

5.1 - Aesthetics

5.1.1 - Introduction

The following evaluation addresses scenic vistas, scenic resources, visual character, and light and glare throughout the Planning Area. The potential for visual impacts to occur as a result of future development in accordance with the proposed project is evaluated.

5.1.2 - Environmental Setting

Study Area for Project Impacts

The study area for project impacts regarding aesthetics is the City of Fresno Planning Area because potential development under the City of Fresno 2035 General Plan and Development Code Update is limited to areas within the Planning Area.

Study Area for Cumulative Impacts

The study area for the analysis of cumulative aesthetics impacts is the City of Fresno Planning Area and the portions of Fresno County located outside the Planning Area as well as portions of the City of Clovis and the County of Madera that can be viewed from, and have views of, the Planning Area. This analysis will be based on a summary of projections approach as provided in Section 15130(b)(1)(B) of the CEQA Guidelines. The applicable projections include growth projections from the Fresno County 2000 General Plan, Madera County General Plan (1995), and buildout projections within the City of Clovis 1993 General Plan.

Scenic Vistas

A scenic vista is a viewpoint that provides a distant view of highly valued natural or man-made landscape features for the benefit of the general public. Typical scenic vistas are locations where views of rivers, hillsides, and open space areas can be obtained as well as locations where valued urban landscape features can be viewed in the distance.

Based on a review of the City of Fresno 2025 General Plan, the City has not identified or designated scenic vistas. Although no scenic vista has been designated, scenic vistas within the Planning Area could provide distant views of natural landscape features such as the San Joaquin River along the northern boundary of the Planning Area and the foothills of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range. The River bluffs provide distant views of the San Joaquin River as well as areas north of the River. However, the majority of these views are from private property. There are limited views of the San Joaquin River from Weber Avenue, Milburn Avenue, McCampbell Drive, Valentine Avenue, Palm Avenue, State Route 41, Friant Road, and Woodward Park. There are various locations throughout the eastern portion of the Planning Area that provide views of the Sierra Nevada foothills that are located northeast and east of the Planning Area. These distant views of the Sierra Nevada foothills are impeded many days during the year by the poor air quality in the Fresno region. Distant views of man-made landscape features include the Downtown Fresno buildings that provide a unique skyline.

Scenic Resources

Scenic resources include landscapes and features that are visually or aesthetically pleasing. They contribute positively to a distinct community or region. These resources produce a visual benefit upon communities. The scenic resources within the Planning Area include landscaped open spaces such as parks and golf courses. Additional scenic resources within the Planning Area include areas along the San Joaquin River due to the topographic variation in the relatively flat San Joaquin Valley. The River bluffs provide a unique geological feature in the San Joaquin Valley. Historic structures in Downtown Fresno buildings also represent scenic resources because they provide a unique skyline.

Existing Visual Character

Visual character is a description of the attributes within a specific area. The Planning Area contains various distinctive visual attributes or characteristics, and they are generally located in Downtown, within suburbs, along corridors of major thoroughfares, within industrial areas, rural residential areas, and agricultural areas.

The Downtown area is the urban core of the City with high-rise buildings that contain a variety of land uses. The most common building types within Downtown are mixed-use buildings, theaters, civic/institutional buildings, and industrial warehouses. The Downtown area contains many structures that provide historic design elements. The suburbs contain low-rise neighborhood buildings that are primarily dominated by single-family residential uses. Supporting uses within the suburbs include retail, office, church, schools, parks, and other public facilities. Corridors consist of primarily low-rise commercial, residential, and industrial uses that are located along major thoroughfares within the City such as Herndon Avenue, Shaw Avenue, Ventura Canyon Avenue/Kings Canyon Road, Blackstone Avenue, and Clovis Avenue. There are three primary areas of industrial uses including area south of Downtown, along State Route 99, and adjacent to the Fresno-Yosemite International Airport. These areas are characterized by large low-rise buildings with manufacturing, processing and warehouse uses as well as utility equipment and service yards.

Light and Glare

The majority of the Planning Area within the existing City limits is urbanized, with significant sources of light and glare, such as streetlights, parking lots, interior lights from Downtown buildings, lighted recreational facilities, and light emitted from residential and non-residential buildings throughout the Planning Area. Limited lighting currently exists in rural residential and agricultural areas that are located within the southeastern and western portions of the Planning Area. Buildings and structures made with glass, metal, and polished exterior or roofing materials exist throughout the Planning Area. These surfaces as well as the natural and manmade light sources could result in localized glare.

5.1.3 - Regulatory Setting

Existing Policies Applying to the Planning Area

Below are summaries of major state and local policies that are applicable to the study area regarding visual resources.

State Policies

State Scenic Highway Program

The State Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963 with the purpose of protecting and enhancing the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment. The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are in Section 260-263 of the Streets and Highways Code. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been officially designated. The status of a proposed state scenic highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the following happens: local governing body applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a Scenic Highway (California Department of Transportation, 2012).

According to the California Department of Transportation mapping of State Scenic Highways (http://www.caltrans.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/fresno.htm), the County of Fresno does not have officially designated State Scenic Highways. Fresno County has three eligible State Scenic Highways, and the nearest eligible highways are east of the Planning Area along State Route 180 (approximately 7 miles east of the Planning Area) and along State Route 168 east of the City of Clovis (approximately 5 miles east of the Planning Area). The nearest designated State Scenic Highway within the County of Madera is located more than 30 miles northeast of the Planning Area. There are no eligible or officially designated State Scenic Highways within the Planning Area.

City of Fresno Policies

The principal tools used by the City of Fresno to regulate urban design are the General Plan and zoning ordinance. The General Plan governs the distribution and intensity of land uses, sets the principles for evaluating development and guides the development and growth of the City. The Zoning Ordinance establishes specific development criteria for each zoning district (i.e. parking requirements, walls, fencing, setbacks, building height, etc.).

City of Fresno Zoning Ordinance - Urban Growth Management

The City's Zoning Ordinance contains Article 4.5, Urban Growth Management Ordinance of the City of Fresno. This area is designated on the City's Zoning Map and is generally located in and around the city's fringe and is either relatively undeveloped or is predominantly agricultural in use and lacks most, if not all, municipal facilities, improvements, or services necessary to serve residential, commercial, industrial, or other type of development. The purpose of the Urban Growth Management Ordinance of the City of Fresno is to achieve the orderly use and development of land by providing a process under the Subdivision Ordinance Article 10, Chapter 12, or the Zoning Ordinance for the construction or modification of buildings and structures in such Area or the change of occupancy of such buildings or structures (City of Fresno Municipal Code. Section 12-4.501).

An integral part of Urban Growth Management is a process referred to as the Urban Growth Management Process. This process is intended to neither prevent any development or growth, or to permit free or disorganized development or growth in the Urban Growth Management Area. The process is instead intended to identify the demands on municipal facilities, improvements, or

services created by any proposed residential, commercial, industrial, or other type of development and to provide the means for satisfying such demands; to identify any deleterious effects of any such development and protect the city and its residents against such effects by minimizing the costs of municipal facilities, improvements, and services; and to maintain a high quality of such facilities, improvements, and services (City of Fresno Municipal Code, Section 12-4.501).

City of Fresno 2025 General Plan

Below are the objectives and policies that relate to aesthetics from the Urban Form Element of the currently adopted Fresno 2025 General Plan.

Image/Gateway and Streetscapes

C-18. OBJECTIVE: Enhance the visual image of all “gateway” routes entering the Fresno metropolitan area.

C-18-a. Policy: Through unified design requirements, encourage the development of gateways which welcome travelers to the city’s activity centers.

C-18-b. Policy: Gateway designation shall apply to key access routes such as Freeways 99, 41, 168, and 180; passenger rail rights-of-way; Peach Avenue and Clinton Way where air travelers enter Fresno; Van Ness/Fulton, Divisadero, Tulare, Fresno, Blackstone/Abby, Shaw and Herndon Avenues should also receive a greater emphasis on streetscape improvements to identify them as special entryways.

C-18-c. Policy: Identify and designate any other entry routes which serve as gateways.

C-18-d. Policy: Prepare and adopt a master plan for Fresno area gateways, expanding the design concept of the Central Area Streetscape Master Plan.

C-18-e. Policy: Pursue funding to ensure systematic implementation of gateway enhancement plans and programs.

C-18-f. Policy: Work with Caltrans, the Council of Fresno County Governments, Tree Fresno, neighboring jurisdictions, and other organizations to obtain funding for highway beautification programs.

C-18-g. Policy: Support and pursue the recommendations of the Fresno County Council of Governments Highway 99 Beautification Master Plan.

C-18-h. Policy: Properties adjacent to both sides of a gateway should be designed to provide a sense of entry and transition, and serve as initial information points for visitors. They should be highlighted by more prominent landscaping, special lighting, orientation signs, and symbols or logos.

C-18-i. Policy: *Placement* of building footprints along gateway areas should be carefully evaluated.

C-18-j. Policy: Potentially unsightly land uses may be restricted, or may be subject to special design/buffering standards, to protect viewscales along gateways.

C-19. OBJECTIVE: Develop and implement streetscape plans to establish cohesive and aesthetic major and local street design patterns by using distinctive features.

C-19-a. Policy. Use a well-balanced variety and spacing of trees with standards established by the city's Parks Division to establish visual continuity for each streetscape and to achieve coherent linkages between public and private spaces.

C-19-b. Policy. Properties fronting on major streets shall be improved with landscaped setbacks and sidewalks which reflect a continuity of design, depth, and planting materials. This should include unified design of street furniture and walls.

C-19-c. Policy. Pursue, through use of both public and private funding, full landscaping of all completed median islands.

C-19-d. Policy. Where appropriate, local streets should be developed as "urban parkways" with landscaping and pedestrian spaces.

C-19-e. Policy. Working with utility companies the city will continue to pursue the undergrounding of overhead utilities as feasible.

Image/Site and Building Design

C-20. OBJECTIVE: As part of the city's project review process, major emphasis will be given to site and building design in order to preserve functionality and community aesthetics.

C-20-a. Policy. Utilize plan implementation /advisory committees, as established through adopted community plans and/or specific plans and city council actions, to review and make recommendations on proposed developments.

C-20-b. Policy. Consider implementation of the recommendations of the Architectural Review Committee as contained in the Design Review Guidelines manual of January 2002 submitted to the Planning and Development Department.

C-20-e. Policy. Consider innovative lot designs and patterns to enhance community livability in residential projects and to most efficiently utilize land for all types of projects.

C-20-d. Policy. Development projects shall be designed with appropriate layouts that provide sufficient areas for all proposed activities, for support functions, and for efficient and safe vehicular and pedestrian access.

- Appropriate space shall be provided for activities proposed (e.g., indoor area for display of merchandise, as opposed to "sidewalk"/parking lot display).

- Sufficient space and access shall be provided for support functions, (e.g., storage, loading, parking, waste disposal/recycling).
- Particular attention shall be given to location of proposed customer parking areas so as to not discourage pedestrian, bicycle and other forms of transit to the project site and so as to encourage multi-modal transit activity centers.
- Safe vehicular, bicycle, and pedestrian access shall be provided and maintained. Access for the disabled shall be incorporated into project designs as required.
- Buildings in shopping centers should be linked by pedestrian walkways.
- Business and industrial parks should be created as integrated, “campus-like” settings, with uniformity of improvements and shared facilities for parking, loading, mass transit, and with internal and external bicycle and pedestrian access.
- Structural conversions and changes of occupancy shall demonstrate compliance with building and zoning codes.

C-20-e. Policy Development projects shall include aesthetic measures which support functionality and add to the appearance and livability of the community.

C-20-f. Policy The project developer shall provide a set of documents and drawings that will allow assessment of the final building product. Materials, texture, and colors shall be noted on the original special permit drawings and on construction plans.

- Development projects shall appropriately interface with adjacent properties.
- High-contrast or gaudy building facades, lighting and signage which create disharmony with adjacent properties, or which draw undue attention, should be avoided.
- Locate service truck access, loading zones, and waste storage/recycling areas at the maximum practical distance from residences and other living quarters.
- Shopping centers shall have internally unified building design, landscaping, and signage.
- Building facades shall include design features and decorative treatments. Visible sides of buildings shall not develop with featureless, “blank” walls.
- Adequately screen roof-mounted mechanical equipment, and ensure that such equipment adheres to noise standards as set forth in the General Plan Noise Element and City Noise Ordinance.
- Apply and enforce the city's Sign and Outdoor Advertising Ordinances. Pursue the amortization and removal of nonconforming and illegal signs and outdoor advertising structures.
- Landscaping and parking lot shading shall be employed for environmental and aesthetic improvement, while observing safe lines-of-sight along access routes.

- Exterior lighting shall not create glare for neighboring properties, but shall provide adequate on-site lighting for safety and security purposes.

C-20-g. Policy. Standards and guidelines shall ensure that metal buildings function as an acceptable and economical form of structures in specially defined areas, including areas adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods, along gateways, and areas adjacent to listed historic structures.

- New buildings with metal walls or metal roofs shall have appropriate finishes.
- Improve metal building appearance by use of steeper roof slopes and fascias, defined entryways, contrasting colors, concealed fasteners, parapet walls, and other treatments.
- Screen all unsightly mechanical equipment with parapet walls, mechanical wells, or other means. Roof vent color should match that of the roof. The distinctive pattern of ribs and joints in standing seam and other metal roofing materials should coordinate dimensionally with similar elements in exterior walls.
- The shape and slope of roof forms can enhance character and scale and should blend with surrounding buildings.
- Roof and wall colors, when appropriate, should also be coordinated with those on surrounding facades.

C-21. OBJECTIVE: Incorporate the following design considerations and practices for single-family clustered projects, multi-family, and residential/ institutional projects.

C-21-a. Policy. An architectural theme shall be established for each development, including visually enhanced architectural features and building materials (which shall be applied throughout the development, particularly where visible to street frontages and adjacent properties).

C-21-b. Policy. In order to promote attractive external appearances and appealing living environments, design measures should be utilized to avoid large scale massive and repetitive “institutional” visual appearances, and to provide a more varied, small scale appearance suggestive of single-family residential development.

C-21-c. Policy. The design measures should include variations of the building footprints with indentations, projections and offsets; variations in the exterior walls using a variety of materials and features such as balconies, bay windows, verandas and entryways and varied roof forms with slopes, ridges and valleys suggestive of single-family residential structures.

G-21-d. Policy. Utilize the cluster planned development criteria and standards where applicable (FMC Section 12-306-N-2 1).

C-21-e. Policy. Design pedestrian and vehicular entrances, walkways, parking areas, open spaces, common facilities, structures and fencing to inhibit uncontrolled access by nonresidents and facilitate surveillance by residents, property managers and law enforcement or security personnel. Vehicular access gates may be used when they can be safely installed.

C-21-f. Policy. Fences and walls along street frontages shall be designed to be architecturally compatible, aesthetically pleasing, and durable with easy pedestrian access to nearby commercial uses.

C-21-g. Policy. Ensure adequate covered parking and overall supply of parking to reflect the actual parking demand of these residential projects and permit an evaluation of a variety of measures such as fully-enclosed garages, multistory parking structures, underground parking and shared facilities. In the comprehensive update of the zoning ordinance, the standards for the parking requirements for residential projects shall be reevaluated.

Image/Community Maintenance and Beautification

C-22. OBJECTIVE: The city will focus efforts on maintaining and improving area health, safety, quality of life, image, and attractiveness through programs which prevent and abate blighting influences.

C-22-a. Policy. The city will implement its newly expanded and proactive Code Enforcement Division activity to remove more public nuisances in a timely manner, through the following:

- maintain efficiency in resolving complaints, and institute proactive code enforcement programs which can abate violations before they engender complaints.
- utilize the Exterior Building Maintenance Ordinance to implement required renovation or removal of unsafe, unsightly structural conditions.
- continue to expedite seasonal weed abatement.
- establish a coordination program among the Code Enforcement Division, City Business Licensing, and the Planning and Development Department to ensure that businesses obtain required entitlements and remain in conformance with established land use conditions and city ordinances (including signage regulations).
- seek grant funding to improve Fresno's tire abatement program.
- work with the Police Department to increase prosecution of illegal dumping.
- improve cost recovery practices so that violators reimburse the city for code enforcement activity.

C-22-b. Policy. Maintain and enhance, as feasible, Community Sanitation's efforts toward litter clean-up and abatement of trash stockpiles on public and private streets.

C-22-c. Policy. Pursue funding for, and support of, building facade improvement programs to refurbish older commercial districts.

C-22-d. Policy. Continue and expand the city's effective Graffiti Abatement Program.

- Maintain city restrictions on spray paint sales to minors, and continue to work with Fresno County in an effort to get a parallel county ordinance.

- Direct resources to support an appropriate number of graffiti abatement vehicles to allow this vandalism to be obliterated within 24 to 48 hours.

Below are the objective and policies that relate to aesthetics from the Public Facilities Element of the currently adopted Fresno 2025 General Plan.

Transportation/Streets and Highways

E-4. OBJECTIVE: Preserve and provide scenic corridors by application of appropriate policies and regulations.

E-4-a. Policy. Implement measures to preserve and develop scenic or aesthetic qualities along those streets and highways designated as scenic corridors or boulevards by the adopted 2025 Fresno General Plan Land Use and Circulation Map.

At a minimum the following streets or highways are to be designated as “scenic corridors or boulevards.” While additional streets of neighborhood significance may be designated by community or specific plans:

- Van Ness Boulevard – Weldon to Shaw
- Van Ness Extension – Shaw to San Joaquin River Bluff
- Kearney Boulevard – Fresno Street to Polk
- Van Ness-Fulton couplet – Weldon to Divisadero
- Butler Avenue – Peach to Fowler
- Minnewawa Avenue – Belmont to Central Canal
- Huntington Boulevard – First to Cedar
- Shepard Avenue – Friant to Willow
- Audubon Drive – Blackstone to Herndon
- Friant Road – Audubon to Millerton Road
- Tulare Avenue – Sunnyside to Armstrong
- Ashlan Avenue – Palm to Maroa

E-4-c. Policy. Preservation of street trees lining designated scenic corridors or boulevards should take precedence when private or public access involve scenic corridors or boulevards.

E-4-d. Policy. Maintenance and replacement of specimen trees along scenic corridors or boulevards should be done with attention to the impact on the visual quality of the area.

E-4-e. Policy. Replacement shall be done with trees of the predominant type and in a comparable pattern to existing plantings if there will be no detriment to public safety.

5.1.4 - Thresholds of Significance

CEQA Thresholds

In accordance with CEQA, the effects of a project are evaluated to determine if they will result in significant adverse impacts on the environment. The criteria used to determine the significance of

an impact to aesthetics are based on the Environmental Checklist in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines and identified below. Accordingly, aesthetics impacts resulting from the proposed project are considered significant if the project would:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? (See Scenic Vista, Impact AES-1)
- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway? (See Scenic Resources within a State Scenic Highway, Impact AES-2)
- c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings? (See Visual Character, Impact AES-3)
- d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area? (See Light or Glare, Impact AES-4)

5.1.5 - Impact Analysis, Mitigation Measures, and Level of Significance After Mitigation

Scenic Vista

Impact AES-1 **The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.**

Project Specific Impact Analysis

The currently adopted 2025 General Plan for the City of Fresno does not designate any locations within the Planning Area as a scenic vista; however, the proposed General Plan Update identifies six locations along the San Joaquin River bluffs. Distant views of highly valued features such as the San Joaquin River, the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, and the Downtown Fresno buildings are provided in within the Planning Area. However, public views of the San Joaquin River from the Planning Area are limited due to the presence of private property located adjacent to the River. Public views of the foothills of the Sierra Nevada are provided within the eastern portion of the Planning Area. These public views are primarily provided along existing roadways. Although views of the foothills are provided from these roadways, the views are impeded due to the poor air quality within the Fresno area. The scenic views from the San Joaquin River bluffs are not expected to be substantially affected since the land uses under the General Plan Update are similar to current land uses. The implementation of future development associated with the General Plan and Development Code Update would result in a less than significant impact on existing public scenic vistas.

Public views of the Downtown Fresno buildings provide a unique skyline within the San Joaquin Valley. Due to the relatively flat topography, existing development and landscaping, views of the unique skyline are primarily limited to areas within the Downtown Fresno area. The interchanges at the freeways that border the Downtown Fresno area provide elevated views of the existing high rises while views of the existing low-rise buildings are impeded by existing vegetation. The implementation of the General Plan and Development Code will allow future development in the Downtown area. This future development could include additional high rises; however, given the

limited views from outside the Downtown Fresno area, existing scenic vistas would result in a less than significant impact.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The implementation of cumulative development that is located outside of the Planning Area such as development that would occur within the City of Clovis, the County of Fresno, and the County of Madera, would not result in the potential to impact the limited scenic vistas to view the San Joaquin River or the Downtown Fresno skyline because the vista is located within the Planning Area. Cumulative development has the potential to reduce distant views of the Sierra Nevada foothills east of the Planning Area along existing roads; however, due to the relatively flat topography and poor air quality that reduce views of the foothills; future cumulative development would result in less than significant cumulative impacts on scenic vistas. Therefore, the implementation of the General Plan and Development Code Update would result in less than significant cumulative impacts.

Mitigation Measures

Project Specific

No mitigation measures are required.

Cumulative

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Project Specific

Less than significant impact.

Cumulative

Less than significant impact.

Scenic Resources within a State Scenic Highway

Impact AES-2	The project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic building within a state scenic highway.
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Project Specific Impact Analysis

According to the California Department of Transportation mapping of State Scenic Highways (http://www.caltrans.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/fresno.htm), the County of Fresno does not have any officially designated State Scenic Highways, but has three eligible State Scenic Highways. The nearest eligible highways are east of the Planning Area along State Route 180 (approximately 7 miles east of the Planning Area) and along State Route 168 east of the City of Clovis (approximately 5 miles east of the Planning Area). Since there are no eligible or officially designated State scenic highways within the Planning Area, future development in accordance with the General Plan and Development Code Update would not impact a designated state scenic highway. The eligibility of the three State Scenic Highways near the Planning Area, scenic resources located within the highway segments or its viewshed would not be impacted by future development as well.

Therefore, future development within the Planning Area would not impact scenic resources within a state scenic highway located well outside of the Planning Area.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

Since there are no designated State Scenic Highways within Fresno County, cumulative development within the City of Clovis and County of Fresno would not impact State Scenic Highways. In addition, the nearest State Scenic Highway in the County of Madera is located more than 30 miles northeast of the Planning Area. Therefore, future development in accordance with the General Plan and Development Code Update would result in no cumulative impact on State Scenic Highways.

Mitigation Measures

Project Specific

No mitigation measures are required.

Cumulative

No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Project Specific

No impact.

Cumulative

No impact.

Visual Character

Impact AES-3	The project would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
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Project Specific Impact Analysis

The proposed General Plan and Development Code Update would result in a substantial alteration to the existing urban form and character of the existing Planning Area. The Update will provide for a substantial increase in residential units (approximately 85 percent increase compared to the existing units) and buildings occupied by non-residential uses (approximately 90 percent increase in square footage compared to the existing square footage). These non-residential uses include commercial, office, public facilities, mixed uses, and industrial. Based on the Update, roughly half of future residential units will be located within the existing City limits, primarily within Downtown Fresno, mixed-use centers, and along major transit corridors such as Blackstone Avenue and Ventura Avenue-Kings Canyon Road.

In addition to future development within the existing City limits, there is a substantial amount of development that is planned for areas outside the existing City limits and within the Planning Area. There are various development areas (i.e., West Development Area, Southwest Development Area, and Southeast Development Area) that will include a variety of land uses that will replace existing rural and agricultural uses as well as open space. This land use replacement will substantially alter

the visual character within the areas that are outside of the existing City limits through the increase of densities and intensification of land uses. Significant visual character impacts are expected to occur from views within the Planning Area as well as from views that are outside the Planning Area such as properties within the County of Fresno, the City of Clovis, and possibly the County of Madera.

To reduce potential visual character impacts within the Planning Area, the General Plan Update includes the following objectives and policies within the Urban Form, Land Use and Design Element and the Mobility and Transportation Element.

Urban Form, Land Use and Design Element

Policy UF-1-c: Legible City Structure. Focus integrated and ongoing planning efforts to achieve an identifiable city structure, comprised of a concentration of buildings, people, and pedestrian-oriented activity in Downtown; along a small number of prominent east-west and north-south transit-oriented, mixed-use corridors with distinctive and strategically located Activity Centers; and in existing and new neighborhoods augmented with parks and connected by multi-purpose trails and tree lined bike lanes and streets.

Policy UF-1-e. Unique Neighborhoods. Promote and protect unique neighborhoods and mixed use areas throughout Fresno that respect and support various ethnic, cultural and historic enclaves; provide a range of housing options, including furthering affordable housing opportunities; and convey a unique character and lifestyle attractive to Fresnoans. Support unique areas through more specific planning processes that directly engage community members in creative and innovative design efforts.

Objective UF-2. Enhance the unique sense of character and identity of the different subareas of the Downtown neighborhoods.

Objective UF-8. Develop each of Downtown's neighborhoods and districts, according to its unique character.

Policy UF-12-g. Impacts on Surrounding Uses. Establish design standards and buffering requirements for high-intensity Activity Centers to protect surrounding residential uses from increased impacts from traffic noise and vehicle emissions, visual intrusion, interruption of view and air movement, and encroachment upon solar access.

Policy UF-13-a. Future Planning to Require Design Principles. Require future planning, such as Specific Plans, neighborhood plans or Concept Plans, for Development Areas and BRT Corridors designated by the General Plan to include urban design principles and standards consistent with the Urban Form, Land Use, and Design Element.

Policy UF-1-f. Complete Neighborhoods, Densities, and Development Standards. Use Complete Neighborhood design concepts, development standards, and project reviews outside the Downtown Planning Area to achieve the development of Complete Neighborhoods and the residential density targets of the General Plan.

Objective UF-14. Create an urban form that facilitates multi-modal connectivity.

Policy UF-14-a. Design Guidelines for Walkability. Develop and use design guidelines and standards for a walkable and pedestrian-scaled environment with a network of streets and connections for pedestrians and bicyclists, as well as transit and autos.

Objective LU-1. Establish a comprehensive citywide land use planning strategy to meet economic development objectives, achieve efficient and equitable use of resources and infrastructure, and create an attractive living environment.

Policy LU-1-b. Land Use Definition and Compatibility. Include zoning districts and standards in the Development Code that provide for the General Plan land use designations and create appropriate transitions or buffers between new development with existing uses, taking into consideration the health and safety of the community.

Policy LU-1-a. Promote Development within the Existing City Limits as of December 31, 2012. Promote new development, infill, and rehabilitation of existing building stock in the Downtown Planning Area, along BRT corridors, in established neighborhoods generally south of Herndon Avenue, and on other infill sites and vacant land within the City.

Objective LU-2. Plan for infill development that includes a range of housing types, building forms, and land uses to meet the needs of both current and future residents.

Policy LU-2-c. Infill Design Toolkit. Develop and distribute an infill design toolkit, consistent with the City's Infill Development Act to support and encourage infill development.

Policy LU-2-e. Neighborhood Preservation. Incorporate standards in the Development Code to preserve the existing small-scale residential quality of older neighborhoods.

Policy LU-3-b. Mixed-Use Urban Corridors that Connect the Downtown Planning Area. Support the development of mixed-use urban corridors that connect the Downtown Planning Area with the greater Fresno-Clovis Metropolitan Area with functional, enduring, and desirable urban qualities along the Blackstone Avenue, Shaw Avenue, California Avenue, and Ventura Avenue/Kings Canyon Road corridors, as shown on Figure LU-1: General Plan Land Use Diagram.

Policy LU-4-a. Neighborhood Nuisance Abatement. Continue proactive and responsive code enforcement and nuisance abatement programs to improve the attractiveness of residential neighborhoods.

Policy LU-5-g. Scale and Character of New Development. Allow new development in or adjacent to established neighborhoods that is compatible in scale and character with the surrounding area by promoting a transition in scale and architectural character between new buildings and established neighborhoods, as well as integrating pedestrian circulation and vehicular routes.

Policy LU-6-a. Design of Commercial Development. Foster high quality design, diversity, and a mix of amenities in new development with uses through the consideration of guidelines, regulations and design review procedures.

Policy LU-6-b. Commercial Development Guidelines. Consider adopting commercial development guidelines to assure high quality design and site planning for large commercial developments, consistent with the Urban Form policies of this Plan.

Policy LU-6-d. Neighborhood and Community Commercial Center Design. Plan for neighborhood mixed use and community commercial uses to implement the Urban Form concepts of this Plan, promote the stability and identity of neighborhood and community shopping areas, and allow efficient access without compromising the operational effectiveness of the street system.

- Neighborhoods will be anchored by community commercial centers with a mix of uses that meet the area's needs and create a sense of place.
- Community commercial centers will be located within Activity Centers.

Policy LU-6-e. Regional Center Planning and Design. Promote economic growth with regional commercial centers.

- New regional commercial centers will be located with access to State Routes and/or other major transportation facilities to ensure access from throughout the region.
- Regional shopping centers will have internally-unified building design, landscaping, and signage standards.

Policy LU-6-f. Auto-Oriented Commercial Uses. Direct highway-oriented and auto-serving commercial uses to locations that are compatible with the Urban Form policies of the General Plan. Ensure adequate buffering measures for adjacent residential uses noise, glare, odors, and dust.

Policy LU-9-e. Downtown Sightline. Require new development to preserve existing sightlines to Downtown to the extent feasible.

Policy LU-9-f. View Corridors. Promote new view corridors that highlight the Downtown skyline.

Objective D-1. Provide and maintain an urban image that creates a "sense of place" throughout Fresno.

Policy D-1-d. Public Art. Continue to promote a citywide public art program that contributes to an awareness of the City's history and culture.

Policy D-1-e. Graphic Identity. Continue the preservation, promotion, procurement and strategic location of landmarks, monuments and artwork that provide orientation and represent Fresno's cultural heritage and artistic values.

Policy D-1-h. Screening of Parking. Continue requiring all new development with parking in Activity Centers and along corridors to be screened or concealed. Locate principal pedestrian entrances to new non-residential buildings on the sidewalk; any entrances from parking areas should be incidental or emergency use only.

Objective D-2. Enhance the visual image of all "gateway" routes entering the Fresno Planning Area.

Policy D-2-a. Design Requirements for Gateways. Consider unified design requirements for gateways to welcome travelers to the City's Activity Centers.

Policy D-2-c. Highway Beautification. Work with Caltrans, the Fresno Council of Governments, Tree Fresno, neighboring jurisdictions, and other organizations to obtain funding for highway beautification programs.

Objective D-3. Create unified plans for Green Streets, using distinctive features reflecting Fresno's landscape heritage.

Policy D-3-a. Green Street Tree Planting. Create a Green Street Tree Planting Program, with a well-balanced variety and spacing of trees to establish continuous shading and visual continuity for each streetscape. Strive to achieve coherent linkages between public and private spaces, prioritizing tree planting along tree-deficient Arterial and Collector Roadways in neighborhoods characterized by lower per capita rates of vehicle ownership.

Policy D-3-b. Funding for Green Street Tree Planting Program. Pursue funding for the Green Street Tree Planting Program, including landscaping of median islands.

Policy D-3-c. Local Streets as Urban Parkways. Develop local streets as "urban parkways," where appropriate, with landscaping and pedestrian spaces.

Policy D-3-d. Undergrounding Utilities. Partner with utility companies to continue to pursue the undergrounding of overhead utilities as feasible.

Objective D-4. Preserve and strengthen Fresno's overall image through design review and create a safe, walkable and attractive urban environment for the current and future generations of residents.

Policy D-4-f. Design Compatibility with Residential Uses. Strive to ensure that all new non-residential land uses are developed and maintained in a manner complementary to and compatible with adjacent residential land uses, to minimize interface problems with the surrounding environment and to be compatible with public facilities and services.

Objective D-5. Maintain and improve community appearance through programs that prevent and abate blighting influences.

Policy D-5-a. Code Enforcement. Continue enforcement of the Fresno Municipal Code to remove or abate public nuisances in a timely manner:

Policy D-5-b. Clean Streets. Promote community partnerships and continued City efforts toward litter clean-up and abatement of trash stockpiles on public and private streets.

Policy D-5-c. Facade Improvements. Pursue funding for, and support of, building facade improvement programs.

Policy D-5-d. Graffiti Prevention and Abatement. Seek ways to end graffiti, continue and expand the City's effective Graffiti Abatement Program.

Policy D-6-b. Consider adopting and implementing incentives for, and support efforts by,, private development to incorporate culturally-specific architectural elements in areas with a predominant ethnic population.

Mobility and Transportation Element

Objective MT-3. Identify, promote and preserve scenic or aesthetically unique corridors by application of appropriate policies and regulations.

Policy MT-3-a. Scenic Corridors. Implement measures to preserve and enhance scenic qualities along scenic corridors or boulevards, including:

- Van Ness Boulevard – Weldon to Shaw Avenues
- Van Ness Extension – Shaw Avenue to the San Joaquin River Bluff
- Kearney Boulevard – Fresno Street to Polk Avenue
- Van Ness-Fulton couplet – Weldon Avenue to Divisadero
- Butler Avenue – Peach to Fowler Avenues
- Minnewawa Avenue – Belmont Avenue to Central Canal
- Huntington Boulevard – First Street to Cedar Avenue
- Shepherd Avenue – Friant Road to Willow Avenue
- Audubon Drive – Blackstone to Herndon Avenues
- Friant Road – Audubon to Millerton Roads
- Tulare Avenue – Sunnyside to Armstrong Avenues
- Ashlan Avenue – Palm to Maroa Avenues

Policy MT-3-b. Preserve street trees lining designated scenic corridors or boulevards. Replace trees of the predominant type and in a comparable pattern to existing plantings if there is no detriment to public safety.

Although the above objectives and policies will reduce the potential visual character impacts from locations within and outside the Planning Area, the replacement of rural and agricultural uses and open space with urban land uses will continue to result in a substantial alteration of the visual character of the Planning Area. This substantial alteration is considered a significant visual character impact.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The implementation of cumulative development that is located outside of the Planning Area such as development that would occur within the City of Clovis, the County of Fresno, and the County of Madera, is anticipated to contribute to the conversion of rural and agricultural land to urban uses. This conversion outside of the Planning Area is expected to result in a substantial alteration of the existing visual character of the area. Therefore, cumulative development will result in a significant impact. Since the proposed project will also result in a significant visual character impact even after the implementation of the General Plan Update goals, objectives, and policies, the project's contribution to cumulative visual alteration impacts in the project vicinity would be cumulatively considerable. Therefore, the project would result in a significant cumulative impact related to the existing visual character.

Mitigation Measures*Project Specific*

No feasible mitigation measures are available.

Cumulative

No feasible mitigation measures are available.

Level of Significance After Mitigation*Project Specific*

Significant impact.

Cumulative

Significant impact.

Light or Glare

Impact AES-4	The project would create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.
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Project Specific Impact Analysis

Development in accordance with the General Plan and Development Code Update will result in land use changes by increasing densities and intensities of land uses within the Planning Area. These land use changes include the development of new residential and non-residential land uses.

New development within the City limits could increase the amount of light from street lights, exterior lighting systems on private and public property, exterior lighting from buildings, and vehicular headlights. New development could also increase light with new illuminated signs and lighting systems to illuminate active play areas. The increase in lighting within the City limits could result in light spillover onto adjacent properties. In addition, the increase in light will substantially illuminate the sky at night. This increase in light illumination is considered a significant impact.

Outside of the existing City limits and within the Planning Area as well as areas directly adjacent to the Planning Area, many areas are exposed to a nominal amount of light due to the rural and

agricultural setting. New urban development will substantially alter these existing rural and agricultural areas. Increases in lighting systems will occur within new development throughout this area and could result in an increase in lighting adjacent to the Planning Area. Development will include new roads that will have lighting systems along the rights-of-way. Residential development will include lighting systems on properties to provide safety and security. Non-residential development will include lighting system for parking areas, buildings, and signs. Public facilities including active use parks will increase lighting to illuminate play areas for evening activities. With the increase in development in this area, there will be increases in nighttime traffic that will increase lighting from car headlights. Together, new development outside the existing City limits and within the Planning Area will increase the amount of light that could cause light spillover onto adjacent properties within and adjacent to the Planning Area and increase the illumination of the sky at night. This increase in light is considered a significant impact.

Development in accordance with the General Plan and Development Code Update will increase the amount of structures that could create new sources of glare within the Planning Area and directly adjacent to the Planning Area. These new sources of glare could be from materials used on building facades, parking lots, signs, roadway surfaces, and motor vehicles. Within the City limits, there are currently many sources of glare, and future development will add to the existing sources. Within the rural and agricultural areas, there are limited sources of glare. The primary sources of glare that will be added within the Planning Area will occur from vertical structures such as building facades and signs. Parking lots, roadway surfaces and motor vehicles do not create substantial amount of glare. Therefore, due to the substantial amount of new building square footage planned for the Planning Area, new buildings will result in a substantial increase in glare. This increase could result in significant glare impacts.

Cumulative Impact Analysis

The implementation of cumulative development that is located outside of the Planning Area such as development that would occur within the City of Clovis, the County of Fresno, and the County of Madera, will contribute to the increase in lighting in the project vicinity. However, future development within the County adjacent to the Planning Area is anticipated to be rural in character and therefore, any development within the County is expected to result in nominal increases in lighting. Future development within the City of Clovis is anticipated to include urban uses adjacent to the northeastern boundary of the Planning Area. This increase in lighting will occur from increases in new roads that will have lighting systems along the rights-of-way. New residential development will include lighting systems on properties to provide safety and security. Non-residential development will include lighting system for parking areas, buildings, and signs. Public facilities including active use parks will increase lighting to illuminate play areas for evening activities. Increases in light from development within the City of Clovis are anticipated to be significant. Furthermore, future development within the County of Madera may occur on the north side of the San Joaquin River. This potential development may include lighting systems for similar land uses as within the Planning Area. Overall, cumulative development is anticipated to result in a significant increase in lighting. Since the proposed project is expected to result in significant lighting impacts, the project's contribution to potential cumulative lighting impacts is cumulatively considerable. Therefore, the implementation of the project would result in significant cumulative lighting impacts.

With future development outside of the Planning Area, there will be increases in the amount of structures that could create new sources of glare. These new sources of glare could be from materials used on building facades, parking lots, signs, roadway surfaces, and motor vehicles. Therefore, cumulative development could create significant glare impacts. Since the proposed project is expected to result in significant glare impacts, the project's contribution to potential cumulative glare impacts is cumulatively considerable. Therefore, the implementation of the project would result in significant cumulative glare impacts.

Mitigation Measures

Project Specific

- MM AES-1** Lighting systems for street and parking areas shall include shields to direct light to the roadway surfaces and parking areas. Vertical shields on the light fixtures shall also be used to direct light away from adjacent light sensitive land uses such as residences.
- MM AES-2** Lighting systems for public facilities such as active play areas shall provide adequate illumination for the activity; however, low intensity light fixtures and shields shall be used to minimize spillover light onto adjacent properties.
- MM AES-3** Lighting systems for non-residential uses, not including public facilities, shall provide shields on the light fixtures and orient the lighting system away from adjacent properties. Low intensity light fixtures shall also be used if excessive spillover light onto adjacent properties will occur.
- MM AES-4** Lighting systems for freestanding signs shall not exceed 100 foot Lamberts (FT-L) when adjacent to streets which have an average light intensity of less than 2.0 horizontal footcandles and shall not exceed 500 FT-L when adjacent to streets which have an average light intensity of 2.0 horizontal footcandles or greater.
- MM AES-5** Materials used on building facades shall be non-reflective.

Cumulative

Implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1 through AES-5 is required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation

Project Specific

Significant impact. The illumination of the sky at night will remain significant. Lighting on properties adjacent to lighting systems will be less than significant. Glare impacts will be less than significant.

Cumulative

Significant impact. The project's contribution of the illumination of the sky at night will remain cumulatively significant. Lighting impact on properties adjacent to lighting systems will be less than cumulatively significant. Glare impacts will also be less than cumulatively significant.