4.1 AESTHETICS

4.1.1 Introduction

This section provides a discussion of existing visual and aesthetic resources on the project site and in the surrounding area as well as an analysis of potential impacts that could result from development of the proposed La Entrada Specific Plan (proposed project) with regard to visual quality, views, and light and glare. Information presented in this section is based on photographs of the project site taken during field surveys (December 21, 2012) and other site visits (May 21, 2013), view simulations of the proposed project (Appendix B), design guidelines in the La Entrada Specific Plan, and the City of Coachella (City) General Plan Conservation Element (1996).

The aesthetics analysis presented in this section addresses the proposed project's visual relationship with existing and future land uses in the area surrounding the project site. The analysis of views is based on the extent to which the proposed Specific Plan development may impact existing views and modify visual access to aesthetic features from nearby public vantage points and corridors, as well as have potential to increase light and glare in the study area.

4.1.2 Methodology

The concepts and terminology that are used in this analysis are defined below.

- **Aesthetic Resource:** An aesthetic resource is any element, or group of elements, that embodies a sense of beauty. A city's aesthetic resources include its natural setting, the architectural quality of its buildings, the vitality of its landscaping, the spatial relationships they create, and the views afforded by each. The degree to which these resources are present in a community is clearly subject to personal and cultural interpretation. However, it is possible to identify certain resources as having aesthetic characteristics and establish general guidelines for assessing the aesthetic impacts of new development.
- **Glare:** A continuous or periodic intense light that may cause eye discomfort or be blinding to the eye.
- **Light Source:** A device that produces illumination, including incandescent bulbs, fluorescent and neon tubes, halogen and other vapor lamps, and reflecting surfaces or refractors incorporated into a lighting fixture. Any translucent enclosure of a light source is considered to be part of the light source.
- **Scenic Resource:** An element that contributes to the area's scenic value and includes landform, land use, vegetation, water, or adjacent scenery and may include a cultural modification to the natural environment.
- **Scenic Vista:** A scenic vista is the view of an area that is visually or aesthetically pleasing from a certain vantage point, usually viewed from some distance away. Aesthetic components of a scenic vista include (1) scenic quality, (2) sensitivity level, and (3) view access. A scenic vista can be impacted in two ways. A development project can have visual impacts by either directly

diminishing the scenic quality of the vista or by blocking the view corridors or "vista" of the scenic resource. Important factors in determining whether a proposed project will block views include its height, mass, and location relative to surrounding land uses and view corridors.

- **Vantage Point:** A particular point of observation.
- **Viewer Sensitivity:** Viewer sensitivity is a measure of a viewer's recognition of a particular object. Viewer sensitivity is defined by visibility of resources in the landscape, proximity of viewers to the visual resources, elevation of viewers relative to the visual resource, frequency and duration of views, number of views, and types and expectations of individuals and viewer groups.
- **Viewshed:** The surface area that is visible from a given vantage point or series of vantage points. It is also the area from which that vantage point or series of vantage points may be seen. The viewshed aids in identifying the views that could be affected by the proposed action.
- **Visual Character and Quality:** The visual aesthetic character or quality of a streetscape, building, group of buildings, or other man-made or natural feature that creates an overall impression of an area within an urban context. For example, a scenic vista along the boundary of a community, a pleasing streetscape with trees, and well-kept residences and yards are scenic resources that create a pleasing impression of an area. In general, concepts of visual character and quality can be organized around four basic elements: (1) site utilization, (2) buildings and structures, (3) landscaping, and (4) signage.

  The analysis of visual impacts focuses on changes in the visual character of the project site that would result from any future development that may occur subsequent to the approval of the proposed project. This would include the visual compatibility of on-site and adjacent uses, changes in vistas and viewsheds where visual changes would be evident, changes to scenic resources along designated scenic roads, and the introduction of sources of light and glare. Impacts to the existing environment in and around the project site are identified by the contrast between the site's visual setting before and after implementation of the proposed development. In this analysis, emphasis has been placed on the transformation of the existing undeveloped conditions into more urbanized uses. Although few standards exist to singularly define perceptions of aesthetic value, the degree of visual change can be described in terms of visual contrast. The visual contrast of pattern elements[1] within visual environments can be described based on four aspects of pattern character:[2] dominance, scale, diversity, and continuity. The enjoyment or interpretation of the visual experience is the visual quality. The degree of visual character and quality is evaluated around three descriptive elements: vividness, intactness, and unity. None of these descriptive elements alone is equivalent to visual quality; all three must be high to substantiate high visual quality.
- **Vividness:** Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns (e.g., the vividness of the Grand Canyon). The view of the Grand Canyon would be rated high for vividness.
- **Intactness:** The visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. This factor can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes and

[1] Pattern elements are primary attributes of a landscape and include form, line, color, and texture.
[2] Pattern character is the visual relationships of pattern elements.

natural settings (e.g., a two-lane road that meanders through the countryside). The view of a two-lane road meandering through the countryside would be rated high for intactness.

- **Unity:** The visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole; it frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the landscape (e.g., an English or Japanese garden). The view of an English or Japanese garden would be rated high for unity.

Visual changes to an existing setting could result in a positive or a negative perception of the proposed project depending on the viewer groups. Thus, viewer sensitivity is a combination of visual quality changes and viewer response to those changes. Viewer sensitivity to a project varies depending on familiarity with existing views, the sense of ownership of these views, and the activities viewers perform in relationship to those views. Visual perception is the act of seeing or recognizing an object and can be affected by physical conditions such as distance and speed. As an observer's distance increases from an object, the ability to see the details of an object decreases. Similarly, as an observer's speed increases, the sharpness of lateral vision declines and the observer tends to focus along the line of travel. Thus, the physical location of the viewer group and the duration of its view would affect viewer exposure. All these factors potentially affect perception and reaction to visual changes.

The potential impacts of the proposed project on area viewsheds were analyzed by evaluating potential project effects in three viewing distance zones:

- **Foreground Views:** These views include elements that are seen at a close distance and that dominate the entire view. These vantage points are generally 500 feet (ft) or less from the project site, depending on the scale of the project, surrounding topography, and other prominent physical features in the project vicinity.
- **Middleground Views:** These views include elements that are seen at a moderate distance and that partially dominate the view. These vantage points are generally located between 500 ft and 1 mile (mi) from the project site.
- **Background Views:** These views include elements that are seen at a long distance and typically comprise horizon-line views that are part of the overall visual composition of the area. These vantage points are generally farther than 1 mi from the project site.

As stated previously, this section analyzes the aesthetic compatibility of the proposed project with the surrounding area and potential impacts to any public views and/or sensitive viewers that may exist in the project vicinity. The assessment of aesthetic impacts is subjective by nature. This analysis attempts to identify and objectively examine factors that contribute to the perception of aesthetic impacts that would be caused by the proposed Specific Plan development. The potential aesthetic impacts of the proposed project were assessed based on consideration of several factors, including scale, mass, and proportion. The City and County of Riverside (County) have not adopted defined standards for analyzing aesthetic impacts. Because the proposed project under evaluation in this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is a Specific Plan, and because specific design plans for the development areas within the plan would be prepared subsequent to this Specific Plan stage, the visual effects of the proposed development are estimated through use of a general massing and scale approach and whether or not the proposed development would be compatible with the surrounding

area. Edge conditions and viewshed alterations are also considered in the context of these factors to the extent such information is known.

Among the eight photographs depicting views of and from the project site provided in Section 4.1.3 below, four key views were selected to demonstrate the approximate massing of the proposed uses developed within the project site as described in the Specific Plan. The four key views are shown both with the existing view and the same view with the proposed project development area overlain with a transparent color wash. The depiction of the color wash is intended to demonstrate where visual changes as a result of the proposed project would likely occur within the existing viewshed. Analysis of the potential view alterations from the key view locations is discussed later in Section 4.1.5.

4.1.3 Existing Environmental Setting

Visual Character. The project site is characterized by undeveloped desert terrain, including rocky ridges and dry washes, that slope from the northeast to the southwest. Existing on-site vegetation consists of scattered shrubs, flowers, creosote, and small, dispersed trees. There are no City-designated scenic viewpoints on the project site or scenic roads surrounding the project site. The Coachella Branch of the All American Canal (Coachella Canal) forms the western border of the project site with agricultural activities west of the Coachella Canal. Interstate 10 (I-10) forms the northern border of the project site, and undeveloped desert terrain surrounds the project site to the north beyond I-10 and to the east and south. Vehicular traffic is commonly visible along I-10 from the project site and areas further west and south.

The landforms in the project area combine to exhibit continuity in form, line, and texture; however, they do not exhibit great diversity of color. The area immediately adjacent to and west of the project site is currently developed with the Coachella Canal and East Side Dike, which are manmade features. The East Side Dike is approximately 30 ft high above the valley floor. Generally, nearly all of the land east of the Coachella Canal is undisturbed desert terrain with low-lying vegetation and no ornamental vegetation. This existing visual condition exhibits harmonious form, color, and texture expected in an undisturbed desert environment. Encroaching features (e.g., overhead electricity towers, poles, and lines) introduce vertical line elements that are visible and the presence of these encroaching features slightly detracts from the undisturbed rural nature of the project site. The scale of the distant mountains in the background contrasts with the landscapes visible in the middleground and foreground; however, they do not overwhelm the pattern character of the view. Visual diversity is moderate because boundaries are generally distinguishable by the presence of the East Side Dike and Coachella Canal in the middleground although there are minimal unnatural features that encroach into the background views in and around the project site, with the exception of the overhead electricity towers, poles, and lines. Visual continuity is moderately high because the elements of the landscape are generally uninterrupted, with the exception of the presence of overhead electricity towers, poles, and lines.

The project site and surrounding area currently exhibit a moderately low amount of vegetation distributed unequally across the project site. The vegetation lacks vividness and there are no distinct, contrasting, or diverse vegetation elements that would create a memorable landscape. Additionally, no striking or distinct visual patterns are exhibited in the existing condition. Manmade elements consist of the Coachella Canal and the East Side Dike. The East Side Dike is approximately 30 ft in height and generally separates active agricultural areas west of the dike (at a lower elevation than the

project site) from the vacant undeveloped areas east of the dike. While the Coachella Canal contains water on a regular basis, the water itself is generally not visible from surrounding areas due to the depressed nature of the canal and the presence of the 30 ft high dike. There is no vegetation on the dike; therefore, the Coachella Canal/East Side Dike do not substantially contribute to the memorability of the landscape. Therefore, the existing condition can be described as exhibiting moderately low vividness. Encroaching features visible (i.e., electricity towers, poles, and lines) create a repetitive pattern that slightly reduces the overall visual integrity of the area; however, the frequency of these utility features is low and their presence does not create the sense of a dense urban environment. While there are natural elements (vegetation and agricultural crops) present in the project area, these elements only partially mask the pattern of the electricity facilities and these facilities do not blend in with the surrounding natural elements. Therefore, the project area can be described as exhibiting moderate intactness. The overall presence of the man-made encroaching features (i.e., electricity towers, poles, and lines) in the middleground slightly degrades the visual quality of the project area and creates minor visual encroachments of natural landforms. These intervening man-made features create a non-harmonious pattern that does not blend into the natural setting in the background and middleground views. Additionally, foreground views primarily exhibit development in the form of agricultural uses; however, these types of uses are generally not intrusive to the visual environment as no large permanent structures or equipment are present. Therefore, the project area can be described as exhibiting moderate unity.

Refer to Section 4.10, Land Use and Planning, later in this EIR for additional details related to adjacent and nearby land uses that contribute to the visual character of the setting in which the site is located. Figure 4.1.1, is an aerial photograph showing the existing conditions of the project site and surrounding land uses with the directional locations of the photo locations and key views. The photo locations and key views were chosen to depict the existing site character and features existing on the project site and the surrounding areas. Figures cited in this section are provided following the last page of text in this section.

Existing Off-Site Views. Figure 4.1.2 shows off-site views of the project site from southwest (View A) and north (View D) of the site. View A would allow for high viewer exposure because this vantage point is along a public road that is oriented directly at the project site. View D would allow for moderate viewer exposure because this vantage point is along a high-speed corridor elevated above the project site; however, the highway is not oriented toward the mountains in the background. Further, it is important to note that as an observer's speed increases, the sharpness of lateral vision declines and the observer tends to focus along the line of travel. Thus, the physical location and the duration of its view would affect the viewer exposure from this vantage point.

View A is from Avenue 52 near Fillmore Street looking northeast towards the project site. View A depicts agricultural land in the foreground, the project site in the middle ground and distant views on the eastern horizon of the Mecca Hills and Little San Bernardino Mountains. It should be noted that the distant view of the Mecca Hills and Little San Bernardino Mountains is frequently masked due to atmospheric conditions (e.g., haze). While not readily visible from the View A vantage point, the Orocopia Mountains are also present to the southeast of the Mecca Hills and would be visible to viewers that would view the project site and surrounding areas.

View D is taken from I-10 looking south across the project site, with the project site in the foreground, agricultural land in the middleground south of the Coachella Canal/East Side Dike, and the distant Santa Rosa Mountains in the background. It should be noted that the distant view of the Santa Rosa Mountains is frequently masked due to atmospheric conditions (e.g., haze). While not readily visible from the View D vantage point, the San Jacinto Mountains are also present to the northwest of the Santa Rosa Mountains and would be visible to viewers that would view the project site and surrounding areas. The Santa Rosa Mountains and San Jacinto Mountains are considered an aesthetically important scenic view identified by the City in its General Plan Conservation Element.

Views of the project site from Avenue 50 are shown in Views B and C on Figure 4.1.3. These views would allow for high viewer exposure because these vantage points are along a public road that is oriented directly at the project site. View B is taken from Avenue 50 near Polk Street, approximately 1.4 mi west of the western boundary of the project site. The site is visible just beyond the agricultural land in the foreground and in front of the Mecca Hills in the background. Middleground views include palm trees, small structures, and utility poles and lines. View C is closer to the project site along Avenue 50 near Fillmore Street, with the agricultural land in the foreground and the project site beyond the East Side Dike in the middleground, and Mecca Hills in the background. As illustrated in both view locations, views of the project site are partially obstructed by the existing East Side Dike bordering the Coachella Canal along the western boundary of the project site.

Existing On-Site Views. Views from the project site facing surrounding and distant off-site viewsheds are shown in Figures 4.1.4 and 4.1.5. These photographs show existing site characteristics and features. View E is from the western edge of the project site near the alignment of Avenue 50 if it were extended along its current alignment. View E looks northeast across the site with the Little San Bernardino Mountains in the background. As shown in View E, the project site is located in the foreground and middleground and contains scattered low-lying vegetation and some moderately-sized dirt/sand mounds. View F is from the western boundary of the project site at the East Side Dike/ Coachella Canal (in the foreground), further northwest of View E, and looks west across agricultural land, unimproved roads, and palm trees in the middleground and the Santa Rosa Mountains and Mount San Jacinto (part of the San Jacinto Mountain range) in the background. Viewer exposure from within the project site is not considered in this analysis because these views are not public views in the existing condition. As noted above in the description of off-site View D, the viewshed of the San Jacinto and Santa Rosa Mountains to the west and southwest is the most aesthetically important view from the project area as identified in the City's General Plan Conservation Element goals (refer to discussion in Section 4.1.4 below).

Views G and H in Figure 4.1.5 show the existing natural Sonoran Desert landscape of the project site looking north/northeast towards I-10 and the Little San Bernardino Mountains in the background. View G is taken from just south of View F and faces northwest looking across the site with the Little San Bernardino Mountains in the background. Scattered low-lying vegetation is visible in the foreground and middleground. Utility lines are also visible from this location. View H is taken from the southern portion of the project site just north of the Avenue 52 easterly terminus. Similar to View G, scattered low-lying vegetation is visible in the foreground and middleground. View H also shows electricity towers, poles, and lines and an unimproved roadway. Relatively low-lying hills and moderately-sized mounds of dirt/sand are also visible in the middleground within View H. As with

Views E and F, viewer exposure from within the project site is not considered in this analysis because these are not public views in the existing condition.

Topography. As discussed in further detail later in Section 4.6, Geology and Soils, in this EIR, the project site lies between the relatively flat alluvial floor of the Coachella Valley to the west and the bedrock highlands of the Little San Bernardino and Orocopia Mountains to the northeast, east, and southeast. In addition, the project site contains multiple southwest-trending ridges with intervening alluvial drainages. Elevations on the project site range from approximately 505 ft to 700 ft above mean sea level.

Existing Lighting and Glare. Due to the fact that the project site is vacant and undeveloped and is generally surrounded by undeveloped vacant land and agricultural uses, nighttime lighting present in the vicinity of the project site consists of minimal lighting from street lights and vehicle headlights and tail lights passing by on nearby roads.

There are no sensitive uses relative to nighttime lighting and daytime glare on or in the vicinity of the project site. The agricultural land west of the project site is not considered a light-sensitive use because most farming operations generally occur during daylight hours. Sensitive receivers relative to daytime glare from reflected sunlight include motorists traveling on the roads adjacent to the project site, including I-10. There are no existing buildings or facilities on the project site that would generate light or glare.

4.1.4 Regulatory Setting

Federal Policies and Regulations. No federal policies or regulations pertaining to aesthetics are applicable to the proposed project.

State Policies and Regulations. No State policies or regulations pertaining to aesthetics are applicable to the proposed project.

Local Policies and Regulations.

City of Coachella General Plan. Visual resources are addressed in the Conservation Element in the City's General Plan. The City also establishes policies and design criteria aimed at creating a unique and attractive visual identity for the City within the Urban Design Element in the General Plan (1996). Although these policies and design criteria do not specifically relate to the impact analysis for aesthetics and visual resources as a result of project development, it should be noted that both the policies and design criteria have been incorporated into the La Entrada Specific Plan. For example, Section 3, Design Guidelines, in the La Entrada Specific Plan contains community design, landscape, and architectural design guidelines for the proposed project consistent with design criteria and policies established in the City's General Plan.

The following goals and policies of the General Plan Conservation Element apply to the proposed project:

City of Coachella General Plan Conservation Element.

Goal: The City shall protect the visual aesthetics of the Mecca Hills and Santa Rosa Mountains.

Policy: The City shall require that grading of projects in sensitive locations shall be limited as much as possible and where grading is approved, repairs shall be required to restore the damaged area to as close to a natural condition as possible.

City of Coachella General Plan Open Space & Parks Element.

Goal: The City shall provide sufficient areas for a range of open space and recreational opportunities to meet the needs of an expanding population and tourism.

Policy: The City shall preserve agricultural lands surrounding the core of the City. The amount of agricultural lands to be preserved should be sufficient to maintain the rural agricultural character and to ensure a viable economic unit for continuing agricultural production.

Policy: The City shall support efforts to preserve the surrounding mountains and hills which provide the scenic visual backdrop to the community.

The City is currently conducting a comprehensive General Plan update. All development proposed for the project site would be subject to the design guidelines and development regulations established in the La Entrada Specific Plan, if approved, because this document would supersede design guidelines and development regulations established in the existing, and if approved, Updated General Plan.

City of Coachella Zoning Code. The City's Zoning Ordinance establishes permitted uses, building coverages, lot areas, setbacks, height limitations, and similar restrictions. The 1,612 acres (ac) of the project site located within the City are currently zoned General Commercial, Open Space, Residential Single Family, and Residential Multiple Family, consistent with the McNaughton Specific Plan. The 588 ac of the project site located within the County, but within the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI), have been prezoned Residential Single Family and Open Space. Approval of the proposed La Entrada Specific Plan Project would amend the current zoning designations for the project site and the part of the site within the City's SOI.

4.1.5 Project Design Features, Grading Standards, Lighting and Utility Standards, and Landscaping Design Guidelines

Project Design Features Relative to Aesthetics and Light and Glare. As described in Chapter 3.0, Project Description, the proposed Specific Plan includes components referred to as Project Design Features. The Project Design Features related to aesthetics and light and glare are:

- The La Entrada Specific Plan has been designed to retain the steeper slopes in natural open space.
- Mass-graded areas would be revegetated at the completion of the mass grading process, pursuant to the City's Municipal Code and the Specific Plan.
- The La Entrada Specific Plan contains grading standards and guidelines and landscape guidelines that provide plans and standards for landscape plant palettes, architectural guidelines (including colors and materials), streetscape enhancements, park treatments, perimeter and interior fencing, walls and other design components.
- The project entries incorporate palm-themed intersection and gateway treatments consistent with the City's median guidelines.
- Common area landscaping, including enhanced streetscape, private parks, and fuel modification zones, would be maintained by a Homeowner's Association (HOA) or by a Landscape and Lighting Maintenance District (LLMD) that could be formed as part of the project financing to ensure a uniform level and high standard of maintenance to maintain the long-term appearance of the community.
- The proposed grading plan incorporates contour grading in hillside areas designed to blend the project's manufactured slopes with existing natural terrain as required by Specific Plan Section 3.2.5, Hillside Design.
- The proposed Specific Plan's open space and parks sites throughout the project would provide scenic viewpoints.
- The Specific Plan's design and development guidelines include specific requirements and restrictions regarding site lighting including:
    - Architectural lighting and landscape accents shall be aesthetically pleasing and nonobtrusive.
    - Shielded lights would be utilized in park lighting to reduce light glare.

Grading Standards. The Specific Plan includes a Conceptual Grading Plan and Grading Standards that the proposed Specific Plan development would be required to adhere to in order to obtain grading permits. As discussed in Section 2.5.2 in the Specific Plan, the Grading Standards would include, in part:

- Conformance to the requirements of the California Building Code and the County of Riverside Grading Standards;
- Conformance to the requirements of the project geotechnical and soils studies;
- Conformance with the Conceptual Grading Plan (Exhibit 2-8 in the Specific Plan and Figure 3.13 in this EIR) and mitigation measures prescribed in this La Entrada Specific Plan EIR;

- A maximum 2:1 finished grade for cut and fill slopes;
- Balanced grading on site by phase;
- Implementation of Best Management Practices for slope stabilization, consistent with County guidelines;
- All streets with gradients not exceeding 15 percent; and
- Postgrading restoration of desert washes and natural areas disturbed during grading.

Hillside Development Guidelines. The Hillside Development Guidelines in Chapter 3 of the Specific Plan include:

- Incorporation of existing landforms, natural features, vegetation, rock formations, and the prevailing ridgeline pattern into the project grading design to the extent feasible;
- Overall slope, height, and grade of cut and fill slopes should be in concert with the natural contours and scale of the existing terrain;
- Protection of natural features in siting of lots and building pads;
- Use of variable slope height and rounded toe and top of slope and other varied gradients for manufactured slopes to have a more natural appearance;
- Avoidance of siting structures on slopes 40 percent or greater;
- Preservation of natural high points in parks and open space areas to promote publicly accessible vista points to the fullest extent feasible;
- Use of variable slope heights greater than or less than 30 ft to reduce the appearance from off site of stacked houses;
- Creation of slopes flatter than 2:1;
- Avoidance of massive flat super pads; and
- Blending color and materials for retaining walls to blend with the adjacent hillsides and landscape palette and use of mechanical stabilized earth (MSE) walls, as well as terraced retaining walls that allow for landscape planting.
- Terraced retaining walls that allow for landscape planting.

Lighting and Utility Standards. Table 3-1 in the Specific Plan specifies that street lighting shall be consistent with City standards and that other lighting, such as from homeowner association and commercial mixed-use areas, shall be shielded to minimize light spillage and glare. All utility connections between the buildings and the main line source shall be located underground.

Landscaping Design Guidelines. Section 3.4 in the Specific Plan includes landscape guidelines for five zones of the overall development, including the community gateway and entry monumentation, community streetscapes, parks and recreational areas, open space areas and buffers, edge treatment

areas, and transitional zones. The La Entrada Specific Plan landscaping design is intended to create a shady oasis concept, using natural and drought-tolerant vegetation.

4.1.6 Thresholds of Significance

The following thresholds of significance criteria are based on Appendix G of the *California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines*. Based on these thresholds, implementation of the proposed project would have a significant adverse impact related to aesthetics if it would:

Threshold 4.1.1: Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;

Threshold 4.1.2: Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway;

Threshold 4.1.3: Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or

Threshold 4.1.4: Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

4.1.7 Project Impacts

Threshold 4.1.1: Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista

Less than Significant Impact. A scenic vista can be categorized as either containing a panoramic view or a focal view. Panoramic views are typically associated with vantage points that provide a sweeping geographic orientation not commonly available (e.g., skylines, valleys, mountain ranges, or large bodies of water). Focal views are typically associated with views of natural landforms, public art/signs, and visually important structures, such as historic buildings.

Visual resources afforded to the City specifically include the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains located to the southwest, the Mecca Hills and Orocopia Mountains to the east, and the Little San Bernardino Mountains to the northeast. The City also considers open space and agricultural areas visual resources because they provide visual relief from urbanized areas and provide views for motorists, pedestrians, and residents. There are no City-designated scenic vistas identified in the City's General Plan.

As previously identified, the visual setting of the project site is characterized by undeveloped desert terrain, including rocky ridges and dry washes. The Coachella Canal forms the western border of the project site with agricultural activities farther west of the Coachella Canal. I-10 forms the northern border of the project site with undeveloped desert terrain surrounding the project site to the north beyond I-10 and to the east and south. Development associated with the proposed project, as viewed from areas west of the Coachella Canal, would occur along the middleground slopes leading up to the Mecca Hills/Orocopia Mountains and the Little San Bernardino Mountains.

The La Entrada Specific Plan establishes building height limits for each land use designation. Table 4.1.A summarizes the height limitations for each proposed land use. As shown in Table 4.1.A, the maximum height of the proposed buildings would be a maximum three stories, up to 55 ft for mixed use non-residential development. Proposed residential uses on the hillsides in the eastern portion of the project site would have views of the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains and the Coachella Valley. Views from the Coachella Valley floor toward the hillside of the project site would consist of the views of project development and the Mecca Hills to the east. The topography of the project site and surrounding area has higher elevation hills above the site. Implementation of the grading standards and design standards in the Specific Plan would not create a skyline development silhouette from public vantage points. In addition to the grading and development standards in the Specific Plan, the proposed project would include approximately 900 ac of open space and park/recreation uses that would preserve scenic views from the project site. The proposed project also includes dedicated earthen-bottom drainage ways to maintain existing flows from the existing wash areas traversing the site.

Table 4.1.A: Land Use Height Limitations

Land Use	Height Limitations (feet)
Very Low Density Residential	35
Low Density Residential	30
Medium Density Residential	36 (maximum two stories)
High Density Residential	45 (maximum three stories)
Mixed Use Residential	45 (maximum three stories)
Mixed Use Non-Residential	55 (maximum three stories)

Source: Draft La Entrada Specific Plan, April 2013.

Four view simulations of the project site depicting the proposed development are shown on Figures 4.1.6 through 4.1.9 and are discussed below. Figure 4.1.1 shows the locations where the photographs were taken for the view simulations. The depiction of the site with the Specific Plan development is intended to show the overall massing and extent of the development of the altered site, with consideration of the design parameters contained in the Specific Plan. Specific design plans and Tentative Tract Maps for the proposed development areas would be prepared subsequent to approval of the Specific Plan and the related discretionary actions identified in Section 3.10.

Figure 4.1.6 View Simulation: Avenue 52 near Fillmore Street (View A). Figure 4.1.6 depicts a view of the project site from Avenue 52 near Fillmore Street facing northeast. As previously noted viewer exposure from this location is high, although this location is at a lower elevation than the project site. As shown in Figure 4.1.6, the extent of the disturbance area would occur along the low-lying hills in the middleground just beyond the Coachella Canal/East Side Dike. The Specific Plan contains design parameters that are intended to guide orderly development, achieve a high level of design quality, reflect features that are unique to the area, ensure compatibility among adjoining land uses, and unify all of the elements that form the project. This includes height restrictions for each type of land use as summarized previously in Table 4.1.A.

It is important to note that the existing East Side Dike partially obstructs views of the lower foothills as evidenced in Figure 4.1.6. While actual structures are not depicted in the view

simulation in Figure 4.1.6, existing steel lattice electricity towers are visible. While these existing steel lattice electricity towers are not solid structures (i.e., you can see through them), their presence is noticeable and they do partially obstruct background views of the lower foothills but they do not encroach into views of the Little San Bernardino Mountains.

These existing steel lattice electricity towers are located immediately adjacent to the project site on the east side of the Coachella Canal. Typical heights of steel lattice electricity towers range from 49 ft to 180 ft. Given this range of heights, an average height is assumed to be approximately 115 ft. Assuming the existing steel lattice towers visible in View A are approximately 115 ft in height, the development of the project site with structures that are not to exceed 55 ft in height would be substantially below the height of the existing steel lattice towers. As shown in Figure 4.1.6, the steel lattice towers do not obstruct existing views of the mountains in the background. Land uses proposed under the Specific Plan in the eastern portion of the project site along the higher elevation areas consist primarily of low density residential uses and open space uses. As noted in Table 4.1.A, low density residential uses have a maximum permitted height of 30 ft and would be located along the eastern portion of the site within the higher elevations of the project site to preserve views of scenic backdrops, consistent with the City's General Plan. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that development envisioned under the proposed Specific Plan would not obstruct existing scenic views of the Little San Bernardino Mountains visible from this key view vantage point. Although background views of the mountains in the background would not be encroached upon by the proposed development of the Specific Plan, middleground views of the lower foothills above the East Side Dike would change from its existing condition (i.e., natural desert terrain and habitat) to a developed condition with structures, green parks, and the extension of Avenues 50 and 52 over the 30 ft dike. While partial obstruction of the low-lying hills may occur with development of structures proposed under the Specific Plan, the overall view of the mountains would not be substantially affected by development of the site. Furthermore, as previously identified there are no city-designated scenic vistas identified in the City's General Plan. Therefore, project implementation would not have a significant effect on a scenic vista from this viewpoint.

Figure 4.1.7 View Simulation: Avenue 50 near Polk Street (View B). Figure 4.1.7 depicts a view of the project site from Avenue 50 near Polk Street facing east. As previously noted, viewer exposure from this location is high although this location is at a lower elevation than the project site. As shown in Figure 4.1.7, the extent of the disturbance area would occur along the low-lying hills in the middleground just beyond the existing Coachella Canal/East Side Dike. It is important to note that the existing East Side Dike as well as the existing agricultural crops in front of the dike currently partially obstruct views of the lower foothills as evidenced in Figure 4.1.7. Existing electricity poles in the foreground also slightly encroach into background views of the mountains; however, their presence does not substantially obstruct these existing views of the mountains. As shown in Figure 4.1.7, the existing steel lattice towers beyond the dike and canal do not obstruct existing views of the Little San Bernardino Mountains in the background. As described above, low density residential uses have a maximum permitted height of 30 ft and would be located along the eastern portion of the site within the higher elevations of the project site to preserve views of scenic backdrops, consistent with the City's General Plan. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that development envisioned under the proposed project would not obstruct existing views from this vantage point. Although background views of the mountains in the background

would not be encroached upon by the proposed development of the Specific Plan, middleground views of the lower foothills above the East Side Dike would change from its existing condition (i.e., natural desert terrain and habitat) to a developed condition with structures, green parks, and the extension of Avenues 50 and 52 over the 30 ft dike. While partial obstruction of views of the low-lying hills may occur, the overall view of the mountains in the background would not be substantially affected by development of the site. Furthermore, as previously identified there are no city-designated scenic vistas identified in the City's General Plan. Therefore, project implementation would not have a significant effect on a designated scenic vista from this viewpoint.

Figure 4.1.8 View Simulation: Avenue 50 near Fillmore Street (View C). Figure 4.1.8 depicts a view of the project site from Avenue 50 near Fillmore Street facing northeast. This location is further east (i.e., closer to the project site) when compared to View B. Similar to the discussion above for Key View B, viewer exposure from this location is high although this location is at a lower elevation than the project site. As shown in Figure 4.1.8, the extent of the disturbance area would occur along the low-lying hills in the middleground just beyond the existing Coachella Canal/East Side Dike. It is important to note that the existing East Side Dike and existing agricultural crops currently partially obstruct views of the lower foothills as evidenced in Figure 4.1.8. As shown in Figure 4.1.8, the existing steel lattice towers do not obstruct existing views of the mountains in the background; however, they do encroach upon the feature. Similar to the discussion for Key View B, low density residential uses have a maximum permitted height of 30 ft and would be located along the eastern portion of the site within the higher elevations of the project site to preserve views of scenic backdrops, consistent with the City's General Plan. Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that development envisioned under the proposed project would not obstruct existing views from this vantage point. Although background views of the mountains in the background would not be encroached upon by the proposed development of the Specific Plan, middleground views of the lower foothills above the East Side Dike would change from the existing condition (i.e., natural desert terrain and habitat) to a developed condition with structures, green parks, and the extension of Avenues 50 and 52 over the 30 ft dike. While partial obstruction of the low-lying hills may occur, the overall view of the mountains in the background would not be substantially affected by development of the site. Furthermore, there are no city-designated scenic vistas identified in the City's General Plan. Therefore, project implementation would not have a significant effect on a designated scenic vista from this viewpoint.

Figure 4.1.9 View Simulation: I-10 towards South (View D). Figure 4.1.9 depicts a view of the project site from I-10 facing south. As previously noted, viewer exposure from this location is moderate. As shown in Figure 4.1.9, the simulated extent of the disturbance area would occur along the low-lying hills in the foreground immediately adjacent to the eastbound lanes of I-10. While actual structures are not depicted in the view simulation presented in Figure 4.1.9, it can be expected that the majority of the visible area depicted in Figure 4.1.9 would be developed with structures and could potentially partially obstruct views of the distant Santa Rosa Mountains in the background from this vantage point as the areas in the vicinity of this key view are proposed for the development of mixed-use and residential uses. However, it should be noted that this photograph is taken from I-10 eastbound lanes where viewer exposure is considered moderate and obstructions of the mountains to the south would be intermittent as vehicles traveling along

I-10 would be traveling at high speeds and would rarely be immobile. Additionally, the land use plan of the Specific Plan identifies areas for drainage where existing wash areas currently exist. Development of any structures would be prohibited within these drainage areas and these drainage areas would be view corridors that would preserve existing scenic views of the mountains to the south. While intermittent obstructions of the Santa Rosa Mountains would occur, the overall view of the mountains in the background would not be substantially affected by development of the site as view corridors would be preserved through drainage areas proposed as part of the Specific Plan Development. Furthermore, as previously identified there are no city-designated scenic vistas identified in the City's General Plan. Therefore, project implementation would not have a significant effect upon a designated scenic vista.

Long-Term Impacts. As stated previously, there are no City-designated scenic viewpoints on the project site, nor are there designated scenic corridors within the vicinity of the project site. However, the City's General Plan Conservation Element requires view protection for views of the Mecca Hills and Santa Rosa Mountains. The Santa Rosa Mountains are located west of the project site, and the Mecca Hills are located east of the project site; both the Santa Rosa Mountains and the Mecca Hills are visible from all areas of the project site (refer to Figures 4.1.2 through Figure 4.1.5) as well as from areas around the project site and looking across the project site. Because the project site and areas surrounding the project site contain views of the Santa Rosa Mountains and the Mecca Hills, views from the project site and surrounding areas are considered to contain scenic vistas.

Implementation of the proposed project would not result in the permanent obstruction of the scenic vistas identified above. Due to the prominence of the Mecca Hills, Little San Bernardino Mountains, Santa Rosa Mountains, and San Jacinto Mountains in the background, views of these natural landforms would not be permanently obstructed by the development envisioned under the Specific Plan. Despite being at a lower elevation from these vantage points, with the exception of View D, no substantial adverse effects to scenic vistas within the existing viewshed would occur. View D is at a higher elevation than the surrounding uses and the project site. The development of the project site would be below the elevation of these viewers and would not permanently obstruct views beyond the project site. As previously identified, project-related drainage areas could serve as view corridors that would preserve existing scenic views of the mountains to the south. Therefore, existing views afforded from the elevated I-10 vantage point would not be substantially affected. While scenic vistas would not be substantially affected by development of the project site as proposed under the Specific Plan, development of the project site would transform views of the site from natural desert habitat and terrain visible above the dike to a developed condition with structures, green parks and landscaping.

The proposed project includes the extensions of Avenues 50 and 52 eastward from their present termini over the Coachella Canal, providing access into the Specific Plan site. These roadway extensions would necessitate the construction of crossings over the Coachella Canal. These new crossings are not anticipated to have a high profile relative to the height of the existing dike that would result in the obstruction or degradation of existing views of the surrounding mountains. Development within the project area has been anticipated. Because the proposed project is consistent with development envisioned in the General Plan, and because implementation of the

proposed project would not affect City-designated scenic vistas, potential impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

Short-Term/Construction Impacts. The Grading Standards in the Specific Plan as described above would be required for each grading plan submitted for development approval. The Conceptual Grading Plan for the entire project site includes excavation of approximately 17,687,000 cubic yards of earth, including the proposed roadway extensions and crossings of the Coachella Canal of Avenues 50 and 52. Per the Specific Plan (Section 2.5), grading is proposed to generally start in the lower elevations (western portion) of the project site and move towards the higher elevations in the eastern portion as development progresses. Grading would be on a phased basis and is proposed to be balanced by phase. Portions of the modified site landscape would be visible from the public vantage points from motorists on I-10 north of the site and from Avenues 50 and 52 west of the site. The Grading Standards are part of the proposed project (Project Design Features) and would serve to partially reduce potential significant aesthetic impacts of the proposed project and effects on scenic vistas looking across the project site.

Implementation of the proposed project would result in temporary visual changes due to grading and other construction activities. Potential short-term construction impacts would result from the proposed project through the presence of construction equipment and materials. Upon completion of each phase of development, equipment and construction materials would no longer be present on those parts of the Specific Plan site. As a Project Design Feature, mass-graded areas would be revegetated at the completion of the mass grading process, pursuant to the City's Municipal Code and the Specific Plan. Furthermore, the activities associated with short-term construction would not obstruct or significantly affect a scenic vista. With adherence to the Project Design Features as described above, construction impacts are less than significant and no mitigation measures are required.

Threshold 4.1.2: Would the project substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway

Less than Significant Impact. The project site is not designated as a scenic resource in the City's General Plan, nor is it located along a designated State Scenic Highway. There are no City-designated scenic corridors in the project area. The project site is undeveloped vacant land and there are no historic buildings or other aesthetic structures on the project site. The City's General Plan does not identify any specific trees considered to be scenic resources other than mature date palm trees. As discussed in Section 4.4, Biological Resources, the project site contains relatively few small, dispersed trees (creosote bush and blue palo verde). No mature date palm trees are located on-site. Therefore, removal of creosote bush and blue palo verde trees would not be considered a substantial impact to scenic resources on the project site.

Rock outcroppings and rock formations are essentially the same kind of natural feature, composed of rock materials, which can provide visual interest on a site. While the project site does contain small rock formations that would be altered as a result of the site grading for building pads, the project includes design features and grading standards (described earlier) that include retention of steeper slopes on the site in natural open space and incorporation of existing landforms, vegetation, rock

formations, and prevailing ridgelines in the project grading and design. The City's General Plan does not identify the presence of scenic rock outcroppings on the project site.

Therefore, the proposed project's impacts on scenic resources, such as scenic resources within a State scenic highway, historic buildings, trees, and rock outcroppings or formations, is considered to be less than significant, and no mitigation is required.

While significant visual resources identified under Threshold 4.1.1 above are visible from the project site and surrounding areas, none of these resources are visible from a designated scenic highway nor would they be obstructed by the proposed project. In the absence of scenic resources visible from designated scenic highways and because the project would not obstruct views from motorists on eligible scenic highways, impacts are considered less than significant. No mitigation is required.

As described in the City's General Plan, vacant land, open space, and agricultural areas provide visual relief from urbanized areas and provide views for motorists, pedestrians, and residents. As a Project Design Feature, the retention of the northern steeper slopes in natural open space would be implemented. Furthermore, Hillside Development Guidelines included in Chapter 3 of the Specific Plan and provided earlier in Section 4.15 specifically address grading and landform modifications in hillside areas on the Specific Plan site.

The City's General Plan currently designates the project site as a mix of commercial (entertainment commercial and general commercial), residential (low and medium density), and open space uses, clearly acknowledging that the project site is slated for development at some point in the future and is therefore not considered to be an aesthetic resource to be preserved in its current undeveloped state. Additionally, a majority of the project site was proposed for development under the approved McNaughton Specific Plan. Therefore, future development of these areas would comply with General Plan policies regulating the design of new buildings and protecting the visual quality of the City. For these reasons, although development of the proposed project would convert vacant lands to urban uses, the scenic resources of the area would not be degraded, resulting in a less than significant impact and no mitigation is required.

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

Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impact. Development of the project site would substantially alter the existing visual character and quality of the site. Existing undeveloped desert terrain that currently characterizes the project site would be developed into a master-planned community consisting of residential, mixed-use, school, park/recreation, and open space uses, permanently changing the visual character of the project site.

The proposed project includes the extensions of Avenues 50 and 52 eastward from their present termini over the Coachella Canal, providing access into the Specific Plan site. Avenue 50 would be a six-lane Major Arterial and would ultimately connect to a future proposed interchange at I-10. As stated previously, the future interchange is not a part of the proposed project addressed in this EIR. Although the proposed interchange project is currently in the Initial Assessment phase, as noted in Section 4.16, Traffic and Circulation, Phase 5 of the Specific Plan would not proceed until construction of the Avenue 50/I-10 interchange is approved and constructed. As illustrated in

previously referenced Figure 3.8, Major Arterials within the project site are proposed as six-lane roads that would include a 14 ft raised landscaped median with 12 ft wide off-street trails on both sides of the road (6 ft wide bicycle and 6 ft wide pedestrian paths). The right-of-way (ROW) portion and ultimate improvement area (cross section) at the proposed extension of Avenue 50 where it would cross the Coachella Canal would be reduced by eliminating the median and multipurpose trails in order to reduce the width of the road overcrossing and minimize impacts to the canal. The extensions of Avenues 50 and 52 crossing the Coachella Canal would be new road overcrossings where no crossings currently exist. The only existing crossing of the canal in the vicinity is located northwest of the project site where I-10 crosses the canal. There is also a small crossing located at Airport Boulevard approximately 2.2 mi to the south. It is anticipated that the bridge crossings would maintain low profiles and widths would be reduced as described above. While the design of the crossings is intended to minimize impacts to the canal, the visual character of the canal would moderately change because no crossings currently exist immediately adjacent to the project site.

Construction of the phases of development would include mass grading in five phases, with subsequent grading for individual tracts within the Specific Plan as approved, followed by construction of residential, commercial, and mixed-use buildings, and supporting uses. The visual character of the 2,200 ac site would substantially change. As previously described, the Project Design Feature requiring the retention of the northern steeper slopes in natural open space would be implemented. It is also important to note that the Hillside Development Guidelines previously described in Section 4.15 and provided in Chapter 3 of the Specific Plan would be implemented during project construction. Implementation of Project Design Features and adherence to the Specific Plan Hillside Development Guidelines would avoid, reduce, offset, or otherwise minimize identified potential adverse visual impacts of the proposed project.

The project site is currently undeveloped and is characterized as natural desert terrain. Implementation of the proposed project would result in the development of the site with residential, general commercial, entertainment commercial, and open space uses. Visual impacts associated with changes to the general character of the project site (e.g., loss of open desert area), the components of the visual settings (e.g., landscaping and architectural elements), and the visual compatibility between proposed site uses and adjacent land uses would occur. The significance of visual impacts is inherently subjective because individuals respond differently to changes in the visual characteristics of an area. The project site is undeveloped and is surrounded by undeveloped properties. Agricultural uses are located to the southwest of the site across the Coachella Canal and I-10 is located to the north of the site. The proposed development would change the character of the vacant project site to an urbanized setting. Although the General Plan designates the project site as a mix of low- and medium-density residential, entertainment commercial, general commercial and open space uses, and acknowledges that the site is slated for development at some point in the future (therefore not considered to be an aesthetic resource in its current undeveloped state), the development of the site as proposed would, nonetheless, result in a substantial change in visual character.

The La Entrada Specific Plan includes design guidelines for development of the project site to be consistent with the visual character of development throughout the City. Design guidelines within the La Entrada Specific Plan include architectural guidelines, which specify the architectural style, roof form, materials, structural elements, windows, and ornamentation of the proposed residential buildings. In addition, the design guidelines establish design criteria for nonresidential uses related to form, height, massing, materials, and colors. Further, landscape design guidelines have been included

to ensure that landscaping of public spaces is complementary to the proposed development. Subsequent Tentative Tract Maps would be required to adhere to the design guidelines in the La Entrada Specific Plan.

In addition, the proposed project also includes approximately 557 ac of open space intended to remain in its natural condition, which would preserve the existing character of portions of the project site. Implementation of the proposed project would also include neighborhood parks in the areas of higher elevations on the project site that would include viewing areas open to all community members to enjoy scenic views from the project site. These open space areas would preserve opportunities for distant views of the Mecca Hills and Santa Rosa Mountains from the project site after project implementation.

Although the proposed land use plan incorporates open space areas and retention of the natural drainage courses on the site for stormwater management, development of the 2,200 ac site and extension of arterial routes into and through the project site would permanently alter the visual conditions of the project site. The changes may potentially degrade the visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings, or the views of surrounding areas. This is a significant adverse impact. Standard Condition 4.1.1 would require the applicant to provide detailed project plans for architectural review by the City's Planning Commission at the time each Tentative Tract Map and/or Site Plan is submitted. Implementation of this Standard Condition would ensure that all development on the project site would be consistent with the City's design requirements in the Specific Plan and would ensure consistency with visual character of existing development within the City.

There are no other feasible mitigation measures that can be implemented to reduce potential impacts to changes in visual character from site development to a less than significant level. Project implementation would result in the conversion of the existing undeveloped site to a developed site. While the proposed project would incorporate specific Project Design Features, grading guidelines, and Hillside Development Guidelines intended to avoid, reduce, offset, or otherwise minimize identified potential adverse impacts of the project, development of the project would not retain the existing visual character of the site. Therefore, project-related visual character impacts would be significant and unavoidable.

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

Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. Currently, there are no existing sources of light or glare on site. In addition, there are no existing street lights or signalized intersections immediately adjacent to the project site. Although I-10 runs along the northern boundary of the project site, this is not a lighted highway.

Short-Term Construction Impacts. During construction on the Specific Plan site, travelers in the area will have views of the site which include construction fencing, equipment, grading areas, building pads, partially constructed structures, and other related facilities and activities. These views would be temporary and, therefore, would not represent a permanent change in views of construction equipment and activities from outside the project site.

Consistent with Section 7.04.070, Construction Activities, in the City of Coachella Municipal Code, construction activities will be limited to the following periods:

- **October 1 through April 30:**
  - Monday through Friday: 6:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
  - Saturday, Sunday, and Holidays: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **May 1 through September 30:**
  - Monday through Friday: 5:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.
  - Saturday, Sunday, and Holidays: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

As a result, there would be no night lighting on the site for construction equipment or activities. However, there would be limited security lighting provided at the Site Manager's trailer and other locations in the construction areas. That lighting would comply with the applicable requirements in the City Municipal Code.

The construction activities and equipment would not represent substantial potential sources of glare on the project site.

As a result, the construction activities and equipment on the project site would result in less than significant temporary impacts related to aesthetics and light and glare.

Long-Term Impacts. The proposed project would introduce new light sources that are typical of urban development projects. The proposed project would include light sources such as street and parking lot lighting, landscape lighting, illuminated signs, exterior lighting on lamps and buildings, and automobile lighting (i.e., headlights). All building and landscape lighting would be consistent with the design guidelines established in the La Entrada Specific Plan (Chapter 3 – Design Guidelines) and all City regulations and ordinances that pertain to specific plan developments (Chapter 17.36 of the City's Municipal Code). On-site landscaping would reduce glare and would screen light sources to reduce the visual impact of lighting from buildings and parking lots. Although the proposed project would introduce new sources of light that would contribute to the light visible in the night sky and the immediate surrounding area, the proposed project is in an undeveloped desert area, and there are no nearby sensitive receptors that would be adversely impacted by the lighting. Because agricultural uses adjacent to the project site operate during the day, the proposed project's impact related to light and glare on these surrounding uses would be less than significant as these uses are not typically sensitive to light and glare.

Riverside County Ordinance 655 restricts the use of certain light fixtures emitting light into the night sky that may have a detrimental effect on astronomical observation and research. Ordinance No. 655 mandates that all outdoor lighting, aside from street lighting, be low to the ground, shielded or hooded in order to obstruct shining onto adjacent properties and streets. This ordinance establishes two zones: Zone A is the area within a 15 mi radius of Palomar Observatory; Zone B is the area that extends from the outer limit of Zone A to 45 mi from Palomar Observatory. The project site is located approximately 48.0 mi from Mt. Palomar

Observatory and is located outside of Zone B established by Ordinance No. 655. Therefore, Ordinance No. 655 is not applicable to the proposed project.

New sources of light associated with the proposed project would be in the form of residential and school lighting on the buildings, security lighting in the carports and in parks, garages and parking areas, and vehicle lights from project-related traffic. Future residential, commercial, mixed-use, school, and park uses would require the installation of outdoor lighting necessary for recreation maintenance, public safety, and security, particularly the medium- and high-density dwelling units and ball fields associated with the parks and schools and in areas adjacent to the proposed future interchange at Avenue 50 and I-10. It is anticipated that the proposed commercial and mixed-use development in the vicinity of the interchange project would incorporate more intense lighting due to the nature of the uses proposed at this location. While the proposed project would add new lighting sources to the project area, the number and type of lighting sources is not anticipated to substantially differ from that commonly utilized at existing developments within the City. However, because the project site and the immediate surrounding area are relatively undeveloped with little to no existing light sources, the proposed project is anticipated to introduce a substantial amount of light and glare sources, where none previously existed, resulting in a significant adverse impact.

All development in the City is required to adhere to lighting requirements contained in the City's Zoning Code. Chapter 16.28.150(L) (Improvements and Grading); Chapter 17.56.010(J)(2)(e); (Signs); 17.54.010 (Off-Street Parking and Loading); Chapter 17.36.030(F) and (H), and 17.36.140(7) (Specific Plan District); and Chapter 17.62.010(17) (Site Plans). These measures are uniformly applied to all development in the City. The Specific Plan documents that the project-related lighting would be consistent with the City Zoning Code and would be shielded to avoid light spillage and glare off the project site. As such, adherence to these measures would be mandatory and enforceable upon approval of the project plans. Adherence to the City's Zoning Code would ensure that any building or parking lighting would not significantly impact adjacent uses. Furthermore, Mitigation Measure 4.1.1 provided below would further reduce potential spillover light-related impacts of the project beyond the requirements identified in the City's Municipal Code. There are no dark skies or other ordinances regarding night lighting that would be applicable to the Specific Plan site and land uses. Therefore, impacts associated with this issue would be mitigated to a less than significant level based on compliance with the City Municipal Code, the Specific Plan, and Measure 4.1.1.

Ball field lighting is anticipated to be in the form of tall fixtures strategically placed to illuminate the ball field completely. As described in the Specific Plan, all street lighting is required to adhere to the City's standards for light fixtures. Homeowner and association lighting other than street lighting is required to be shielded to minimize illumination of adjacent lots or properties and to reduce glare. Freestanding poles used for homeowner or association lighting other than street lighting would not exceed a maximum height of 14 ft. As specified in the Specific Plan, all field lighting proposed as part of the development that would occur under the Specific Plan is required to incorporate low glare shielded lighting to minimize glare impacts to the surrounding community. Additionally, final design would be sensitive to adjacent residential uses, locating active, lighted facilities away from residential uses to the extent possible. Furthermore, Mitigation Measure 4.1.1 requires that photometric (lighting) studies be conducted for all outdoor light sources, including the ball field, and that the lighting be designed to avoid the spillover of light

from the project site to adjacent properties. Measure 4.1.1 would reduce potential ball field light-related impacts of the project beyond the requirements identified in the City's Municipal Code.

New traffic signal improvements would be added as a part of the proposed project at the future intersections of internal roads. Traffic signals are not intended to provide on street lighting and are of an intensity that is much less than the typical street light. Traffic signals are also fitted with shielding to direct light toward a specific lane while blocking the view of the vehicles in lanes moving in other directions. By comparison, high pressure sodium lighting typically found in street lighting produces approximately 9,500 lumens or greater. Typical light-emitting diode (LED) traffic signal lights produce approximately 850 lumens. Due to the lower intensity of the lights used in the traffic signals and the use of shielding on the traffic signals to prevent the light from spreading, lighting impacts from the placement of new traffic control devices would be less than significant. No mitigation is required.

Exterior surfaces of proposed structures within the commercial, residential, and mixed-use planning areas would be finished with a combination of architectural coatings, trim, and/or other building materials such as stucco, wood, concrete, and brushed metal. The proposed project is not expected to substantially increase the amount of daytime glare in the project area.

4.1.8 Standard Conditions

Standard Condition 4.1.1 **Architectural Review.** At the submittal of each project Tentative Tract Map and/or Site Plan**,** the project applicant shall submit detailed project plans for architectural review and approval by the City's Planning Commission.

4.1.9 Mitigation Measure

To ensure that nighttime light impacts are reduced to less than significant levels, the following mitigation measure would be applied to the project in addition to implementing the City's applicable Ordinances and Project Design Features.

Mitigation Measure 4.1.1 **Photometric Study.** Prior to the approval of any Site Plans for any phase of development, the applicant shall submit to the City of Coachella (City) a photometric (lighting) study (to include parking areas and access way lights, external security lights, lighted signage, and ball field lighting) providing evidence that the project light sources do not spill over to adjacent off-site properties in accordance with the City's Municipal Code. All project-related outdoor lighting, including but not limited to, street lighting, building security lighting, parking lot lighting, and landscaping lighting shall be shielded to prevent spillover of light to adjacent properties. All ball field lighting shall be fully shielded.

Shielding requirements and time limits shall be identified on construction plans for each phase of development.

Adherence to the proposed mitigation measure would reduce potential light impacts to a less than significant level by ensuring that there is no spillover light from on-site lighting.

4.1.10 Cumulative Impacts

Cumulative visual impacts would occur if the visual character of the project site or the immediately adjacent areas would be degraded by the proposed project in combination with other past, present, or reasonably foreseeable projects, thereby having a substantially negative effect on the surrounding aesthetics, including visual character, views, and light/glare and shade/shadow conditions. The cumulative impact study area for visual resources for the proposed project is the project site's viewshed.

As stated previously, the viewshed from the project site facing west would include the Coachella Canal in the foreground, the agricultural vineyard in the middleground, as well as agricultural uses and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains in the background. The viewshed from the project site towards the east includes undeveloped desert terrain and scattered desert vegetation in the foreground and middleground, and views of the Mecca Hills/Orocopia Mountains in the background. The viewshed of the project site from Avenue 50 includes an agricultural vineyard in the foreground and middleground, small structures and palm trees in the middleground, and the project site and distant views of the Little San Bernardino Mountains in the background. The viewshed from Avenue 52 includes roads and desert terrain in the foreground and middleground; utility poles and a dirt road in the middleground; the East Side Dike, the project site, and the Little San Bernardino Mountains in the background.

As illustrated by Figures 4.1.6 through 4.1.9, the project site would change from a largely undeveloped condition characterized by vacant desert terrain to a master-planned community. The overall visual character of the project site would be substantially altered with development of the project site. While the existing character of the project site would be substantially changed compared to existing conditions, the site design (including grading), landscaping, open space preservation, and architectural design would adhere to design guidelines established in the La Entrada Specific Plan which are intended to avoid, reduce, offset, or otherwise minimize identified potential adverse impacts of the proposed project or provide significant benefit to the community and/or to the physical environment. In addition, Standard Condition 4.1.1 requires architectural review of project plans as each Tentative Tract Map and/or Site Plan is submitted. Despite incorporation of Project Design Features, the Specific Plan grading plans, and adherence to Standard Condition 4.1.1, impacts related to the change in visual character would be significant and unavoidable as no feasible mitigation is available to reduce impacts to visual character. Compliance with the Hillside Development Guidelines, if adopted in the future by the City, would not be sufficient to reduce those significant and unavoidable impacts related to visual character.

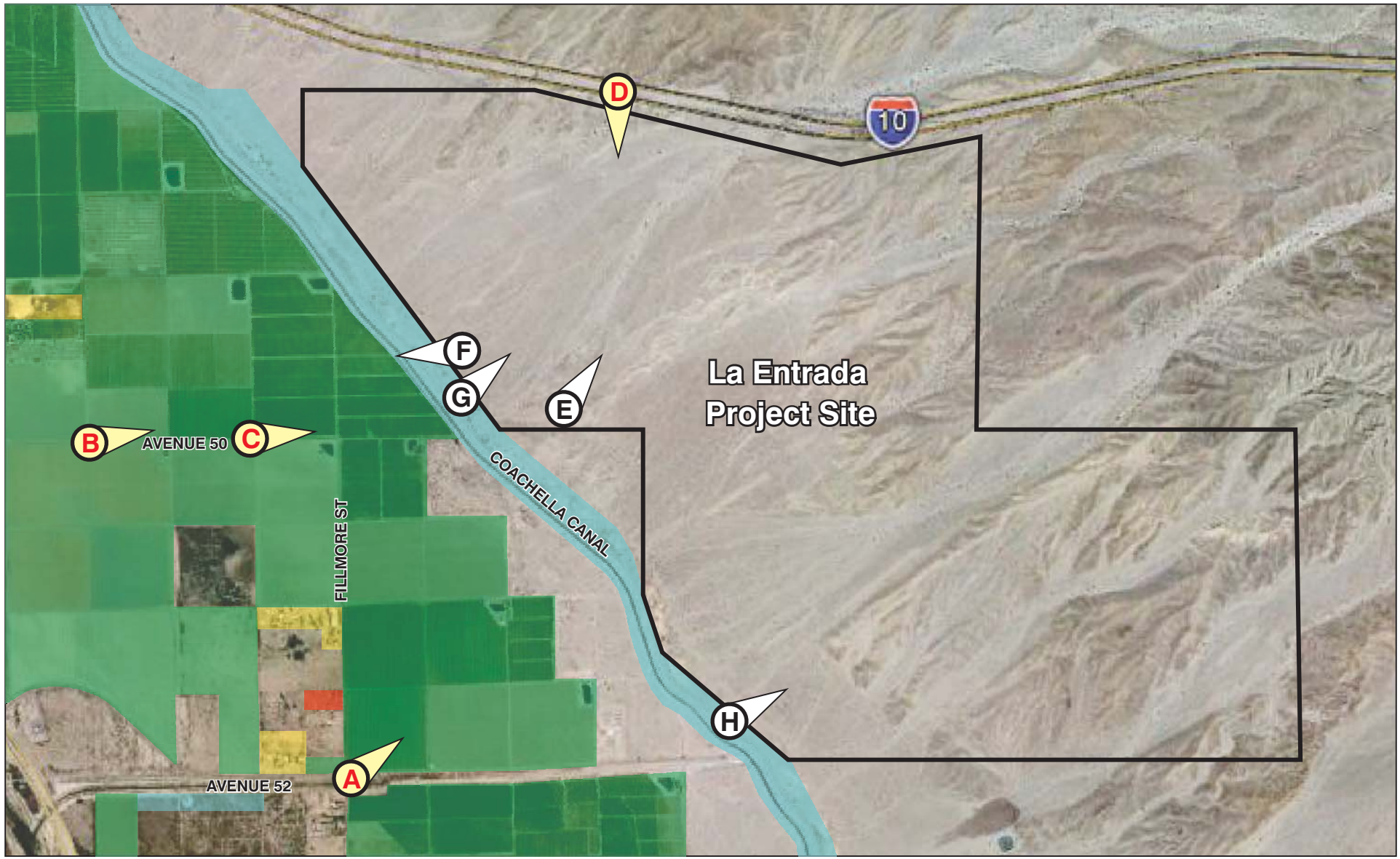
The proposed project would introduce new sources of light and glare on the project site. As previously identified, it is anticipated that the proposed commercial and mixed-use development that would occur in the vicinity of the future interchange project (not a part of this project) would incorporate more intense lighting due to the nature of the uses proposed at this location. Therefore, light intensity at I-10 along the northerly project limits is anticipated to be slightly greater than on the remainder of the site. However, because there are no nearby related projects that would combine with

the proposed project to result in cumulative visual impacts, the proposed project would not contribute to a cumulative adverse impact related to aesthetics.

As seen in Table 4.A in Section 4.0, several projects are planned within the City (including the proposed interchange at Avenue 50 and I-10). The nearest of the planned development projects is over 1 mile south/southwest of the project site, as shown in Figure 4.1.1. As a result, none of those projects is located near enough to the project site to contribute to cumulative lighting impacts within the project's viewshed. As shown in Figure 4.1.1, the nearest planned project is identified as Project 1, which is the proposed I-10 interchange improvement. Although the proposed project would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to nighttime lighting conditions given that the project site and surrounding areas do not currently emit substantial amounts of nighttime light, there are no adjacent sensitive land uses that would be adversely impacted by the introduction of those new light sources and glare. Therefore, the proposed project would not contribute to a cumulatively significant impact to viewsheds, visual character, or lighting and glare.

4.1.11 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

The proposed project would result in significant unavoidable adverse impacts related to visual character because there are no feasible mitigation measures to reduce impacts associated with a change in visual character to a less than significant impact.



LSA

N

0 1000 2000
FEET

SOURCE: KTGY/ LSA, 2013

LEGEND

A - Key Views for Visual Simulations

F - Existing Site Photos

Existing Land Use:

- Residential
- Agriculture
- Horse Ranch
- Utility Facility
- Vacant

FIGURE 4.1.1

La Entrada Specific Plan

Existing Land Uses,
Key Views, and Photo Locations

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View A looking east from Avenue 52 near Fillmore Street.

View D looking south from I-10.

LSA

FIGURE 4.1.2

La Entrada Specific Plan

Existing Off-Site Views A and D

SOURCE: City of Coachella

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View B looking east on Avenue 50 near Highway 86.

View C looking east on Avenue 50.

LSA

FIGURE 4.1.3

La Entrada Specific Plan

Existing Off-Site Views B and C

SOURCE: City of Coachella

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View E looking northeast across the project site at the Little San Bernardino Mountains and Interstate 10 .

View F looking southwest across the Coachella Canal at the agricultural vineyard and the Santa Rosa and San Jacinto Mountains from the proposed crossing at Avenue 50.

LSA

FIGURE 4.1.4

La Entrada Specific Plan

Existing On-Site Views E and F

SOURCE: LSA Associates, Inc.

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View G looking northeast across the project site from near Avenue 50.

View H looking northeast across the project site from near Avenue 52.

LSA

FIGURE 4.1.5

La Entrada Specific Plan

Existing On-Site Views G and H

SOURCE: LSA Associates, Inc.

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Key View A - Existing Viewshed

Simulation - Street View from Ave 52 near Fillmore St with Specific Plan development area in middle-ground.

LSA

FIGURE 4.1.6

LEGEND

- Project Site Area of Coverage

La Entrada Specific Plan

View Simulation A: Avenue 52 Near Fillmore Street

SOURCE: KTGY, 2013

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Key View B - Existing Viewshed

Simulation - Street View from Ave 50 near Polk St with Specific Plan development area in middle-ground.

LSA

FIGURE 4.1.7

LEGEND

- Project Site Area of Coverage

La Entrada Specific Plan

View Simulation B: Avenue 50 Near Polk Street

SOURCE: KTGY, 2013

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Key View C - Existing Viewshed

Simulation - Street View from Ave 50 near Fillmore St with Specific Plan development area in middle-ground.

LSA

FIGURE 4.1.8

LEGEND

- Project Site Area of Coverage

La Entrada Specific Plan

View Simulation C: Avenue 50 Near Fillmore Street

SOURCE: KTGY, 2013

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Key View D - Existing Viewshed

Simulation - Street View from Interstate 10 with Specific Plan development area in foreground.

LSA

FIGURE 4.1.9

LEGEND

- Project Site Area of Coverage

La Entrada Specific Plan

View Simulation D: View from I-10 Towards South

SOURCE: KTGY, 2013

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