents to consider alternatives to the automobile.**

**CD-8-2**      **Residential Pedestrian Connections:** Require the provision of safe, walkable connections between residential developments, schools, and park sites.

**CD-8.5**      **Neighborhood Amenities:** Encourage appropriately scaled neighborhood-supportive facilities and services to enhance neighborhood identity and provide convenient access within walking and biking distance of City residents.

**CD-8.6**      **Connections to Open Space:** Ensure that new residential neighborhoods contain a diverse mix of parks and open spaces that are connected by trails, bikeways, and other open space networks and are within easy walking distances of residents.

#### **GOAL CD-10**

**Establish mixed-use development standards that facilitate design excellence and compatibility with neighboring uses.**

**CD-10.1**      **Mixed Use Development:** Mixed use development should:

- a. Encourage pedestrian activity by providing sidewalks with ample width, encourage on-street parking, include street furniture sited adjacent to the curb as a barrier to auto traffic, and encourage commercial spaces featuring frequent sidewalk entrances.
- b. Create a credible residential environment by making commercial uses visually distinct from residential spaces. Dwelling units should exhibit a residential character, and residential entrances should read differently from entrances to commercial businesses.
- c. Include public plazas that attract visitors to the public portions of the development, and offer private open space areas that limit intrusion by nonresidents.
- d. Encourage the use of outdoor dining and gathering areas to provide street activity.
- e. Incorporate transit systems and amenity within or serving the project, such as local jitney services, shuttle loops, or nonmotorized vehicular trails within the project area.
- f. Inclusion of special landscape design improvements such as: streetscape design in the public right-of-way, pedestrian plazas, courtyards, sidewalk cafes, and overall landscape design of project open space.
- g. Provision of public park facilities, pedestrian connections and easements, bicycle routes that link activity centers and other mixed use areas.

**CD-10.2 Commercial Orientation:** Require that commercial uses be located along the street frontage where sites are developed for mixed-use projects, with housing or offices on the upper levels or to the rear of the commercial uses.

## **GOAL OS-2**

**Conserve open space areas and hillsides to provide for a balance of recreation, scenic enjoyment, development, and protection of natural resources and features.**

**OS-2.2 Resource Conservation:** Conserve view corridors and ridgelines, the San Jacinto River and Mountains, slopes, significant rock outcroppings, historic and landmark trees, and other important landforms and historic landscape features through the development review process.

### ***City of Hemet Municipal Code***

The City's Municipal Code identifies land use categories, development standards, and other general provisions that ensure consistency between the City's General Plan and proposed development projects. The following are provisions within the City's Municipal Code that are relevant to the Project:

---

---

**Chapter 90 (Zoning), Article XXXII (Scenic Highway Setback Overlay Zone)**

- **Section 90-1121 (Purpose).** The purpose of the scenic highway overlay zone is to implement the scenic highways element of the general plan to minimize adverse visual impacts and enhance the public's aesthetic enjoyment of the scenic highway corridors. This shall be accomplished through the use of landscaped setbacks on certain roads designated as local scenic highways.
- **Section 90-1123 (Setbacks).** Front yards adjoining a scenic highway shall be a minimum of 25 feet in depth, and shall be landscaped with a mixture of live trees, shrubs, and ground cover.
- **Section 90-1124 (Scenic highways established).** The following streets are designated as scenic highways:
  - (1) Florida Avenue, from Sanderson Avenue west to the sphere of influence line.
  - (2) Florida Avenue, from Stanford Street east to the sphere of influence line.
  - (3) State Street, from Thornton Avenue south to the sphere of influence line.
  - (4) Simpson Road, from the west sphere of influence line to State Street.
  - (5) Sanderson Avenue, from the north sphere of influence line to Domenigoni Parkway excepting that portion from Florida Avenue to 850 feet south and that portion of the easterly side from Florida Avenue to 530 feet north.
  - (6) Warren Road, from Commonwealth Avenue to Simpson Road.

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS****Thresholds of Significance**

In accordance with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, a project could have a significant environmental impact if the project would result in one or more of the following:

- 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 a state scenic highway;
- c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surrounding;  
or
- d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

## Project Design Features

The Project includes the following Project Design Features (PDFs) to reduce impacts related to lighting:

- Per Section 5.106.8, *Light Pollution Reduction*, of the CALGreen Code, development in the Project shall comply with requirements of the California Energy Code.
- Utilize shielded fixtures, avoiding overhead lighting of areas such as walkways.
- Provide low-contrast lighting, and use low-voltage fixtures and energy-efficient bulbs, such as compact fluorescent (CFL) and light emitting diode (LED) bulbs.
- Use automated occupancy sensors in nonresidential buildings that automatically shut off lights when rooms are unoccupied.
- Install only energy efficient street lighting.
- Per Section A4.209, *Lighting*, of the CALGreen Code, building lighting shall consist of at least 90 percent Energy Star qualified hard-wired fixtures.

## Project Impacts

***Impact IV.B-1: The Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, and impacts would be less than significant.***

### *Scenic Vistas*

Implementation of the Project would result in the development of 208.87 acres featuring a multiple-use commercial and residential community concentrated around open space amenities. The Project would provide a wide range of lifestyle choices and opportunities for existing and future residents, from a variety of residential options, to passive and active recreational uses, to a Commercial Mixed-Use District that could possibly include retail, service, entertainment, restaurant, professional office, medical, and big-box retail uses. The maximum height of the Project would range from 50 feet (for the Commercial Mixed-Use District) to 35 feet (for the Low Medium Density Residential communities).

Scenic vistas in the Project area include the Tres Cerritos Foothills immediately north of the Project site, the Lakeview Mountains to the west and northwest, and the San Jacinto Mountains to the east. Within the Project area, views of these visual resources are available to motorists traveling along Warren Road, Florida Avenue (SR-74), and Myers Street. However, existing development north of Florida Avenue (SR-74) east of the Project site, such as the Florida Promenade Shopping Center and existing single-family neighborhoods, has partially obscured the views of the mountains and foothills. Structures associated with the Project would be introduced into the viewsheds from the surrounding thoroughfares, and therefore, the Project could have to potential to partially obscure views of the mountains and foothills.

Visual simulations have been prepared to demonstrate potential impacts of the Project from two representative viewpoints on Florida Avenue (SR-74): (1) at the intersection of Florida Avenue (SR-74)

and Myers Street; and (2) at the intersection of Florida Avenue (SR-74) and Warren Road (see also Figure IV.B-1 for a visual simulation location map).

Figure IV.B-2 provides an existing view of the Project site from the southeast corner of Florida Avenue (SR-74) and Myers Street, looking northwest. This view includes flat topography with the Tres Cerritos Foothills and open sky in the background. This view shows the currently undeveloped Project site, with a few trees located on the corner of the site in the foreground.

Figure IV.B-3 provides a representative view of commercial uses that could be located on the southeast corner of the Project site in the Commercial Mixed-Use District.<sup>2</sup> This view also shows residential buildings that could be located north of the commercial uses, along Myers Street. As shown on this view simulation, there is a monument sign located on the corner, with buildings located north along the length of Myers Street. A grouping of buildings is also shown along Florida Avenue (SR-74). In addition, trees and shrubs are shown at the corner, flanking the monument sign, as well as along both Myers Street and Florida Avenue (SR-74). Figure IV.B-3 demonstrates that Project development would partially obstruct views of the Tres Cerritos Foothills from this viewpoint, although views of the mountains and foothills would still be available.

Figure IV.B-4 provides an existing view of the Project site from the southwest corner of Florida Avenue (SR-74) and Warren Road, looking northeast. This view includes relatively flat topography, with a faint view of the Tres Cerritos Foothills in the background.

Figure IV.B-5 provides a representative view of commercial uses that could be located on the southwest corner of the Project site in the Commercial Mixed-Use District. As shown on this view simulation, there is a monument sign located on the corner, with buildings located east along the length of Florida Avenue (SR-74). In addition, trees and shrubs are shown at the corner, along with a grouping of buildings located along Warren Road. Figure IV.B-5 demonstrates that Project development would partially obstruct views of the surrounding hills and mountains from this viewpoint, although as views would still be available, and similar to views from other locations along Florida Avenue (SR-74) where development currently exists.

---

<sup>2</sup> *It is important to note that because the Project is a Specific Plan, it is a conceptual development at this stage. No specific architectural details are available at this time, and as such, the buildings shown on the proposed view simulations provide a conservative scenario of the Project's potential to affect scenic vistas and resources.*



Source: S.A. Johnson Architectural Simulation, July 25, 2013.



Source: S.A. Johnson Architectural Simulation, July 25, 2013.



Source: S.A. Johnson Architectural Simulation, July 25, 2013.



Source: S.A. Johnson Architectural Simulation, July 25, 2013.



Source: S.A. Johnson Architectural Simulation, July 25, 2013.

While the visual simulations discussed above show that Project development would partially obstruct views of surrounding mountains and foothills, these simulations only show two viewpoints out of innumerable viewing locations along Florida Avenue (SR-74). In addition, views of the surrounding mountains and foothills are similarly impeded by existing development along Florida Avenue (SR-74). Similar to the views that are available as one travels along Florida Avenue (SR-74) with its existing development, the surrounding mountains and foothills would still largely be viewable with the Project in place, and views would not be substantially obscured beyond existing conditions.

Further, as outlined in the Specific Plan, Project buildings would be subject to following maximum height requirements: 35 feet in the Low-Medium Density Residential zone; 40 feet in the Medium Density Residential zone; 45 feet in the Village Residential zone; and 50 feet in the Commercial Mixed-Use zone. By limiting the heights of buildings within the various areas of the Project site, this would further ensure the preservation of scenic vistas along surrounding roadways from various vantage points. In addition, the development regulations outlined in the Specific Plan require that a minimum setback of 25 feet be provided along Florida Avenue (SR-74). Providing deep building setbacks would help preserve scenic vistas from various vantage points such as surrounding roadways.

Finally, the Ramona Creek Specific Plan includes the following design standards and guidelines relevant to scenic vistas:

*Florida Avenue Setback Area (Section 3.4.1, Development Criteria, General Mixed-Use Development Standards)*

- Portions of the Ramona Creek Specific Plan area that fall within the 25-foot setback from Florida Avenue are subject to the requirements in the Scenic Highway Setback Manual.

*Walls and Fences (Section 3.4.1, Development Criteria, General Mixed-Use Development Standards)*

- Fences within the 25-foot Florida Avenue setback area are subject to the City's Scenic Highway Setback Manual.

Applicants submitting proposals for development in the Specific Plan area would be subject to an architectural review process, during which the City of Hemet Community Development Department would review each application to ensure it meets the design standards and guidelines of the Ramona Creek Specific Plan. Adherence to these provisions would minimize potential adverse effects of new development on the existing viewshed by ensuring that aesthetically pleasing elements are incorporated into design, a variety of architectural and landscape features are utilized, and detractive features are properly screened. Overall, impacts with respect to scenic vistas would be less than significant.

***Impact IV.B-2: The Project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway, and impacts would be less than significant.***

### ***Scenic Resources***

The Project site does not contain scenic resources including trees, rock outcroppings, or other unique or landmark features. Therefore, Project development would not cause the removal of scenic resources and thus would result in a less than significant impact to scenic resources. While there are no State-designated scenic highways in the vicinity of the Project site, Florida Avenue (SR-74) is eligible to be designated as a State scenic highway in the future. Further, the City has designated the portion of Florida Avenue (SR-74), between Sanderson Street continuing west to the City's sphere of influence, as a scenic highway (see Municipal Code Section 90-1124, provided above). Therefore, the views from this portion of Florida Avenue (SR-74), while not officially State-designated, are conservatively considered to be scenic. However, as described above under "Scenic Vistas," views of the surrounding mountains and foothills are currently partially impeded by existing development along Florida Avenue (SR-74). Similar to the views that are available as one travels along Florida Avenue (SR-74) with its existing development, the surrounding mountains and foothills would still largely be viewable with the Project in place. In addition, as outlined in Section 90-1123 of the Municipal Code, front setbacks along scenic highways are required to be a minimum of 25 feet and landscaped with a mixture of trees, shrubs, and groundcover. The development regulations outlined in the Specific Plan require that a minimum setback of 25 feet and an enhanced landscape scheme to provided along Florida Avenue (SR-74). As such, the Project's impact with respect to scenic resources within a State scenic highway would be less than significant.

***Impact IV.B-3: The Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, and impacts would be less than significant.***

### ***Visual Character***

The Project site is situated on relatively flat topography in an urbanized area of the City of Hemet. The surrounding area is developed with commercial and residential uses. There are also several large areas in the general Project vicinity that consist of open space and previously tilled agricultural land. Because of the existing commercial development, including the Hemet Auto Mall and the Florida Promenade Shopping Center, the Project would not introduce new commercial uses that are in contrast to the existing visual character of the area. Similarly, single-family residential subdivisions (Montero and the future communities of Tres Cerritos East and West) are located northwest and north of the Project site, respectively, and as such, the residential component of the Project would not introduce new uses that would conflict with nearby residential development.

The Commercial Mixed-Use District's location along Florida Avenue (SR-74) enables the site to act as a gateway into the western portion of the City, and the district would focus around a walkable entry spine

and pedestrian plaza, ringed by restaurants and active commercial uses to encourage exploration and community interaction, and enhance the existing commercial corridor along Florida Avenue (SR-74). The pedestrian plaza would be positioned to provide a direct visual and pedestrian connection with the residential community to the north via the Community Green and Recreation Spine.

The development of the Project is aimed at enhancing the image of the area with detailed Project entries, attractive land use transitions and streetscapes, and aesthetically pleasing landscaping. In addition, the Project's density would be arranged to respond to surrounding uses. The commercial uses located on Florida Avenue (SR-74) would be complementary to other commercial uses located along Florida Avenue (SR-74). Higher density residential uses would be located near the Commercial Mixed-Use District on the southern end of the site, while lower density residential uses would be positioned on the northern portion of the site near the Tres Cerritos Foothills, closer to existing and planned single-family residential neighborhoods.

In addition, Chapter 4 (Design Guidelines) of the Ramona Creek Specific Plan includes standards and guidelines that would ensure high quality site design, architecture, and streetscapes not only within the Project development, but also along the major project frontages. The guidelines would comprise the basic framework that the City would use to evaluate proposed development projects. The Specific Plan provides the following broad general design considerations:

- **Design Consistency.** The architectural character, form, and spatial layout of neighborhoods in Ramona Creek should visually unify the overall community while avoiding monotony through variations in product types/floor plans and applications of materials and colors.
- **Quality of Construction.** Buildings and public spaces in Ramona Creek should be constructed of high-quality, durable materials that are environmentally friendly and contribute to the long-term sustainability of the community.
- **Safety.** Development in Ramona Creek should be designed in a manner that promotes the safety of residents, with lighting, roadway design, and building orientation designed to balance access, visibility, and privacy.

As discussed above, applicants proposing projects in the Specific Plan area would need to demonstrate conformity with these guidelines in order to receive project approval from the City of Hemet. Compliance with these design standards and guidelines would ensure a consistent visual character with the surrounding area and on-site quality by ensuring a cohesive and harmonious community design, incorporation of high-quality building and architectural materials, and selection of landscaping and design features as appropriate to the various uses of the site. Therefore, although the Project would substantially alter the visual appearance of the Project site from vacant to developed land, adherence to the development standards and design guidelines provided in the Ramona Creek Specific Plan would ensure that the Project would be developed as a high-quality master planned community. As such, development of the Project would not negatively impact the aesthetic appearance of the Project site or surrounding area, and impacts with respect to visual character would be less than significant.

---

---

***Impact IV.B-4: The Project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area, and impacts would be less than significant.***

### ***Light and Glare***

As described above, the Project site is undeveloped, although the land has been previously disturbed. As such, no sources of light or glare currently exist within the Project site. However, a fair amount of ambient lighting from surrounding land uses already exists. Sources of light in the Project area include lighting from the commercial and residential uses south of the Project site across Florida Avenue (SR-74), the Montero residential neighborhood northwest of the Project site across Old Warren Road, and existing residential uses east of the Project site beyond Myers Street. Other sources of nighttime lighting include streetlights and vehicular traffic on the surrounding roadways.

The Project site is located in an urbanized area of the City of Hemet. Development of the Project would increase the nighttime lighting and glare in the Project area. The Project's proposed land uses would require a variety of lighting for the proposed commercial and residential buildings, ancillary structures, roadways and internal drive aisles, parks and recreation facilities, school site, walkways, and parking areas. Nighttime illumination would also be used to highlight building design and landscape features and to create a feeling of security and safety. Other sources of light would include security lighting, minimal nighttime traffic, and light associated with the nighttime use of the Commercial Mixed-Use District (Planning Area 3).

The City of Hemet does not have a lighting ordinance specifying the maximum amount of light that may be generated by new projects. However, the City's Municipal Code requires that all outdoor lighting shall be low-pressure sodium type fixtures and hooded, so that light is not reflected upon adjacent streets or properties. Also, a lighting plan for all development shall be submitted to the City, prior to the installation of any new outdoor lighting, to ensure that all lighting meets the requirements of the City. The lighting facilities and apparatus associated with the Project would be designed and installed to comply with all applicable City standards and regulations. The lights associated with the Project would be directed toward the interior of the Project site so as not to create impacts to surrounding land uses or motorists traveling on the surrounding roadways. All exterior lighting would be designed with internal and/or external glare control and would also be designed, arranged, directed, or shielded to contain direct illumination on-site, thereby preventing excess illumination and light spillover onto adjoining land uses and/or roadways. Lighting would be installed to accommodate safety security, while minimizing impacts on surrounding residential areas. Blinking, flashing, or oscillating lights would be prohibited. Light fixtures for parking areas and drive aisles would be designed with full cut-off designs (downcast) and oriented to minimize light spillage or glare off the Project site. Parking area lighting would be the minimum necessary that is consistent with the City's lighting standards.

In addition, the Ramona Creek Specific Plan proposes the following design standards and guidelines with respect to Project lighting:

---

---

*Outdoor Lighting (Section 3.2.3, Development Criteria, Lighting)*

- All developments shall provide lighting on all vehicular access ways and along major walkways.
- A preliminary lighting plan indicating the location and style of lighting and lighting fixtures in common areas shall be provided during the site development plan review process.
- Lighting shall be installed within all shared and common covered and enclosed parking areas, and light control switches shall not be accessible to residents.
- Security lighting fixtures shall not project above the fascia or roofline of the building.
- Outdoor lighting shall not blink, flash, oscillate, or be unusually bright or intense. Landscaping shall be used with other features to reduce potential light and glare impacts.
- Outdoor lighting shall be low-pressure sodium-type fixtures and shall be hooded so that light is not reflected on adjacent streets or properties. Outdoor lighting should provide low-contrast lighting and use low-voltage fixtures and energy efficient bulbs, such as compact fluorescent (CFL) and light emitting diode (LED) bulbs, when feasible.
- Lighting shall be located to reflect away from adjoining properties.

*Residential Lighting (Section 3.3.1, Development Criteria, General Residential Development Requirements - Lighting)*

- Lighting shall be reviewed during the site development review process.
- Aisles, passageways, and recesses within the building complex shall be illuminated with an intensity of at least 0.25 footcandle at the ground level during the hours of darkness.
- Open parking lots and carports shall be provided with a maintained minimum of 1 footcandle of light on the parking surface during the hours of darkness.
- Common garage areas shall be lit with a minimum of 0.5 footcandle when inside a building.
- Lighting shall be directed on the driveways and walkways and away from adjacent property.
- Walkway lighting shall be low-level fixtures (e.g., bollards), spaced to provide adequate walkway illumination, and shall not intrude into the residential dwelling units.
- Lighting shall be decorative, in keeping with the architectural theme of the facility served, and shall be located within landscape planter areas.
- Exterior lighting may be used to illuminate significant exterior features and landscaping.

*Mixed-Use Lighting (Section 3.4.1, Development Criteria, General Mixed-Use Development Standards - Lighting)*

- Light standards shall not exceed 30 feet in height above finish grade, shall be consistent with the architectural theme of the facility served, and shall be located within landscape planter areas.
- Parking areas shall have lighting that provides adequate illumination for safety and security as approved by the Building and Safety and/or the Police Departments. At a minimum, parking lot lighting fixtures should maintain a minimum of 1 footcandle of illumination at ground level at

any location within the parking facility, excepting at convenience markets, where the standard should be a minimum of 1.5 footcandles.

- Office and commercial structures should incorporate exterior lighting to illuminate significant exterior features and landscaping.
- Parking lot lighting may be required to be shut off after certain hours, depending upon the use and proximity to residential developments, as determined through the site development review process.

To ensure that all exterior lighting is designed, arranged, directed, or shielded to contain direct illumination on-site, while maintaining public safety and security, a mitigation measure has been provided at the end of this section that requires the submittal of street lighting plans. Project compliance with the Project Design Features with respect to lighting, the Specific Plan design guidelines provided above related to lighting, and Mitigation Measure B-1, would ensure that the Project's nighttime lighting and lighting spillover impacts would be less than significant.

## **CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

Because aesthetic impacts are localized to the Project site and immediate surrounding area, cumulative impacts would include nearby projects. A listing of potential cumulative projects is provided in Table II-1 (refer to Section II [Environmental Setting]). As discussed previously, the Project site is surrounded by a variety of land uses. South of the site, across Florida Avenue, are vacant land, the Hemet West Mobile Home Park, the Hemet Auto Mall, and a gas station. The Hemet-Ryan Airport is located one-half mile southeast of the site. East of the Project site, across Myers Street, land uses include vacant land consisting of open space and previously tilled agricultural land and the Florida Promenade Shopping Center. North of the Project site, across Celeste Road, are the Tres Cerritos Foothills, and the future residential communities of Tres Cerritos West and Tres Cerritos East. The residential community of Montero is located northwest of the Project site, across Old Warren Road. West of the site, across Old Warren Road, is vacant land consisting of previously tilled agricultural land. Devonshire Avenue traverses the northwestern and northeastern portions of the Project site.

Future and/or concurrent development of the areas surrounding the Project site is reflected in the existing zoning and land use designations for these areas, including Tres Cerritos Specific Plan (SP 90-009) to the north; Heavy Agricultural (A-5) and Florida Promenade (SP 06-4) to the east; General Commercial (C-2), Hemet Auto Mall (SP 87-28) and Hemet Marketplace (SP 89-19) to the south; and General Commercial (C-2), Heavy Agricultural (A-5), and Single-Family Residential (R-1-7) to the west. The General Plan designates the areas directly north of the site for Low Density Residential (LDR) uses; High Density Residential (HDR), Very High Density Residential (VHDR), and Community Commercial (CC) uses to the east; Low Density Residential (LDR) and Regional Commercial (RC) land uses with one parcel (currently a gas station and carwash) designated for CC uses to the south; and Mixed Use (MU) with a Multi-Species Habitat Conservation Plan (MSHCP) overlay designation to the west.

Much of the existing, proposed, and/or planned development in the vicinity of the Project site includes land uses that are similar to those associated with the Project (i.e., commercial and residential). As with the Project, all development in the City is subject to an architectural review process, during which the City of Hemet Community Development Department reviews each application to ensure it meets the City's applicable design standards, as well as height and setback requirements. Thus, the cumulative aesthetic nature of the Project area would be that of a mixed-use suburban area, reflective of the planned land uses outlined in the General Plan. For these reasons, cumulative impacts related to aesthetics would be less than significant.

### **MITIGATION MEASURES**

No significant impacts related to aesthetics have been identified, and no mitigation measures are required.

### **LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION**

Impacts related to aesthetics would be less than significant.