

## 4.7 AESTHETICS AND COMMUNITY DESIGN

*Because individual site plans, design plans, and/or landscaping plans would be prepared by property owners at a future time, there is the potential for the proposed Specific Plan to result in significant impacts to the aesthetic environment. As a result of future development under the Specific Plan, public viewing areas may be significantly impacted. Even with extensive mitigative policies contained in the Specific Plan, impacts are considered significant and unavoidable (Class I).*

### 4.7.1 Setting

**a. Visual Character of the Region.** The visual character of the general vicinity is a combination of natural and built environments. In recent years, the agricultural landscape near the City has been transitioning from predominantly ranchlands to an increasing number of vineyards and related winery and residential development. Typical architectural styles in the area often connect to the historic settlements in the north county. Spanish mission, ranch and western styles of architecture are prevalent and some reflect the region's historic link with farming and ranching.

Topography varies from relatively flat low-lying flood plain areas to rolling hills to steeply sloping foothills of the Santa Lucia Range. On both sides of the Salinas River the terrain varies from gently rolling hills with oak savanna and open grassland (from San Miguel to Atascadero). Oak woodlands are a prominent unifying feature through the region. The absence of substantial urban development has allowed many areas east of the Specific Plan area to retain a rural character, providing a visual contrast to the urban centers located along Highway 101 west of the Specific Plan area.

**b. Visual Character of the Subject Property.** The Chandler Ranch site is characterized by rolling terrain with an elevation range of approximately 205 feet. The highest points of the property are approximately 985 feet above mean sea level while the lowest portions of the property have elevations of about 780 feet. Much of the site is higher in elevation than surrounding roadways and vantage points, making the rolling hills and scattered oak woodlands visible from public areas. Visually dominant features besides the rolling grass-covered hills include scattered oak woodland, Huerhuero Creek in the far northeast of the site, and unnamed drainages that contribute that converge and connect to Huerhuero Creek. Barney Schwartz Park is not included within the boundaries of the Specific Plan, but visually appears to be contiguous with the Plan Area. The park and associated facilities are part of the foreground view, but do not block the background view, when viewed from either Highway 46 East or Union Road.

The visual quality of an area is a subjective assessment, which addresses the overall attractiveness of an area and the preservation of the attractiveness of the area when new manmade features are introduced. The grass meadows, oak woodlands, and rolling hills of the project site define the attractive rural quality of the area. In its present condition, many viewers would consider the site to be typical of the rural areas east of Paso Robles. The site's visual quality would be ranked as moderately high because of the cohesive nature of the open and because of its contribution to Paso Robles' oak woodland heritage. The landscape visibility is high due to the fact that much of the site is higher in elevation than the surrounding roads. Finally, the viewer exposure to parts of the site is moderately high along Highway 46 East,



Union Road, Golden Hill Road, Sherwood Road, Fontana Road and Linne Road (refer to Figure 4.7-1 to 4.7-4).

The visual sensitivity level reflects the public's visual expectation of the area and the number of people viewing the area. Public visual expectation of the Chandler Ranch area is for a high-quality rural visual setting with rolling hills, oak trees and open vistas. The topographic diversity and oak woodland area are probably the most distinctive visual resources on the site.

The site is within a transition area, where urban uses are located to the south and west, and more rural development is located to the east and north, and across Highway 46. The most sensitive interfaces would be to the east, south and west. To the east, the Paso Robles Vineyard Agricultural Cluster Subdivision project is an approved 851-acre, 43-unit single-family rural residential development located among vineyards, within unincorporated San Luis Obispo County. The overall visual effect of this development is predominantly rural, and none of the homes within that development would directly abut the Specific Plan area. To the south along Linne Road, and west of Fontana Road, residential development is located nearly adjacent to the site across these roadways. Future development within the southern portion of the Specific Plan Area would be visually prominent in these areas.

With respect to light and glare, the Specific Plan Area has no significant source of lighting, apart from the few residences located in the southern portion of the site. However, the site is currently affected by street lighting along Union Road and Golden Hill Road. In addition, the mounted pole lights associated with Barney Schwartz Park also contribute to light and glare within the Specific Plan area. Land uses in the vicinity that would be most sensitive to night lighting are the existing residences located west of Golden Hill Road, the residences south of Union Road and Linne Road, and north of Gilead Lane.

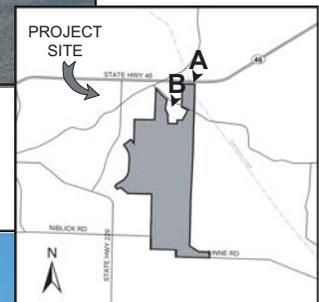
**c. Regulatory Setting.** The City of Paso Robles regulates community design and aesthetics of buildings and public spaces through implementation of adopted General Plan policies and zoning. The General Plan prescribes visual resource policies, and the Zoning Ordinance, in some cases, requires development review of projects. The Land Use Element, Open Space Element, and Conservation Element of the General Plan contains policy statements that serve as a framework for evaluating proposed projects in regard to their potential to effect the atmosphere of the City. Building plans for development in the City would be reviewed for consistency with these policies, which include the following:

- **POLICY LU-2B: Visual Identity.** Promote architectural and design excellence by imposing stringent design and construction standards for commercial, industrial, mixed-use, and multi-family projects.
- **Action Item 2.** Adopt design standards to clearly articulate how important public views, gateways and landmarks are to be maintained/enhanced. This is to include, but not be limited to:
  - Enhancing views along highways, roads, streets, and rail corridors with landscaping, building setbacks, enhanced architecture and signage/monuments; and





**Photo A** - View of Specific Plan Area from Highway 46 looking southwest. Highway 46 in the foreground; rolling hills of Specific Plan Area in the background.



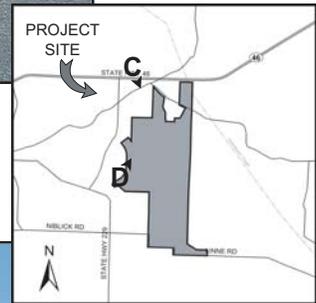
**Photo B** - Background view of planning area from north side of Union Road, in front of Barney Schwartz Park. Union Road and Barney Schwartz Park are visible in the foreground; the rolling hills in the background are within the planning area.







**Photo C** - View of planning area from Union Road (at bend in Union Road near Highway 46) looking southeast. Union Road is visible in the foreground, while the planning area can be seen in the background.



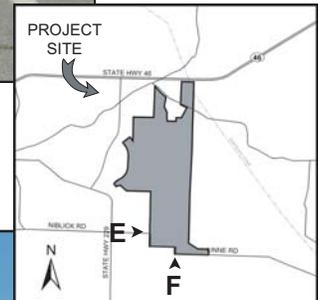
**Photo D** - View from Golden Hill Road showing a portion of the planning area to the east.







**Photo E** - View of the southern portion of the planning area (background) as seen from Sherwood Road (foreground) by eastbound travelers.



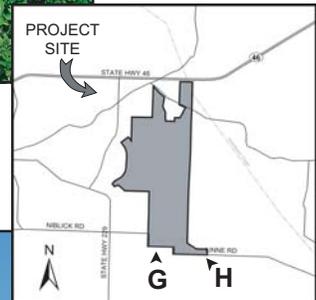
**Photo F** - View looking north towards the planning area (background) from Linne Road (foreground).







**Photo G** - View of planning area from Linne Road, looking north. The existing Ranch House Complex (indicated by arrow) and rolling hills in higher elevations of the planning area are visible.



**Photo H** - View with Linne Road in the foreground and rolling hills of the planning area in the background. A portion of the "Our Town" area is visible in the left side of the photo.





- Ensuring that residential building lots are of sufficient size to preserve the topographic and aesthetic features of the landscape.
- **POLICY LU-2D: Neighborhoods.** Strive to maintain and create livable, vibrant neighborhoods with:
  - Attractive streetscapes,
  - A pedestrian friendly setting,
  - Coordinated site design, architecture, and amenities,
  - Adequate public and private spaces; and,
  - A recognizable and high quality design aesthetic.
- **Action Item 5.** Require all new lighting to be shielded and directed downward in such a manner as to not create off-site glare or adversely impact adjacent properties. The style, location and height of the lighting fixtures shall be submitted with the building plans and shall be subject to approval by the Development Review Committee prior to issuance of building or grading permits, as appropriate.
- **POLICY C-5A: Visual Gateways and Landmarks.** Identify important visual resources: gateways, visual corridors, major arterials, natural/open space areas, as shown on Table 4.1-1.
- **POLICY C-5B: Hillsides:** Protect hillsides as a visual amenity by implementing design standards and grading requirements that call for:
  - a. Decreasing density as slope increases;
  - b. Limiting the amount of grading;
  - c. Providing substantial amounts of landscaping;
  - d. Incorporating architectural treatment that enhances the form of the hillside rather than conflicting with it;
  - e. Limiting the number of building sites that may be placed on prominent ridgelines
  - f. Preventing development of new buildings that project above the ridgeline unless adequately mitigated with landscaping.
  - g. Ensuring sensitive design of development on steep slopes, and on the crest of major ridgelines. Considerations for development on steep slopes shall include the following:
    - Avoid slope stability hazards by restricting development from slopes of 35 percent or greater.
    - Site-specific visual assessments (with and without the project) to thoroughly evaluate the visual effects of development proposals on slopes of 30 percent or greater.
    - For new development located on ridges and hills consider providing a substantial building setback from the edge of the downhill slope and/or screening landscaping, where the slope exceeds 15 percent.



In addition, City Zoning Ordinance Sections 21.14, 21.15, and 21.19 include development standards regarding Hillside Development, Historical and Architecture, and Signs, respectively, as follows:

- **Hillside Development District.** Establish development standards that conserve the natural character of hillside areas, preserve and enhance the scenic amenities of the city and minimize the environmental impact resulting from extensive grading in visually sensitive areas.
- **Historical and Architectural Preservation District.** Encourage the preservation, restoration and renovation of buildings and/or neighborhoods of architectural significance or interest. (Ord. 460 N.S. § 6 (part), 1981)
- **Signs.** Establishing regulations and development standards for signs is as follows:
  - a. To maintain and improve the attractiveness and orderliness of the city's appearance;
  - b. To provide for the identification of uses in a manner appropriate to the activity conducted on a site and harmonious with the purposes of the zoning district in which the site is located;
  - c. To advance traffic safety by minimizing the visual clutter and confusion to motorists that can result from too many sign messages and/or inappropriately designed signs;
  - d. To prevent damage to or interference with the normal use of public property;
  - e. To assure the proper maintenance of signs; and
  - f. To implement the community design objectives expressed in the general plan. (Ord. 651 N.S. Exh. A(part), 1993; Ord. 613 N.S. § 3 (part), 1991)

#### **4.7.2 Impact Analysis**

**a. Methodology and Significant Thresholds.** The assessment of aesthetic impacts involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective in nature. Different viewers react to viewsheds and aesthetic conditions differently. This evaluation measures the existing visual resource against the proposed action, analyzing the nature of the anticipated change. The Specific Plan area was observed and photographically documented in its surrounding context. The City's General Plan was reviewed for policy instruction relative to visual resources and design policy.

Pursuant to the State CEQA Guidelines, the project would result in a potentially significant impact if it would:

- i. *Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;*
- ii. *Damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;*



- iii. *Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; and/or*
- iv. *Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.*

To assess the potential visual impacts from the Specific Plan development, a photographic interpretation of present view conditions was analyzed. In this analysis, modifications to the viewshed were considered not significant if the modification would be visually subordinate to the existing condition. A modification that is visually dominant or one that substantially modifies the existing view adversely is considered a significant impact.

Views are discussed below in terms of foreground, middleground, and background views. Foreground views are those immediately presented to the viewer, and include objects at close range. Middleground views occupy the center of the viewshed, and tend to include objects that dominate the viewshed in normal circumstances. Background views include distant objects and other objects that make up the horizon.

#### **b. Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures.**

**Impact AES-1** **Development under the proposed Specific Plan will alter the terrain and introduce manmade features that have the potential to degrade views of the site, and introduce new sources of light and glare to the area. This will change the existing rural character of the site to a more urban condition. This alteration is considered a Class I, significant and unavoidable, impact.**

*Viewing Corridor Impacts.* The Specific Plan area is visible from Highway 101 and Highway 46, both of which are City-designated visual corridors and eligible for designation as State Scenic Highways. A portion of a ridgeline within the center of the Specific Plan area would be visible from northbound Highway 101 for a very brief period of time (approximately 2-3 seconds). Within this distant viewshed the water tanks associated with the adjacent Golden Hill residential development are visible, and the oak-covered ridgeline within the Specific Plan area is visible behind the water tanks. The Specific Plan area is also visible from Highway 46. Portions of the property are visible to east- and westbound travelers on Union Road, Sherwood Road, and Linne Road. Additionally, the Chandler Ranch site is visible to north- and southbound travelers on Golden Hill Road and Fontana Road. The eastern project boundary is not currently defined by any public roadways; however, the site would be highly visible from the planned extension of Airport Road, which would occur under the Specific Plan. The site is adjacent to land in active vineyard production to the east, which is approved for the Paso Robles Vineyard Agricultural Cluster Subdivision rural residential development. Because the central portion of the site is elevated, it is visible from various public areas to the north, west and south. The Specific Plan proposes to cluster the areas of development, preserving areas of open space in the central portion of the site, which would reduce visual impacts to some extent.

Clustering development would only be somewhat effective at minimizing potential visual impacts. Much of the preserved open space would be in the lowest elevation portions of the site within an internal drainage area, and would not be visible offsite, except from areas to the north near Barney Schwartz Park. Thus, the clustering, which is primarily designed to avoid steep



slopes, drainages, and associated habitat, would only be somewhat effective at reducing the visual prominence of development from offsite locations.

Specific impacts from viewing locations are described below.

Highway 46 East Viewshed. Portions of the site are visible from slightly west of the Highway 46 East and Union Road intersection to just east of the proposed Airport Road extension. Barney Schwartz Park, adjacent to the northeast of the property along Union Road, is not included within the Specific Plan boundaries, but visually appears as contiguous with the subject property as viewed from Highway 46. Although only visible for a short period of time due to the typical traveling speed (55 to 65 miles per hour) on Highway 46, the park and associated facilities interjects a somewhat developed appearance in the northeastern portion of the property and interrupts the viewshed of the site to some degree. However, the rolling hills at higher elevations in the center of the property are highly visible in the background from Highway 46 East. Refer to Figure 4.7-1, Photo A.

Union Road Viewshed. The site can be viewed from Union Road along the northwest and northeast of the site. The northwest portion of the site near the terminus of Gilead Lane is visible to eastbound travelers on Union Road, just west of Golden Hill Road, for a very brief time. Past the intersection of Union Road and Golden Hill Road, the project site is not visible to eastbound travelers for approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile, and then becomes visible again. From this point, both the portion of the Specific Plan area north of Union Road as well as south of Union Road are visible to travelers on Union Road, until the eastern property boundary is passed. Westbound travelers on Union Road can view the project site from the eastern property boundary to the location where Union Road makes the sharp turn to the southwest, and for approximately  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile past the turn (Refer to Figure 4.7-2, Photo C). Figure 4.7-1, Photos A and B indicate that lower elevations in the northern portion of the property (in the vicinity of Barney Schwartz Park) will consist of commercial/business/tourist (Areas 4, 5, 10), recreational (Area 19) and residential (Area 6) land uses. It is notable that the foreground view in this area already has a somewhat developed appearance due to the existing park and related facilities, as shown in Figure 4.7-1, Photo B.

The rolling hills at higher elevations in the central portion of the site will also be visible from Union Road. Figure 4.7-2, Photos C and D, indicate that future dwelling units within Areas 1 and 3 will be clustered, with areas of open space and trails intermingled between the residential clusters. Further, Areas 1 and 3 will have lower density development with one to two units/acre. These features, along with building below ridgelines will reduce the visual impacts from the Union Road viewshed.

Golden Hill Road Viewshed. Portions of the Specific Plan area are visible from Golden Hill Road to both north- and southbound travelers, particularly between Red River Drive and Kapareil Lane (Refer to Figure 4.7-2, Photo D). Figure 4.7-2, Photo D, indicates that much of the visible portions of the site from this viewshed will remain as open space; however, some of the Area 1, 2, and 3 dwelling units may be visible.

Sherwood Road, Fontana Road, and Linne Road Viewsheds. The southern portion of the site is directly viewable by eastbound travelers on Sherwood Road (Refer to Figure 4.7-3,



Photo E). In addition, the subject property is visible from Fontana Road in both north and south directions, and from Linne Road looking north [Refer to Figure 4.7-3, Photo F, and Figure 4.7-4, Photos G and H). The Specific Plan proposes commercial (Area 18) and residential [Areas 9, 12, 13 (with Area 13 as a potential school site), 14, 15, 16, and 17] land uses in the areas visible from Sherwood Road, Fontana Road and Linne Road. The topography in these viewsheds is relatively flat in the foreground to rolling hills in the background. These topographical characteristics will likely increase the potential for subsequent development to intersect and alter existing visual resources.

**Light and Glare Impacts.** At present there is minimal nighttime lighting within the subject property. However, portions of the proposed Specific Plan area are currently subject to light and glare associated with the operation of Barney Schwartz Park. Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would introduce new residential units to areas near Barney Schwartz Park. In addition, implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would require added lighting that could be visible from the residences located to the north, south, and west. Streetlights, entry lights, and interior lights have the potential to adversely affect nearby residences and degrade the nighttime view of the foothill area. The addition of homes and streetlighting in this area would contribute to an alteration of the rural character of the site.

Sources of glare that may affect nearby residences would be exterior building materials, surface paving materials, and vehicles traveling or parked on roads and driveways within the project area. Any highly reflective facade materials would be of particular concern, as buildings would reflect sunlight. Nearby residences may be impacted by project-generated lighting and glare. The primary sources of light and glare that may affect future residents near Barney Schwartz Park include stadium-style lighting of the park and sports fields and parking/security lighting. The proposed Specific Plan includes the possible introduction of residential development in Subareas 3 and 6, in the vicinity of Barney Schwartz Park. Barney Schwartz Park provides both passive and active recreational opportunities. The park has picnic areas, playgrounds, and concession stands, and is capable of hosting large-scale tournaments for baseball/softball and soccer on the sports fields. The sports fields are lighted and activities often are held in the evening and at night. Residences are considered sensitive noise receptors. New development in the vicinity of the park could be exposed to noise from nighttime activities.

The closest residential development within subarea 6 would be within 700 feet of the southernmost ballfields within the park, but would be shielded to some extent by intervening vegetation. The nearest residences within subareas 3 would be about 1,200 feet from the same ballfields, but would be separated to some extent by an intervening topographic rise. Some residential portions of subareas 1, 3, 6 and 7 will have sufficient elevation to have line of sight to the park, but would be relatively far away; the nearest portions of subareas 1 and 7, for example, would be at least ½ mile from the park. Noise levels at these locations are not expected to be substantial. It should be noted, however, that noise levels from park activities can vary considerably depending on site topography and wind direction as much as horizontal proximity to the park. Thus, the Specific Plan includes policy language to address these potential impacts.

Subarea 10 presents a special case. Although not anticipated to be developed with residential uses, it could support such uses if the school district does not acquire this site for a school. Portions of subarea 10 are directly adjacent to the park, and could be subjected to direct noise



impacts from park activities. The western portion of subarea 10 is possibly the most suitable location for homes, since it is partially blocked from park activities by intervening topography. Nevertheless, noise impacts from the park would likely be greater in subarea 10 than in any of the other residentially-designated portions of the Specific Plan area.

**Conclusion.** The proposed Specific Plan could result in significant impacts to nearby viewing corridors, and would introduce light and glare sources within a currently unlighted area. Impacts are potentially significant.

#### Mitigation Measures.

*Viewing Corridor Impacts.* Visual impacts in general would be reduced by the nature of the Specific Plan, through site planning, open space preservation, minimizing the removal of oak trees, architectural treatments, minimized lighting, custom lot grading in certain areas to avoid impacts to oak trees and sensitive habitats, and setbacks from roadways. A variety of Specific Plan policies and standards would address these issues, some of which are further articulated in the Design Guidelines included in the Specific Plan, Appendix A. Some of the more relevant Specific Plan policies include:

- **Policy LU-5. Open Space Areas.** *Provide an expansive open space corridor that connects the southern end of the site with Barney Schwartz Park in the north, to protect natural resources, facilitate recreational opportunities, include pedestrian linkage, and protect the area's visual quality. Prior to any City grant of entitlements for development becoming effective, the respective property owner shall dedicate open space and / or land within the 100-year flood area within that parcel. The dedicated area shall clearly designate open space that is to remain undisturbed (in a natural state, except to allow for the development of the Airport Road bridge over Huerhuero Creek, and for periodic maintenance as required), and shall also clearly designate areas that are subject to grading on the boundaries of development areas. Areas proposed to be graded shall be the subject of a grading easement that will be quitclaimed to the City once the graded areas are landscaped in a manner approved by the City Engineer. Once accepted by the City, the open space and flood areas shall be maintained through a Landscaping and Lighting District (LLD). The property owner may propose that portions of the property be maintained by a Home Owners Association (HOA); the areas that are proposed to be maintained by an HOA shall be included in the LLD, with assessments identified at the full cost of maintenance, to insure that if the HOA is disbanded that the LLD can take over maintenance responsibilities.*
- **Policy LU-13. Grading.** *Grading shall preserve hillsides and natural topography to the maximum extent feasible. Grading shall not occur outside of the boundaries of designated development subareas, and shall conform to the requirements described in the Specific Plan, unless otherwise refined by standards included in Section 3.5 of the Specific Plan for specific subareas.*
- **Policy LU-15. Ridge and Hilltop Protection.** *Design and appropriateness of building development on prominent ridges and hilltops shall be subject to extraordinary review by the Planning Commission, including but not limited to lines of sight analysis. The purpose and intent is to provide more than a routine evaluation of options for reducing visual impacts of homes in ridge and hilltop locations.*



- **Policy LU-19. Visual, Noise and Air Quality Construction Mitigation.** During project construction, measures to minimize noise, visual and air quality impacts to existing neighboring development shall be implemented. These could include (but not be limited to) limiting the hours of construction, temporary screening, and dust control measures.
- **Policy LU-22. Interim Land Use Compatibility (during ongoing development).** The siting of buildings, circulation, parking, and other elements of new development should take into consideration existing development patterns adjacent to the site. Potentially incompatible uses or design elements shall be designed sensitively when adjacent to existing uses on neighboring sites.
- **Policy LU-23. Cluster Development.** Clustered development is encouraged to preserve open space, prevent development on moderate slopes, minimize noise impacts from roadways, and establish a variety of lot sizes and housing types.
- **Policy LU-26. Residential Site and Building Design.** Residential development is required to comply with zoning requirements. In addition, the following standards would apply:
  - a. Lot Layout. Subdivision lot layout shall be to preserve natural features to the maximum extent feasible.
  - b. Flag Lots. Flag lots shall be kept to a minimum and utilized only where their use conserves grading or accesses an area that cannot reasonably be reached by standard streets.
  - c. Neighborhood Atmosphere. Design features such as front porches, front yards along streets and entryways facing public roads and walkways, shall also be incorporated into residential design to strengthen neighborhood atmosphere. Continuous garages facing the street shall be avoided.
  - d. Solar Access, Design and Orientation. Lot layout should be oriented to achieve optimum solar accessibility as feasible. When practical, residential structures are recommended to be oriented to achieve optimum solar accessibility. Overhangs and south-facing windows should be a part of the design consideration of habitable spaces. The use of active solar systems is encouraged, particularly for domestic water heating, heating of swimming pools and spas, and similar purposes. Passive solar design and orientation is also encouraged to reduce energy use for residential space heating and cooling.
  - e. Efficiency. Water and lighting fixtures shall be designed for efficiency. Water conserving fixtures may include low-flow faucets, showerheads, and toilets, as well as drip irrigation systems. Energy efficient lighting fixtures may include photosensitive or timed outdoor lighting, and compact fluorescent lighting.
  - f. Accessory Buildings. Accessory buildings shall be permitted in all residential land use designations subject to compliance with all setback and height requirements of



*the Zoning Ordinance. Accessory structure design shall be compatible with use of similar architectural design features, colors, and materials of the primary structure.*

- g. Primary Buildings. Architectural design should support a cohesive neighborhood compatible with the area's natural site characteristics (i.e., colors and materials should be complementary of surrounding natural features).*
- **Policy LU-27. Commercial Site Design.** *Commercial development is required to comply with zoning requirements. In addition, the following standards would apply:*
  - a. Screening. In commercial development, areas utilized for storage, refuse, or loading shall be screened from adjacent public and private property. The visual impact of off-street parking areas shall be mitigated through use of berms, landscaping, low garden walls, or a combination of these features.*
  - b. Circulation. The design of commercial development shall be sensitive to non-vehicular traffic and will not require pedestrians or bicyclists to unsafely cross large expanses of parking lot. Large surface parking lots shall be visually and functionally segmented into several smaller lots. Continuous internal pedestrian walkways, no less than 6 feet in width, shall be provided from any adjacent public walkway or right-of-way to the customer entrance of all buildings on the site. Walkways shall connect pedestrian activity such as, but not limited to, transit stops, street crossings, buildings and store entry points, and central features and community spaces. All internal pedestrian crosswalks shall be distinguished by the use of durable, low maintenance surface materials such as pavers, bricks, stamped asphalt, or stamped or scored concrete to enhance pedestrian safety and comfort, as well as the attractiveness of the walkways so long as they met the ADA guidelines.*
  - c. Parking Lot Location. Provide parking at the side or rear of the proposed structures when practicable.*
- **Policy LU-28. Design Guidelines.** *Appendix A (of the Specific Plan) includes Design Guidelines that would apply only to subareas 1-10 and 20. They are intended to supplement and enhance the City's General Plan and Zoning Code in application to the Chandler Ranch Area Specific Plan. If adopted with the Specific Plan, the Guidelines would provide additional development standards beyond City minimum expectations. If there is any conflict between the City's Zoning Code, other Specific Plan policies included in this document, and the Design Guidelines, the most restrictive provision would apply. In terms of operational / land use restrictions that exceed City code requirements (e.g. additional restrictions on placement of recreational vehicles), the property owner may established Covenants, Conditions and Restrictions (CC&Rs) which can be enforced by a Home Owners Association.*

Site-Specific policies relevant to minimizing general visual impacts in include:

- **Grading in Subarea 1.** *Grading shall be consistent with Grading Category A, as described in Specific Plan Policy LU-13. Grading for each lot shall be considered and designed separately from contiguous lots to preserve the topography and aesthetics of the hillside. Grading schemes that would grade contiguous lots together, disrupt natural grades at the property lines, or create flat building pads on slopes greater than 10% shall be avoided. Pad*



*grading will be allowed where the natural terrain within the identified building envelope is less than 10%. Where the natural terrain is greater than 10%, an area of no more than 1,000 sf can be graded for a garage. The remainder of any structure will be constructed to conform to the natural terrain.*

*Driveway widths may be reduced to 12' where necessary to reduce impacts to oak trees as a result of grading or other construction activities. Alternate paving materials will be considered within the CRZ's of native oak trees to further reduce the development impact. In the event that grading or construction activities are necessary within the CRZ of an oak tree, a certified arborist shall be consulted to review the design and provide appropriate mitigation measures for any potential impacts. Cut and fill slopes shall be minimized in an effort to preserve the natural landscape of the area. Where grading is necessary, limit slopes to 3:1 or flatter. Use of slopes steeper than 3:1 shall be allowed only to preserve oak trees. All slopes shall be re-vegetated with native or naturalizing plan material. **(applies to subarea 1)***

- **Grading in Subarea 2.** For Subarea 2A grading shall be consistent with Grading Category B, as described in Specific Plan Policy LU-13. Grading for each lot shall be considered and designed separately from contiguous lots to preserve the topography and aesthetics of the hillside. Grading schemes that would grade contiguous lots together, disrupt natural grades at the property lines, or create flat building pads on slopes greater than 10% shall be avoided except where feathering of road fills results in a better transition to natural grades. As a part of the tentative map process, it should be demonstrated that all lots provide adequate building space. No oak tree removals will be permitted as a part of the tentative map, grading permit or building permit processes, unless it is consistent with the current Oak Tree Ordinance (i.e. oak trees that are diseased, deceased or pose a hazard too great to mitigate). **(applies to subarea 2)**
- **Structure Visibility.** Buildings shall be designed and placed at locations that will minimize their visibility from Golden Hill Road. No development on existing slopes of 30 percent or greater. Buildings shall be designed to fit in with the landscape by utilizing alternative foundation systems such as split level, post and beam, etc., and use exterior materials and colors that blend with the surroundings. **(applies to subareas 1 and 2)**
- **Maximum Building Envelopes.** Maximum building envelopes shall be designated for each dwelling unit. Constructive notice shall be recorded on each lot advising the property owner that areas outside of the maximum building envelope and within the individual lots shall remain in an undisturbed state. **(applies to subarea 1)**
- **Modified Street Standards to Avoid Oak Impacts.** Through the Planned Development Process and subject to approval of the Chief of Emergency Services, the Planning Commission may approve modifications to local street standards within the oak forest area with the purpose and intent to minimize oak tree impacts. Some of the concepts that could be considered include narrow streets, off-street parking, bulb-outs, or split lanes. **(applies to subarea 1)**
- **Screening.** All areas in commercial/recreation development areas that are utilized for parking, storage, refuse, or loading shall be screened from view of access streets, freeways, or adjacent private properties with berms, landscaping, low garden walls, fencing, or a combination of these features. **(applies to subareas 4, 5, 10, and 15)**



*Light and Glare Impacts.* The Specific Plan was designed in such a way to reduce potential residential development directly adjacent to major lighting sources, such as Barney Schwartz Park, particularly in subareas 4 and 5. The following policies included in the Specific Plan to address potential nuisance impacts, including lighting, that could impact residents closest to Barney Schwartz Park:

- **Policy LU-20. Constructive Notice Regarding Lights and Noise.** *As a condition of approval of any new residential development north of Subarea 8 (including but not limited to Subareas 1, 2, 3, 6, 7 and 10), constructive notice shall be recorded on each parcel and dwelling unit, and notice shall be provided in each rental agreement for occupancy of dwelling units, advising residents that Barney Schwartz Park will operate up to 24 hours per day, with substantial emission of lights and noise from park activities. The form and content of the constructive notice and rental agreement text shall be subject to approval of the City Attorney.*

Other relevant specific plan policies that address lighting impacts include:

- **Policy LU-22. Interim Land Use Compatibility (during ongoing development).** *The siting of buildings, circulation, parking, and other elements of new development should take into consideration existing development patterns adjacent to the site. Potentially incompatible uses or design elements shall be designed sensitively when adjacent to existing uses on neighboring sites.*
- **Policy LU-24. Lighting.** *Require all new lighting to be shielded and directed downward in such a manner as to not create off-site glare or adversely impact adjacent development or open space habitat. The style, location and height of the lighting fixtures shall be submitted with the building plans and shall be subject to approval by the Community Development Department prior to issuance of building or grading permits, as appropriate.*

The following site-specific policy for subareas 6 and 10 is also included in the Specific Plan:

- **Visual Screening.** *Portions of the subarea intended for residential development must be visually screened from direct glare produced by the lights of Barney Schwartz Park. Such screening can be (in order of preference) a combination of intervening topography, natural vegetation, manmade landscaping, manmade barriers or berms, and site orientation of the buildings themselves to avoid lighting impacts to the interior of homes. A visual screening analysis that presents this information to the Community Development Department must be accepted by the Department prior to approval of tract maps for this subarea.*

The following policy would apply to the potential development of a school in subarea 10, to minimize potential light and glare impacts from that land use on neighboring homes within subarea 3.

- **Lighting.** *Security lighting or other lighting associated with school development shall be designed in such a way to minimize offsite glare to neighboring future residential uses within subarea 3.*



The following policy would apply to the potential development of neighborhood commercial uses in subareas 14 and 15, to minimize potential light and glare impacts from that land use on nearby homes.

- **Compatibility With Residential Uses.** *Commercial development shall be designed to direct commercial lighting away from adjacent residential areas. In addition, no loading or staging areas shall be allowed along the interface between commercial and residential development.*

The following policy would apply to the potential development of trails in open space areas in subarea 20:

- **Trail Lighting.** *Trail lighting shall be in compliance with the site design standards in the Design Guidelines, included in Appendix A of the Specific Plan. Lighting shall be limited to trail heads and staging areas, or as necessary along the pathways to ensure user safety.*

Through its policies and standards, as articulated further in the Specific Plan Design Guidelines, the Specific Plan is self-mitigating to the extent possible. No additional mitigation measures are suggested.

Residual Impacts. Although impacts would be reduced through Specific Plan policies and Design Guidelines, no mitigation is available to avoid changing the site from its unlighted rural condition, to a more urban condition. Impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.

- **Impact AES-2** **The proposed development has the potential to alter the aesthetic character of the site vicinity through grading activities that would alter the topography and vegetation of the Specific Plan area. This is considered Class I, significant and unavoidable, impact to the aesthetic character of the area.**

Development under the Specific Plan would require grading and modifications to site topography. Such activities would modify the existing terrain and in some areas, remove existing vegetation, including grasslands and, if explicitly approved by the City Council, some oak trees. Alteration of the visual character of the area as a result of site grading and construction would be considered a potentially significant and unavoidable impact.

Five kinds of grading approaches would be used within the Specific Plan area, based on Specific Plan policy LU-13, and shown in Table 4.7-1.

- **Policy LU-13. Grading.** *Grading shall preserve hillsides and natural topography to the maximum extent feasible. Grading shall not occur outside of the boundaries of designated development subareas, and shall conform to the requirements described in the Specific Plan, unless otherwise refined by standards included in Section 3.5 (of the Specific Plan) for specific subareas.*



**Table 4.7-1. Grading Requirements**

Grading Category	Description	Where Applicable
A	<p><b>Custom Lot Grading</b> - The following general standards would apply, as refined in greater detail for subareas 1 in Section 3.5 of the Specific Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Grading for each lot will be considered and designed separately from contiguous lots to preserve the topography and aesthetics of the hillside;</li> <li>• Grading schemes that would grade contiguous lots together, disrupt natural grades at the property lines, or create flat building pads on slopes greater than 10% shall be prohibited.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subareas 1</li> <li>• Local roadways within these subareas</li> <li>• See additional refinement of these standards for subareas 1 in Section 3.5</li> </ul>
B	<p><b>Custom Lot Grading</b> – The following general standards would apply, as refined in greater detail for subarea 2 in Section 3.5 of the Specific Plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where grading for the public street allows for and results in a naturally sloping lot, grading requirements will conform to Grading Category A.</li> <li>• Where grading for the public street unavoidably results in placing significant fill into a private lot or a series of private lots, and a pad is created, additional grading may be allowed to create a suitable pad for conventional slab-on-grade home construction.</li> <li>• Standard maximum cut-slopes for street construction is 3:1. Maximum grade of 2:1 allowed for preservation of oak trees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subarea 2</li> <li>• Local roadways within subarea 2</li> <li>• See additional refinement of these standards for subarea 2 in Section 3.5</li> </ul>
C	<p><b>Mass Grading</b> - Mass grading consists of large scale cut and fill operations that extend across multiple lots with the goal of providing large, gently sloped areas for building homes. Areas that are mass graded shall blend in with the natural environment by avoiding terraced or stepped contours where adjacent to open space. Graded slopes will be gradual and undulating to match the natural topography of the site and surrounding area and soften the visual impact of development. The following standards would apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graded changes to the existing topography shall not result in severe angular and obvious benches on the existing hillsides, where adjacent to open space;</li> <li>• Graded slopes adjacent to existing ground (at daylight lines) shall be rounded to blend the graded slope to natural terrain;</li> <li>• Graded slopes adjacent to open space shall vary in graded to provide a natural transition to existing hillsides;</li> <li>• Unless otherwise noted in standards for specific sub-areas, maximum slopes shall not exceed 3:1;</li> <li>• Drainage within a subdivision shall be designed in a comprehensive master plan. In most cases, lots will drain to the street or to an acceptable drainage facility.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subareas 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 (residential portions only)</li> <li>• All Specific Plan arterials and collectors</li> <li>• Local roadways within each of the above subareas</li> <li>• See additional refinement of these standards for subareas 3, 6, 7, 8 and 9 in Section 3.5</li> </ul>
D	<p><b>Pad Grading (for large buildings –non-residential uses)</b> – Grading activities to construct a level pad for a building shall be limited to the area required for the building, parking lot and access. The pad elevation should be established to blend the surrounding grading into the existing terrain and avoid excessively tall cut slopes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sub-areas 4, 5 (for emergency services area only), 10, 15, 18a,b, 19a,b,c.</li> <li>• See additional refinement of these standards for sub-areas 4, 5 and 10 in Section 3.5</li> </ul>
E	<p><b>Open Space</b> - No grading allowed in designated Open Space areas, except as needed to construct trails; water, sewer or drainage infrastructure; and roadway crossings.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Subareas 18c, 19d, and 20; subarea 5 (except for the emergency services</li> </ul>



**Table 4.7-1. Grading Requirements**

Grading Category	Description	Where Applicable
	The area identified for emergency services in subarea 5 is an exception to the requirement and shall conform to Grading Category D.	portion)
<b>Other Grading Requirements Applicable to All Development Areas</b>		
a.	<p><b>Contour Grading.</b> Grading in the specific plan area, to the extent feasible, shall be “contour graded”. Areas approved for mass grading shall be “contour graded” where they conform to ungraded areas. The term “contour grading” shall, for the purposes of this specific plan, mean the design and performance of grading in accordance with the following requirements:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Grading for development shall conform to the existing contours of the ground as much as feasible.</li> <li>ii. Conformance contours at the edge of developed areas shall blend into and preserve the existing contours of the ground to preserve a natural appearance.</li> <li>iii. In applying these guidelines, principles of good drainage practice should be maintained.</li> </ul>	
b.	<p><b>Grading Plans.</b> Prior to any development within any sub-area where mass grading techniques would be applied, an overall preliminary grading plan, accompanied by a physical model or photo-simulations illustrating the grading plan, shall be submitted for Community Development Department approval. The preliminary grading plan and physical model or photo-simulations for each subarea shall be used as the basis for subsequent detailed grading plans for individual development within that area. Plans shall include a program with: techniques to prevent soil erosion and sedimentation during and after the grading process; approximate time frames for grading; and preliminary pad and roadway elevations. Photo-simulations or physical models shall accurately depict the post grading topography of the subarea. Depending on conditions additional inspections may be required to ensure compliance with water quality regulations.</p>	
c.	<p><b>Revegetation.</b> Areas where grading is allowed but development will not occur must be revegetated, for the purpose of providing a transition between neighboring development and undisturbed open space. This applies to areas of mass grading that result in disturbed slopes without roads or structures. Prior to initial grading in any area, a revegetation plan shall be prepared by a licensed landscape design professional. The plan shall be reviewed and approved by the City Community Development Director in consultation with the Public Works Director.</p>	

In addition, the following grading techniques would be used in subareas 1 and 2, where the Specific Plan’s highest elevations, most varied topography, and greatest number of oak trees are found:

- **Grading in Subarea 1.** *Grading shall be consistent with Grading Category A, as described in Specific Plan Policy LU-13. Grading for each lot shall be considered and designed separately from contiguous lots to preserve the topography and aesthetics of the hillside. Grading schemes that would grade contiguous lots together, disrupt natural grades at the property lines, or create flat building pads on slopes greater than 10% shall be avoided. Pad grading will be allowed where the natural terrain within the identified building envelope is less than 10%. Where the natural terrain is greater than 10%, an area of no more than 1,000 sf can be graded for a garage. The remainder of any structure will be constructed to conform to the natural terrain.*

*Driveway widths may be reduced to 12’ where necessary to reduce impacts to oak trees as a result of grading or other construction activities. Alternate paving materials will be considered within the CRZ’s of native oak trees to further reduce the development impact. In the event that grading or construction activities are necessary within the CRZ of an oak tree, a certified arborist shall be consulted to review the design and provide appropriate mitigation measures for any potential impacts. Cut and fill slopes shall be minimized in an effort to*



*preserve the natural landscape of the area. Where grading is necessary, limit slopes to 3:1 or flatter. Use of slopes steeper than 3:1 shall be allowed only to preserve oak trees. All slopes shall be re-vegetated with native or naturalizing plan material.*

- **Grading in Subarea 2.** For Subarea 2A grading shall be consistent with Grading Category B, as described in Specific Plan Policy LU-13. Grading for each lot shall be considered and designed separately from contiguous lots to preserve the topography and aesthetics of the hillside. Grading schemes that would grade contiguous lots together, disrupt natural grades at the property lines, or create flat building pads on slopes greater than 10% shall be avoided except where feathering of road fills results in a better transition to natural grades. As a part of the tentative map process, it should be demonstrated that all lots provide adequate building space. No oak tree removals will be permitted as a part of the tentative map, grading permit or building permit processes, unless it is consistent with the current Oak Tree Ordinance (i.e. oak trees that are diseased, deceased or pose a hazard too great to mitigate).

Mass grading techniques used in Areas 3, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17 would alter the terrain substantially. Similarly, pad grading techniques used for non-residential development in subareas 4, 5, 14, 15, 18, and 19 would result in similar impacts. Each of these areas is visible from one or more major public roadways (including Sherwood Road, Golden Hill Road, Union Road, Gilead Lane, and Highway 46 East). Subareas 4, 5, 10, 18, 19 are particularly prominent from Highway 46 East. However, it should be noted that subareas 4 and 5 would have minimal development. With the extensions of Airport Road, Sherwood Road, and Gilead Lane, development in subareas 3, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18 and 19 would gain additional viewing exposure.

In the short-term during the grading phases, these areas would be visually unattractive, as some areas would be stripped of vegetative cover, and hilltops could be altered. In the longer term, however, these areas would be landscaped and retain their existing rolling character, albeit in a somewhat altered form. Oak trees, for the most part, would be retained except as noted in the Specific Plan and explicitly approved for removal by the City Council. The most obvious visual difference between the existing views from nearby roadways and post-development views is that there would be structures and street lighting on the site. The site would show some signs of grading, but would be contoured and revegetated in such a way to reduce the visual effects of this action. However, one purpose of using a mass grading approach in these areas is to minimize “stair-step” development and grading, and its associated visual effects, including prominent drainage infrastructure and extended graded custom lots in steeper areas that might occur by implementing the City’s existing hillside grading provisions in these areas.

Custom lot grading techniques would be applied to Areas 1 and 2, where custom lots would be implemented within an oak woodland area. This approach would be used primarily to preserve the existing oak woodland and the relative prominent ridgeline within these areas. Development at these locations would be partially screened by the cover of the existing oaks.

Nevertheless, the grading that would be performed onsite, whether it would be mass grading, or hillside compliant grading, would result in a significant, unavoidable visual impact. It should be noted, however, that the short-term effects of mass grading, while likely greater until revegetation and landform alteration are complete, would be relatively less noticeable in the long-term compared to a hillside grading approach. Hillside grading techniques would have



the potential for more prominent long-term impacts, if such techniques were applied in areas where there is little existing vegetative screening in the form of oak trees. Provided that hillside grading would preserve oaks, it may be an appropriate technique in Areas 1 and 2.

Mitigation Measures. Visual impacts resulting from grading will be minimized to a great extent through the implementation of General Plan policies, zoning requirements, and grading requirements included in the Specific Plan as articulated above. One of these requirements is that a physical model or photosimulation of grading plans must be used to illustrate the grading associated with an individual development. No other mitigation measures are suggested.

Residual Impacts. With implementation of the above mitigation measures, impacts would be reduced to the extent feasible. However, impacts related to land alteration, regardless of the grading approach used, would remain significant and unavoidable.

**c. Cumulative Impacts.** The City General Plan land use designation of the proposed project is Specific Plan, which envisions a level of development generally consistent with what is included in the proposed project. Development of the site for urban use was therefore expected and is consistent with the General Plan. Therefore, any impacts to the visual character of the site and the surrounding area related to the conversion of the rural character of the site were anticipated in the General Plan EIR. However, buildout under the General Plan would result in a significant cumulative loss of open space and would irrevocably alter the character of the area from semi-rural to urban. Implementation of the proposed Specific Plan would incrementally contribute to this change in aesthetic character of the site and the surrounding areas. Cumulative impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

