

3.1 AESTHETICS

This section evaluates the potential aesthetic impacts associated with the adoption and implementation of the proposed Project. This section describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions; identifies criteria used to determine impact significance; provides an analysis of the potential aesthetic impacts; and identifies proposed General Plan 2045 goals and policies that would minimize potentially significant impacts.

This analysis is based in part on the Livermore General Plan Update Existing Conditions Report prepared in March 2022 (City of Livermore 2022a). Where more recent data is available at the time of preparation of this Draft EIR, the analysis provided herein reflects such updated information.

As detailed in Chapter 3, *Environmental Analysis*, no concerns related to aesthetics were received during the EIR scoping period.

3.1.1 Regulatory Framework

STATE

California State Scenic Highways Program

California's Scenic Highways Program was created by the State legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment. The State laws governing the Scenic Highways Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code Sections 260 through 263. Section 263 states the State Scenic Highway System shall be composed of the highways listed in Sections 263.1 to 263.8 and includes those identified as either "eligible" for designation as state scenic highway or "officially designated" as a state scenic highway.

When a city or county nominates an eligible scenic highway for official designation, it must identify and define the scenic corridor of the highway. Scenic corridors consist of land that is visible from the highway right-of-way and consist primarily of scenic and natural features. Topography, vegetation, viewing distance, and/or jurisdictional lines determine the corridor boundaries. The city or county must also adopt ordinances, zoning, and/or planning policies to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor or document such regulations that already exist in various portions of local codes. These ordinances and/or policies make up the Corridor Protection Program. The status of a proposed State scenic highway changes from "eligible" to "officially designated" when the local governing body applies to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for scenic highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a Scenic Highway.

AESTHETICS

California Building Code

The State of California provides a minimum standard for building design through the California Code of Regulations (CCR), Title 24, Part 2, commonly referred to as the California Building Code (CBC). The CBC is updated on a three-year cycle. It is effective statewide, but a local jurisdiction may adopt more restrictive standards based on local conditions under specific amendment rules prescribed by the State Building Standards Commission. The CBC includes standards for outdoor lighting that are intended to reduce light pollution and glare by regulating light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls.

CALGreen

The California Building Standards Commission adopted the California Green Building Standards Code, commonly known as CALGreen. As part of the CBC, CALGreen is in Part 11 of Title 24. CALGreen establishes building standards aimed at enhancing the design and construction of buildings using building concepts that reduce negative impacts and increase positive environmental impacts by encouraging sustainable construction practices. Specifically, Section 5.106.8, *Light Pollution Reduction*, establishes backlight, upright, and glare ratings to minimize the effects of light pollution for nonresidential development. The local building permit process enforces the mandatory provisions of CALGreen.

California Environmental Quality Act

Section 21081.3

CEQA Statute Section 21081.3 shall remain in effect only until January 1, 2029, and as of that date is repealed, unless otherwise extended by the State legislature. Pursuant to this section, a lead agency is not required to evaluate the aesthetic effects of a project, and aesthetic effects shall not be considered significant effects on the environment if the project involves the refurbishment, conversion, repurposing, or replacement of an existing building that meets all the following requirements:

- The building is abandoned, dilapidated, or has been vacant for more than one year. Dilapidated means decayed, deteriorated, or fallen into such disrepair through neglect or misuse as to require substantial repair for safe and proper use.
- The building site is immediately adjacent to parcels that are developed with qualified urban uses or at least 75 percent of the perimeter of the site adjoins parcels that are developed with qualified urban uses and the remaining 25 percent of the site adjoins parcels that previously have been developed for qualified urban uses.
- The project includes the construction of housing.
- Any new structure does not substantially exceed the height of the existing structure.
- The project does not create a new source of substantial light or glare.

Projects that have either of the following are not included in this section:

- A project with potentially significant aesthetic effects on an official state scenic highway established pursuant to Article 2.5 (commencing with Section 260) of Chapter 2 of Division 1 of the Streets and Highways Code.
- A project with potentially significant aesthetic effects on historical or cultural resources.

This section does not alter, affect, or otherwise change the authority of a lead agency to consider aesthetic issues and to require the mitigation or avoidance of adverse aesthetic effect pursuant to other laws. If the lead agency determines that it is not required to evaluate the aesthetic effects of a project pursuant to this section, and the lead agency determines to approve or carry out that project, the lead agency shall file a notice with the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation and the county clerk of the county in which the project is located in the manner specified in Section 21108(b) and (c) or Section 21152(b) and (c).

Section 21099

As described in Chapter 3, *Environmental Analysis*, CEQA Statute Section 21099 establishes that project's aesthetics impacts are no longer considered significant impacts on the environment if the project is a residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center project and if the project is on an infill site within a transit priority area (TPA). Pursuant to Section 21099(a)(1), an employment center is defined as "a project located on property zoned for commercial uses with a floor area ratio (FAR)¹ of no less than 0.75 and that is located within a transit priority area." Within these areas where site-specific residential, mixed-use residential, or employment center infill projects meet the standards of CEQA Statute Section 21099, aesthetics impacts shall not be considered significant environmental impacts. See Figure 3-1, *Priority Development Areas and Transit Priority Areas*, in Chapter 3, *Environmental Analysis*, for the locations of the TPAs in the EIR Study Area.

REGIONAL

Alameda County East County Area Plan

The East County Area Plan (ECAP) outlines goals, policies, and programs to conserve natural resources for the eastern portion of Alameda County while ensuring adequate development to accommodate the growing population (Alameda County 2000). The ECAP covers the area surrounding the EIR Study Area. Many of the hills and ridgelines that define the views of the EIR Study Area are outside of the Livermore City Limit and therefore fall under the regulation of the

¹ A common measure of building intensity is Floor Area Ratio (FAR), which is determined by dividing the amount of gross floor space in a building by the total area of the parcel it occupies. For example, a 10,000 square-foot building on a 20,000 square-foot parcel has a FAR of 0.5 or 50 percent.

AESTHETICS

ECAP. The ECAP includes goals, policies, and implementation programs to protect the sensitive viewsheds in east Alameda County, including those within the EIR Study Area.

South Livermore Valley Area Plan

The South Livermore Valley Area Plan (SLVAP) is administered by Alameda County and regulates the development of land immediately south of the city of Livermore between the City Limit and the southern ridgeland (Alameda County 1993). It accomplishes this by establishing a framework of land use coordination between Alameda County and the Cities of Livermore and Pleasanton with the explicit goal to prioritize and promote the area as a unique and historic wine region by protecting its rural and scenic qualities, discouraging urban development, and maintaining and expanding cultivated agricultural use in the area. The South Livermore Valley Specific Plan (SLVSP) is administered by the City of Livermore and functions as the city's component of the SLVAP for protecting the valley.

East Alameda County Conservation Strategy

The East Alameda County Conservation Strategy (EACCS) provides a framework for conserving the natural communities and environment of the lands of the EIR Study Area with the goal of protecting biological and natural resources that are native to the area (ICF 2010). It establishes growth controls to limit future residential and commercial development. Although it is primarily a biological resources management strategy (and is discussed in more detail in Section 3.4, *Biological Resources*), the conservation of these lands helps contribute to the natural aesthetics that surround and define the EIR Study Area.

LOCAL

Livermore Municipal Code

The Livermore Municipal Code (LMC) includes various directives to minimize adverse impacts to visual resources. The LMC is organized by title, chapter, section, and, in some cases, articles. Most provisions related to visual resources are in Title 2, *Administration and Personnel*; Title 12, *Streets, Sidewalks and Public Places*; and Title 15, *Buildings and Construction*, as follows:

- **Chapter 2.42, *Beautification Committee***, establishes the Beautification Committee, to consist of seven Livermore residents. Duties and responsibilities of the Committee include designating and planning specific sites and extended areas for the beautification of major roadway systems, median islands and entranceways throughout the city; reviewing the designs for establishment of small parks or rest areas at street intersection; recommending revisions of the street tree ordinance, specifying tree types, installation standards, spacing dimensions, and other related matters for the implantation of decorative trees in all areas to be developed within the city in both residential and commercial areas; recommending replacement landscaping, planting and maintenance standards; reviewing proposals for the installation of street furnishing and accessories, lights, ornamental fixtures, monuments,

fountains, or other forms of furnishing of an aesthetic nature as to location, design, and cost; and proposing and recommending a master plan for Livermore beautification with detailed standards for aspects of city beautification.

- **Chapter 2.47, *Historic Preservation Commission***, establishes the Historic Preservation Commission, to consist of five Livermore residents of professionals in historic preservation-related disciplines or lay members who have demonstrated special interest, competence, experience, or knowledge in historic preservation. Among the various duties and responsibilities of the Commission, one is to recommend action for the preservation of buildings, structures, sites, natural features, works of art, or similar objects which have a significant historic, cultural, architectural, archaeological, community or aesthetic value.
- **Chapter 12.51, *Art in Public Places Program***, requires public art in new commercial, industrial, and residential construction to create a unique sense of community as well as public identity and will enhance the visual and aesthetic quality of such developments for commercial, residential, and visitor activity, particularly in the downtown. Section 12.51.030, *Requirement to provide public art of pay in-lie contribution*, requires private developments to devote an amount not less than the program allocation amount for acquisition and installation of public art in the development project, such amount to be determined by the building official. In lieu of acquisition and installation of public artwork on the development site, an owner or developer, at its discretion, may deposit a public art in-lieu contribution in an amount equal to the program's allocation into the Livermore public art fund established by Section 12.41.040, *Livermore public art fund*, for acquisition and installation of public art.
- **Chapter 12.20, Article II, *Tree Preservation***, establishes the Livermore tree preservation ordinance. A healthy urban forest reduces air and noise pollution, provides energy-saving shade and cooling, furnishes habitat for wildlife, enhances aesthetics and property values, and is an important contributor to community image, pride, and quality of life. The provisions set forth in this article are intended to preserve and enhance the aesthetic and quality of life values provided by Livermore's urban forest.
- **Chapter 15.02, *Building Code***, adopts the International Building Code, as amended and set forth in the California Building Standards Code, CCR Title 24.
- **Chapter 15.26, *Green Building Standards Code***, adopts the Green Building Standards Code, as set forth in the California Building Standards Code, CCR Title 24.

Livermore Development Code

The City of Livermore regulates land use and design through the Livermore Development Code (LDC), an alternative approach to zoning that reinforces walkable, sustainable mixed-use environments and development, and builds upon community character. The LDC provides development standards similar to typical zoning ordinances, such as heights, setbacks, and site regulations for all zones. It also establishes allowable building types with frontage and design standards.

AESTHETICS

Design Review

The City of Livermore requires Site Plan and Design Review through LDC Chapter 9.07, *Site Plan and Design Review*, for all construction and development activities as set forth in Section 9.07.020, *Applicability*. The intent of a Site Plan and Design Review is to promote orderly development of the City in compliance with the General Plan, any applicable Specific Plan, and LDC standards to ensure physical and environmental characteristics of the site is respected through minimization or elimination of undesirable visual impacts and prevention of inappropriate design or development of structure to ensure that development of a city having “image and character.” All structures erected, with specific exemptions, are required to undergo Site Plan and Design Review before the issuance of a building or grading permit for construction activities. Each application for a Site Plan and Design Review shall be reviewed to ensure that the application is consistent with the purpose of LDC Chapter 9.07 to provide a process for the appropriate review of construction and development projects and confirm compliance with applicable development standards and regulations of the LDC and the City’s Design Standards and Guidelines.

Historic Preservation Ordinance

The City of Livermore has a Historic Preservation Ordinance administered as LDC Chapter 9.02. It provides a framework and process for preservation, rehabilitation, and reuse of the city’s historic resources, which include buildings and places. See Section 3.5, *Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources*, for more details.

Livermore Design Standards and Guidelines

The Livermore Design Standards and Guidelines are applied citywide and provide design guidance in each land use category established in the City’s General Plan (City of Livermore 2004). The goals of the Design Standards and Guidelines include encouraging development that is harmonious with the city’s surrounding built and natural environments; preserving a small-town community surrounded by rural open space; maintaining views to and around scenic corridors and natural features unique to Livermore; encouraging development that strengthens connectivity across the community by linking open space, parks, schools, and civic buildings; recognizing the historic significance of vineyards and wineries; identifying gateways to the city; high-quality placemaking; and facilitating sustainable design. The Design Standards and Guidelines also provide general guidance on design and development of city streets and streetscape features.

Livermore Mixed-Use and Multifamily Objective Design Standards

The purpose of the Livermore Mixed-Use and Multifamily Objective Design Standards (MODS) is to guide the design of multiunit and mixed-use housing, and to ensure that new development is designed to be compatible with adjacent uses as well as existing and future development (City of Livermore 2025). MODS provides clear design direction for new projects by identifying which architectural styles, building typologies, and universally applicable design elements need to be incorporated into new Mixed-Use and Multifamily Residential projects.

Specific and Neighborhood Plans

Downtown Specific Plan

The Downtown Specific Plan (DSP) regulates approximately 272 acres of land that constitute Downtown Livermore, establishing policies for land use, circulation, infrastructure, and a financial strategy (City of Livermore 2021). It includes design guidelines for mixed-use, commercial, residential, and historic structures, as well as streetscape features. Informed by an extensive public engagement process, it provides a vision for Downtown Livermore as a regional destination and as the heart of the community, allowing for a combination of mixed-use development, unique retail, civic uses, residential development, and public spaces. It builds on the historic fabric that gives the city its visual character and provides a revitalization strategy and development standards to shape the look of the downtown. The DSP identifies several central parcels as catalyst development sites.

Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan

The Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan (INSP) provides a framework for developing approximately 1,138 acres in the northwest part of the EIR Study Area (City of Livermore 2022b). The INSP planning area surrounds the proposed Isabel Valley Link Station at Interstate 580 (I-580) and Isabel Avenue. The plan will create a complete, transit-oriented neighborhood with housing and amenities for residents, workers, and students. The INSP planning area includes Las Positas College at the northern edge. The urban design of the plan introduces new, higher-density, and forward-looking developments that express sustainability, healthy living, and innovation balanced with the existing historic look of the EIR Study Area to create a transit-oriented neighborhood. Design standards allow for dense mixed-use and residential developments alongside campus-like work environments that maintain viewsheds to the surrounding natural landscape.

AESTHETICS

El Charro Specific Plan

The El Charro Specific Plan (ECSP) establishes policies and standards for development of the westernmost subarea of the EIR Study Area along I-580 (City of Livermore 2007b). It envisions this area as a regional commercial node that does not compete with downtown by focusing on providing and servicing volume. The San Francisco Premium Outlets are now developed in this area, consistent with the design guidance of the ECSP.

South Livermore Valley Specific Plan

The SLVSP is the City of Livermore's component of Alameda County's SLVAP for protecting the agricultural area and open space of the South Livermore Valley (City of Livermore 2023). Together, the SLVSP and SLVAP provide policies and standards for managing future growth and development of approximately 1,891 acres within the South Livermore Valley. It is the culmination of a collaborative planning effort between the County of Alameda, the Cities of Livermore and Pleasanton, winegrowers, vineyard owners, and associated parties to conserve the agricultural activities and natural landscape that contribute to the valley's rural, wine country character. It allows for limited and focused residential and commercial development in the valley and provides design standards for ensuring new development maintains the existing, small-scale aesthetic of the area.

Arroyo Vista Neighborhood Plan

The Arroyo Vista Neighborhood Plan establishes policies and standards for development on approximately 28 acres of land, also known as the "Pell Site" in the eastern side of the EIR Study Area (City of Livermore 2007a). The Arroyo Vista Neighborhood Plan envisions this area as a residential community with densities between 14 and 18 units per acre combined with a circulation network, open space, and neighborhood-serving amenities. It provides for a mixture of two- to three-story detached and attached single-family and multifamily homes in street-facing or courtyard-oriented configurations.

3.1.2 Existing Conditions

PHYSICAL SETTING

The EIR Study Area is situated at the eastern end of the Livermore Valley on the valley floor and is on relatively flat topography with rising elevations as the land approaches the hills to the north, east, and south. The western area is flat as it continues towards the city of Pleasanton. The EIR Study Area is surrounded to the north, east, and south by hills and ridgelines, some of which are part of open space preserves managed by the East Bay Regional Park District.

Several arroyos² and waterways run through the EIR Study Area and contribute to the scenic views. Many arroyos run through the northern part of the EIR Study Area along I-580. Two of the most visible are Arroyo Las Positas and Arroyo Mocho. Arroyo Las Positas runs east to west along the northern edge of the EIR Study Area, close to I-580, and is occasionally visible from the highway. Arroyo Mocho runs east to west through the southern part of the EIR Study Area and turns southeast to the South Livermore Valley. Development is buffered from this arroyo, giving space for open space, trails, and the placement of several parks along its routes. It is a defining natural feature within this part of the EIR Study Area that is publicly accessible. Other arroyos in and around the EIR Study Area include Altamont, Arroyo Seco, Collier Canyon, Cayetano, and Arroyo del Valle (City of Livermore 2022a).

BUILT FORM

The community of Livermore can be organized through the growth of its built form, the special districts surrounding the main city, and the agricultural land along the southern edge. Like many California communities with a historic core, Livermore’s original growth can be traced to the railroad station that is part of the Union Pacific Railroad system, which runs east to west through the EIR Study Area. The original block structure is oriented towards this rail line and station and extends in a nearly three-quarter-mile radius from the original station location (City of Livermore 2022a).

SCENIC VIEWS

The Livermore Valley provides topographical and visual diversity looking outwards from the EIR Study Area. Views of the surrounding hillsides are a distinctive visual characteristic of the EIR Study Area. Hill and ridgeline views are available from many vantage points within the EIR Study Area. Mount Diablo is visible to the northwest of EIR Study Area, and Brushy Peak is prominent to the northeast. The ridgelines along the San Antonio Reservoir; Delle Valle Regional Park; and Cedar, Bald, and Eagle Mountains creates a near visually contiguous ridgeline that frames views to the south. The Pleasanton Ridge backdrops views to the west and the Altamont hills to the east. I-580, State Route Highway 84, and many of the other transportation corridors in the EIR Study Area, including trails, provide views of the surrounding hillsides and ridgelines.

STATE SCENIC HIGHWAY

I-580 runs east and west through northern the EIR Study Area. Its location near the northern hills situates it at a slightly higher elevation than most of the EIR Study Area, giving it clear views of natural features to the north and views of the hills in South Livermore Valley. Caltrans has designated I-580 as “eligible” for a State Scenic Highway designation (Caltrans 2025).

² Arroyo is the Spanish word for a dry stream or gully. Arroyos are dry watercourses that temporarily or seasonally fills and flows after sufficient rain.

AESTHETICS

LIGHT AND GLARE

Light pollution refers to all forms of unwanted light in the night sky around and above developed urban areas, including glare, light trespass, sky glow, and can also be visually disruptive to humans and nocturnal animal species, and often reflects over lighting. Views of the night sky are an important part of the natural environment and the aesthetic of the EIR Study Area. Light pollution has the potential to become an issue of increasing concern as new development contributes additional outdoor lighting installed for safety and other reasons.

The EIR Study Area includes several urban areas with a variety of residential, commercial, and public uses. Existing sources of light and glare in the EIR Study Area are similar to those that would be found in any urban area, and include streetlamps, parking lot lighting, storefront and signage lighting, car headlamps, and interior lighting visible through windows. Light pollution is primarily limited to urban areas of the EIR Study Area and is restricted primarily to street lighting along major arterial streets, I-580, and to night-time illumination of commercial buildings, shopping centers, and industrial buildings. Light spillage from residential areas, particularly older neighborhoods, is mostly screened by trees and other landscaping.

TRANSIT PRIORITY AREAS

As described in Chapter 3, *Environmental Analysis*, and shown on Figure 3-1, *Priority Development Areas and Transit Priority Areas*, portions of the EIR Study Area are in three TPAs surrounding the Downtown Livermore Station area in central Livermore, the proposed Isabel Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) station in northwest Livermore, and the McGrath Southfront in east Livermore.

3.1.3 Standards for Analysis

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Appendix G, *Environmental Checklist Form*, of the CEQA Guidelines states that, except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, the proposed Project would result in a significant aesthetic impact if it would:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway.
- c) Conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality if the project is in an urbanized area.
- d) Expose people on- or off-site to substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

3.1.4 Project Impact Analysis

a) **Would the project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?**

Less than Significant. A scenic vista is generally considered a view of an area that has remarkable scenery or a resource that is of significance to the area. As described in Section 3.1.2, *Existing Conditions*, the EIR Study Area contains many scenic views featuring natural landscape, rolling hills, and ridgelines, especially as seen from the I-580 scenic corridor. For the purposes of this analysis, these scenic views are considered scenic vistas under this threshold.

The proposed General Plan 2045 would not directly result in new development; however, it is a regulatory document that includes proposed changes in land use designation that would allow for redevelopment and increased density on certain parcels within the EIR Study Area. The proposed Project promotes infill development and encourages higher density in already-developed areas, where it would be expected to have less of an impact on existing scenic vistas and/or corridors.

As presented in Section 3.1.1, *Regulatory Framework*, the City has adopted extensive policies and programs that protect scenic vistas and guide the integration of new development with the natural environment. Consistent with these policies and programs, all future development would be required to undergo a Site Plan and Design Review, as required by LDC Chapter 9.07, to ensure consistency with General Plan policies, any applicable Specific Plan, LDC standards, and Design Standards and Guidelines. Compliance with the City's Design Standards and Guidelines, which would be confirmed during design review, would ensure that properties are developed at appropriate height limits, with compatible orientation, setbacks, and massing so that views to and around scenic vistas are maintained. Future mixed-use and multifamily development would be subject to the design standards outlined in the MODS, which would ensure that new development is designed to be compatible with adjacent uses as well as existing and future development and would not adversely affect scenic vistas. Furthermore, future development would also be subject to the regulations of the various planning documents described in Section 3.1.1, *Regulatory Framework*, that govern scenic quality in the EIR Study Area, as applicable, including the INSP, ECSP, and SLVSP. The INSP includes design standards and guidelines for site planning and orientation, including requiring the placement of buildings to be staggered to provide scenic views from public streets, to support the INSP vision of access to scenic vistas. The ECSP imposes height restrictions on properties along I-580 to ensure that the views of the surrounding hills are not obstructed. The SLVSP includes design standards and guidelines that would ensure future development with the SLVSP area would contribute to a rural identity through the qualities of openness, simplicity, and variety within structure.

AESTHETICS

Additionally, the Community Identity (CI) Element of the proposed General Plan 2045 contains the following goals and policies that are designed to protect scenic vistas:

- **Goal CI-9:** Preserve and enhance Livermore’s natural setting.
 - **Policy CI-9.1: Natural Features.** Leverage Livermore’s existing natural features, such as the arroyos and open spaces to strengthen community identity and connections.
 - **Policy CI-9.2: Protection of Hills.** Prohibit intensive development or mass grading of the hills. Development, including roads, buildings, and other structural or land coverage shall be located, sited, and designed to fit and be subordinate to the natural landforms. Under no circumstances shall development create uniform, geometrically terraced building sites that are contrary to the natural landforms and that detract, obscure, or negatively affect the visual quality of the landforms.
 - **Policy CI-9.3: Ridgeline Protection.** As a means of preserving natural “ridge skylines,” no major ridgeline shall be altered to the extent that a development creates a silhouette or an artificial ridgeline results. Minor grading below the skylines and ridgelines may be authorized to accommodate development or activities otherwise consistent with these policies.
 - **Policy CI-9.4: Preservation of Natural Amenities.** Identify, inventory, map, and preserve significant natural amenities throughout the city, including, but not limited to, hillsides, ridges, peaks, vineyards, agricultural areas, waterways, and tree stands.
 - **Policy CI-9.5: Land Alterations.** Require a grading permit for the alteration of natural or artificial land contours with the objective to preserve and enhance the natural topography and vegetation in developable areas.
 - **Policy CI-9.6: Water-Adjacent Developments.** Ensure development adjacent to streams, canals, reservoirs, and other bodies of water is consistent with the Citywide Design Guidelines for preserving their natural scenic qualities or enhancing them through design and treatments that emphasize naturalistic forms.
- **Goal CI-10:** Protect scenic views of areas surrounding Livermore.
 - **Policy CI-10.1: Scenic Resource Protection.** Promote views of Livermore’s surrounding scenic resources from key public vantage points, including local streets, gateways, parks, and trails to contribute to the city’s identity and enhance the visual experience for residents and visitors.
 - **Policy CI-10.2: Scenic Resource Coordination.** Coordinate with regional agencies, neighboring jurisdictions, and landowners to protect and enhance views of scenic landscapes beyond Livermore’s city limits, ensuring development and land uses are consistent with the natural setting and Livermore’s identity.
 - **Policy CI-10.3: Architectural and Landscape Design.** Within the Scenic Resource areas, ensure high-quality architectural and landscape design to enhance the Livermore scenic character, preserve and frame identified scenic views, promote compatibility with the natural skyline, and create an intriguing and inviting entry into the community.

- **Policy CI-10.4: Scenic View Areas Context-Sensitive Design.** Apply context-sensitive design and development standards to new development within Scenic View Areas, as shown in Figure CI-2 (of the General Plan), to protect and enhance scenic resources and protect views of designated scenic vistas, while ensuring that development supports the City's broader goals for housing, economic vitality, and sustainable growth..
- **Goal CI-12:** Enhance the city's gateways with improvements that represent the multiple facets of Livermore's identity.
 - **Policy CI-12.1: Focused Commercial Development.** To protect visual quality at entrances to the city along the freeway, limit highway commercial development to areas immediately adjacent to freeway interchanges.
- **Goal CI-13:** Maintain high standards of urban design in Livermore.
 - **Policy CI-13.1: Design Review and Standards.** Require all new development and redevelopment to be subject to design review, consistent with State law. Maintain and routinely update the City's Design Standards and Guidelines, including objective design standards for residential and mixed-use development, to ensure high-quality design, regulatory consistency, and review efficiency.

Specifically, proposed Policies CI-10.1 through CI-10.4 would preserve views of scenic vistas and promote views from key public vantage points by implementing design standards that would ensure future development would be designed such that scenic vistas are maintained. Proposed Policy CI-12.1 would ensure that the visual qualities along the I-580 scenic corridor are protected. Proposed Policies CI-9.1 through CI-9.6 would ensure that natural features that make up scenic views are preserved through the protection of hills, ridgelines, and waterbodies, the requirement of a grading permit for the alteration of natural or artificial contours as well as the identification and mapping of natural amenities throughout the City.

The proposed Project would also include updates to the LDC to introduce the Scenic Resources Overlay District. The proposed Scenic Resources Overlay District would include specific development and design standards to protect scenic views and establish inviting gateways into Livermore.

Therefore, as confirmed through design review (required by the LDC and proposed General Plan 2045 Policy CI-13.1), project consistency with the Design Standards and Guidelines, MODS, any applicable Specific Plan, as well as the proposed General Plan 2045 goals and policies and the proposed Scenic Resources Overlay District, would ensure that future development would not cause a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, including those of hillsides, ridgelines, and water bodies, and impacts would be **less than significant**.

AESTHETICS

b) Would the project substantially degrade the view from a State scenic highway, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings?

Less than Significant. As described in Section 3.1.2, *Existing Conditions*, there is not an “officially designated” State scenic highway in the EIR Study Area; however, Caltrans has assigned the entire section of I-580 that spans the EIR Study Area as being “eligible” to be designated as a State scenic highway. Pursuant to Streets and Highways Code Section 263, the State Scenic Highway System shall be composed of areas that are either “eligible” for designation as State scenic highway or “officially designated” as a State scenic highway. Therefore, impacts to views from both officially designated areas and areas eligible for designation are evaluated herein and collectively referred to as “scenic highways”.

The proposed General Plan 2045 would not directly result in new development; however, it is a regulatory document that includes proposed changes in land use designation that would allow for redevelopment and increased density on certain parcels within the EIR Study Area. The proposed Project promotes infill development and encourages higher density in already-developed areas, which would help reduce impacts to views from a scenic highway. Because scenic highways, including I-580, carry vehicles through areas of notable beauty and/or with natural resources, landmarks, historic features, or cultural interest points, the City has regulations in place to protect and enhance the aesthetic values of scenic routes by governing the development of property and placement of outdoor advertising.

As described under impact discussion (a), all future development would be required to undergo a Site Plan and Design Review, as required by LDC Chapter 9.07, to ensure compliance with General Plan policies, any applicable Specific Plan, Design Standards and Guidelines, and the LDC. Compliance with these policies, programs, and standards would ensure that properties are developed at appropriate height limits, with compatible orientation, setbacks, and massing so that views to and around scenic corridors and natural features would be maintained. Future mixed-use and multifamily development along I-580 would be subject to the design standards outlined in the MODS, which would ensure that new development is designed to be compatible with adjacent uses as well as existing and future development. Furthermore, future development along I-580 would also be subject to the various planning documents described in Section 3.1.1, *Regulatory Framework*, that govern scenic quality in the EIR Study Area, as applicable, including the INSP and ECSP. The INSP includes design standards and guidelines for site planning and orientation, including requiring the placement of buildings to be staggered to provide scenic vistas from public streets, to support the INSP vision of access to views. The ECSP imposes height restrictions on properties along I-580 to ensure that the views of the surrounding hills are not obstructed.

Additionally, the same proposed General Plan 2045 goals and policies from the Community Identity (CI) Element identified under impact discussion (a) would also serve to minimize impacts related to views from I-580 by ensuring that development would be constructed in such a way as to not obstruct views of scenic resources from scenic highways. Specifically, proposed Policy CI-12.1 would ensure that the visual qualities along the I-580 scenic corridor are protected by limiting highway commercial development to areas immediately adjacent to freeway interchanges.

The proposed Project would also include updates to the LDC to introduce the Scenic Resources Overlay District. The proposed Scenic Resources Overlay District would include specific development and design standards for the protection of scenic views and establishment of inviting gateways to Livermore.

As the City receives development applications for future development, those applications would be reviewed by the City through the Site Plan and Design Review process for compliance with the Design Standards and Guidelines, MODS, any applicable Specific Plan, as well as the proposed General Plan 2045 goals and policies and the proposed Scenic Resources Overlay District; compliance with these standards would ensure development would not substantially damage scenic resources within view of a scenic highway and impacts would be **less than significant**.

c) Would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality if the project is in an urbanized area?

Less than Significant. Livermore is considered an urban area under CEQA Statute Section 21071. CEQA Section 21071(a)(1) states that a city can be classified as an urban area if an incorporated city has a population of less than 100,000 persons if the population of that city and not more than two contiguous incorporated cities combined equals at least 100,000 persons. The only cities contiguous to Livermore are Pleasanton to the west and Dublin to the northwest. According to the State of California Department of Finance, in 2023, the population of Livermore was 86,094, the population of Pleasanton was 77,862, and the population of Dublin was 73,222. The population of these contiguous cities totals 237,178. Therefore, Livermore is considered an urban area under CEQA Statute Section 21071 and is analyzed as such in this impact discussion. Future projects in Livermore would be subject to this standard as well.

As described under impact discussion (a), all future development would be required to undergo a Site Plan and Design Review, as required by LDC Chapter 9.07, to ensure consistency with General Plan policies, any applicable Specific Plan, Design Standards and Guidelines, and LDC standards. Consistency with the City's Design Standards and Guidelines would encourage development that is harmonious with the surrounding built and natural environments. Future mixed-use and multifamily development would be subject to the design standards outlined in

AESTHETICS

the MODS, which ensures that new development is designed to be compatible with adjacent uses as well as existing and future development. Furthermore, future development would also be subject to the regulations of the various planning documents described in Section 3.1.1, *Regulatory Framework*, that govern scenic quality in the EIR Study Area, as applicable, including the DSP, INSP, ECSP, and SLVSP. The DSP centers historic buildings and architectural heritage as key indicators of appropriate architectural style and "design language" for new development to preserve the historic core. The INSP includes design standards and guidelines for site planning and orientation, including requiring the placement of buildings to be staggered to provide scenic view from public streets, to support the INSP vision of access to scenic views. The ECSP imposes height restrictions on properties along I-580 to ensure that the views of the surrounding hills are not obstructed. The SLVSP includes design standards and guidelines that would contribute to the Valley's rural identity through the qualities of openness, simplicity, and variety within structure.

Furthermore, the proposed General Plan 2045 goals and policies identified under impact discussion (a), in addition to the following goals and policies from the Community Identity (CI) Element, are designed to protect scenic quality:

- **Goal CI-12:** Enhance the city's gateways with improvements that represent the multiple facets of Livermore's identity.
 - **Policy CI-12.2: Enhanced Architectural Design.** New development at major gateways (see Figure CI-3 [of the General Plan]), must include site, landscape, and architectural improvements that create a strong sense of arrival and reflect Livermore's unique identity. Require undergrounding of utility service connections on private property to enhance the visual quality of gateway areas.
 - **Policy CI-12.3: Aesthetically Pleasing Uses.** For new developments near major entrances to the city, favor uses that are aesthetically pleasing and would provide a high-quality design that will benefit its location as a gateway to the city.
- **Goal CI-13:** Maintain high standards of urban design in Livermore.
 - **Policy CI-13.2: Process Streamlining.** Explore opportunities to streamline the design review process and standards to improve efficiency while maintaining high-quality design.
 - **Policy CI-13.3: High-Quality, Contextual, and Human-Scaled Design.** Require high-quality design that addresses community, site, building, and landscape design. New development and redevelopment shall consider the context and character of surrounding land uses and incorporate human-scale, pedestrian-oriented features to create an engaging and compatible built environment.

- **Policy CI-13.4: Sustainable Design Requirements.** Where appropriate, require design and amenities in new development and redevelopment that promote sustainability and improve the public realm, including, but not limited to:
 - a. Interconnected street layout
 - b. Clustering of buildings
 - c. Landscaping on each lot
 - d. Facilitating pedestrian activity
- **Policy CI-13.5: Traditional Design Elements.** Where appropriate, require new development to incorporate traditional site and architectural design elements consistent with Livermore’s character and western heritage. This may include grid street layouts, narrower streets, detached sidewalks, street trees, reduced setbacks, front porches or stoops, and rear- or side-loaded garages, unless alternative design guidance is adopted by the City Council.
- **Policy CI-13.6: Active Ground Floors and Public Realm.** Promote active ground floors through high-quality public realm design to enhance street-level activity, walkability, and neighborhood vibrancy.
- **Policy CI-13.7: Single-Family Housing Scale Consistency.** Avoid construction of single-family homes that are out of scale with surrounding homes.
- **Policy CI-13.8: Initial Landscaping.** Require all new development and redevelopment to landscape front yard and public street-facing areas upon initial construction using climate-appropriate, water-efficient, and sustainable practices; and require residents and property owners to maintain their property in good condition to support neighborhood quality and visual character. Encourage the use of xeriscaping, drought-tolerant plant species, and efficient irrigation systems to promote long-term water conservation and climate resilience.
- **Policy CI-13.9: Design Process Efficiency.** Explore opportunities to streamline design review processes while maintaining high-quality design outcomes. This includes developing and promoting the use of preapproved building designs and styles across the city and in Specific Plan areas, as well as improving the efficiency and clarity of sign design review standards.
- **Policy CI-13.10: Legislative Advocacy.** Support State legislation that enhances local discretion over design review and discretionary design decisions to ensure high-quality standards that represent Livermore’s unique identity. Oppose State legislation that reduces local authority to preserve high-quality urban design and architecture.
- **Goal CI-14: Incorporate graceful transitions between areas of different uses and scales.**
 - **Policy CI-14.1: Landscaped Buffers.** Determine where landscaped buffers should be required to create transitions between different land use categories, such as between residential and industrial areas.

AESTHETICS

- **Policy CI-14.2: Distinguishable Neighborhood Designs.** Require the design of new neighborhoods to incorporate themes and features that delineate and distinguish them from one another.
- **Policy CI-14.3: Missing-Middle Housing.** Allow and encourage middle housing development types, such as duplexes, multiplexes, townhouses, courtyard apartments, carriage houses, and bungalow courts, to provide a transition between residential areas of different densities.
- **Policy CI-14.4: Infill Design Integration.** Where appropriate, require infill development to incorporate design features of the existing neighborhood and adjacent buildings to visually integrate them into the existing community fabric.
- **Goal CI-15:** Maintain high-quality design of public facilities.
 - **Policy CI-15.1: Street Width Standards Review:** Periodically review and revise, as necessary, street width standards to address emergency vehicle access while also providing for the narrowest streets possible to enhance walkability and urban design character.
 - **Policy CI-15.2: Attractive Street Furniture System:** Continue to implement an attractive, coordinated system of “street furniture,” including fire hydrants, litter containers, paving patterns, planters, signposts, traffic signals, benches, and light standards.
 - **Policy CI-15.3: Street Corridors:** Identify, map, design, and implement major street corridors throughout the city. Each major street corridor shall include high-quality urban design features like generously landscaped medians and backing lots, quality and consistent backing lot walls and fences, large shade tree species, separated sidewalks, and consistent and artistic public facilities like light poles, pedestrian benches, and litter bins.
 - **Policy CI-15.4: Screening of Visually Unattractive Public Facilities.** Adequately screen visually unattractive or incompatible public facilities, such as sewer lift stations, pump houses, water tanks, and other major infrastructure from public view, where feasible.

Specifically, proposed Policy CI-13.1 would require all new development and redevelopment to be subject to design review and would require the City to regularly update the City’s Design Standards and Guidelines. Proposed Policy CI-13.3 would require new development and redevelopment to consider the context and character of surrounding land uses. Proposed Actions CI-A-14.1 and CI-A-14.2 would further support these policies by developing objective design standards and updating the LDC to ensure visually pleasing and compatible development that reflects current best practices in planning and design.

Additionally, the proposed Project would involve updates to the LDC to introduce the Scenic Resources Overlay District. The proposed Scenic Resources Overlay District would include specific development and design standards for the protection of scenic views and establishment of inviting gateways to Livermore. Future development in the proposed Scenic Resources

Overlay District would be required to comply with these development and design standards, as to not conflict with the LDC regulations governing scenic quality.

The proposed General Plan 2045 is the primary planning document for Livermore. The proposed Project is intended to ensure consistency between the General Plan, LDC, LMC, and federal and State laws. Because the proposed General Plan 2045 is the overriding planning document, and because the proposed Project involves amending the current General Plan and the LDC, the proposed Project would be consistent with the policies and regulations governing scenic quality. Future development would be required to undergo the Site Plan and Design Review process to ensure adherence to existing regulations, along with the proposed General Plan 2045 goals and policies, as well as the proposed Scenic Resources Overlay District. Accordingly, implementation of the proposed Project would not conflict with applicable zoning or other regulations governing scenic quality and impacts would be **less than significant**.

d) Would the project expose people on- or off-site to substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Less than Significant. The EIR Study Area contains many existing sources of nighttime illumination. These include street and parking area lights, building-mounted lights, illuminated signage, security lighting, and interior and exterior lighting on existing residential, commercial, and institutional buildings. Glare is primarily from building materials, solar photovoltaic panels, and parked cars. Additional on-site light and glare are caused by traffic on I-580.

As described in Section 3.1.1, *Regulatory Framework*, CALGreen requires lighting that is context sensitive in style and intensity, achieved through general best management practices such as luminaire shielding, automatic scheduling, and motion sensors. Additionally, all future development would be required to undergo a Site Plan and Design Review, as required by LDC Chapter 9.07, to ensure consistency with General Plan policies, any applicable Specific Plan, and LDC standards. Future development, including the installation of solar photovoltaic panels, would be subject to the City's Design Standards and Guidelines, which provides lighting standards for different types of uses. Future mixed-use and multifamily development would be subject to the design standards outlined in the MODS that regulate the height of luminaries and shielding to avoid spillover. Furthermore, future development would also be subject to the regulations of various planning documents described in Section 3.1.1, *Regulatory Framework*, that govern scenic quality, including lighting, as applicable, including the DSP, INSP, ECSP, and SLVSP. The DSP includes standards and guidelines to ensure lighting is compatible with the existing built environment, and creates a cohesive aesthetic for the Downtown. The INSP requires lighting to not exceed 18 feet in height and to be designed and shielded to direct light downward to minimize glare and night-sky light pollution. The ECSP provides general lighting guidelines to provide for illumination for security and safety designed with cut-off shields to

AESTHETICS

minimize light spread and off-site glare. The SLVSP promotes lighting to be simple rather than ornamented and fabricated in materials and styles that evoke the Valley's rural heritage.

Additionally, the Community Identity (CI) Element of the proposed General Plan 2045 contains the following goal and policies that are designed to minimize impacts related to lighting and glare:

- **Goal CI-11:** Protect the nighttime sky of Livermore as a significant scenic resource.
 - **Policy CI-11.1: Nighttime Sky.** Designate the nighttime sky of Livermore as a significant scenic resource of Livermore.
 - **Policy CI-11.2: Glare from Developments.** Require developments to minimize obtrusive glare and wasted energy from excessive nighttime lighting and preserve views of the nighttime sky.

Specifically, proposed Policy CI-11.2 would require developments to minimize obtrusive glare and wasted energy from excessive nighttime lighting and preserve views of the nighttime sky. Proposed Action CI-A-11.1 would further support this policy by requiring the City to update the LDC and Standard Details to include design standards that regulate lighting quantity, intensity, and design, minimizing glare, light trespass, and sky glow.

Compliance with existing lighting standards to reduce light spill and glare and implementation of the proposed General Plan 2045 goals and policies, to be confirmed through Site Plan and Design Review, would ensure future development does not generate excessive light levels or glare and impacts would be **less than significant**.

3.1.5 Cumulative Impact Analysis

The following discussion considers how buildout of the EIR Study Area and the eastern Alameda County region (e.g., the surrounding cities of Dublin, and Pleasanton) have the potential to cumulatively impact the visual resources in the eastern Alameda County region. This analysis evaluates whether the impacts of future development, together with the impacts of cumulative development, would result in a cumulatively significant impact on aesthetics and visual quality. This analysis then considers whether the incremental contribution to cumulative impacts associated with the implementation of the proposed Project would be significant. Both conditions must apply for a project's cumulative effects to rise to the level of significance.

Would the project have a cumulative effect related to aesthetics?

Less than significant.

Vistas and Visual Character

Most of the growth in the region is anticipated to occur in and around existing urban development within the Livermore City Limit and within other urbanized areas, including the cities of Pleasanton and Dublin. Future development in the cumulative context would include predominantly infill residential, commercial, and industrial development consistent with the General Plans of each municipality. However, the lands that provide agricultural and scenic views that surround the EIR Study Area are in unincorporated areas of eastern Alameda County. The geographic area contains many natural features such as hillsides and ridgelines, as well as extensive open spaces, arroyos, and canals. These lands are not designated for urbanization and are anticipated to primarily remain in agricultural and natural open space uses under cumulative conditions. Future development would be subject to the design review processes of the individual jurisdiction, and the applicable land use plans containing policies and implementing programs to preserve visual character, land use compatibility, and views in those jurisdictions.

Future development would be required to comply with the applicable zoning and other regulations governing visual character and views as described under impact discussion (a) through (c), including the LMC, LDC, MODS, DSP, INSP, ECSP, SLVSP, and Livermore Design Standards and Guidelines, as well as the proposed General Plan 2045 goals and policies and the proposed Scenic Resources Overlay District. Future development would be subject to specific regulations and guidelines related to building heights, setbacks, undergrounding of utilities, landscaping, signage, and permitted land uses. These regulations would ensure that visual character and viewsheds are maintained.

Light and Glare

Cumulative development would consist primarily of infill development, which could increase light and glare in the geographic area. Cumulative development could include streetlights, exterior lighting, safety lighting, lighting from vehicles, and sources of glare from the buildings and vehicles. All cumulative development both inside and outside of the City's jurisdiction would be required to comply with CALGreen's building standards regarding lighting and to comply with local regulations related to light and glare. In addition, development would be subject to administrative design review by the various jurisdictions. Compliance with these regulations and completion of design review would building windows are tinted to minimize interior light transmission and exterior lighting is designed so that it is directed downward and away from adjacent properties. Therefore, cumulative impacts would be less than significant.

AESTHETICS

Light and glare from future development would be regulated by the Livermore Design Standards and Guidelines, and other applicable plans and policies as described under impact discussion (d). Compliance with these regulations and completion of design review would ensure building windows are tinted to minimize interior light transmission and exterior lighting is designed so that it is directed downward and away from adjacent properties.

Summary

Future development would be subject to the design review processes of the individual jurisdiction, and the applicable land use plans containing policies and implementing programs to preserve visual character, land use compatibility, and views and minimize light and glare in those jurisdictions. As such, the proposed Project, in conjunction with cumulative projects, would result in a less than significant cumulative impact with respect to aesthetics, and cumulative impacts would be **less than significant**.

3.1.6 References

Alameda County. 1993, February 23. *South Livermore Valley Area Plan*.

<https://www.acgov.org/cda/planning/generalplans/documents/SLValleyAreaPlanFeb1993.pdf>, accessed October 23, 2025.

———. 2000 (amended). *East County Area Plan*.

<https://www.acgov.org/cda/planning/generalplans/documents/EastCountyAreaPlancombined.pdf>, accessed September 25, 2025.

Caltrans (California Department of Transportation). 2025. California State Scenic Highways.

<https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-landscape-architecture-and-community-livability/lap-liv-i-scenic-highways>, accessed October 23, 2025.

ICF. 2010, October. *East Alameda County Conservation Strategy*. [https://www.eastalco-](https://www.eastalco-conservation.org/documents/Final_EACCS_Oct2010_Ch1-5%20lo%20res.pdf)

[conservation.org/documents/Final_EACCS_Oct2010_Ch1-5%20lo%20res.pdf](https://www.eastalco-conservation.org/documents/Final_EACCS_Oct2010_Ch1-5%20lo%20res.pdf), accessed October 23, 2025.

Livermore, City of. 2004, June 28. *Design Standards and Guidelines*.

<https://www.livermoreca.gov/departments/community-development/planning/design-standards-and-guidelines>, accessed October 23, 2025.

———. 2007a, July 2. *Arroyo Vista Neighborhood Plan*.

<https://www.livermoreca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/1429/6385060906430000>, accessed October 23, 2025.

- . 2007b, July 9. *El Charro Specific Plan*.
<https://www.livermoreca.gov/departments/community-development/planning/specific-plans/el-charro-specific-plan>, accessed October 23, 2025.
- . 2021, April (updated). *Downtown Specific Plan*.
<https://www.livermoreca.gov/departments/community-development/downtown/downtown-specific-plan>, accessed October 23, 2025.
- . 2022a, March 7. *Livermore General Plan Update Existing Conditions Reports*.
<https://imaginelivermore2045.org/documents/>, accessed September 25, 2025.
- . 2022b, November (amended). *Isabel Neighborhood Specific Plan*.
<https://www.livermoreca.gov/departments/community-development/planning/specific-plans/isabel-neighborhood-specific-plan>, accessed October 23, 2025.
- . 2023, May (amended). *South Livermore Valley Specific Plan*.
<https://www.livermoreca.gov/home/showpublisheddocument/11742/638584449265230000>, accessed October 23, 2025.
- . 2025, July 31. *Mixed-Use and Multifamily Objective Design Standards*.
<https://www.livermoreca.gov/home/showdocument?id=13069&t=63891361958397000>, accessed October 30, 2025.

AESTHETICS

This page is intentionally left blank.