

4.1 AESTHETICS

This chapter describes the existing aesthetic character of the Specific Plan Area and evaluates the potential environmental consequences of future development that could occur to the aesthetic character by adopting and implementing the proposed Specific Plan Update, and approval and development of the proposed Transit-Oriented Developments (TOD) #1 and #2 (together referred to as the “proposed Project”).

4.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

4.1.1.1 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This section summarizes key State and local regulations and programs related to aesthetics in the Specific Plan Area. There are no federal regulations pertaining to aesthetics that apply to the proposed Project.

State Regulations

California Scenic Highway Program

The California Scenic Highway Program, administered by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), protects scenic State highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to those highways.¹ Two highways run through the city of Millbrae: Highway 101 and Interstate 280. Highway 101 runs through the eastern portion of Specific Plan Area, but it is not a designated State scenic highway.² The stretch of Interstate 280 that runs through Millbrae is designated as a State scenic corridor. However, the Specific Plan Area is located approximately 1.5 miles away, and because of existing development and vegetation the Plan Area is not visible from Interstate 280.

California Building Code

The California Building Code, Part 2 of Title 24 in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), is based on the International Building Code and combines three types of building standards from three different origins:

- Building standards that have been adopted by State agencies without change from building standards contained in the International Building Code.
- Building standards that have been adopted and adapted from the International Building Code to meet California conditions.

¹ Streets and Highways Code Section 260 et seq.

² California Department of Transportation website, Officially Designated State Scenic Highways, Santa Clara County, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm, accessed December 30, 2014.

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- Building standards, authorized by the California legislature, that constitute extensive additions not covered by the International Building Code that have been adopted to address particular California concerns.

The California Building Code includes standards for outdoor lighting that are intended to improve energy efficiency, and to reduce light pollution and glare by regulating light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls.

Senate Bill 743

On September 27, 2013, Senate Bill (SB) 743 was signed into law.³ The Legislature found that with the adoption of the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 (SB 375), the State had signaled its commitment to encourage land use and transportation planning decisions and investments that reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and thereby contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (GHG), as required by the California Global Warming Solutions Act of 2006 (Assembly Bill [AB] 32).

As previously discussed in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this Draft EIR the MTC and ABAG *Plan Bay Area*, adopted on July 18, 2013,⁴ is the Bay Area's Regional Transportation Plan/Sustainable Community Strategy (SCS).⁵ The SCS sets a development pattern for the region, including the identification of Priority Development Areas (PDAs), which form the implementing framework for *Plan Bay Area*. Specifically, the PDAs are transit-oriented infill development opportunity areas within existing communities that are expected to host the majority of future development. As shown on Figure 3-6 in Chapter 3, there are two PDAs within Millbrae, of which one (Transit Station Area) is the Specific Plan Area.

Under SB 743 the aesthetic impacts of residential or mixed use projects located on an infill site in a “transit priority area” “shall not be considered significant impacts on the environment.”⁶ SB 743 defines an “infill site” as a lot in an urban area that has been previously developed and “transit priority area” means an area within a half mile of a major transit stop, both of which apply to the proposed Project.⁷ While SB 743 does not provide a definition of the an “urban area”, Public Resources Code Section 21071 defines “urbanized area” as an incorporated city with a population over 100,000, or, if the city’s population is less than 100,000, where the population of the city and no more than two adjoining cities exceeds 100,000. While Millbrae’s population in 2014 is less than 100,000 people (22,605) and the combined population of Millbrae with the adjacent cities of Burlingame (29,685) and San Bruno (43,223) falls just short of 100,000, ABAG population forecasts indicate that by 2020 and throughout the 2040 buildout of the Specific Plan Area, the combined population would exceed 100,000.⁸ Thus, under this recent

³ An act to amend Sections 65088.1 and 65088.4 of the Government Code, and to amend Sections 21181, 21183, 21186, 21187, 21189.1, and 21189.3 of, to add Section 21155.4 to, to add Chapter 2.7 (commencing with Section 21099) to Division 13 of, to add and repeal Section 21168.6.6 of, and to repeal and add Section 21185 of, the Public Resources Code, relating to environmental quality.

⁴ It should be noted that the Bay Area Citizens filed a lawsuit on MTC and ABAG adoption of *Plan Bay Area*.

⁵ To read more about Plan Bay Area: Jobs-Housing Connection Scenario, go to www.OneBayArea.Org.

⁶ Public Resources Code Section 21099(d)(1).

⁷ Public Resources Code Section 21099 (4).

⁸ Association of Bay Area Governments, *Plan Bay Area, Projections 2013*, Subregional Study Area Table, Total Population, San Mateo County. Population projections for the year 2020 forecast a population of 24,200 (Millbrae), 32,800 (Burlingame), and 45,900

amendment to CEQA, any aesthetic impacts of future development under the Specific Plan Update, including impacts to visual character, scenic views and vistas and scenic resources, is not considered an impact on the environment. SB 743 does confirm that the City retains full design review discretion and may address aesthetic issues, but they are considered outside of the CEQA context.

Local Regulations

Millbrae 1998-2015 General Plan

The City of Millbrae General Plan, adopted in 1998, includes goals and policies that relate to aesthetics. Specifically, the Land Use Element, Parks, Open Space and Conservation Element and Housing Element include policies aimed at protecting and enhancing the city’s physical and visual character. Specifically, Goal LU2, Promote Proper Site Planning, Architectural Design and Property Maintenance, ensures high quality site planning, landscaping and architectural design for all new development, renovation or remodeling and require property maintenance to maintain the long-term health, safety and welfare of the community. Table 4.1-1 lists policies relevant to urban form and visual character in Millbrae.

TABLE 4.1-1 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES PERTAINING TO AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

Number	Policy
Land Use (LU) Element	
LU1.1	Quality of Millbrae's Residential Neighborhoods. Assure that all new residential development, renovation or remodeling preserves and strengthens Millbrae's residential neighborhoods by requiring projects to be in keeping with the character of the neighborhood and be harmoniously designed and integrated with the existing neighborhood.
LU1.4	Conflicts Between Residential and Non-Residential Uses. Eliminate, to the greatest extent possible, noise, parking, traffic and other conflicts between residential and non-residential land uses.
LU2.1	Site Planning and Design. Ensure high quality site planning, architecture and landscape design for all new development, renovation or remodeling.
LU2.2	Residential Design Guidelines. Implement the Residential Design Guidelines for all new residential development, renovation, and remodeling projects to preserve the character of the surrounding neighborhood and of the community as a whole. To this end, proposed projects shall strive to achieve the following goals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure provision of light and air to individual residential parcels. b. Ensure a reasonable level of compatibility in the scale of structures within residential neighborhoods. c. Maintain spatial relationships between structures and within neighborhoods. d. Protect the predominantly low intensity setting of the community. e. Encourage cooperation among neighbors in consideration of the impact of residential second-story additions on the views, solar access and privacy of nearby neighbors. f. Locate and design structures and landscaping improvements so as to minimize the obstruction of primary views from structures on neighboring properties. Some minor loss of view may be consistent with this policy if necessary to protect a property right.

(San Bruno) for a combined population of 102,900. Forecasts for 2040 are 30,300 (Millbrae), 39,600 (Burlingame), and 56,800 (San Bruno) for a combined population of 126,700.

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TABLE 4.1-1 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES PERTAINING TO AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

Number	Policy
LU2.3	Architectural Review Process for Residential Projects. Require design review of residential projects to ensure compatibility of new residential projects, or property improvements, including room additions, with existing residential property, with the existing character of the neighborhoods in which they are located, and with respect to architectural style, scale, mass, bulk, color, materials, lot coverage and setbacks. Ensure that there is proper noticing of all such projects, and that there are opportunities for applicants to consult with neighbors on design issues and possible solutions. Design review shall also ensure that new residential projects are protected from the impacts of undesirable traffic, noise, or other intrusions when proposed near existing commercial or industrial uses.
LU2.4	Design and Development Review Process for Commercial and Industrial Projects. Establish design guidelines for all new commercial and industrial development, renovation, and remodeling projects to enhance the overall character of the City, protect the public from unwarranted nuisances, and create a high-quality aesthetic in the City's commercial districts. To this end, proposed projects shall strive to achieve the following goals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Achieve a high quality design in keeping with Millbrae's suburban character. Assure that the design and scale of the project is appropriate in relation to the neighborhood in which it is located, including exterior colors and materials. Minimize impacts of excessive noise, glare, or hazardous materials. Screen unsightly uses, including trash and loading dock areas, roof top equipment, and ventilating systems. Incorporate setbacks, open space, and landscaping (including maintenance) into project design.
LU2.7	Civic Beautification and Public Art. Establish a continuing program of civic beautification, gateway or entryway enhancement tree planting, commercial area enhancement, maintenance of homes and streets, public art and other measures which will promote an aesthetically desirable environment and attractive neighborhood and commercial areas. Formalize the process for the acceptance, review and placement of public art.
Parks, Open Space and Conservation (PC) Element	
PC4.5	Trees and Landscaping. Protect existing trees and encourage drought-tolerant landscaping, including new tree plantings, in private and public areas, including street medians. Utilize the design review process to review landscaping plans and enforce tree and landscape goals, consistent with the preservation of views.
PC5.4	Development Review. Review all new development or improvement proposals through the City's development and design review processes for: (1) impacts on access to sunlight; (2) provision of landscaped setbacks; (3) provision of street furniture in public open spaces; and (4) impacts on views.
Housing (H) Element	
H2.9	Housing Design. Protect the character of existing residential neighborhoods and provide stable, safe and attractive neighborhoods by ensuring excellence in project design consistent with existing community character (architecture, site planning, amenities, etc.).

Source: City of Millbrae General Plan 1998-2015, adopted 1998; 2015-2022 Housing Element Public Hearing Draft April 2015.

Millbrae Municipal Code

The City of Millbrae Municipal Code contains all ordinances for the city. The Municipal Code is organized by Title, Chapter, and Section. The current Municipal Code is up to date through Ordinance 747, passed May 27, 2014. Besides the General Plan, the City of Millbrae Municipal Code is the primary tool that shapes the form and character of physical development in Millbrae, including the Specific Plan Area. The following provisions from Title 9, Building Regulations, and Title 10, Planning and Zoning, of the Municipal Code help minimize visual impacts associated with new development projects in Millbrae:

- **Chapter 9.05 Building Code.** Per Section 9.05.010 the City has adopted the 2013 California Building Code including modifications relevant to Millbrae. The California Building Code includes standards for outdoor lighting that are intended to improve energy efficiency, and to reduce light pollution and glare by regulating light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls.
- **Chapter 10.05 Zoning Ordinance:** The City's Zoning Ordinance identifies specific zoning districts within Millbrae and describes the development standards that apply to each district. Under Article XVII, the Specific Plan Area is designated “Millbrae Station Area Planned Development” District, and all site development projects are required to be consistent with the adopted Millbrae Station Area Specific Plan. Any development involving new construction or exterior alteration is subject to the City’s design review process, as identified in Section 10.05.2500.
- **Section 10.05.2500 Design Review Permits.** This Section sets forth review procedures and standards for new development and exterior modification projects to ensure compliance with the required standards and design guidelines and to minimize potential visual impacts. Community Development Department staff will review and approve applications prior to building permit issuance. Construction of new buildings, additional floors, and significant alterations, and projects requiring conditional use permits, exceptions, variances, and time extension, are subject to the Planning Commission design review and public hearings. Under this Section, Design review for all single-family, duplex, triplex, and multifamily residential development shall be conducted pursuant to the “Residential Design Review Guidelines” adopted by the planning commission and approved by the city council.⁹
- **Chapter 8.60 Tree Protection and Urban Forestry Program.** This Chapter establishes the City’s Tree Protection and Urban Forestry Program. This program is intended to promote diversity in street tree species, an appropriate amount of street trees, the value of properties, and the aesthetics of the community. Section 8.60.060 requires all property owners to maintain street trees fronting upon the property in a healthy condition, including watering and weeding. Permits from the parks and recreation director or designee are required to prune, plant, or remove any street tree in Millbrae.

4.1.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section describes the existing visual character of the Specific Plan Area, including the TOD #1 and TOD #2 Project sites, the scenic resources present in the surrounding area, as well as light and glare conditions.

Visual Character

Regional Setting

By virtue of its natural landscape and patterns of urbanization, the northern peninsula, in which the Millbrae is located, is a region of distinctive visual character. The peninsula is bisected by the Santa Cruz Mountains, which contain the San Francisco watershed lands and the Crystal Springs reservoirs. The bayside of the peninsula has

⁹ The Residential Design Review Guidelines are currently being revised.

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been developed as a series of predominantly residential communities organized along the Highway 101 corridor between San Francisco and San Jose. In general, commercial and industrial uses, as well as older residential neighborhoods, have become established along the flatter lands near Highway 101, with residential neighborhoods extending into the hills. In this area, particularly along Highway 101 and Interstate 280, there are visually interesting contrasts between the natural landscape and urban development created by the watershed lands to the west and the San Francisco Bay to the east. Views of landscape features, the mountain, hills, and the bay dominate the visual environment and provide a strong sense of orientation to those living or traveling in the area.¹⁰

Specific Plan Area

The Specific Plan Area is shown on Figure 3-3 in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this Draft EIR. As shown on this figure, the Specific Plan Area is located near the southern boundary of the city, a few blocks southeast of Downtown Millbrae. Other than the Bayside Manor neighborhood to the north and the San Francisco Bay and the San Francisco International Airport (SFO) to the east, the Specific Plan Area is mostly surrounded by commercial and industrial uses. Medium- to high-density residential buildings are also located near the downtown area.

The Specific Plan Area exhibits predominantly an auto-oriented urban character. Because a few major transportation thoroughfares run through the area, including El Camino Real (State Route 82, a major north-south route), Highway 101, and Millbrae Avenue (a major east-west arterial), the built form of the Specific Plan Area has been heavily influenced by auto vehicle uses. The BART and Caltrain tracks running north to south in the middle of the Specific Plan Area. Two sections of Millbrae Avenue are elevated to provide grade separation over the railroad tracks and Highway 101.

Existing development in the Specific Plan Area generally features one- to two-story buildings except for three 4- to 5-story mixed-use complexes on El Camino Real, which were built between 2007 and 2013. Although comprised of different small and large buildings of varying architecture, for the most part, buildings in the Specific Plan Area appear to have been built between the 1960s and 1990s based on a visual assessment. The Southern Pacific Depot, located at the intersection of South Irwin Place and California Drive, however, was originally built in the late 19th century. The Depot was subjected to two fires and rebuilt in 1907.¹¹ The Depot is currently used as the Millbrae Train Museum and is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.¹² The following sections describe building types and character in the Specific Plan Area.

West of the Tracks (along El Camino Real)

Development in this area is centered on the El Camino Real commercial corridor. Building types along El Camino Real are mainly comprised of one or two-story retail strip malls, stand-alone restaurants and stores, and auto repair shops in small footprints, with the exception of the aforementioned three 4- to 5-story mixed-use complexes. This area also contains two 3-story buildings (a stand-alone office building and a motel) all of which were built during

¹⁰ City of Millbrae, 1998, Environmental Impact Report for the Millbrae Station Area Specific Plan.

¹¹ National Register of Historic Places in San Mateo County, <http://www.noehill.com/sanmateo/nat1978000770.asp>, accessed on January 7, 2015.

¹² Tom Origer & Associates (TOA), September 22, 2014, A Cultural Resources Study for the Millbrae Station Area Specific Plan Update Millbrae, San Mateo County, California. This report is included in Appendix C, Cultural Resources Data, of this Draft EIR

the late 1950s and early 1960s. Most buildings do not contain architectural treatments, as bland, box-shaped buildings dominate the general character of this area. Some restaurant buildings feature architectural details that display their ethnicity, such as a pitched roof with glazed tiles.

The low-rise stores and shops generally face El Camino Real with windows and doors accessible from the sidewalk. However, a lack of street trees and landscaping in combination with front parking lots and frequent driveways diminish the visual interest of the built environment. The TOD #1 project site is located in this area, which is described in more detail below.

East of the Tracks

In contrast, the east side of the Specific Plan Area exhibits more industrial character. The southeast quadrant of the Specific Plan Area consists of large box type single-story industrial buildings, except for the area immediately next to Highway 101 on-ramp, which has been developed as a highway-oriented shopping center. These industrial buildings contain the minimum architectural features necessary to provide business functions, such as doors, windows, and garages. These buildings lack architectural treatments, such as articulation, massing variation, roof detailing, and varied siting, such as building frontage along the street, that would generally create more distinct visual interest. The northeast quadrant area is described in the TOD #2 project site section below.

In addition, PG&E's power lines run through this area and transmission towers are aligned along the power lines, almost parallel to Highway 101. The overhead transmission lines and the towers, which range from 65 to 75 feet in height,¹³ are taller than all existing buildings, and therefore are visible from almost every location in the vicinity.

Millbrae Station Vicinity

The Millbrae Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART)/Caltrain Station (Millbrae Station) is located at the center of the Specific Plan Area. Because this Station is located at the end of a BART line, the vast majority of the surrounding area has been devoted for parking; the area between the BART tracks and Aviator Avenue, north of Millbrae Avenue and south of the Highline Canal, consists of a 4-story parking structure, surface parking lots, a transfer terminal, and access roads.

Highway 101 Vicinity

The area near the Highway 101 interchange east of Aviator Avenue and Adrian Road has remained largely undeveloped, except for a wastewater treatment plant, built in the early 1950s, and associated facilities in the northeast corner of the interchange.¹⁴ This area consists of one-story industrial buildings.

TOD #1 Project Site

The TOD #1 project site is shown on Figure 3-26 in Chapter 3. The project site is located immediately south of the northern boundary of the Specific Plan Area, west of the Millbrae Station, east of El Camino Real and Serra

¹³ City of Millbrae, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes, page 4, December 7, 2009.

¹⁴ Millbrae Life and Times, June 2014, <http://www.millbraehs.org/files/93737642.pdf>, accessed on January 5, 2015.

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Avenue, and north of Linden Avenue. Currently, the site presents two distinctive characters: 1) a vacant lumber yard, and 2) warehouse in the northern side and a nursing facility in the southern side. The northern side consists of a single-story warehouse with a showroom facing El Camino Real and a paved area for parking and storage with two driveways from El Camino Real and Serra Avenue. The southern side is occupied by a long single-story building set back about 15 feet from Serra Avenue. Behind the building is a grassy back yard with several mature trees screening the yard from the Millbrae Station. South of the building is a fenced surface parking lot.

The area west of the TOD #1 project site exhibits a similar built environment, as described above, including single-story shops or stores with surface parking lots. In contrast, the area north of the TOD #1 project site is predominantly single-family homes developed along Hemlock Avenue, except for a surface parking lot that is associated with a fast-foot restaurant (Taco Bell) on El Camino Real. Most of these homes were built in the 1940s and feature prominent garages, small front lawns, and mature street trees.¹⁵ The area east of the project site is occupied by the Caltrain platforms and railroad tracks. The area south across Linden Avenue is surface parking lots and a stand-alone restaurant.

TOD #2 Project Site

The TOD #2 project site is shown on Figure 3-26 in Chapter 3. The TOD #2 project site is located west of Aviator Avenue, north of Millbrae Avenue, east of the Millbrae Station, and south of the Highline Canal, and the project site also includes a City storage yard north of the Highline Canal. The site currently includes a 4-story parking structure, surface parking lots for BART and Caltrain patrons, a drop-off area, and a bus station. An operating gas station (Chevron) is located to the southeast of the site; however, as shown in Figure 3-27 in Chapter 3, this is a separate property and is not part of the TOD #2 project site. The City storage yard, located north of Highline Canal, is unpaved and does not have any permanent structure. Rollins Road, a 6-lane road, runs in the middle of the site, connecting Millbrae Avenue to the parking garage, as well as the drop-off area and the bus station. The rest of the site is largely divided into three surface parking lots. Each lot is defined on its edge by sidewalks except for exits for ingress and egress. The peripheries of the lots are lined with ornamental trees or bushes.

As described above, the tallest structures on the site are PG&E's transmission towers. Two sets of PG&E transmission towers (each set consists of three towers) are located in the surface parking lots, and each set is spaced approximately 400 feet apart.

Similar to the TOD #1 project site, the area north of Highline Canal has been developed as a single-family neighborhood, called the Bayside Manor neighborhood. The area west of the TOD #2 project site has the Millbrae Station and railroad tracks, and the area south across Millbrae Avenue has been developed with two-story industrial and commercial buildings. As described above, the area east of the site between Aviator Avenue and Highway 101 is owned by the San Francisco International Airport and currently has no permanent structure.

¹⁵ Burlingame Properties, <http://burlingameproperties.com/communities/millbrae/manor-1-manor-2-park-millbrae/>, accessed on December 31, 2014.

Scenic Vistas

The City's General Plan has not established official scenic vistas in the city. Scenic vistas are generally interpreted as long-range views of a specific scenic feature, such as open space lands, mountain ridges, or bodies of water. The Specific Plan Area is located on the northern peninsular, and potential scenic features in its viewsheds include the Santa Cruz Mountain Range to the west, the San Bruno Mountains to the north, and the San Francisco Bay to the east.

Ground surface elevations at the Specific Plan Area generally range from 15 to 60 feet above mean sea level (amsl), whereas the neighboring hills to the southwest locally attain elevations in excess of 450 feet amsl. Because the Specific Plan Area is relatively flat, with minor grade changes and is largely built out, views of the scenic vistas are limited. In particular, the views of the San Francisco Bay are only visible from the highest point of the elevated Millbrae Avenue overpass crossing over Highway 101. Distant views to the north of the San Bruno Mountains are visible from a few vantage points, such as at the intersection of Millbrae Avenue and El Camino Real and along Rollins Road, Serra Avenue, and Highway 101.

Given the flat nature and low building heights of the Specific Plan Area, glimpses of the Santa Cruz Mountain Range can be captured from major west-east corridors, including Millbrae Avenue and Murchison Boulevard. Views from north-south corridors, including the El Camino Real corridor, rarely capture the Santa Cruz Mountain Range because of existing development and vegetation. From several vantage points along Highway 101, especially in the interchange, which is at a higher level than surroundings, wide views of the Santa Cruz Mountains are visible.

Light and Glare

Light pollution refers to all forms of unwanted light in the night sky, including glare, light trespass, sky glow, and over-lighting. Excessive light and glare can be visually disruptive to humans and nocturnal animal species, and often reflects an unnecessarily high level of energy consumption. 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.

Existing sources of nighttime light in the Specific Plan Area include those common to urban areas, such as street lights, parking lot lights, building lighting, vehicle headlamps, and interior lighting visible through windows.

Shade and Shadow

The issue of shade and shadow is an important environmental issue because it may impact the users or occupants of certain land uses on adjacent properties if on-site buildings block direct sunlight. Users or occupants of certain land uses, such as residential, recreational, churches, schools, outdoor restaurants, historic buildings, and pedestrian areas have expectations for direct sunlight and warmth from the sun. These land uses are termed "shadow-sensitive." Shadow lengths are dependent on the height and size of the building from which it is cast and the angle of the sun. The angle of the sun varies to the rotation of the earth (i.e. time of day) and elliptical orbit (i.e. change in seasons). The longest shadows are cast during the winter months and the shortest shadows are cast during the summer months.

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4.1.2 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The proposed Project would result in a significant aesthetic impact if it would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
2. Substantially degrade scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway.
3. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

With regards to Standard of Significance 2, there are no State-designated scenic highways in the vicinity of the Specific Plan Area. Therefore, *no impact* to scenic resources visible from a State Scenic Highway would occur with the implementation of the proposed Specific Plan Update and this issue will not be discussed further.

4.1.3 IMPACT DISCUSSION

AES-1 The proposed Project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

Future development under the proposed Project would have the potential to affect scenic vistas and/or scenic corridors if new or intensified development blocked views of areas that provide or contribute to such vistas. Potential effects could include blocking views of a scenic vista/corridor from specific publically accessible vantage points or the alteration of the overall scenic vista/corridor itself. Such alterations could be positive or negative, depending on the characteristics of individual future developments and the subjective perception of observers.

As previously described, public views of scenic corridors are considered those views as seen along a linear transportation route and public views of scenic vistas are views of specific scenic features. Scenic vistas are generally interpreted as long-range views, while scenic corridors are comprised of short-, middle-, and long-range views. As stated in Section 4.1.1.2, Environmental Setting, the current General Plan does not have designated scenic corridors or vistas. However, for this analysis, the Santa Cruz Mountains to the west, the San Bruno Mountains to the north and the San Francisco Bay to the east are considered scenic vistas.

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As described in detail in Section 4.1.1.2, Existing Conditions, the Specific Plan Area where potential future development is expected to occur is concentrated on a limited number of vacant parcels and in the form of infill/intensification on sites either already developed and/or underutilized, and/or in close proximity to existing development, where future development would have a lesser impact on scenic vistas. Proposed changes under the Specific Plan Update consist primarily of increased development intensities; however, some locations that are within the Specific Plan Area propose increases in maximum height as shown on Figure 3-10 in Chapter 3, Project Description, of the Draft EIR.

Because of the increase in proposed building heights, potential future development under the proposed Specific Plan Update could block the far-field views of the Santa Cruz Mountains, the San Bruno Mountains and the San Francisco Bay from various vantage points surrounding the Specific Plan Area. However, because the topography in the Specific Plan Area is essentially flat, the views from street-level public viewing to the scenic vistas are currently inhibited by existing conditions such as buildings, structures, mature trees/vegetation, and transmission lines. While taller buildings under the Specific Plan Area's maximum height increases, that are restricted to certain areas as shown on Figure 3-10, would be visible from distant views in Millbrae, including those from the hillsides in western Millbrae, and the surrounding area, future development under the proposed Specific Plan Update would not further block or obstruct public views of scenic vistas from within the city or surrounding areas. Similar views would continue to be visible between projects and over lower density areas. In addition, the maximum heights currently permitted limit the opportunity for views of scenic vistas from street-level public viewing. Considering this and the fact that the Specific Plan Area and surrounding roadways, hillsides in western Millbrae are not considered destination public viewing points nor are they visible from scenic vistas, overall impacts to scenic vistas would be *less than significant*.

In addition, as described in Chapter 3, Project Description, the proposed Specific Plan Update contains Development Standards to reduce the obstruction of views to scenic vistas. Specifically, the setback standards and the standards for maximum street wall heights would break up building mass and allow for more open views on street corridors. The following Specific Plan Update Urban Design (UD) policies, once adopted, would further reduce impacts to scenic vistas:

- Urban Design Policies
 - P-UD 1. Allow for more intensive and taller development in the immediate vicinity of the Millbrae Station as a means to bring vitality to the area and increase transit ridership.
 - P-UD 9. Create gateway features at the intersections of Victoria/El Camino Real, Murchison/El Camino Real, and Millbrae Avenue/Rollins Road to enhance the identity of Millbrae and the Plan Area. Gateway features include special architectural elements like corner towers, unique landscaping treatments, special intersection paving, signage, and corner development setbacks for open space. Ensure that new development buildings located at the three gateway intersections provide such features.

Furthermore, future development under the proposed Specific Plan Update would be subject to existing General Plan policies identified in Table 4.1-1 that seek to preserve existing views within Millbrae. In particular, Policy PC5.4 requires all new projects to go through the City's design review process specifically to address impacts on views.

Consistency with the General Plan and proposed Specific Plan Update policies, combined with compliance with the City's Design Review process, would ensure that future development under the proposed Specific Plan Update would result in a *less-than-significant* impact to scenic vistas.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

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TOD #1 Project

As is the case with future development under the Specific Plan Update, the development of the proposed TOD #1 project could affect far-field views of the scenic vistas from various vantage points surrounding the Specific Plan Area. However, because the topography of the TOD #1 project site is essentially flat, the views from street-level public viewing to the scenic vistas are currently inhibited by the existing buildings, structures, and mature trees/vegetation. The maximum height (75 feet) currently permitted on the project site under the 1998 Specific Plan limit the opportunity for views of scenic vistas from street-level public viewing around the project site. Also, while the taller building proposed on the site would be visible from distant views in Millbrae and the surrounding area, it would not further block or obstruct public views of scenic vistas from within the city or surrounding areas. Similar views would continue to be visible around the building and over lower buildings in the areas.

Furthermore, same as future development under the Specific Plan Update, the proposed TOD #1 project would be subject to the policies of the General Plan, the Specific Plan Update once adopted, and the Municipal Code requirements that would ensure development of the proposed TOD #1 project would protect views of scenic vistas. Considering this and the fact that the Specific Plan Area and surrounding roadways are not considered destination public viewing points nor are they visible from scenic vistas, overall impacts to scenic vistas would be *less than significant*.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

TOD #2 Project

As is the case with future development under the Specific Plan Update and the proposed TOD #1 project described above, the development of the proposed TOD #2 project could affect far-field views of the scenic vistas from various vantage points surrounding the Specific Plan Area. However, because that the topography of TOD #2 project site is essentially flat, the views from street-level public viewing to the scenic vistas are currently inhibited by the existing buildings, structures, mature trees/vegetation and transmission lines. The maximum height of the parking structure currently on the project site and those permitted under the 1998 Specific Plan (30 to 70 feet) limit the opportunity for views of scenic vistas from street-level public viewing around the project site. Also, while the taller buildings proposed on the site would be visible from distant views in Millbrae and the surrounding area, they would not further block or obstruct public views of scenic vistas from within the city or surrounding areas. Similar views would continue to be visible around the buildings and over lower buildings in the areas.

Furthermore, same as future development under the Specific Plan Update, the proposed TOD #2 project would be subject to the policies of the General Plan, the Specific Plan Update once adopted, and the Municipal Code requirements that would ensure development of the proposed TOD #2 project would protect views of scenic vistas. Considering this and the fact that the Specific Plan Area and surrounding roadways are not considered destination public viewing points nor are they visible from scenic vistas, overall impacts to scenic vistas would be *less than significant*.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

AES-2 **The proposed Project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.**

Future development allowed by the proposed Specific Plan Update could degrade the visual character of the Specific Plan Area if the form and appearance of new development deteriorate the quality of the existing setting.

Specific Plan Update

As described above, the Specific Plan Area exhibits predominantly an auto-oriented urban character and is largely comprised of retail commercial and light industrial uses in buildings that are not architecturally notable. Future development allowed by the proposed Specific Plan Update would introduce building form and massing that is more intense than the current character of the area but would generally be consistent with the overall urban character of the area.

In addition, as described in Chapter 3, Project Description, the proposed Specific Plan Update contains Design Guidelines and Development Standards that regulate new site and building development through standards for intensity, building height, and setbacks. These standards and guidelines would require all new development be more visually pleasing to pedestrians than existing uses, most of which are auto-oriented and includes surface parking lots along the sidewalk. New buildings would be required to include high-quality design, pedestrian-oriented frontages, and landscaping to attract pedestrian traffic, create vibrant streetscapes, provide open corridors with natural light that are visually attractive and provide a sense of place. Maximum and minimum building heights are established for projects in the Specific Plan Area to achieve a building scale that is transit-supportive, as well as pedestrian-friendly. The proposed Specific Plan Update also includes landscape standards to promote appropriate setbacks and buffers, screen undesirable views, provide tree canopies in parking lots and sidewalks, and preserve existing trees. Further, the proposed Specific Plan Update contains special setback policies and design standards for development adjacent to or in close vicinity of existing single-family residential neighborhoods in order to reduce visual inconsistency and promote design that is complementary to and harmonious with adjacent properties and the surrounding area.

In addition to Specific Plan Update Urban Design Policies UD-3 through UD-16 listed under AES-1, the following Specific Plan Update Urban Design (UD) policies, once adopted, would further reduce adverse impacts to the existing visual character of the site and surrounding land uses:

- Urban Design Policies
 - P-UD 3. Ensure new development includes varying and visually engaging facades to promote a pedestrian-friendly environment.
 - P-UD 4. Require new development to employ sustainable building and site design principles, such as Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED), as promulgated by the U.S. Green Building Council, or other acceptable standards. Sustainable building and site design principles include minimizing impervious surfaces, orienting toward solar access, and incorporating energy-efficient elements.
 - P-UD 5. Ensure that new buildings use high quality materials, visually interesting physical elements, and building modulation.

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- P-UD 6. Ensure new development adjacent to residential neighborhoods provides appropriate transitions that respect the scale and character of the adjacent residential neighborhoods.
- P-UD 7. Require that new buildings orient toward public spaces with entries and frontages.
- P-UD 8. Ensure that new development provides visual interest at the ground floor to provide pedestrian interest. Blank walls and non-transparent street frontages should be minimized.
- P-UD 10. Require all development projects provide appropriate landscaping between the street and buildings to soften the hardscape and along the edges of open spaces to define the space.
- P-UD 12. Enhance streetscapes along El Camino Real and Millbrae Avenue to enhance the gateway role and appearance of the street.
- P-UD 13. Ensure new buildings that can be seen from Highway 101 include visually pleasing building envelope and signage.
- P-UD 14. Encourage office development with state-of-the-art design techniques to maximize space, flexibility and functionality. Ensure office buildings are oriented towards public streets or open space.
- P-UD 15. Ensure parking structures are screened from pedestrian views and/or wrapped with active uses. Pay attention to design of the upper portions of parking structures to ensure attractive architecture.
- P-UD 16. Integrate public art into public space design.

Furthermore, future development under the proposed Specific Plan Update would be subject to the City's Design Review process and to existing General Plan policies identified in Table 4.1-1 that aim to protect the visual character of Millbrae. In particular, Policy LU2.1 requires quality site planning, architecture and landscape design for all new development, renovation or remodeling. Although future development allowed by the proposed Specific Plan Update would change the existing visual character on individual sites, compliance with these regulations would ensure that the bulk, mass, height, and architectural character of future development in the Specific Plan Area would be compatible with surrounding uses and would not substantially degrade the visual quality of the site or its surroundings and associated impacts would be *less than significant*.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

TOD #1 Project

The proposed TOD #1 project, described in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this Draft EIR, includes 267,000 square feet of office space, 32,000 square feet of retail space and 500 residential units. The project would develop three main buildings between eight and ten stories tall over three levels of subterranean parking and an enclosed galleria retail corridor connecting Serra Avenue to the Millbrae Station platform. The proposed TOD #1 project would install streetscape features along the project site perimeter, including street lights, sidewalk treatments, trees, planters, landscaping, and street furniture. Landscaping features are illustrated on Figure 3-23 (Landscape Plan).

The street tree types would be determined according to the Millbrae Municipal Code Chapter 8.60, City of Millbrae Tree Protection and Urban Forestry Program.¹⁶

While development of the proposed TOD #1 project would represent a change to the existing visual character, which as described above, presents two distinctive characters: 1) a vacant lumber yard and 2) a warehouse on the northern side and a nursing facility with a grassy back yard and a fenced surface parking lot on the southern side, the proposed TOD #1 project would be consistent with the overall urban character of the surrounding area. The surrounding area exhibits a similar built environment as the proposed TOD #1 project, including single-story shops with surface parking lots; a recently built four- to five-story mixed-use building across El Camino Real to the west; the Caltrain platforms and railroad tracks to the east, and surface parking lots and a stand-alone restaurant across Linden Avenue. Therefore, the proposed TOD #1 project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality to these surrounding uses.

There is the potential for the project to degrade the visual quality of the area surrounding the site to the north as this area predominately consists of single-family homes. However, as shown on Figure 3-19 (Site Plan) in Chapter 3, the proposed TOD #1 project would include a private driveway with limited use by office employees only. This driveway would serve as a buffer between the project and the single-family homes to the north. As shown on Figure 3-24 (Roadway Layout), a 16-foot buffer would be provided between the roadway and the single-family homes. As shown on Figure 3-23 (Landscape Plan), the buffer would be landscaped. In addition, the 24-foot to 36-foot roadway and 10-foot sidewalk would also serve as a buffer between these two uses. This is consistent with Specific Plan Update Urban Design Policy 6, which requires new development adjacent to residential neighborhoods to provide appropriate transitions that respect the scale and character of the adjacent residential neighborhoods, and General Plan Policy H2.9, which requires the protection of the character of existing residential neighborhoods. Therefore, the proposed TOD #1 project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the surrounding single-family homes.

Furthermore, the proposed TOD #1 project would be subject to the City's Design Review process and to existing General Plan policies identified in Table 4.1-1 that aim to protect the visual character of Millbrae. In particular, Policy LU2.1 requires quality site planning, architecture and landscape design for all new development, renovation or remodeling. Compliance with these regulations would reduce visual inconsistency and promote design that is complementary to and harmonious with adjacent properties and the surrounding area. Therefore, development of the project would not substantially degrade the visual quality of the site or its surroundings and associated impacts would be *less than significant*.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

TOD #2 Project

The proposed TOD #2 project, described in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this Draft EIR, includes 164,535 square feet of office space, 46,935 square feet of retail space, 321 residential units and 116 hotel rooms. The project would develop four main buildings between four and seven stories tall over three levels of parking and an

¹⁶ Millbrae Municipal Code Title 8 (Public Works), Chapter 8 (City of Millbrae Tree Protection and Urban Forestry Program).

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additional surface parking lot north of the Highland Canal. The proposed TOD #2 project would install streetscape features along the building perimeters and the pedestrian and bicycle paseo that connects to the Millbrae Station, including street lights, sidewalk treatments, trees, planters, landscaping, and street furniture. Landscaping features are illustrated on Figure 3-34 in Chapter 3. The street tree types would be determined according to the Millbrae Municipal Code Chapter 8.60, City of Millbrae Tree Protection and Urban Forestry Program.¹⁷

While development of the proposed TOD #2 project would represent a significant change to the existing visual character of the site itself, which as described above, includes a four-story parking structure, surface parking lots with PG&E transmission towers, a drop-off area and a bus station, and the City storage yard, the proposed TOD #2 project would be consistent with the overall urban character of the surrounding area and the non-project structures on the site that would be retained (i.e. four-story parking garage and gas station). Similar to the TOD #1 project site, the TOD #2 project site borders the Millbrae Station and railroad tracks. While the areas to the south and east do not include high-rise buildings, the SFO-owned parcel to the east is within the SFO Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (ALUCP), which prohibits permanent structures on the site, and the two-story industrial and commercial buildings south of the TOD #2 project site are located across Millbrae Avenue. The four-lane Millbrae Avenue serves as a visual buffer between the TOD #2 project site and the development to the south. Therefore, because the surrounding land uses either exhibit a similar urban environment, are prohibited from development or are buffered by Millbrae Avenue, the proposed TOD #2 project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality to these surrounding uses.

Similar to the proposed TOD #1 project, there is the potential for the proposed TOD #2 project to degrade the visual quality of the single-family homes to the north. However, because the proposed TOD #2 project would include a surface parking lot adjacent to these single-family homes the proposed TOD #2 project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the surrounding single-family homes.

Furthermore, the proposed TOD #2 project would be subject to the City's Design Review process and to existing General Plan policies identified in Table 4.1-1 that aim to protect the visual character of Millbrae. In particular, Policy LU2.1 requires quality site planning, architecture and landscape design for all new development, renovation or remodeling. Compliance with these regulations would reduce visual inconsistency and promote design that is complementary to and harmonious with adjacent properties and the surrounding area. Therefore, development of the proposed TOD #2 project would not substantially degrade the visual quality of the site or its surroundings and associated impacts would be *less than significant*.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

¹⁷ Millbrae Municipal Code Title 8 (Public Works), Chapter 8 (City of Millbrae Tree Protection and Urban Forestry Program).

AES-3 **The proposed Project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.**

Nighttime illumination and glare impacts are the effects of a project's exterior lighting upon adjoining uses and areas. Light and glare impacts are determined through a comparison of the existing light sources with the proposed lighting plan or policies.

Currently, the Specific Plan Area contains many existing sources of nighttime illumination. These include street and parking area lights, security lighting, and exterior lighting on existing residential and commercial buildings. Additional onsite light and glare is caused by surrounding land uses and traffic on El Camino Real, Millbrae Avenue and Highway 101.

Specific Plan Update

The Specific Plan Area is almost fully developed with various uses, including the BART station and its surface parking lots and parking structure, commercial, industrial, and few multi-family residential mixed-use. Future development under the proposed Specific Plan Update would replace existing low-rise buildings with medium- to high-rise buildings, adding new sources of light, such as exterior lighting, indoor lighting, and safety lighting. In particular, the proposed Specific Plan Update would have up to 1,750 multi-family residential units at build-out, which would introduce 24-hour uses that could involve more nighttime lighting than currently exists in the Specific Plan Area. Additionally, as described in Chapter 6, Design Guidelines, of the proposed Specific Plan Update, open space would be designed for day and nighttime use and would include sufficient lighting for safety and comfort.

With development of the proposed Project, sources of light associated with the existing buildings would be replaced with new sources of interior and exterior lighting. Exterior lighting provided on and around the future development and would largely be contained under the roofs of the proposed structures. In the walkways and common areas, lighting would meet levels needed to assure adequate orientation and safety. Lights near the property lines of the future project site would be directed so as to minimize any spill-over lighting to the maximum extent practicable. In landscaped and paved areas, light sources would be concealed. All exterior surface and above-ground mounted fixtures would be sympathetic and complementary to the architectural theme. The nearest land uses sensitive to spill light are residences that share a property line with the Specific Plan Area to the north. Exterior lights for safety, security, and building illumination could create substantial spill light at that distance.

The travel lanes on El Camino Real, Millbrae Avenue and Highway 101 traverse the Specific Plan Area. Because there is no new development potential for the lands adjacent to Highway 101 and the areas where El Camino Real and Millbrae Avenue cross the Specific Plan Area are highly developed, the increase in lighting under the Specific Plan Update would not adversely affect nighttime views as seen from these roadways.

The Specific Plan Update includes Design Guidelines to ensure all light sources should be directed downward and shielded to prevent light and glare spillover onto adjacent residential properties. The Design Guidelines also stipulate that building exteriors should use non-reflective coatings, low-emissivity glass, and external shade devices for heat and glare control, and prohibits the use of highly reflective glass. The landscaping requirements of the Design Guidelines, which require all development projects to provide appropriate landscaping between the street

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and buildings which would further screen buildings and reduce glare. Future development under the Specific Plan Update would be subject to the City's Design Review process per General Plan Policy LU2.1, which requires quality site planning, architecture and landscape design for all new development, renovation or remodeling. The Design Review Process would include compliance with the Design Guidelines set forth in the Specific Plan Update once adopted. Furthermore, the City has adopted the California Building Code per Municipal Code Section 9.05.010, which includes standards for outdoor lighting that are intended to reduce light pollution and glare by regulating light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls.

Overall, interior and exterior lighting provided by the proposed Specific Plan Update would be consistent with the urbanized context of the Specific Plan Area and would not be considered substantial. Accordingly, future development under the Specific Plan Update would not create substantial light and glare such that could degrade daytime or nighttime views or pose a hazard to drivers on nearby roadways.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

TOD #1 Project

The impact discussion for the Specific Plan Update also applies to the proposed TOD #1 project.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

TOD #2 Project

The impact discussion for the Specific Plan Update also applies to the proposed TOD #2 project.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

4.1.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

AES-4	The proposed Project, in combination with past, present and reasonably foreseeable projects, would not result in less than significant cumulative impacts with respect to aesthetics.
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The methodology used for the cumulative impact analysis is described in Section 4, Environmental Analysis, of this Draft EIR. The cumulative setting for aesthetics includes past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects within the immediate vicinity of the Specific Plan Area.

As previously discussed, there are no State-designated scenic highways in the Specific Plan Area or surrounding area. As such, there would be no cumulative impacts to visual resources along scenic highways.

Significant impacts, including those associated with scenic resources, visual character, and increased light and glare would generally be site-specific and would not contribute to cumulative impacts after implementation of the Specific Plan Update and the provisions stated in the Municipal Code. The proposed heights in some areas of the

proposed Project would, within the designated growth areas, significantly alter the vertical landscape and urban form of the Specific Plan Area over time, as new development is proposed.

Because of the developed nature of the Specific Plan Area, future development under the proposed Project, in combination with other new development, would not negatively impact the visual character of the Millbrae.

In addition, future development in the city would be required to comply with the City's Design Review process and be reviewed against applicable General Plan policies and City's design standards for design quality and compatibility with adjacent land uses. As discussed above, the proposed Specific Plan Update includes policies to ensure that future projects in the Specific Plan Area are well designed, attractive, and compatible with surrounding uses. Therefore, the combination of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects would not result in a cumulatively considerable significant impact on scenic resources, visual character, or light and glare.

Significance Without Mitigation: Less than significant.

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