3.1 - Aesthetics, Light, and Glare

3.1.1 - Introduction

This section describes the existing aesthetics, light, and glare setting and potential effects from project implementation on visual resources and the site and its surroundings. Descriptions and analysis in this section are based on site reconnaissance by FirstCarbon Solutions personnel, as well as review of the City of Atascadero General Plan, the Atascadero Municipal Code, and the proposed Eagle Ranch Specific Plan.

3.1.2 - Environmental Setting

Visual Character

Regional Setting

The City of Atascadero is located in northern San Luis Obispo County on California’s Central Coast. Atascadero is located approximately 12 miles inland from the Pacific Ocean at an elevation of approximately 800 feet above mean sea level. Relief is characterized by the Santa Lucia Mountains to the west and the Coast Range foothills to the east, with the Salinas River Valley in between. The natural land cover of the regional landscape is predominantly oak woodland and oak savanna, with riparian plant communities in the drainages and creeks.

The City of Atascadero is organized in a north-south orientation, with the downtown area in the center. Commercial land uses are generally located along the El Camino Real corridor, which parallels U.S. 101, with residential uses to west, north, and east. The Salinas River forms the eastern boundary of the city limits. Notable landmarks include Pine Mountain, the historic Sunken Gardens, and the historic Atascadero City Hall.

Specific Plan Area

The Specific Plan area consists of rolling topography that has historically been used for grazing purposes. Within the Specific Plan area, elevations range from approximately 920 feet to 1,600 feet above mean sea level. Tarantula Hill, elevation 1,300 feet, is located in the center of Eagle Ranch and serves as a prominent topographical feature.

Vegetation primarily consists of non-native grassland and oak woodland. Generally, the non-native grassland is present on valley floors and the oak woodland is present on hillsides and ridgelines. Tree species primarily consist of Coast live oak, blue oak, toyon, gray pine, cottonwood, and sycamore. There are an estimated 110,000 existing trees within the boundaries of the Specific Plan area that are 5 inches or greater in diameter at breast height.

A cluster of structures is located in the southern portion of the Specific Plan area. The structures include three single-family residences and several barns and outbuildings associated with grazing operations. Improvements such as corrals, stock ponds, and groundwater wells are also present.

Tributaries of three major drainages (Atascadero Creek, Eagle Creek, and Paloma Creek) are located within the Specific Plan area. All drainages convey runoff to the north and ultimately the Salinas River.
Surrounding Land Uses and Views

The following describes the land uses and views surrounding the Specific Plan boundaries. Exhibit 3.1-1 provides views of the surrounding land uses.

West

The Los Padres National Forest is located west of the Specific Plan boundaries. The National Forest contains foothills that are vegetated with forest and oak grassland.

North

Residential development located within the Atascadero city limits is located north of the Specific Plan boundaries. Development generally consists of large-parcel, rural residential uses of 1 acre or more. In addition, the Atascadero Land Preservation Society (ALPS) property, a private open space area, is located north of the Specific Plan area along State Route 41 (SR-41).

East

US 101 (a four-lane freeway) and residential development located within the Atascadero city limits are located east of the Specific Plan boundaries. Residential lots range from approximately 8,000 square-feet to 1 acre in area. East of US 101 are large-parcel, rural residential uses and foothills.

South

Rugged foothills that are vegetated with forest and oak grassland are located south of the Specific Plan boundaries. This area is owned by the project applicant, is located within unincorporated San Luis Obispo County, and is used for grazing activities. (Note that this land is not part of the project application.) Further south is the Los Padres National Forest.

Light and Glare

Eagle Ranch contains limited existing sources of light and glare. The existing structures on-site have exterior light fixtures, and interior lighting is visible at night. Headlamps and tail lamps associated with ranch vehicles produce light and glare.

Light and glare in areas surrounding Eagle Ranch consist of exterior and interior residential lighting and vehicle headlamps and tail lamps on surrounding roads, namely US 101, Atascadero Avenue, and Santa Barbara Road.

3.1.3 - Regulatory Framework

Local

The General Plan establishes the following goals and policies related to aesthetic resources that are applicable to the proposed project:

Chapter 2: Land Use, Open Space and Conservation Element

- **Goal LOC 1.1:** Protect and preserve the rural atmosphere of the community by assuring “elbow room” for residents by means of maintenance of large lot sizes which increase in proportion to distance beyond the Urban Core.
Surrounding Land Uses

View of residential uses near US 101 / Santa Barbara Road.
View of Eagle Peak south of Eagle Ranch.
View of Atascadero.
View of Santa Lucia Mountains west of Eagle Ranch.

Source: FirstCarbon Solutions, 2013.
• **Policy LOC 1.1:** Preserve the rural atmosphere of the community and assure “elbow room” in areas designated for lower density development by guiding new development into the Urban Core to conform to the historic Colony land use patterns of the City and to respect the natural environment, hillside areas, and existing neighborhoods.

• **Policy LOC 1.2:** (Ensure the rural character of Atascadero is preserved by respecting the historic Colony boundaries and cooperate with the County on regional planning issues surrounding the Colony.)

• **Policy LOC 1.3:** Enhance the rural character and appearance of the City, including commercial corridors, gateways, and public facilities.

• **Policy LOC 1.4:** Ensure that “darkness” remain a rural characteristic by requiring that all exterior lighting does not result in significant off-site spillage or glare.

• **Goal LOC-2:** Preserve residential neighborhoods and the winding tree-lined nature of the street and road system.

• **Policy LOC 2.1:** Ensure that new development is compatible with existing and surrounding neighborhoods.

• **Goal LOC-5:** Preserve the contours of the hills. Buildings built on hillsides shall conform to the topography using the slope of the land as the basis for the design of the structure.

• **Policy LOC 5.2:** Require hillside development and subdivisions to blend in with surrounding topography.

• **Policy LOC 5.3:** Prevent unnecessarily intensive grading of development sites.

• **Goal LOC-6:** Preserve natural flora and fauna and protect scenic lands, sensitive natural areas, historic buildings and cultural resources.

• **Policy 6.1:** Ensure that development does not degrade scenic and sensitive areas, including historic sites, creeks, riparian corridors, wetlands, woodlands, hillsides, and other valuable habitats.

• **Goal LOC-7:** Tree-covered hills shall be preserved to retain the distinctive scenic quality of the community.

• **Policy 7.1:** Ensure that the native trees of Atascadero are protected from new development in order to retain the natural character of the community.

• **Policy 7.2:** Protect and replenish native tree populations, including saplings.

### 3.1.4 - Methodology

FirstCarbon Solutions (FCS) evaluated project impacts on aesthetics, light, and glare through site reconnaissance, review of the Specific Plan and project plans, and the preparation of visual simulations. FCS conducted site reconnaissance in October 2013 and documented existing conditions with digital photographs. FCS reviewed the proposed Specific Plan, vesting tentative map, and grading plan to determine the extent of proposed development activities. Finally, visual simulations were prepared to provide a conceptual depiction of the proposed project’s visual attributes.

### 3.1.5 - Thresholds of Significance

According to Appendix G, Environmental Checklist of the CEQA Guidelines, aesthetics impacts resulting from the implementation of the proposed project would be considered significant if the project 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 building within a state scenic highway? (Refer to Section 7, Effects Found Not To Be Significant.)

c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Regarding Checklist Item b), neither SR-41 nor US 101 is classified as “Officially Designated” State Scenic Highways and, therefore, this issue is addressed in Section 7, Effects Found Not To Be Significant.

3.1.6 - Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section discusses potential impacts associated with the development of the project and provides mitigation measures where appropriate.

Scenic Vistas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact AES-1:</th>
<th>Buildout of the Specific Plan would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Impact Analysis**

A scenic vista for purposes of CEQA can be defined as a viewing point that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape available to the general public. Although the City of Atascadero General Plan does not identify specific locations as “Scenic Vistas,” the General Plan contains policies and goals regarding the protection of scenic hillsides, ridgelines, native trees, and open space. Thus, for the purposes of this analysis, a scenic vista will be views of these features from public places (e.g., roadways) that may be altered by the proposed project.

Agriculture and open space would occupy the majority of the acreage (75 percent), with development and infrastructure occupying the remaining acreage (25 percent). Nearly all development would be located below the 1,450-foot contour. The most rugged and remote areas of the Specific Plan area (e.g., areas that adjoin the Los Padres National Forest, ALPS property, the privately owned grazing land to the south, and panhandle-shaped area that abuts the US 101 corridor) would be protected as open space. Exhibit 3.1-2 depicts the areas of slopes between 20 and 30 percent and Exhibit 3.1-3 depicts the areas of slopes of 30 percent or more. The project site plan and Vesting Tentative Tract Map were designed with the intention to minimize development on steep slopes. In accordance with the City’s General Plan and Subdivision regulations, the Tentative Tract Map was developed by the applicant and checked by city staff to verify that any lots proposed with an average slope of over 30 percent shall contain a building site with slope less than 20 percent. As shown in the exhibits, the Specific Plan has provisions to preserve open space areas in perpetuity; thus, this is considered a benefit that would otherwise not occur without the project.
Exhibit 3.1-2
Slopes 20-30%

Legend
- Specific Plan Boundaries
- Slopes 20-30%

Source: rrm design, 2016, ESRI Imagery
Ridgelines and hillsides in this area are as high as 2,000 feet and, thus, are the most visible topographical features, particularly to motorists on US 101 and SR-41. As will be discussed in greater detail in Impact AES-2 and depicted in Exhibit 3.1-4 through Exhibit 3.1-14, views of the most prominent portions of the foothills and ridgelines to the west and south would be preserved, thereby avoiding impacts on the scenic features.

Within the developed areas, the Specific Plan sets forth “No Build” lines to protect waterways, oak tree stands, and steep slopes to limit development to appropriate areas and minimize adverse effects to these scenic features.

In summary, impacts on scenic vistas would be less than significant.

**Level of Significance Before Mitigation**

Less than significant impact.

**Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is necessary.

**Level of Significance After Mitigation**

Less than significant impact.

**Visual Character**

Impact AES-2: Buildout of the Specific Plan would not degrade the visual character of the project site and its surroundings.

**Impact Analysis**

This impact addresses the potential for the proposed project to substantially degrade the visual character of the project site and its surrounding area. The existing visual character of the project vicinity is defined by low-density residential uses, medium-density residential uses, and Los Padres National Forest. The project is surrounded by residential uses to the north and east and on by Los Padres National Forest to the west and south.

**Specific Plan**

The Eagle Ranch Specific Plan seeks to guide the development of residential, commercial, resort, park, recreation, and open space uses within the 3,457-acre project site. The Specific Plan would be phased over a period of decades; as such, the change in visual character would occur incrementally over time.

Agriculture and open space would occupy the majority of the acreage (75 percent), with development and infrastructure occupying the remaining acreage (25 percent). This 3:1 ratio of open space to development is codified in Specific Plan Policy COS-1, which stipulates that “approximately 75 percent of the Specific Plan area shall be protected and maintained as open space and/or agriculture.” Moreover, the most rugged and remote areas of the Specific Plan area would be designated open space, including areas that adjoin the Los Padres National Forest, ALPS property, the privately owned grazing land to the south, and panhandle-shaped area that abuts the US 101...
corridor. The Specific Plan has provisions to preserve open space areas in perpetuity; thus, this is considered a benefit that would otherwise not occur without the project.

Development and infrastructure would be located in areas adjacent to the existing Atascadero city limits. The Specific Plan contemplates single-family residential development of similar density and lot sizes in areas where the project would interface with existing residential development in the Atascadero city limits (e.g., along Atascadero Avenue, San Rafael Road, San Carlos Road, and Los Osos Road). Higher density residential uses are proposed in interior areas of the project, such as the area around the Village Center. These provisions would promote the City of Atascadero’s goals and policies concerning land use compatibility with adjacent uses (i.e., “elbow room”), while also maximizing the efficient use of land and minimizing the development footprint of the project.

The Specific Plan contemplates the protection of creek corridors by locating development away from the banks and channels where feasible, and minimizing roadway crossings. For example, Paloma Creek and its seven unnamed tributaries drain the eastern portion of the Specific Plan area—including the most densely developed areas—but would only be crossed by roadways in six locations. Moreover, four tributaries would be largely untouched by development because they would overlap with areas designated for open space. In areas where creeks would pass through developed areas, the Specific Plan identifies “No-Build Lines” in order to prevent encroachment of development or improvements into creek corridors.

Nearly all development would be located below the 1,450-foot contour. The most rugged and remote areas of the Specific Plan area (e.g., areas that adjoin the Los Padres National Forest, ALPS property, the privately owned grazing land to the south, and panhandle-shaped area that abuts the US 101 corridor) would be protected as open space. Exhibit 3.1-2 depicts the areas of slopes between 20 and 30 percent and Exhibit 3.1-2 depicts the areas of slopes of 30 percent or more. The project site plan and Vesting Tentative Tract Map were designed with the intention of minimizing development on steep slopes. In accordance with the City’s General Plan and Subdivision regulations, the Tentative Tract Map was developed by the applicant and checked by city staff to verify that any lots proposed with an average slope of over 30 percent shall contain a building site with slope less than 20 percent. Moreover, construction is prohibited where the slope of natural grade exceeds 30 percent. Finally, for the purposes of this EIR’s analysis, the Specific Plan seeks to minimize oak tree removal through the use of the aforementioned “No-Build Lines” and establishment of limits on tree removal on individual residential lots in accordance with Atascadero Municipal Code requirements. The latter requirement sets for a recommended sliding scale of trees that may be removed that corresponds to lot size, existing tree density, and location.
Sources: Environmental Vision, 2015

Exhibit 3.1-4
Visual Simulation Key

CITY OF ATASCADERO • EAGLE RANCH SPECIFIC PLAN
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
Existing view from northbound US 101 looking northwest.

Visual simulation of proposed project.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015
Existing view from southbound US 101 looking southwest.

Visual simulation of proposed project.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015
Existing view from rear yard on Eagle Creek Court looking south.

Visual simulation of proposed project.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015
Existing view from Atascadero Avenue looking west.

Visual simulation of proposed project.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015
Existing view from Atascadero Avenue near San Diego Road (East) looking northwest.

Visual simulation of proposed project.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015
Existing view from Atascadero Avenue north of San Diego Road (East) looking southeast.

Visual simulation of proposed project.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015
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Existing view from San Rafael Road near San Carlos Road looking southeast.

Visual simulation of proposed project.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015
Existing view from San Carlos Road looking south.

Visual simulation of proposed project.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015
Existing view of center of Eagle Ranch.

Visual simulation of Village Center multi-family residential uses.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015

Exhibit 3.1-13
Visual Simulation I
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Existing view from San Diego Road (West) at San Dimas Road looking southeast.

Visual simulation of proposed project.

Source: Environmental Vision, 2015
Design Standards
The Design Guidelines in the Specific Plan Appendix A sets forth design guidelines for new residential and commercial developments and provides architectural review bodies a tool by which to evaluate projects. These design guidelines encourage architectural variety, promote quality development, and ensure that new development:

- Is attractive and an asset to the neighborhood by incorporating architectural detail on all sides of the home (360 degree architecture).
- Protects the natural features of a site.
- Incorporates quality articulation, multiple building forms, desirable building details, a variety of materials, and other elements that display excellence in design.

The following discussion provides an overview of the relevant Specific Plan design guidelines related to visual character.

Neighborhood Design Objectives
- Establish a sense of place and design identity.
- Embrace the City of Atascadero’s “elbow room” quality as a desired neighborhood characteristic.
- Encourage landscape design that complements and enhances both the appearance and function of the streetscape.
- Provide a comfortable, functional, and aesthetic streetscape that unifies the character of the Specific Plan Area.
- Create a streetscape design framework that promotes a walkable environment, traffic safety, and sustainability while providing thematic consistency throughout the Specific Plan Area.
- Strengthen the character and sense of place within the Specific Plan Area by providing visual elements to orient residents and visitors to their surroundings.

Neighborhood Design Policies
General Design Policies
- When preparing project designs, environmental, agricultural, and open space resources within the Eagle Ranch Specific Plan Area shall be protected to the extent practical.
- Trails and open space areas shall be provided to enhance neighborhood quality of life.
- Distinguish the streetscape design in commercial areas from the streetscape design in residential areas while maintaining a consistency in character throughout the Specific Plan Area.
- The design of gateway monuments and signage, neighborhood landmarks, and focal areas shall be coordinated to reinforce their prominence.
- Gateways into the Specific Plan area shall receive special, character-defining treatments and landscaping with natural materials and colors.

Residential Design Policies
- Residential design shall incorporate “360 degree” architecture meaning that all facades shall be articulated with varying wall planes and roof forms.
• Accessory structures and residential second units shall exhibit the same level of design, quality, and architectural detail as the home they accompany. Mansard roof styles are prohibited. Mirror glass is prohibited. Accessory structures shall include architectural details that reflect the architectural style of the primary residence.

• Manufacturer’s specifications and/or cut sheets for all proposed exterior light fixtures shall be provided with HOA ARC submittal and/or building permit applications. Applicant shall prepare an exterior lighting cut sheet as part of the HOA ARC review process.

• Except for ambient string lights, exterior lighting shall shield the light bulb so it cannot be seen from adjacent residential development or from public viewpoints. Flood lights are prohibited.

• Residential design shall be easily recognizable as one of the encouraged architectural characters identified in Section 7.4.2.

Landscape Design Policies

• The neighborhood public park shall be maintained by the Eagle Ranch Home Owners Association.

• Specific plant palettes for the different land uses should include plants selected from the Atascadero Mutual Water Company (available at www.amwc.us/ConservingLandscape.asp.)

• Well-designed and substantial streetcape and front yard landscaping shall be provided in both single-family and multifamily neighborhoods (see landscaping standards in Table 2.5)

• Landscape materials selected for the hardscape such as pavements, pavers, street furnishings, and fixtures shall be uniform and complementary throughout the Specific Plan area.

• Infrastructure and appropriate planting shall be provided to facilitate efficient stormwater drainage and management.

• Functional and usable outdoor areas, such as porches, patios, courtyards, or other areas for the use of building residents shall be provided for multifamily buildings.

• Turfgrass lawn area for single-family residential lots shall be limited to functional use areas and conform to the standards in Table 2.5. Turf should be directly accessible to and/or adjacent to outdoor pedestrian spaces, such as patios or walks.

• Turfgrass lawn area for multifamily residential developments shall be provided per the standards identified in Table 2.20 and shall be designated as usable recreation space.

• Turfgrass lawn area for non-residential areas shall be prohibited with an exception for the commercial recreation-hotel area events lawn, hotel, resort, and parks.

• Sustainable landscape practices shall be applied to medians, gateways, and park areas to the extent practical.

• Trees, plants, shrubs, and ground cover that are well-adapted to the regional climate (appropriate “Sunset Climate Zones” or “USDA Zones”), well adapted to local soils, and drought-tolerant for water conservation shall be selected for use within multifamily residential areas and streetscapes.

• Trash cans shall be enclosed or screened from public view with landscaping and fencing or within a structure, such as the garage.

• Above-grade utility components and boxes, and other site elements and structures that detract from the overall visual aesthetics of the specific plan area shall be screened using plants or other screen material or structure that is compatible utility company requirements and with the overall landscape design and project character.
• All common area landscaping shall be maintained to ensure plants are healthy and visually attractive.
• Irrigation systems shall comply with the California Department of Water Resources Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance AB 1881.
• Low flow, weather and/or moisture based irrigation controllers and efficient irrigation heads shall be used to apply water to plants and turfgrass areas for water conservation.
• Irrigation systems shall be adjusted and programmed to apply water based on the local evapotranspiration rate on an as needed basis.
• All single-family detached housing shall be constructed with a weather and/or moisture based irrigation controller per CALGreen. Where possible, subsurface drip irrigation is recommended.
• Low-flow, efficient irrigation heads shall be used for water conservation when applying water to plants and lawns.
• Irrigation heads shall be adjustable to minimize overspray and runoff.
• Irrigation systems shall be fitted with a master flow valve to detect line breakage and to shut off the supply.
• Lighting fixtures shall contain extension shields to minimize glare and light source visibility.
• Palm trees are prohibited in residential and non-residential projects.
• Meandering sidewalks shall be permitted to reflect a natural character.

**Pylon Sign**

The Specific Plan permits the highway commercial area near US 101 to erect one, 50-foot-tall pylon sign advertising the hotel. The sign is allowed to have two, internally lit sign panels totaling 150 square feet on each face. The Specific Plan prohibits the pylon sign from employing flashing or rotating elements, electronic displays, or neon.

Overall, the visual impact of the pylon sign would be proportionate to the hotel building in terms of height, sign size, and lighted elements. Moreover, it would be similar to other pylon signs along US 101 in San Luis Obispo County.

**Visual Simulations**

Exhibits 3.1-4 through 3.1-14 depict visual simulations of the proposed project. Each simulation is described as follows:

• Exhibit 3.1-4: Map showing the location of each vantage point.
• Exhibit 3.1-5: View of the highway commercial uses from northbound US 101.
• Exhibit 3.1-6: View of the highway commercial uses from southbound US 101, including pylon sign.
• Exhibit 3.1-7: View of the highway commercial uses from Eagle Creek Court.
• Exhibit 3.1-8: View of the Atascadero Avenue (South) access point from westbound Atascadero Avenue.
• Exhibit 3.1-9: View of the Atascadero Avenue/San Diego Road intersection from northbound Atascadero Avenue.

• Exhibit 3.1-10: View of the Atascadero Avenue (North) access point from southbound of Atascadero Avenue.

• Exhibit 3.1-11: View of the dwelling units along San Rafael Road (West) looking southeast.

• Exhibit 3.1-12: View of the San Carlos Road access point looking south.

• Exhibit 3.1-13: View of the San Diego Road (West) access point looking southeast.

• Exhibit 3.1-14: View of the Village Center multi-family uses from the Main Loop.

Analysis
Exhibits 3.1-5 through 3.1-7 show various views of the highway commercial uses. As shown in Exhibit 3.1-5 and Exhibit 3.1-6, the highway commercial uses would be minimally visible from northbound and southbound US 101. However, as shown in Exhibit 3.1-7, the highway commercial uses would be readily visible from Eagle Creek Court because they would be at a higher elevation and because of the lack of intervening structures and vegetation. However, they would be clustered in a manner such that they would not dominate the viewscape or prevent views of the foothills or the ridgelines to the south from Eagle Creek Court.

Exhibit 3.1-8 through Exhibit 3.1-10 depict various vantage points along Atascadero Avenue. There will be substantial changes to the alignment and visual character to Atascadero Avenue. Mitigation measures include additional changes including a roundabout at the south entry, road alignment at the north entry, medians and bulb-outs for traffic calming, and either bike lanes and pedestrian paths or a separated road trail.

Exhibit 3.1-11 depicts San Rafael Road (West), which forms the project boundary. New single-family lots associated with Eagle Ranch are proposed along the south side of San Rafael Road (West). The lot lines of the new residential uses would align with the existing single-family lot lines on the opposite of the roadway in order to achieve density and proportion similar to the existing residential uses. This is a design technique intended to promote visual compatibility with adjoining uses.

Exhibit 3.1-12 depicts the San Carlos Road access point looking south into Eagle Ranch. Similar to San Rafael Road (West), the new single-family lots proposed along this roadway would align with the existing single-family lots on the opposite side of the roadway in order to achieve density and proportion similar to the existing residential uses.

Exhibit 3.1-13 depicts the San Diego Road (West) access point. No residential development would be visible from this vantage point as views of Eagle Ranch would be screened by topography and vegetation.

Exhibit 3.1-14 provides a visual simulation of the Village Center multi-family residential uses from the main loop within Eagle Ranch. The multi-family uses would be located at a lower elevation than surrounding topography, thereby preserving views of the foothills and ridgelines to the south.
Overall, views of the development within Eagle Ranch from surrounding land uses would be limited to the existing residential uses closest to project boundary; most of the development would not be visible from these uses. In cases where new Eagle Ranch development would interface with existing residential uses, the project design has sought to minimize the change in visual character by proposing uses of similar density and proportion, which would serve to promote visual compatibility.

**Conclusion**

Although the Eagle Ranch Specific Plan Project would result in the irreversible change of the portion of the project site that would support development, it would allow the retention and preservation of most of Eagle Ranch as agriculture and open space. The agriculture and open space area includes the most visually significant portions of project site such as creeks, steep slopes, and ridgelines. The new urban development contemplated by the project would be guided by the Specific Plan’s design standards, which set forth comprehensive guidelines for architecture, landscaping, and site design to ensure a high-quality, visually appealing project. Overall, the preservation of approximately three-fourths of the project site as open space, the modest change in visual appearance from surrounding residential uses, and the establishment of design standards would ensure that the proposed project would have a less than significant impact on visual character.

**Level of Significance Before Mitigation**
Less than significant impact.

**Mitigation Measures**
No mitigation is necessary with buildout of proposed project as identified in Specific Plan.

**Level of Significance After Mitigation**
Less than significant impact.

**Light and Glare**

| Impact AES-3: | Buildout of the Specific Plan may result in introduction of new sources of substantial light and glare. |

**Impact Analysis**

This impact will evaluate the potential for the Specific Plan and its project components to introduce new sources of light and glare.

The potential project uses with the greatest potential to adversely impact existing residential land uses with light and glare impacts are the highway commercial area and the new residential uses located along the northern portion of the project site along San Rafael Road (East and West) and San Carlos Road. Each will be discussed separately. For all other areas of the Specific Plan, lighting would not be expected to be visible because of the presence of intervening topography and vegetation.
Highway Commercial Area
The highway commercial uses would feature a hotel and restaurant that would employ nighttime lighting for safety and security purposes. Additionally, street lighting along the roadways leading to the highway commercial area would be illuminated during nighttime hours. The existing residential uses on Eagle Creek Court would have the greatest potential exposure to these sources of light and glare.

The Specific Plan sets forth various standards for exterior lighting and street lighting that would apply to the highway commercial area:

- Chapter 3, Land Use and Development Standards, Table 3.10 establishes specific development standards for nonresidential exterior lighting. Upward-aimed building façade lighting is limited to no more than 900 lumens and must be fully shielded, fully confined from projecting to the sky by eaves, roofs, or overhangs, and mounted as flush to a wall as possible. Other types of building façade lighting must be fully shielded, aimed downward, and mounted as flush to a wall as possible.

- Appendix A, Design Guidelines, Section A.7.5 reiterates the standards set forth in Chapter 3 and requires that nonresidential residential lighting be reviewed for consistency with the Specific Plan’s standards prior to installation. Additionally, this section provides recommendations for lighting techniques to ensure that lighting is directed downward or away from adjoining property lines.

- Appendix A, Design Guidelines, Section A.9.5 establishes street lighting design guidelines. All streetlights must employ a full-cutoff or fully shielded design and be downward-facing to control night sky light pollution. Additionally, street lighting would be limited to major intersections along the loop road (e.g., the main access points on Atascadero Avenue and the Village Center). Finally, the height of the fixture is limited to no more than 14 feet above grade.

Note that these design standards are equivalent to or exceed the exterior lighting standards set forth in Atascadero Municipal Code Section 9-4.137 and provide certainty that exterior lighting would be fully shielded and directed away from nearby residential uses, and street lighting would employ a full-cutoff or fully shielded design.

San Rafael Road (East and West) and San Carlos Road Residential Uses
The single-family residential uses proposed along San Rafael Road (East and West) and San Carlos Road would employ standard exterior light fixtures. (Note that no new street lighting is proposed along any of these roadways.)

The Specific Plan sets forth various standards for exterior lighting that would apply to these single-family residential uses:

- Chapter 2, Land Use and Development Standards, Table 2.5 establishes specific development standards for residential exterior lighting. In accordance with Atascadero Municipal Code Section 9-4.137, all outdoor lighting must be directed downward and not exceed 150 watts.
• Chapter 7, Neighborhood Design, Section 7.5.12 reiterates the standards set forth in Chapter 2 and requires that single-family residential exterior lighting be reviewed for consistency with the Specific Plan’s standards prior to installation. Additionally, this section provides recommendations for lighting techniques to ensure that lighting is directed downward or away from adjoining property lines.

These design standards are equivalent to or exceed the exterior lighting standards set forth in Atascadero Municipal Code Section 9-4.137. Additionally, the lot lines of the new residential uses on San Rafael Road (West) would align with the existing single-family lot lines on the opposite of the roadway in order to promote land use compatibility. This would serve to limit the adverse effects of the introduction of new lighting along this roadway.

Pylon Sign
The Specific Plan permits the highway commercial area near US 101 to erect one 50-foot-tall pylon sign advertising the hotel. The sign is allowed to have two internally lit sign panels totaling 150 square feet on each face. The Specific Plan prohibits the pylon sign from employing flashing or rotating elements, electronic displays, or neon.

The light and glare impact of the pylon sign would be limited, as only the sign panels would be illuminated and would not employ distracting elements.

Conclusion
In summary, the Specific Plan’s potential lighting impacts would be limited two areas and would be minimized by design standards requiring the use of fixtures and practices intended to prevent light spillage. To ensure that new exterior lighting does not create adverse spillover impacts, Mitigation Measure AES-3 is proposed that requires the applicant to prepare and submit a photometric plan to the City of Atascadero for review and approval. The mitigation measure requires the use of devices to prevent spillover onto adjacent properties, encourages the use of pedestrian scale lighting where appropriate in place of overhead light or pole-mounted lighting, and requires the use of timers or other devices to automatically shut off outdoor activity area lighting when not in use. As such, the new lighting contemplated by the Specific Plan uses would not result in the introduction of substantial sources of light and glare. Impacts would be less than significant.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation
Potentially significant impact.

Mitigation Measures
MM AES-3 Prior to issuance of building permits for the highway commercial uses or Village Center commercial uses, the project applicant shall prepare and submit a photometric plan to the City of Atascadero for review and approval. The photometric plan shall identify all exterior light fixtures, the level of illumination, and the use of devices that prevent spillover onto adjacent properties (e.g., full cut-off fixtures or fully shielded light fixtures). Where appropriate, pedestrian-scale lighting should be used in place of overhead or pole-mounted lights. Additionally,
light fixtures used to illuminate outdoor activity areas (event lawns, recreational facilities, etc.) shall be equipped with timers or other devices that automatically shut off lights when not in use.

**Level of Significance After Mitigation**

Less than significant impact.