

4. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING, IMPACTS, AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This section addresses project-related impacts within the following 12 topic categories:

- Aesthetics
- Air Quality
- Biological Resources
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Land Use and Planning
- Noise
- Public Services
- Recreation
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Energy

Each of the 12 topic sections in this EIR presents information in three parts, as described below.

INTRODUCTION

This section addresses the overall issues covered for the topic and the primary studies and other documents used in report preparation.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section briefly describes elements of the project setting relevant to a discussion of impacts in the topic category.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

This section identifies potential impacts based on the identified significance criteria. Specific impacts are numbered and summarized in **bolded** text, followed by text that describes the impact in more detail. The level of significance prior to mitigation is also identified as either less than significant (LTS) or significant (S). Mitigation measures (indented text) that can reduce such impacts follow this discussion with a number that corresponds to the

number of the impact. A statement regarding the level of significance of each impact after mitigation follows the mitigation measures for that impact. The term “S” stands for “significant” and “LTS” stands for “less than significant.” The term “SU” stands for “significant and unavoidable.”

4.1 AESTHETICS

INTRODUCTION

This section discusses the existing visual conditions at the project sites and vicinity, and considers the potential visual effects of the proposed projects with respect to visual character, scenic and public views, and light and glare. This visual impact analysis is based on field observations at the project sites and vicinity, and a review of the projects' architectural plans.

ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

VISUAL CHARACTER

The two project sites of the East Weddell Residential Projects are described below. While the two sites are in close proximity to each other, separated only by North Fair Oaks Avenue, they each have different visual conditions and surroundings.

Sares Regis Site

The Sares Regis site is located in an urbanized portion of northern Sunnyvale, composed of highways and wide arterials adjacent to residential and non-residential development. State Highway 101 (Highway 101) is immediately adjacent to the southern boundary of the Sares Regis site, visually screened by existing mature evergreen trees along the site's southern edge. The topography in the area is level and thus long-distance views are limited by both the built environment and mature landscaping.

East Weddell Avenue terminates at the northwestern corner of the Sares Regis site. Views from this location are shown in **Figure 4.1-1(A)**. Looking into the site, one sees the existing one-story building and utility equipment on the left side of the image, and the terminus of East Weddell Drive and the private on-site entry road on the right. **Figure 4.1-1(B)** shows the area north of the site where the SFPUC right-of-way adjoins the site's northern boundary and where landscape improvements may occur. This area is paved but unimproved, and a portion has been used for a surface parking area. **Figure 4.1-1(C)** shows the northern side of the existing on-site building, with lighting and landscaping shown in the foreground. Fencing screens much of the external equipment associated with previous on-site uses.

Raintree Site

The Raintree site is also located in a similar urbanized portion of northern Sunnyvale. However, compared to the Sares Regis site, the Raintree site is visible from more locations along existing local roads. East Weddell Drive abuts the western and northern boundaries of the Raintree site, and North Fair Oaks Avenue abuts the eastern boundary. Highway 101 adjoins the southern



A) View of Sares Regis and existing onsite building as seen from terminus of East Weddell Drive, looking south.



B) View of north side of Sares Regis site showing PG&E substation in the background and SFPUC right-of-way in the foreground, looking east.



C) View of north wall of existing onsite Sares Regis development, looking southeast.

Figure 4.1-1

VIEWS OF SARES REGIS SITE

SOURCE: Amy Skewes-Cox

boundary of the Raintree site, but existing shrubbery screens most of the site from view for motorists on the highway.

Figure 4.1-2(A) shows the site as seen looking south and southeast from the entrance on East Weddell Drive. As can be seen in this photo, existing mature trees along East Weddell Drive are visible in the foreground and the multiple one-story on-site buildings, on-site landscaping, and parking are visible in the background. **Figure 4.1-2(B)** shows the northwest corner of the Raintree site, looking west along East Weddell Drive where recently constructed three-story residential buildings are visible in the background.

SCENIC VISTAS/PUBLIC VIEWS

The project sites are not part of scenic vistas due to the level terrain and the urbanized nature of the surroundings. As can be seen in the aerial photograph (Figure 3-2), the two sites are part of the overall urban fabric of the northern portion of the City of Sunnyvale that includes highway overpasses, highways, arterials and developed residential and non-residential neighborhoods.

The main public viewing locations include the adjacent local roadway, East Weddell Drive, and the SFPUC right-of-way that is part of the John W. Christian Greenbelt. However, the improved portions of this greenbelt are not located in the immediate vicinity of the project sites.

The two sites are visible from Highway 101 for both northbound and southbound motorists, but existing shrubbery and trees screen most of the sites from view. As shown in **Figure 4.1-3(A)**, the Sares Regis site is visible from the Highway 101 overpass on North Fair Oaks Avenue for northbound motorists, but the only element visible is the row of evergreen trees planted at the site's southern and western edges. It also should be noted that the direction and speed of travel affects the degree of visibility of the site, both for Highway 101 motorists and motorists using the overpass on North Fair Oaks Avenue. For motorists, the view would be relatively short-term due to the speed of travel and would require that the motorist take his/her eyes away from the road momentarily to take in this view. Views of the Sares Regis site for northbound motorists on Highway 101 would be very limited, also due to the heavy tree planting at the south end of the site. Southbound motorists' views to the Sares Regis site would be limited due to their location on the highway, the existing tree cover, and the presence of the North Fair Oaks Avenue overpass.

For the Raintree site, the shrubbery and small trees planted at the south end of the site limit views of the existing on-site buildings as shown in **Figure 4.1-3(B)**. For the southbound motorist, exiting the highway at North Fair Oaks Avenue, the row of plantings are the main element visible as shown in **Figure 4.1-4**. These same plantings would be visible for the northbound motorist. Utility lines are also visible in this view.

For pedestrians, the main viewing locations for the project sites are from the sidewalks of East Weddell Drive, and the future improvements made to the SFPUC right-of-way. At the present time, the SFPUC right-of-way does not include pedestrian facilities in the immediate vicinity of the sites. Also, in the future, improvements are planned for the East Channel Trail along the eastern edge of the Sares Regis site, but such improvements do not yet exist.



A) View south into the Raintree site from E. Weddell Drive showing existing mature trees along E. Weddell Drive.



B) View of northwest corner of Raintree site, looking west along E. Weddell Drive. Recently-constructed residential units are visible in the background.

Figure 4.1-2

SOURCE: Amy Skewes-Cox

VIEWS OF RAINTREE SITE



A) View from N. Fair Oaks Ave. overpass shows shrubbery and tree cover at southwest edge of Sares Regis site behind the freeway offramp visible in the midground.



B) Vegetation planted along the south side of the Raintree site screens most of the site from view of the highway.

Figure 4.1-3

SOURCE: Google Earth, 2013

VIEW OF SITES FROM U.S. HIGHWAY 101 AND OVERPASS

LIGHT AND GLARE

Due to the adjacent industrial and residential development in the project vicinity, the sources of light and glare near the project sites are primarily vehicles on public roadways, lighting in parking lots and along public streets, and building and parking security lighting. Vehicle headlights on public roadways, on adjacent properties, and on the project site emit temporary lighting in their direction of travel. Existing buildings on the Raintree site include lighting visible during nighttime hours.

REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

FEDERAL AND STATE REGULATIONS

No federal regulations related to visual quality would pertain to the project. The State of California has a formal program related to scenic highways. The California Scenic Highway Program, established in 1963, identifies and designates certain highways along which adjoining land uses and features require special conservation treatment. The responsibility for the management of a program is left to local cities and counties. Highways shown as “eligible” for listing are believed to have outstanding scenic values. Once a highway is shown in “Streets and Highways Code Section 263,” it may be nominated for official designation by the local governing body with jurisdiction over the lands adjacent to the proposed scenic highway. A visual assessment is required and a number of other steps must be followed. No highways in the vicinity of the project sites are included in “Streets and Highways Code Section 263” or are designated a scenic highway (State of California, 2013).

LOCAL REGULATIONS

City of Sunnyvale General Plan

The City of Sunnyvale General Plan (2011) includes a number of policies related to community character and design. The relevant policies are the following:

- Policy CC-1.3: Ensure that new development is compatible with the character of special districts and residential neighborhoods.
- Policy CC-1.4: Support measures which enhance the identity of special districts and residential neighborhoods to create more variety in the physical environment.
- Policy CC-1.8: Provide and encourage the incorporation of art – both functional and decorative – in public and private development.
- Policy CC-2.1: Maintain and provide attractive landscaping in the public right-of-way to identify the different types of roadways and districts, make motorists more comfortable, and improve the enjoyment of residential neighborhoods.
- Policy CC-3.1: Place a priority on quality architecture and site design which will enhance the image of Sunnyvale and create a vital and attractive environment for business,

residents, and visitors, and be reasonably balanced with the need for economic development to assure Sunnyvale's economic prosperity.

- Policy CC-3.2: Ensure site design is compatible with the natural and surrounding built environment.
- Policy CC-4.1: Ensure that Sunnyvale's public facilities are easily identified, accessible, attractive, and representative of the community's values and aspirations.*
- Policy CC-4.2: Maintain beautiful and comfortable outdoor public places, which provide a shared sense of ownership and belonging for Sunnyvale residents, business owners, and visitors.*
- Policy CC-4.3: Work with outside government agencies to achieve attractive public and quasi-public facilities consistent with the quality of development in Sunnyvale.*

*Applies to the SFPUC right-of-way facilities within the Raintree site and just north of the Sares Regis site.

City of Sunnyvale Zoning Code and Design Review

The City of Sunnyvale has a design review process that is described in Section 19.80 of the Zoning Code. Design guidelines can be found in the document entitled "City-Wide Design Guidelines (City of Sunnyvale, 1992). The Planning Commission is responsible for approving the design review for the applicable projects. Both the Sares Regis and Raintree projects would require Design Review as part of the Special Development Permit required for the PD zoning combining district prior to the issuance of building permits.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

For the purposes of this EIR and based on Appendix G of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines, implementation of the proposed projects would have a significant effect on visual resources if it would:

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

This following impact analysis focuses on potential impacts of the proposed project related to visual changes, overall visual quality, and potential for light and glare. The following Appendix G criteria

are not considered relevant to the project based upon the proposed project plans and data research and therefore will not be evaluated further in this EIR:

- **Adverse Effect on a Scenic Vista:** As stated in the Initial Study, scenic vistas are not present in the vicinity of either the Sares Regis site or the Raintree site.
- **Damage to Scenic Resources:** As stated in the Initial Study, the site is not visible from a state scenic highway and would not entail removal of trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings visible from a scenic highway.

PROJECT IMPACTS

Impact AESTHETICS-1: Construction of the proposed projects would potentially create temporary aesthetic impacts associated with project demolition and construction activities. **(S)**

Project construction activities would result in temporary exposure of demolition debris, graded surfaces, construction debris and materials, and the presence of construction equipment and heavy truck traffic. Construction equipment would be stored at the project sites.

Sares Regis Applicant Proposed Scenario. Construction equipment, materials, and debris would not be highly visible due to the location of the site and its distance from nearby residences. However, some amount of construction visibility may occur for residents located east of the site on the east side of the proposed East Channel Trail. Existing fencing screens the site from the view of the mobile home park to the north.

Sares Regis Full Buildout Scenario. While this scenario has a higher density, visibility of ground-level construction equipment, materials, and debris would be the same as described for the Sares Regis Applicant Proposed Scenario.

Raintree Applicant Proposed Scenario. Construction equipment, materials, and debris would be visible to existing residences located north and west of the Raintree site.

Raintree Full Buildout Scenario. While this scenario has a higher density, visibility of ground-level construction equipment, materials, and debris would be the same as described for the Raintree Applicant Proposed Scenario.

Mitigation Measure AESTHETICS-1: *The applicants for both projects shall incorporate the following specifications into all construction contracts for the proposed projects:*

- *Construction staging areas and the storage of large equipment shall be located in the interior of the project sites as much as possible, and whenever feasible away from East Weddell Drive.*
- *Construction staging areas shall be on-site and shall remain clear of trash, weeds, and debris.*
- *Construction fencing shall be placed around the sites and shall include green fabric screening to screen portions of the site from view. The fencing shall be located at the*

northern and western edges of the Raintree site and the northern and eastern edges of the Sares Regis site. (LTS)

- Applies to Sares Regis Applicant Proposed Scenario:
- Applies to Sares Regis Full Buildout Scenario:
- Applies to Raintree Applicant Proposed Scenario:
- Applies to Raintree Full Buildout Scenario:

Impact AESTHETICS-2: The proposed projects could degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. (LTS)

The two projects would introduce residential buildings, parking garages, and on-site landscaping in an area currently occupied by one-story industrial buildings. Project elevations have not yet been prepared.

The two projects would change the overall appearance of the two sites but would not substantially visually degrade the visual quality of the site or the surroundings. In addition, the projects would be required to undergo design review, which would help to ensure that the projects would be in keeping with the surroundings. Thus, no mitigation measures would be necessary.

Sares Regis Applicant Proposed Scenario. Under the Applicant Proposed Scenario, the Sares Regis project would include one large, four-story building (maximum height of 55 feet). This building would have three landscaped “openings” as shown in Figure 3-3 to allow light to interior units. A four-story garage would adjoin the south end of the building to “screen/buffer” the building from traffic and associated noise and air quality emissions associated with Highway 101 which is just south of the site.

Trees would continue to line the south-southwest edges of the site, screening most of the site from view. However, the 55-foot-tall building is likely to be visible above the tree line, especially for northbound motorists on the North Fair Oaks Avenue overpass. The 53 trees that would be removed for construction are currently located within the interior of the site and along the eastern and northern boundary.

New landscaping would be added to the north and eastern edges of the site, and pedestrian amenities would be added such as paved pathways and plazas near the entrance lobby. Overall, the visual quality of the site is expected to improve over the existing industrialized nature of the site.

It has not yet been determined if the SFPUC right-of-way, which is just north of the site, would be improved with landscaping. As shown in Figure 3-9, improvements for this area, that may become part of the John W. Christian Greenbelt, would include new paths, and new plantings in the vicinity of an existing parking area that would remain. If such improvements are completed, the overall visual quality would also improve, as this area is now just composed of un-landscaped areas of deteriorating paving (see Figure 4.1-1[B]).

Sares Regis Full Buildout Scenario. Visual impacts of the Full Buildout Scenario for the Sares Regis site would be similar to those of the Applicant Proposed Scenario. However, the main on-site building and garage would be increased in height to five stories, or about 65 feet. This building

would be more visible from off-site locations and would contrast more significantly with the one-story mobile homes located north of the site. However, similar landscape improvements would occur on the site and the project would not substantially degrade the visual quality of the site or the surroundings. With the increased height, the building would likely be more visible to passing motorists on Highway 101.

Raintree Applicant Proposed Scenario. For the Raintree site, eight new residential buildings would replace the existing 15 industrial on-site buildings. The buildings would range in height from three to four stories, which would be compatible with the recently constructed residential buildings to the north and west of the Raintree site. By separating the buildings, the project would include areas of on-site landscaping and pedestrian amenities as shown in Figure 3-4. A multi-story parking structure would frame the south end of the site to buffer residential units from the nearby highway.

Existing mature trees along East Weddell Drive would be preserved to the maximum extent feasible. New trees would be added to interior portions of the site as shown in Figure 3-10. Trees along the site's southern edge that now screen portions of the site from the view of the highway would be mostly retained.

The SFPUC right-of-way that goes through the middle of the site is proposed to be improved with a gravel pathway and plantings as shown in Figure 3-10. Additional trees would be planted along the building edges near this pathway area. Access for public use is to be provided from two locations on East Weddell Drive.

An enclosed trash and transformer area would be located at the site's southwestern corner near East Weddell Drive. Pedestrian entrances to the site would be located at three locations along East Weddell Drive.

Raintree Full Buildout Scenario. Visual impacts of the Full Buildout Scenario for the Raintree site would be similar to those of the Applicant Proposed Scenario. However, the main on-site building and garage would be increased in height to five and six stories (see Figure 3-6). These building would be more visible from off-site locations and would contrast more significantly with the three-story homes located north and west of the site. However, similar landscape improvements would occur on the site and the project would not substantially degrade the visual quality of the site or the surroundings. With the increased height, the building would likely be more visible to passing motorists on Highway 101.

Mitigation Measure AESTHETICS-2: *No mitigation measures would be necessary. (LTS)*

- Applies to Sares Regis Applicant Proposed Scenario:
- Applies to Sares Regis Full Buildout Scenario:
- Applies to Raintree Applicant Proposed Scenario:
- Applies to Raintree Full Buildout Scenario:

Impact AESTHETICS-3: The proposed projects could create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. (S)

New lighting would be associated with the projects for both the Applicant Proposed Scenario and the Full Buildout Scenario.

Sares Regis Applicant Proposed Scenario. Lighting would occur for interior portions of the building as well as outdoor for the multi-story garage, pathways, patios and landscaped areas. Lighting would also be associated with the project entrance at the terminus of East Weddell Drive. Most of this lighting is not expected to create substantial light or glare, and would occur in an urbanized portion of the city where lighting exists in all of the surroundings. However, some amount of glare may occur from the lighting associated with the parking garage that would be in close proximity to Highway 101.

Sares Regis Full Buildout Scenario. Lighting impacts would be similar to those of the Applicant Proposed Scenario. However, the building would be one story taller in height; thus, lighting would be more visible from off-site locations for the interior lighting that would be seen. Also, the garage would be taller and could create glare for passing motorists, depending on the type of lighting used.

Raintree Applicant Proposed Scenario. Lighting impacts would be similar to those of the Sares Regis project. Given the proximity of the Raintree site to existing residences to the north and west, it would be important that excessive outdoor lighting not occur at the northern and western perimeters of the site.

Raintree Full Buildout Scenario. Lighting impacts would be similar to those of the Applicant Proposed Scenario. However, the buildings would be one to two stories taller in height; thus, lighting would be more visible from off-site locations for the interior lighting that would be seen. Also, the garage would be four and five stories in height and could create glare for passing motorists, depending on the type of lighting used.

Mitigation Measure AESTHETICS-3: The applicants for both projects shall incorporate the following specifications into the proposed projects:

- *All lighting shall be shielded so that lighting is cast downward and "spillover" is minimized.*
- *Lighting for exterior locations shall be designed primarily for public safety and shall not result in unnecessary glare for nearby residences.*
- *Whenever possible, lighting for pathways shall be low path lighting.*
- *All garage lighting shall be shielded to minimize spillover to adjacent areas and roadways.*
- *The overall lighting design approach shall be to provide 1-foot candle of light on all parking lots and major pathways, while ½-foot candle could be provided at minor pedestrian paths.*
- *Over-lighting shall be prevented and full-cut off fixtures shall be used to minimize light pollution and trespass.*

The combination of the above measures would reduce this potential impact to a less-than-significant level. (LTS)

- Applies to Sares Regis Likely Buildout Scenario:
- Applies to Sares Regis Full Buildout Scenario:
- Applies to Raintree Likely Buildout Scenario:
- Applies to Raintree Full Buildout Scenario:

CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

The geographic scope for assessing cumulative visual impacts would be limited to the immediate surroundings of the projects due to the level terrain, the existing land uses, and the overall viewsheds of the project vicinity. No other proposed or approved projects are located in the immediate vicinity of the two project sites. The two projects together would be separated by North Fair Oaks Avenue and mature vegetation; thus, the two projects would not be visible at the same time to nearby residents or users of nearby roads, and joint aesthetic impacts of the two projects would be less than significant with the implementation of the recommended mitigation measures. Overall, the aesthetic effects of the projects, in combination with other past, present, and foreseeable projects, would be less than significant. The projects would not result in or contribute to any significant cumulative impacts on visual resources.

REFERENCES

City of Sunnyvale, 1992, *Citywide Design Guidelines*, adopted June 23.

City of Sunnyvale, 2011, *City of Sunnyvale General Plan (Consolidated)*.

State of California, 2013, website on the State's Scenic Highway Program: <http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic/schwly.htm>, viewed on May 6.