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### **4.15.1 INTRODUCTION**

This section describes the existing visual resources, including important visual corridors, within the Project area and its vicinity. The section also assesses the significant visual impacts of the "No Action/No Project" alternative (Alternative 1), the "Proposed Project" alternative (Alternative 2), and the five Project alternatives (Alternatives 3-7), and sets forth applicable mitigation measures to reduce the identified significant impacts. The study area for the visual analysis includes the Specific Plan site, the VCC and Entrada planning areas, and surrounding areas within Los Angeles and Ventura counties that have views of the Project site that could be impacted by the proposed Project and the alternatives.

#### **4.15.1.1 Relationship of Project to Newhall Ranch Specific Plan Program EIR**

This section (**Section 4.15**) provides a stand-alone assessment of the potential significant visual impacts associated with the proposed Project; however, the previously certified Newhall Ranch environmental documentation provides important information and analysis for the RMDP and SCP components of the proposed Project. The Project components would require federal and state permitting, consultation, and agreements that are needed to facilitate development of the approved land uses within the Specific Plan site and that would establish spineflower preserves within the Project area, also facilitating development in the Specific Plan, VCC, and a portion of the Entrada planning area. Due to this relationship, the Newhall Ranch environmental documentation, findings, and mitigation, as they relate to visual resources, are summarized below to provide context for the proposed Project and alternatives.

Section 4.7 of the Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999) identified and analyzed the existing conditions, potential impacts, and mitigation measures associated with visual resources for the entire Specific Plan area. In addition, Section 5.0 of the Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999) identified and analyzed the potential visual impacts and mitigation measures associated with construction and operation of the approved WRP, which would treat the wastewater generated by the Specific Plan. The Newhall Ranch mitigation program was adopted by Los Angeles County in findings and in the revised Mitigation Monitoring Plans for the Specific Plan and WRP.

The Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999) concluded that the Specific Plan area is visible from three corridors: (1) the Santa Clara River/State Route-126 (SR-126) corridor; (2) the Chiquito Canyon Road corridor; and (3) the Interstate 5 (I-5) corridor. Eight viewsheds were identified within the three view corridors where large or permanent viewing audiences have prominent views of at least a portion of the Specific Plan area. Two additional viewsheds were identified from locations outside of the view corridors. A view analysis was conducted for each of these viewsheds to determine the significance of the Specific Plan's effects on the visual qualities of these views.

Due to the view-blocking effects of intervening topography, much of the Specific Plan area is not visible from off-site locations. For example, development areas located along the middle and upper portions of Potrero Canyon and the upland portions of Airport Mesa (when not directly near the bluff edge) are not visible from off-site locations. In addition, approximately 10,200 acres of the Project area, including the Specific Plan site, would be open space.

## 4.15 VISUAL RESOURCES

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Nonetheless, development proposed adjacent to the Santa Clara River Corridor that parallels SR-126 would significantly alter the visual characteristics of the Corridor. Views in Chiquito Canyon also would be altered significantly by build-out of the Specific Plan. Specific Plan development near the Santa Clara River/SR-126 view corridor also would significantly change the existing characteristics of the site and introduce sources of outdoor illumination to an otherwise dark area. This result would significantly impact the nighttime environment.

Los Angeles County's Regional Planning Commission expressed concern over visual impacts along SR-126 during hearings on the Specific Plan. In response, the Project applicant eliminated 494 dwelling units and 39,000 square feet of commercial space in the Indian Dunes portion of the Specific Plan. The reduction of development intensity preserved view corridors to the Santa Clara River. Other modifications to the Specific Plan included creation of a development setback along the Los Angeles County/Ventura County line, removal of residential estate units from the High Country Special Management Area (SMA)/Significant Ecological Area (SEA) 20, strengthening of development standards along the River, and use of contour grading techniques.

With regards to the WRP, the Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999) found that the WRP and any uncontrolled outdoor lighting utilized in operating the WRP would contrast sharply with the neighboring environment and with natural landscape features, including the Santa Clara River Corridor, in its vicinity.

The Specific Plan contains Development Regulations (Chapter 3.0) and Design Guidelines (Chapter 4.0) intended to provide a comprehensive set of regulations governing build-out under the Specific Plan that will achieve a development image that blends into adjoining natural landscapes and reduces the alteration of natural landforms and scenic natural features found on the Specific Plan site. In addition, the Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999) recommended the implementation of Mitigation Measures SP-4.7-1 and SP-4.7-2 and Mitigation Measures SP-5.0-33 through SP-5.0-35 to address the significant impacts to visual resources caused by implementation of the Specific Plan and WRP, respectively, as identified in the document.<sup>1</sup> The Board of Supervisors found that the Specific Plan's and the WRP's impacts to visual resources would be unavoidably significant even with implementation of the feasible mitigation measures.

**Table 4.15-1** summarizes the Specific Plan's and the WRP's impacts on visual resources, the applicable mitigation measures recommended in the Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999), and the significance findings after the mitigation is implemented.

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<sup>1</sup> References to mitigation measures included in the Newhall Ranch Specific Plan Program EIR are preceded by "SP" in this EIS/EIR to distinguish them from other mitigation measures discussed herein.

**Table 4.15-1  
Impacts to Visual Resources Caused by Implementation of the Specific Plan and WRP**

Impact Description	Mitigation Measures	Finding After Mitigation
<p><b>Specific Plan Visual Resource Impacts</b> - Approximately 5,852 acres (or 49 percent) of the Newhall Ranch site would remain in major open space; nonetheless, development proposed adjacent to the Santa Clara River Corridor that parallels SR-126 would significantly alter the visual characteristics of the River Corridor. Views in Chiquito Canyon would also be significantly altered as a result of Specific Plan implementation. Development proposed near the River Corridor would be a significant change from the existing characteristics of the site and would introduce sources of outdoor illumination, which is an essential safety feature in development projects.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SP-4.7-1 (requires application of the Specific Plan's Development Regulations and Design Guidelines to build-out under the Specific Plan);</li> <li>• SP-4.7-2 (requires application of specified design guidelines to all areas along SR-126).</li> </ul>	<p>Significant unavoidable impact.</p>
<p><b>Specific Plan Cumulative Visual Resource Impacts</b> - The Newhall Ranch Specific Plan and other proposed or on-going projects are in an area that is in the process of changing from rural to urban. Proposed projects are contributing to a loss of open land and a change in the visual appearance of the area. Grading and development will result in significant changes to the natural landform, including encroachment on hillside areas, and will change the appearance of the landscape as viewed from public roads. Proposed cumulative development also will contribute to cumulative night lighting and daytime glare, and reflective impacts. These cumulative impacts are considered significant. However, the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) and Los Angeles County project that growth will occur on the Specific Plan site and in the Santa Clarita Valley in the years ahead. Consequently, a large part of the cumulative development described above already is reflected in SCAG's Regional Comprehensive Plan and Guide and the County's General Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No additional mitigation proposed.</li> </ul>	<p>Significant unavoidable impact.</p>

**4.15 VISUAL RESOURCES**

**Table 4.15-1  
Impacts to Visual Resources Caused by Implementation of the Specific Plan and WRP**

Impact Description	Mitigation Measures	Finding After Mitigation
<p><b>WRP Visual Resource Impacts</b> - Without proper screening, the WRP site would contrast sharply with the neighboring environment and with natural landscape features found in the background. Uncontrolled outdoor lighting could significantly contrast with the surrounding rural environment.</p> <p>The WRP site also would contrast sharply with the scenic qualities of the Santa Clara River Corridor and surrounding natural landscapes, and would result in an unavoidable significant impact on the scenic visual quality of that area, both during and following construction.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SP-5.0-33 (provide vegetation, walls, fencing, and/or other techniques to soften views of the WRP);</li> <li>• SP-5.0-34 (provide visual continuity by implementing landscaping themes consistent with themes developed for adjacent Business Park development);</li> <li>• SP-5.0-35 (place, orient, and shield light fixtures to illuminate only those areas where light is needed and to prevent stray light from spilling off-site).</li> </ul>	<p>Significant unavoidable impact.</p>

Source: Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999) and Newhall Ranch Revised Additional Analysis (May 2003).

**4.15.1.2 Relationship of Proposed Project to VCC and Entrada Planning Areas**

**4.15.1.2.1 VCC Planning Area**

The SCP component of the proposed Project, if approved, would facilitate development in the VCC planning area. The VCC is reliant on the SCP and associated take authorizations, and would not be developed without the take authorizations due to grading constraints. The VCC planning area is the remaining undeveloped portion of the VCC commercial/industrial complex currently under development by the applicant. The VCC was the subject of an EIR certified by Los Angeles County in April 1990 (SCH No. 1987123005). The applicant recently has submitted to Los Angeles County the last tentative parcel map (TPM No. 18108) needed to complete build-out of the remaining undeveloped portion of the VCC planning area. The County will require preparation of an EIR in conjunction with the parcel map and related project approvals; however, the County has not yet issued a Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the EIR or released the EIR. **Table 4.15-2** summarizes the VCC's impacts on visual resources, the applicable mitigation measures, and the significance findings after mitigation from the previously certified VCC EIR (April 1990).

**4.15 VISUAL RESOURCES**

**Table 4.15-2  
Impacts to Visual Resources Caused by VCC Implementation**

VCC Impact Description	VCC Mitigation Measures	Finding After Mitigation
<p><b>Project Visual Resource Impacts</b> - Approximately 64 percent of the site will be graded and developed, permanently altering the visual characteristics of the area. Castaic Creek and Halsey Canyon drainage will be channelized, and up to 51 of the 79 on-site oak trees will be removed. Industrial and commercial buildings will be visible from some adjacent residential areas and a portion of a proposed Scenic Highway.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of the VCC in accordance with specified design concepts;</li> <li>• Maintaining over 40% of the site as open space;</li> <li>• Revegetating areas graded and not developed;</li> <li>• Replacing all oak trees removed; using landscaping, landforms, and walls to screen completed project from view;</li> <li>• Provide visual cohesiveness for the entire development;</li> <li>• Placing and shielding outdoor lighting so that it will not cause excessive glare or light spillage.</li> </ul>	Not significant.
<p><b>Cumulative Visual Resource Impacts</b> - Increasing urbanization as the result of pending, approved, and recorded development projects in the vicinity of VCC will permanently alter the topographical features and visual character in the area. Each individual site plan will vary. It is the responsibility of future developers and Los Angeles County to maintain the natural character of the Valley while integrating man-made uses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No further mitigation recommended.</li> </ul>	Not significant.

Source: VCC EIR (April 1990).

**4.15.1.2.2 Entrada Planning Area**

The applicant is seeking approval from Los Angeles County for planned residential and nonresidential development within the Entrada planning area. The SCP component of the proposed Project would designate an area within Entrada as a spineflower preserve. If approved, the SCP component would include take authorization of spineflower populations in Entrada that are located outside of the designated spineflower preserve area. Thus, the planned residential and nonresidential development within portions of the Entrada planning area is reliant on the SCP and associated take authorizations, and those portions would not be developed without the take authorizations. The applicant has submitted to Los Angeles County Entrada development applications, which cover the portion of the Entrada planning area facilitated by the SCP. However, as of this writing, the County has not yet issued a NOP of an EIR or released an EIR for Entrada. As a result, there is no underlying local environmental documentation for the Entrada planning area at this time.

**4.15.2 METHODOLOGY**

Project conditions were evaluated against the existing visual character of the Project region in the context of topography, vegetation, existing uses, and visual character. The potential impacts to the visual character of the area and surroundings were evaluated in terms of massing, size, and type of land use. The potential to introduce substantial new lighting and/or create new sources of glare that could affect nearby existing uses also was evaluated in order to determine potential significant impacts to visual resources. Analysis of project conditions took into account visual corridors and viewshed impacts. The term "visual corridor" describes a location or series of locations from which portions of the Project area are visible by the public. Three visual corridors are proximate to the Project area: (1) the Santa Clara River/SR-126 corridor; (2) the I-5 corridor; and (3) the Chiquito Canyon Road corridor. "Viewshed" analysis considers the features that are visible from a viewing point/corridor.

**4.15.3 REGULATORY SETTING**

In addition to the regulatory parameters established under CEQA, Public Resources Code sections 21000 *et seq.* (see **Subsection 4.15.4**), the Project area is regulated by two local planning documents. Each document is discussed below.

**4.15.3.1 Los Angeles County General Plan**

SR-126, while not a "Scenic Highway," is identified in the Scenic Highway Element of the County's General Plan as a *proposed* "First Priority Scenic Route." However, since SR-126 is not officially designated a "First Priority Scenic Route," it carries no regulatory restrictions or significance.

The General Plan does not identify any scenic vistas within the Project area or its vicinity.

**4.15.3.2 Newhall Ranch Specific Plan**

The Specific Plan sets forth a comprehensive set of plans, development regulations, design guidelines, and implementation programs designed to ensure consistency with the goals, objectives, and policies of the Los Angeles County General Plan and Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan. Chapters 3 and 4 of the Specific Plan contain Development Regulations and Design Guidelines, respectively. These regulations and guidelines address grading, lighting, fencing, landscaping, signage, architecture, and site planning. The Development Regulations and Design Guidelines are intended to provide a comprehensive set of regulations governing the use and development of land within the Specific Plan, and thereby achieve a development image that blends into adjoining natural landscapes and reduces the alteration of natural landforms and scenic natural features found on Newhall Ranch. The Specific Plan also includes landscape standards directing the use of drought-tolerant and native plants (including the replacement of removed oak trees) that would further highlight the surrounding natural environment.

In accordance with the development review process set forth in Chapter 5 of the Specific Plan, all future subdivision maps and other discretionary permits, which allow construction shall incorporate the Development Regulations and Design Guidelines, and the design themes and view considerations identified in the Specific Plan. Furthermore, all residential tentative tract maps and the coordinating site

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## 4.15 VISUAL RESOURCES

planning of multi-family, commercial, and mixed-use land use designations along SR-126, shall comply with the following Design Guidelines:

- Where building elevations would obstruct views from SR-126 to the south, the location and configuration of individual buildings, driveways, parking, streets, signs and pathways shall be designed to provide view corridors of the Santa Clara River and its bluffs, and the ridge lines south of the River. Those view corridors may be perpendicular to SR-126 or oblique to it in order to provide for views of passengers within moving vehicles on SR-126.
- The Community Park between SR-126 and the Santa Clara River shall be designed to promote views from SR-126 of the River, bluffs and ridge lines to the south of the River.
- Residential site planning and architectural guidelines shall be employed to ensure that the views from SR-126 are aesthetically pleasing and that views of the River, bluffs and ridgelines south of the River are preserved.
- The mixed-use and commercial site planning guidelines shall be incorporated in the design of mixed-use and commercial land use designations located between SR-126 and the River to ensure that the views from SR-126 are aesthetically pleasing and to preserve views of the River, bluffs and ridge lines south of the River.
- Landscape improvements along SR-126 shall incorporate the landscape design guidelines in order to ensure that the views from SR-126 are aesthetically pleasing and to preserve views of the River, bluffs, and ridge lines south of the River.

### 4.15.4 EXISTING CONDITIONS

#### 4.15.4.1 Regional Setting

The Santa Clarita Valley consists of a mixture of undeveloped and developed landscapes. It is a rapidly growing region that has experienced significant changes in land use over the past 10 years, with the continued expansion of urban land uses. The Valley has been transformed from a landscape dominated by croplands with undeveloped hills, to a complex urban landscape with open space.

Within the Project vicinity, the Santa Clarita Valley varies in width and is bounded by low hillsides, most of which currently are undeveloped. These hillsides are the dominant visual features in the area. While the Santa Clara River represents an important visual feature, views of the River are often obscured because: (1) it is a low-lying element of the landscape; (2) the visual elements of the River are mostly low and diffuse, such as barren sand and low-growing shrubs; (3) the number of viewing locations for the River and its tributaries are relatively limited; and (4) many portions of the River are adjacent to busy urban roadways, where views are obscured either by vegetation or unavailable because the motorist's attention is directed to the roadway.

##### 4.15.4.1.1 Visual Corridors

The term "visual corridor" describes a location or series of locations from which portions of the Project area are visible by the public. Correspondingly, a "viewshed" analysis considers the features that are

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## 4.15 VISUAL RESOURCES

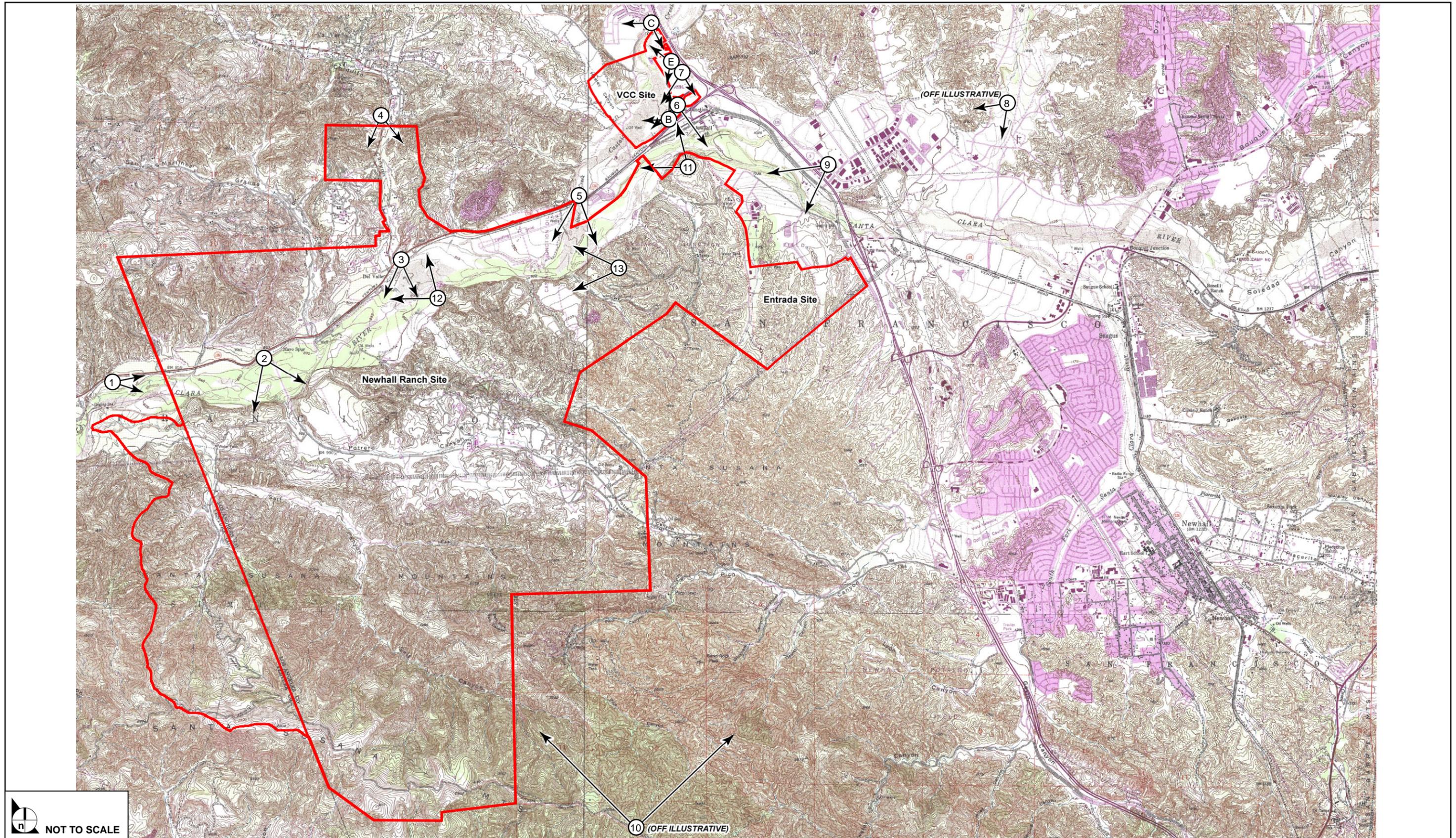
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visible from a view point/corridor. When considering a viewshed perspective, major portions of a project may or may not be visible to a large portion of the public. Three visual corridors are proximate to the Project area: (1) the Santa Clara River/SR-126 corridor; (2) the I-5 corridor; and (3) the Chiquito Canyon Road corridor. Within these three visual corridors, ten key observation points (KOPs) were identified for the Specific Plan site, as shown in **Figure 4.15-1**. KOPs for the VCC planning area, as identified in the VCC EIR (April 1990), also are depicted on **Figure 4.15-1**.

The Santa Clara River/SR-126 corridor supports a large mobile viewing audience, and is approximately 6.5 miles in length. The Santa Clara River/SR-126 corridor is in a largely undeveloped, rural area situated on level land. **Figures 4.15-2, 4.15-3, and 4.15-4** provide views from KOPs 2, 3, and 5, respectively, and show that the land located in the vicinity of the River is cultivated for farm crops. Development on or adjacent to the western and central portions of the Specific Plan site that can be seen from SR-126 is limited, and generally consists of interspersed accessory farm buildings and individual residences. Developed areas adjacent to the eastern portion of the Specific Plan site that can be seen from SR-126 include the VCC, Travel Village, and a variety of commercial services located near the intersection of Interstate 5 and SR-126. The viewing audience traveling along the Santa Clara River/SR-126 Corridor has unobstructed views of the Specific Plan site and VCC planning area, but is unable to view the vast majority of the Entrada planning area due to intervening topography.

The Santa Clara River/SR-126 corridor contains visual features that are unique to the Specific Plan site, the VCC and Entrada planning areas, and Los Angeles County. Such features include:

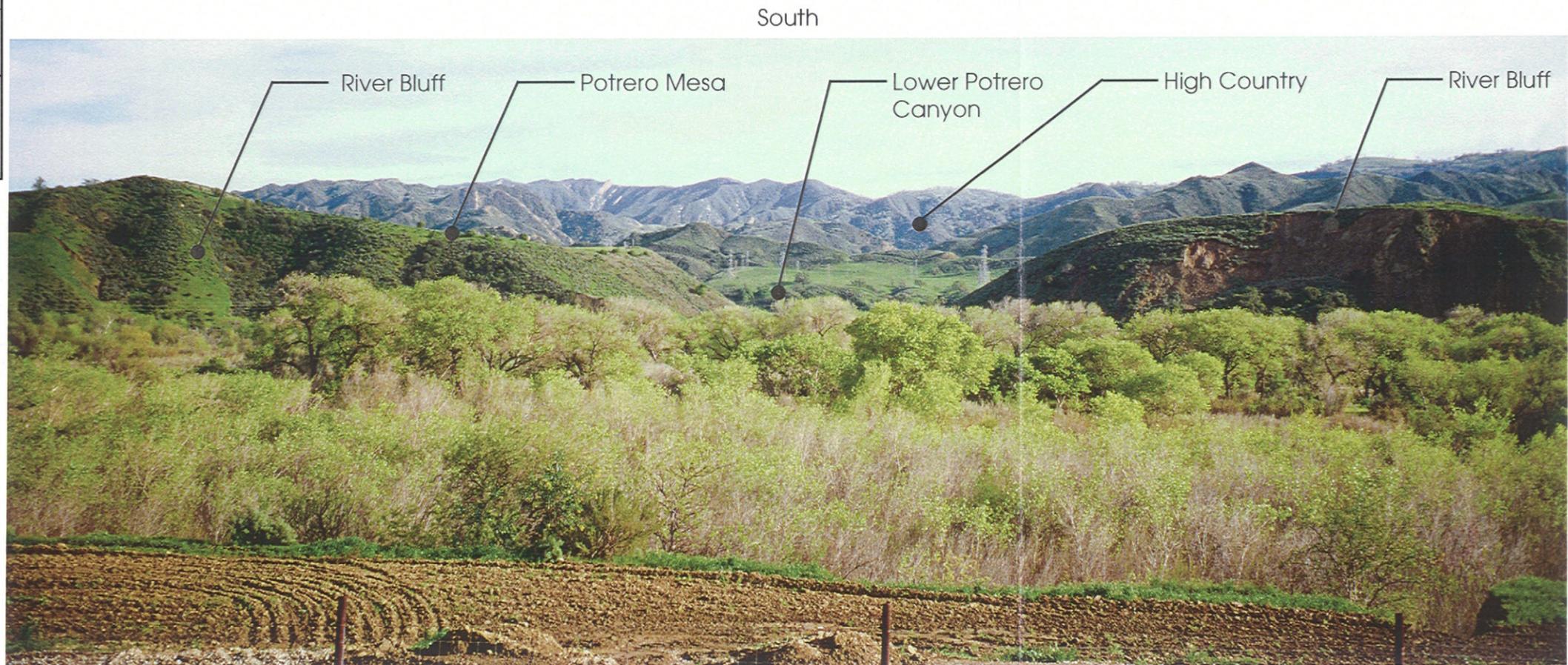
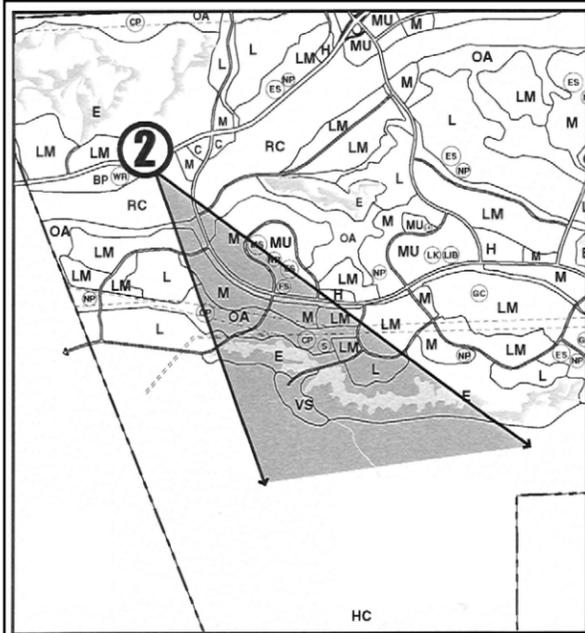
- The Santa Clara River and its associated riparian vegetation;
- The River bluffs and steep canyons that rise up from the River on its southern bank;
- The various stands of oak trees;
- The mesas, which are elevated above the Santa Clara River Corridor and are partially visible;
- Sawtooth Ridge, which stands out due to its exposed rock faces; and
- The higher elevations of the Santa Susana Mountains, which include the Specific Plan-High Country SMA/SEA 20.



SOURCE: National Geographic Maps - 2001, URS - March 2006

**FIGURE 4.15-1**

Key Observation Points



VIEW 2 BEFORE

North

South

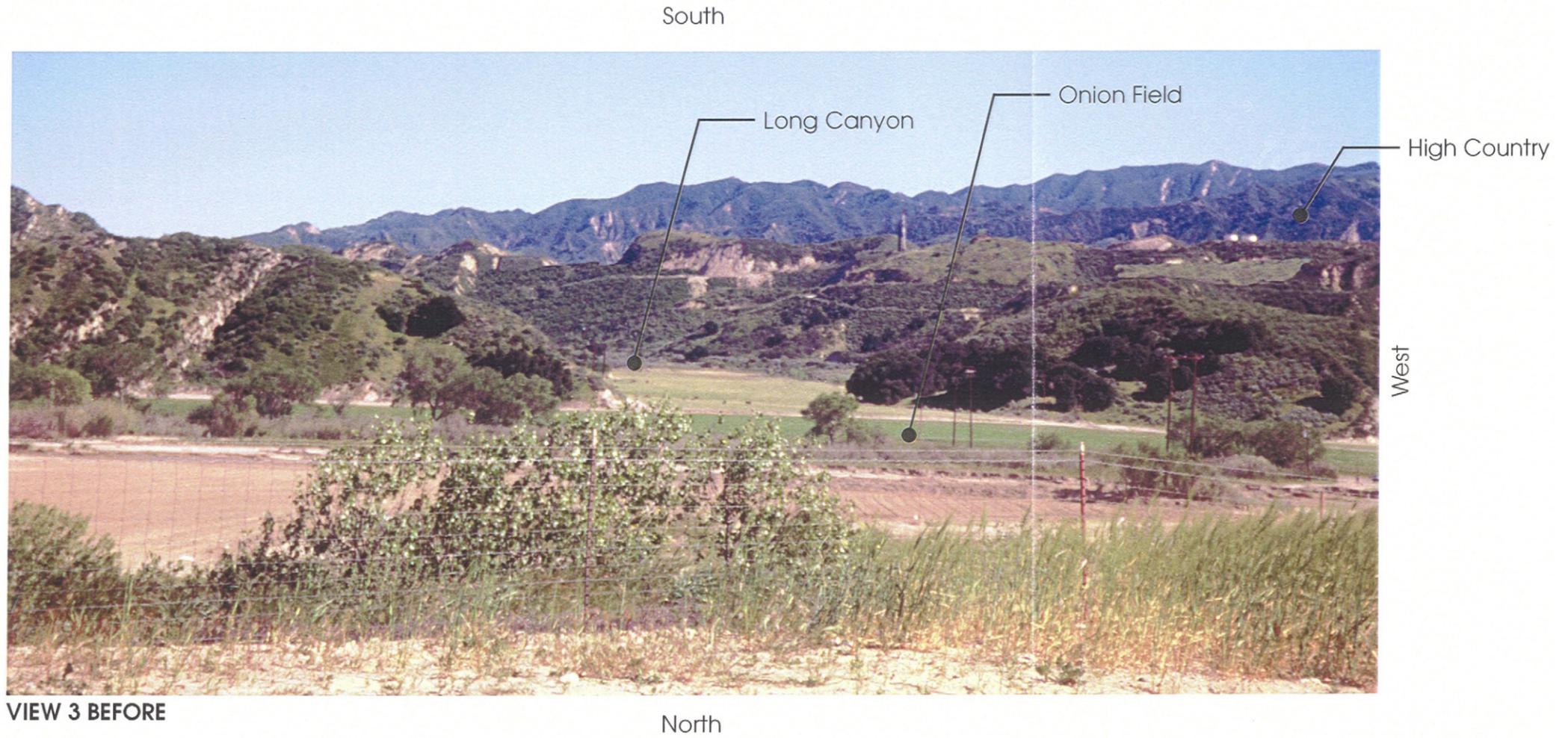
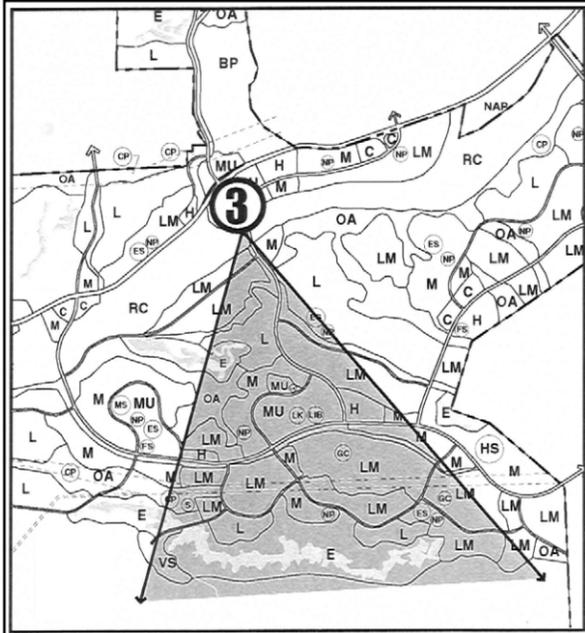
East

West

SOURCE: FORMA

**FIGURE 4.15-2**

Santa Clara River / SR-126 View Corridor - Location 2

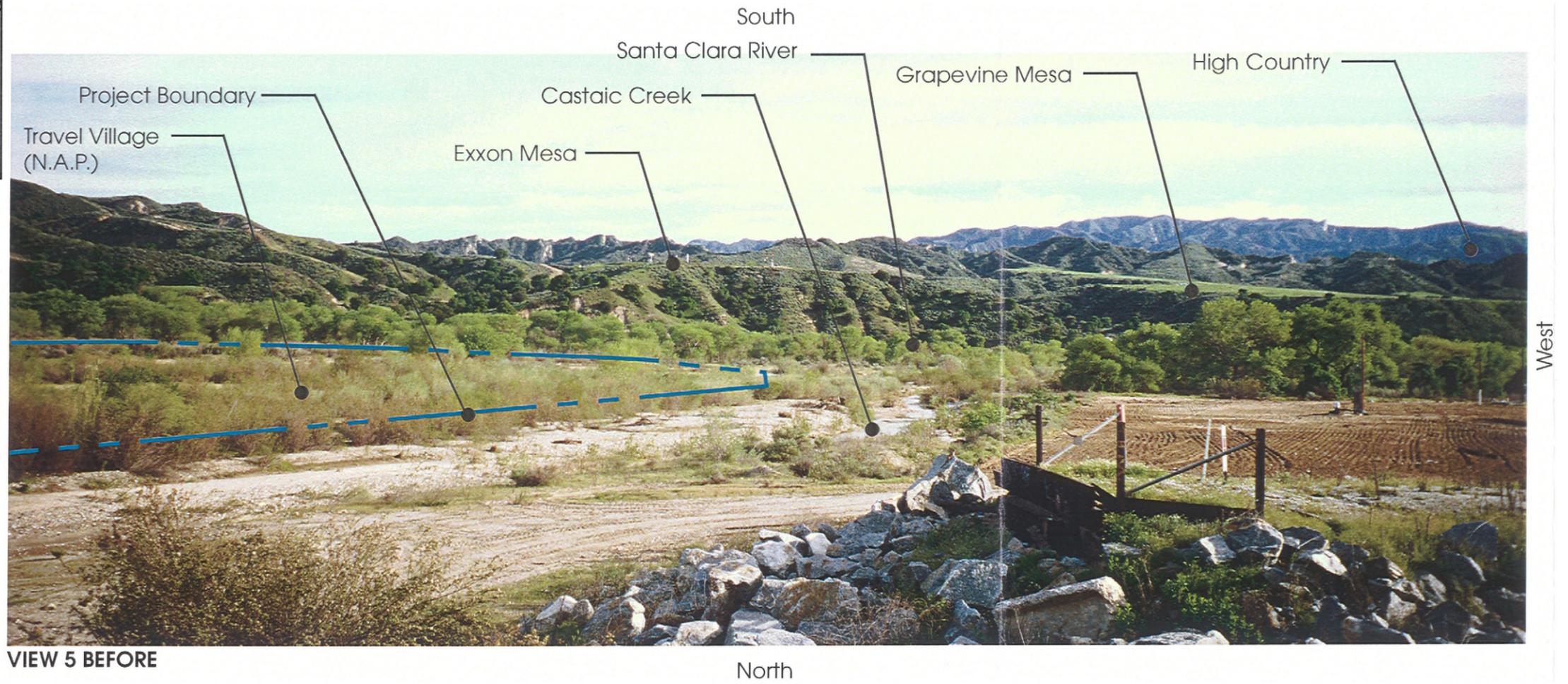
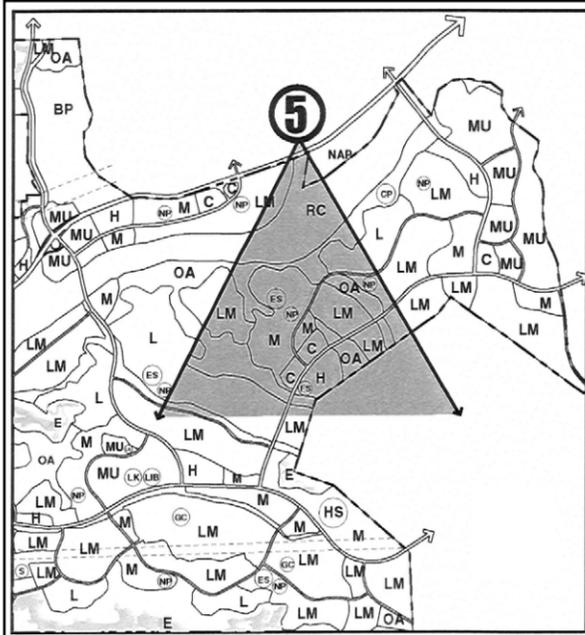


VIEW 3 BEFORE

SOURCE: FORMA

FIGURE 4.15-3

Santa Clara River / SR-126 View Corridor - Location 3



SOURCE: FORMA

**FIGURE 4.15-4**

Santa Clara River / SR-126 View Corridor - Location 5

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The second visual corridor in the Project vicinity occurs along Chiquito Canyon Road, extending through a portion of the Specific Plan area from the community of Val Verde south to SR-126. This visual corridor is approximately 1.75 miles in length and is viewed by a relatively small population, including motorists traveling on Chiquito Canyon Road and residents located adjacent to the northern Project boundary. This view corridor provides limited views of the Project area; however, it does contain visual features that are unique to the Project area and Los Angeles County. As shown on **Figure 4.15-5**, which represents views from KOP 4, this view corridor is characteristically non-urban with natural features such as: (1) Chiquito Canyon Creek; (2) oak trees in the flatter grassland area; and (3) views of the higher elevations of the Santa Susana Mountains in the distance. The visual resources provided within this corridor are restricted to the Specific Plan site; that is, the VCC and Entrada planning areas are not visible from the Chiquito Canyon corridor.

The third visual corridor in the Project vicinity is the I-5 corridor, between Magic Mountain Parkway on the south and Backer Road on the north. This corridor supports the largest mobile viewing audience, is approximately one-half mile away from the Project area at its nearest point, and is approximately three miles long. As shown in **Figures 4.15-6** and **4.15-7**, representing views from KOPs 7 and 9, respectively, visual features considered unique to the Project area found within this corridor include: (1) limited views of the Santa Clara River and its associated riparian vegetation and bluffs; (2) limited views of the hills that form the bases of the mesas, which are elevated above the River; and (3) limited views of the Santa Susana Mountains and High Country SMA/SEA 20.

From the segment of I-5 located south of Magic Mountain Parkway and north of Backer Road, most of the Specific Plan site is not visible due to intervening topography. If the Specific Plan site is visible, views exist only from a considerable distance (*i.e.*, over eight miles). The viewing audience within this portion of the I-5 visual corridor consists primarily of mobile viewers traveling at high speeds. **Figure 4.15-8** represents this view, from KOP 8. These viewers are afforded, at close proximity, a view of portions of the Entrada planning area and a view of the VCC planning area.

Also of visual importance are the views available of the Project area from existing recreational areas. Field surveys indicated that the most extensive views of the Project area from a recreational area would be from a location elevated above the Project area, such as the Rim of the Valley Trail, located southeast of the Project area. As shown in **Figure 4.15-9**, representing the view from KOP 10, intervening topography limits views of the Project area from this trail to the eastern edge of the Project site adjacent to the Six Flags Magic Mountain Amusement Park.

**4.15.5 IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

The significance criteria listed below are from Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. The Corps has agreed to use the CEQA criteria presented below for purposes of this EIS/EIR, although significance conclusions are not expressly required under NEPA. The Corps also has applied additional federal requirements as appropriate in this EIS/EIR. The visual impacts would be significant if implementation of the proposed Project or its alternatives would:

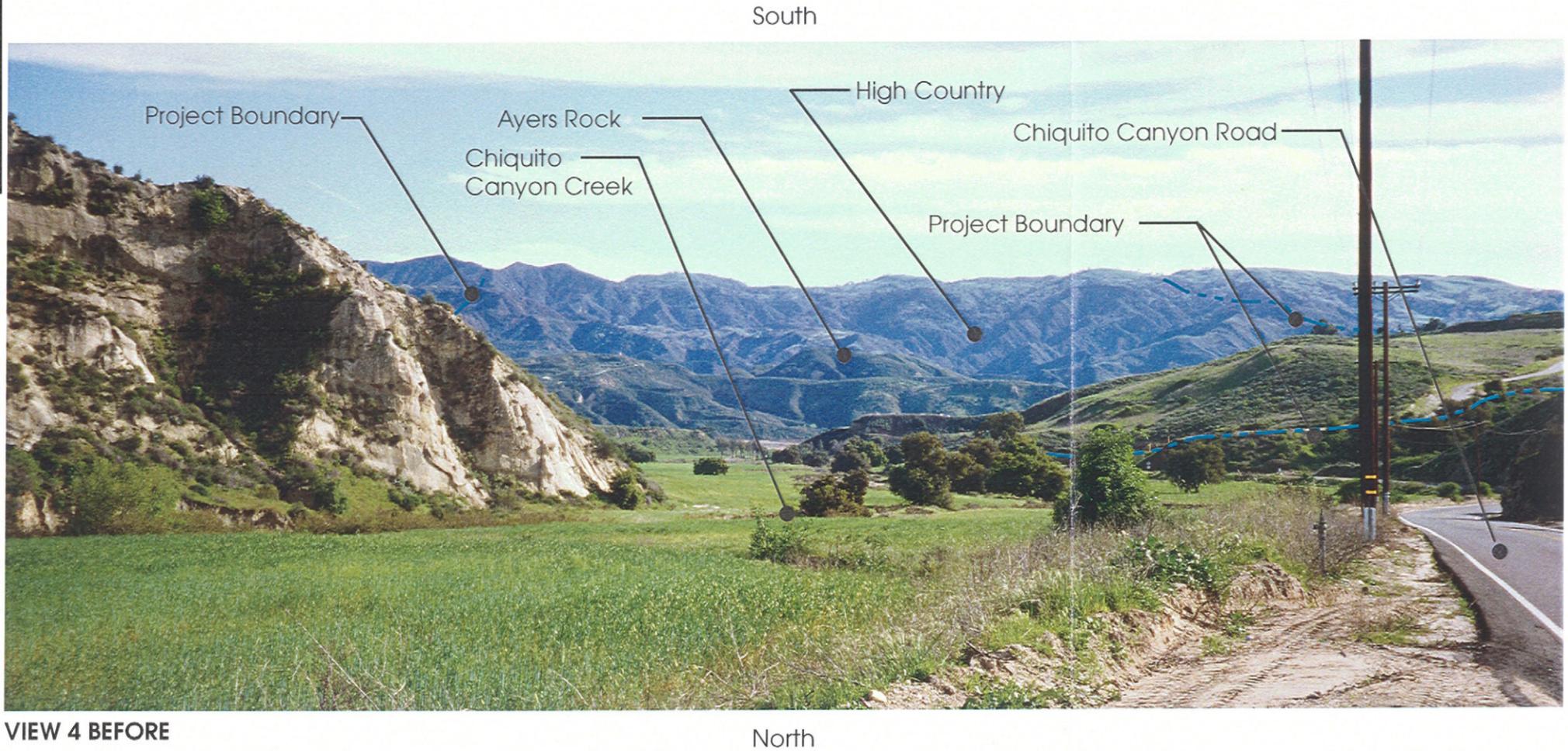
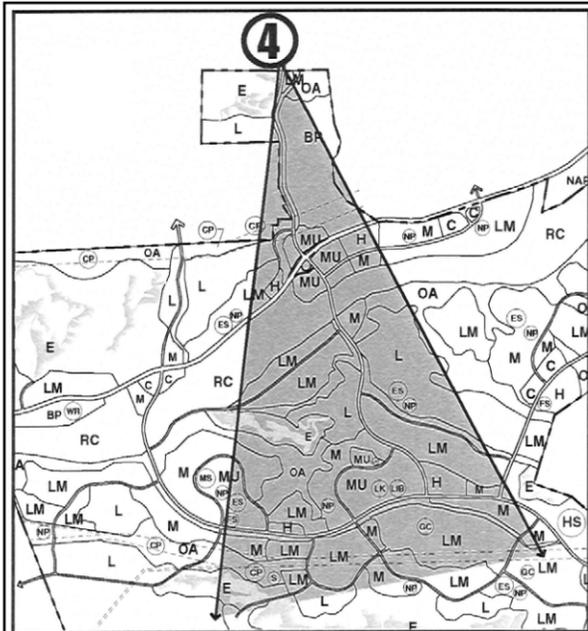
1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; or
2. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
3. Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The Appendix G significance criterion that states a project would normally result in a significant aesthetic impact if it would substantially damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway, such as trees, rock outcroppings, historic buildings, *etc.*, has not been included in this analysis because no roadway located in the Project area or its vicinity is classified as a state scenic highway.

**4.15.6 IMPACTS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND ALTERNATIVES**

The facilities associated with the RMDP and SCP components of the proposed Project would significantly impact visual resources. Scenic vistas, such as visual features that are unique to the Project area, specifically, and Los Angeles County, generally, could be adversely impacted; the existing visual character or quality of the Project area and its surroundings could be substantially degraded; and new sources of substantial light and glare could adversely affect day or nighttime views in the Project area. In addition, because implementation of the proposed Project indirectly would facilitate urban development within the Specific Plan area and VCC planning area, and facilitate development in the Entrada planning area, if approved by the County, indirect visual impacts potentially could occur.

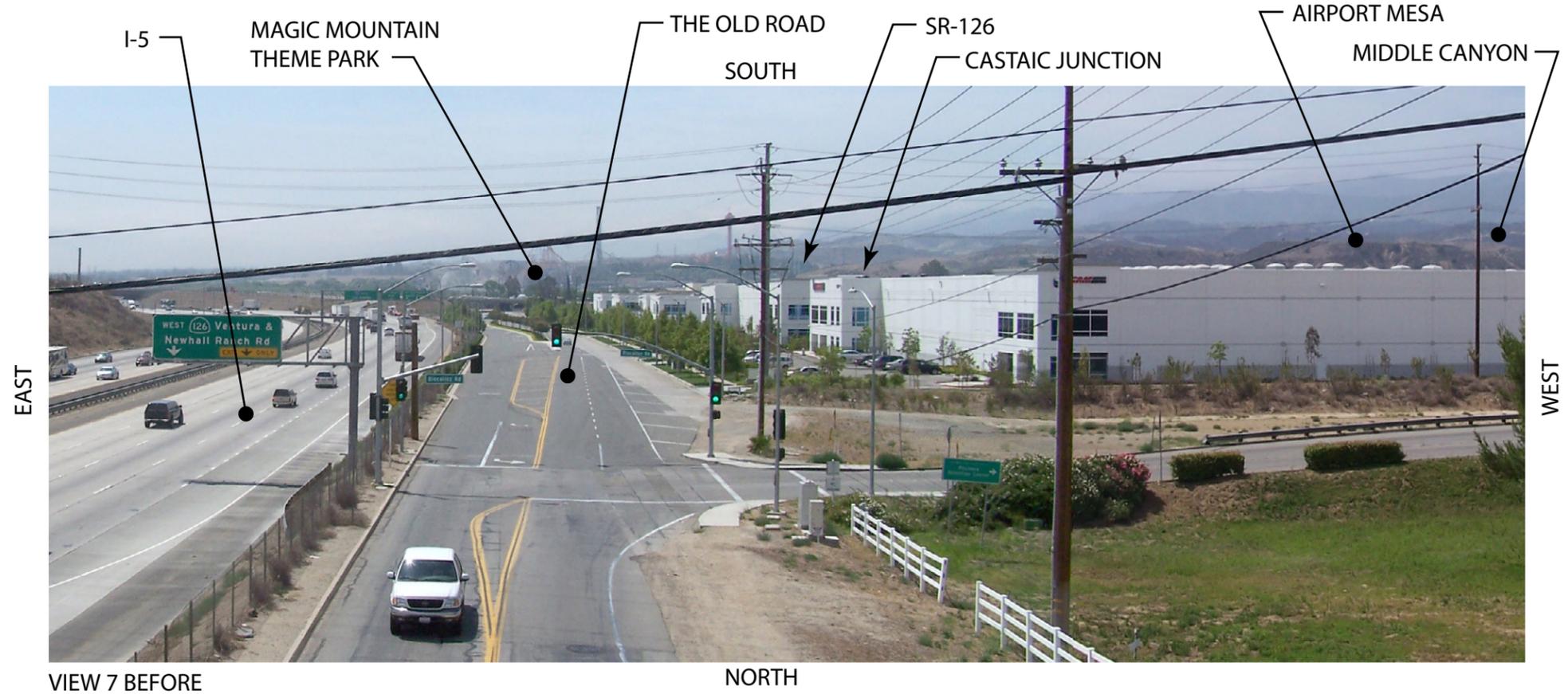
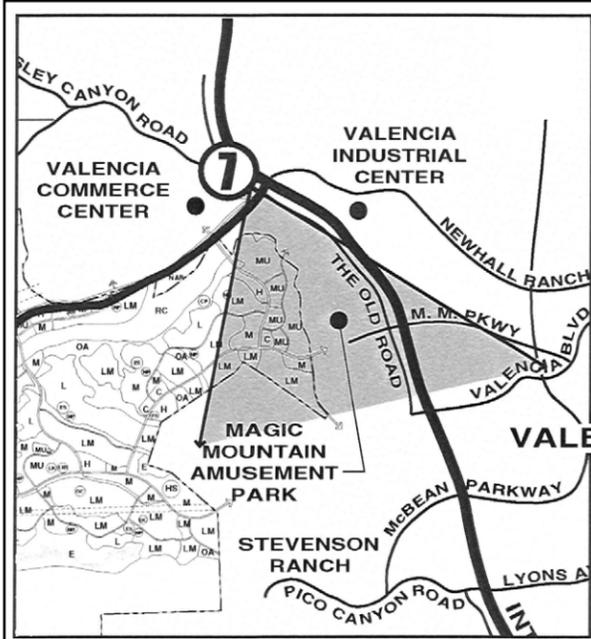
In general, each "build" alternative (Alternatives 2-7) would significantly impact the visual quality of the Project area. Only the "No Action/No Project" alternative would avoid Project-related visual impacts altogether. However, each "build" alternative proposes a lesser amount of development or a smaller development footprint; as such, each such alternative would reduce incrementally the impact magnitude created when compared with the proposed Project (Alternative 2).



SOURCE: FORMA

**FIGURE 4.15-5**

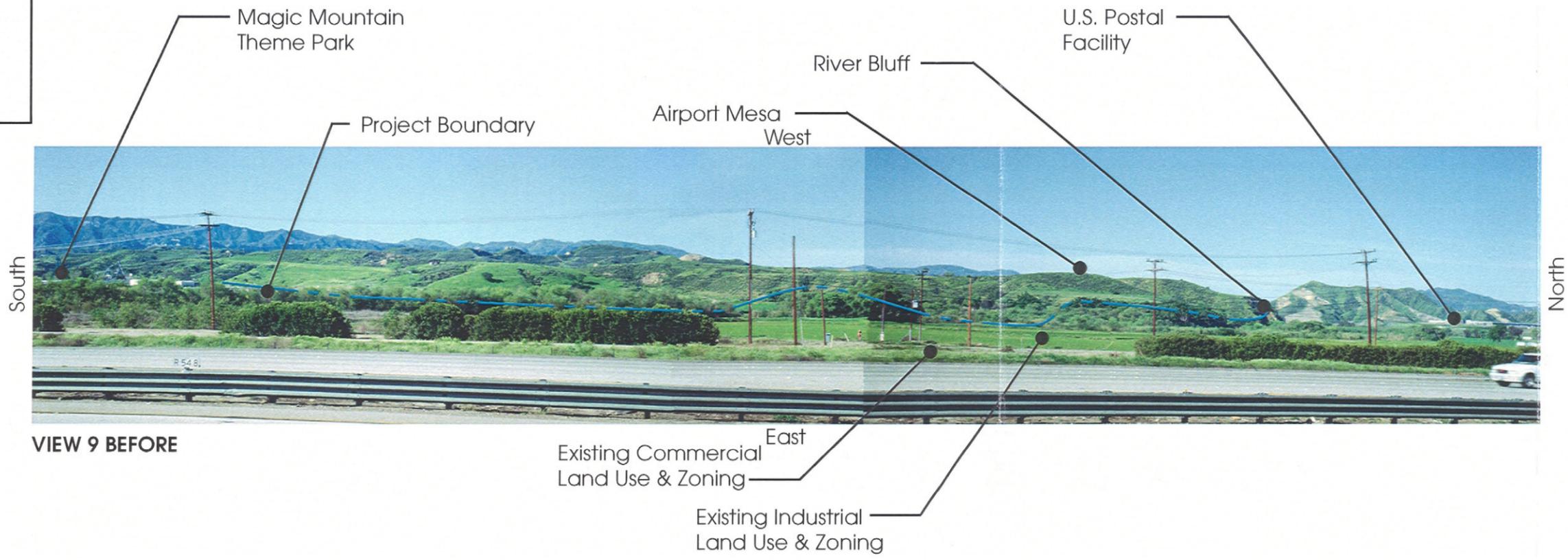
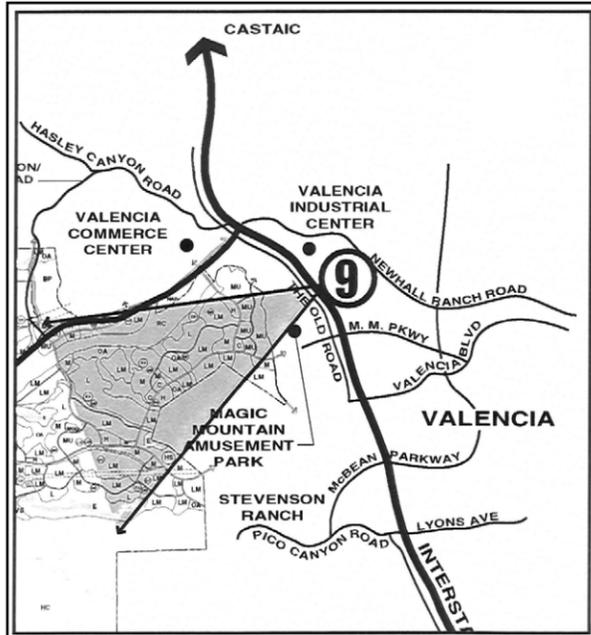
Chiquito Canyon View Corridor - Location 4



SOURCE: FORMA

**FIGURE 4.15-6**

I-5 Corridor - Location 7

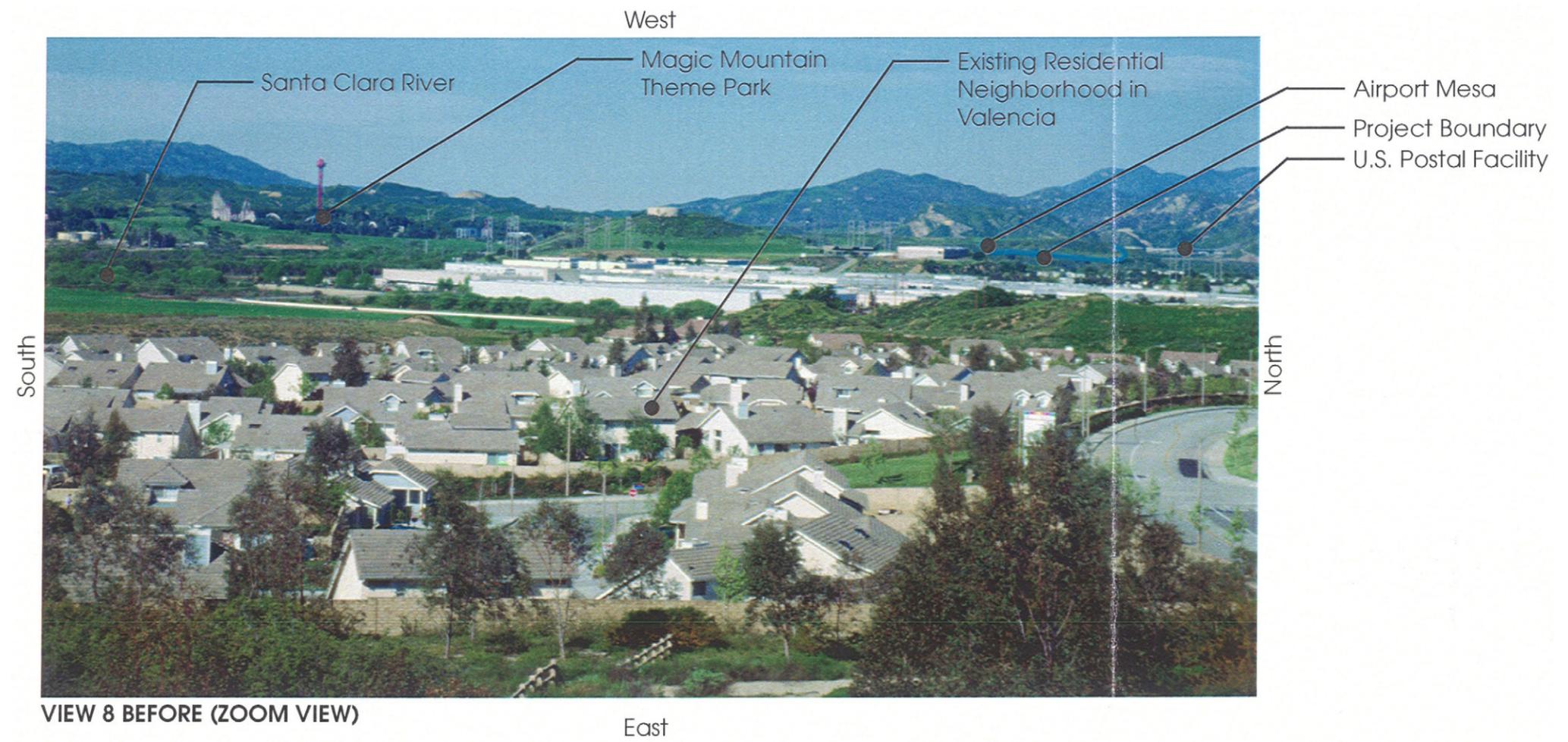
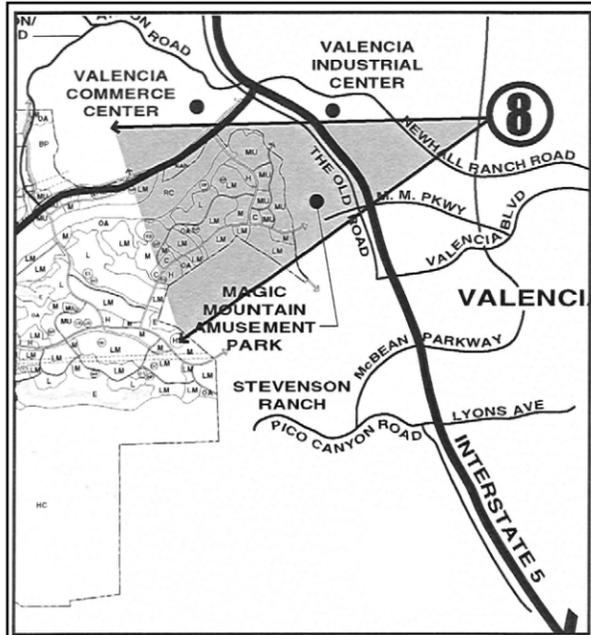


VIEW 9 BEFORE

SOURCE: FORMA

FIGURE 4.15-7

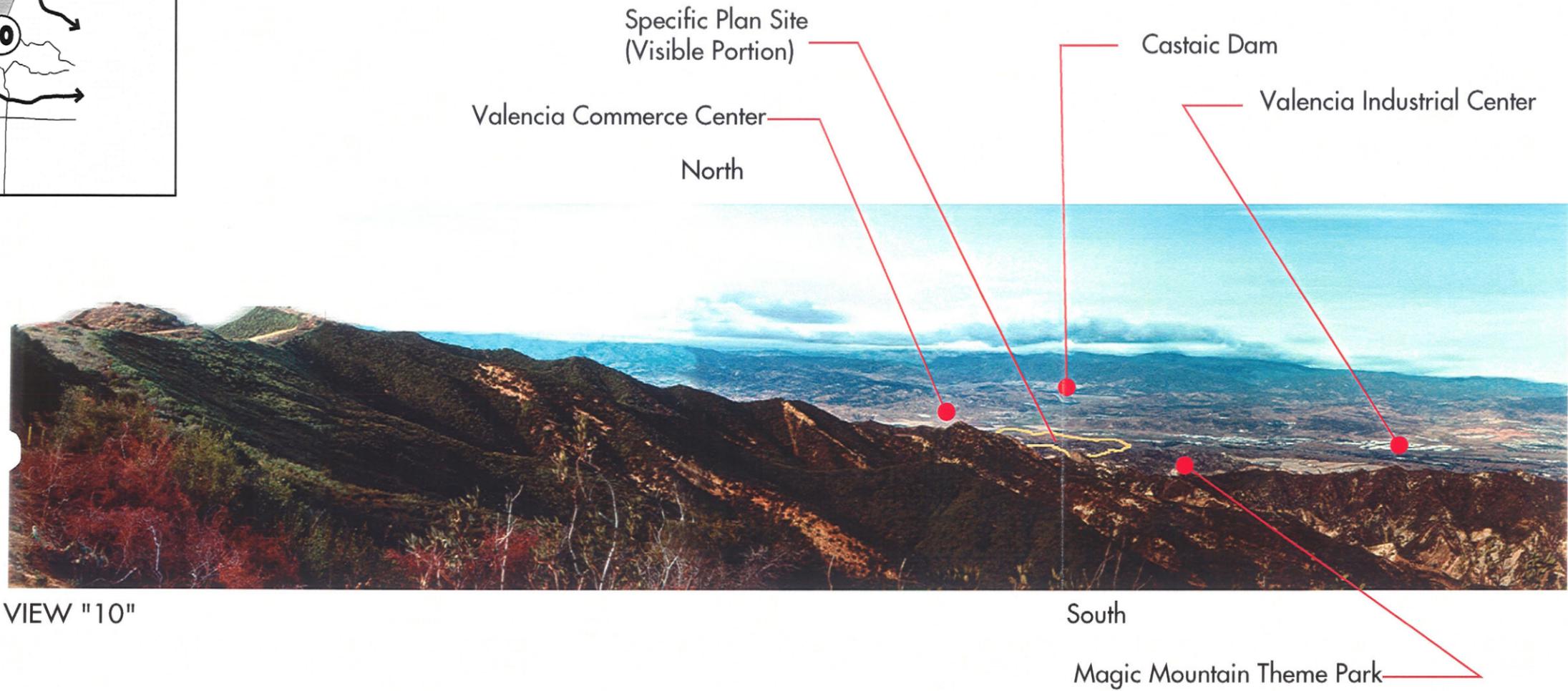
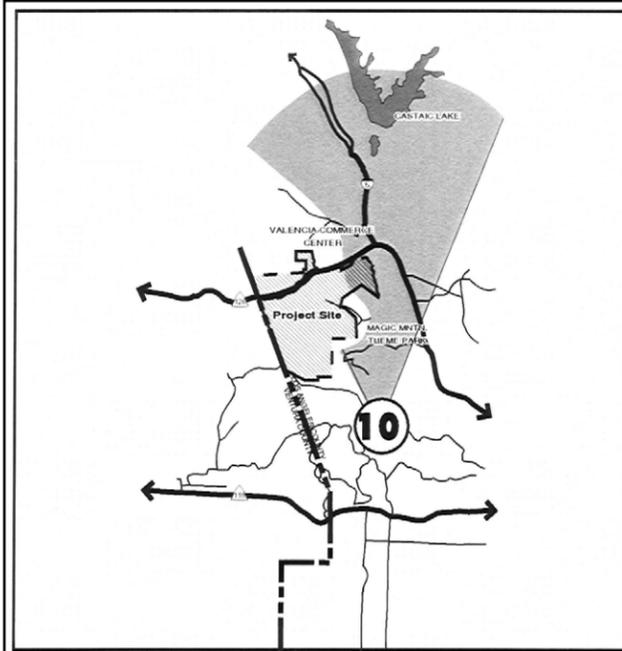
I-5 Corridor - Location 9



SOURCE: FORMA

**FIGURE 4.15-8**

City of Santa Clarita View - Location 8



SOURCE: FORMA

**FIGURE 4.15-9**

Rim of the Valley Trail - Location 10

**4.15.6.1 Impacts of Alternative 1 (No Action/No Project)**

Under Alternative 1, no action would be taken and the proposed Project would not be developed. Therefore, under this alternative, there would be no construction of bridges, bank stabilization, grade stabilization structures, detention basins, storm drains, road improvements, or the WRP. Consequently, Alternative 1 would not result in any direct visual impacts to the environment. Similarly, with respect to indirect and secondary impacts, under Alternative 1, no infrastructure would be built and no permits issued to facilitate development within the Specific Plan area, the VCC planning area, or portions of the Entrada planning area. Therefore, Alternative 1 would not result in activities that would have the potential to substantially affect scenic vistas or the visual character or quality of the Project site, or create a new source of substantial light or glare, indirectly or otherwise (Significance Criteria 1-3). Consequently, this alternative would not result in any visual resource-related impacts associated with development and implementation of the proposed Project or the alternatives.

**4.15.6.2 Impacts of Alternative 2 (Proposed Project)****4.15.6.2.1 Direct Impacts****RMDP Direct Impacts.**

**RMDP Construction Activities.** Installation of flood control improvements (*e.g.*, buried bank stabilization), drainage facilities, bridges, water quality basins, road improvements, and the WRP outfall would cause various short-term visual disturbances to landforms due to clearing of vegetation, grading, excavation, stockpiling, and filling. In addition, the presence of construction equipment and vehicles at construction sites would create a new short-term visual impact. These visual impacts would occur throughout the Project area as various RMDP elements are installed, and would be seen from the 10 KOPs described above. **Figures 4.15-10 through 4.15-16** illustrate the approximate appearance of such activities.

The construction sites associated with installation of the RMDP infrastructure would be temporary in nature and views of construction areas from the 10 KOPs would predominantly be from distant locations. As shown in **Figures 4.15-10 through 4.15-16**, construction activities would include the development of storm drain outlets, buried bank stabilization, and debris basins, that would occupy relatively small construction areas and that are not highly visible from adjacent public viewing locations. In addition, the visual simulation provided on **Figure 4.15-13** depicts the Long Canyon Road Bridge as a relatively low elevation bridge that blends in with existing topography and adjacent proposed development.

The RMDP-related construction activity would occur at various locations within the Project area over the approximate 20-year build-out of the Specific Plan, but not all construction projects would occur at the same time. For example, while buried bank stabilization for the Santa Clara River (see **Figure 4.15-10**) may be installed concurrently with construction of the Long Canyon Road Bridge (as proposed for the Landmark Village development), the timing of many construction projects will not overlap. It also could be the case that buried bank stabilization will be installed near the WRP, while grading is occurring simultaneously to make way for drains and outfalls (see **Figure 4.15-11**) on the Mission Village portion

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## 4.15 VISUAL RESOURCES

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of the Specific Plan site. However, there also may be periods when no construction occurs during the build-out timeframe.

In all cases, once the construction activities are completed, the construction sites would be planted with native vegetation and ensure compliance with the development regulations and design guidelines mandated in the Specific Plan. **Figure 4.15-12** provides a visual representation of the appearance of a buried bank stabilization site in Santa Clarita that has been revegetated in a manner similar to that of the proposed Project and alternatives.

RMDP-related construction activity required to develop RMDP infrastructure would generally occur in conjunction with the development of other urban development authorized by the previously approved Specific Plan. Infrastructure-related construction activities would generally affect limited areas of the Specific Plan site, would occur at locations that would not significantly block scenic views from public viewing locations, and development periods for the infrastructure improvements would be limited in duration. Therefore, construction activities required to develop proposed RMDP infrastructure would not adversely affect a scenic vista and would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project area and its surroundings under Significance Criteria 1 or 2. Because the temporary construction sites would not be lighted, or would have only minimal nighttime security lighting, the construction activity would not create new sources of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area under Significance Criteria 3. As a result, temporary construction-related visual impacts are considered adverse, but not significant because they would be of limited duration and specific to the construction sites themselves.

**RMDP Operational Activities.** Proposed facilities and drainage improvements potentially causing direct, permanent impacts to visual resources under Alternative 2 are described below.

***Santa Clara River.*** The proposed Project includes the construction of three bridges across the Santa Clara River, including bridges at Long Canyon Road, Potrero Canyon Road and the previously approved bridge at Commerce Center Drive. The bridges are proposed to be conventional concrete girders placed over concrete filled piers with low profile railing, similar to the existing bridges upstream of the Project area at McBean Parkway and Newhall Ranch Road (see **Figure 2.0-31** of this EIS/EIR). The bridges would be located in undeveloped areas where the existing visual character is predominantly naturally vegetated landforms and the Santa Clara River channel.



**Buried Soil Cement Excavation**



**Buried Soil Cement Backfill**

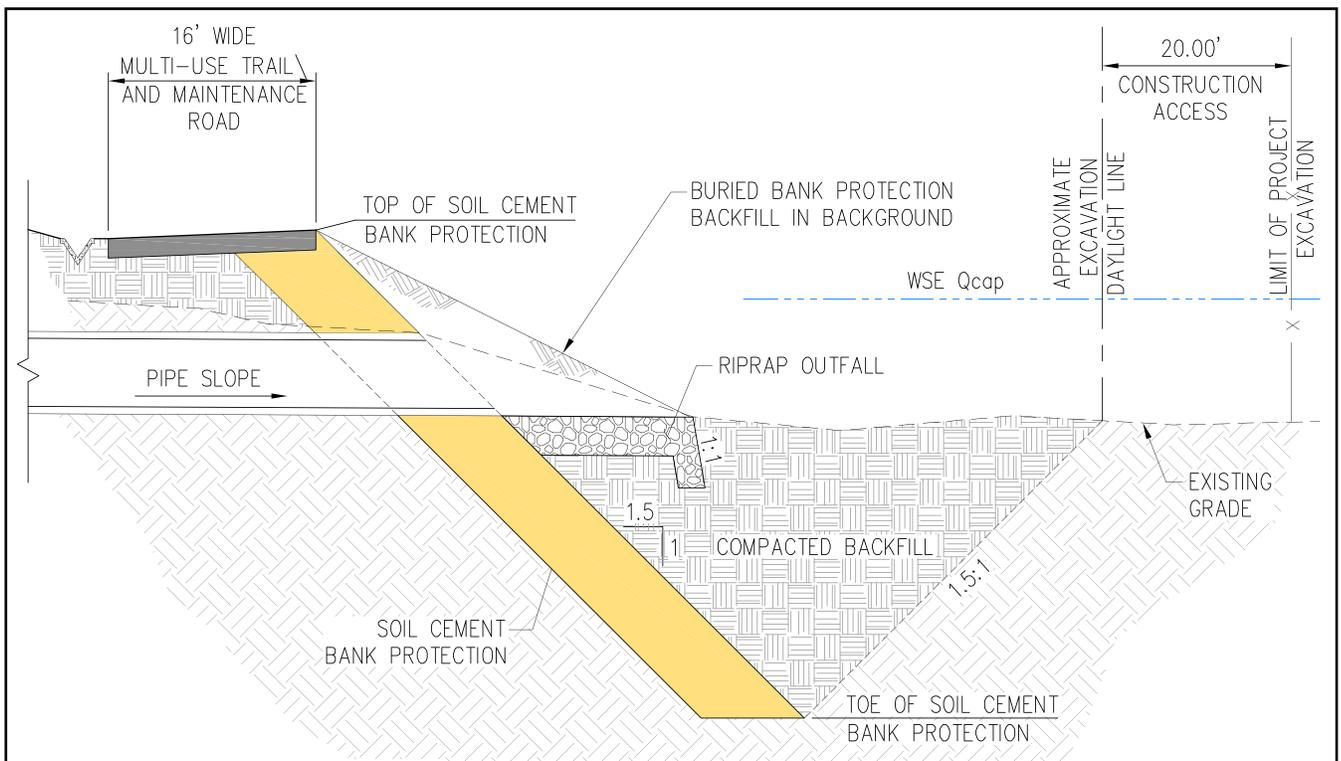
SOURCE: Newhall Ranch RMDP – February 2007

**FIGURE 4.15-10**

Buried Bank Stabilization Construction



**Storm Drain Outlet**



**Typical Storm Drain Outlet Model**

SOURCE: Newhall Ranch RMDP - February 2007.

**FIGURE 4.15-11**

Typical Storm Drain Outlet



**Buried Soil Cement**

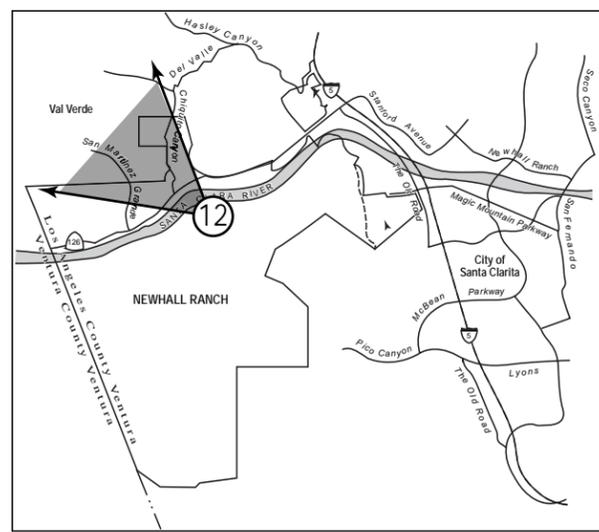


**Revegetation**

SOURCE: Newhall Ranch RMDP – February 2007

**FIGURE 4.15-12**

Revegetated Buried Bank Stabilization



Southwest



VIEW 12 BEFORE

Northwest

Northeast

Southeast

VIEW 12 AFTER



Southwest

Northwest

Northeast

Southeast

SOURCE: Impact Sciences, Inc. – October 2007

**FIGURE 4.15-13**

Long Canyon Bridge Simulation - Location 12



**Extended Detention Basin**



**Extended Detention or Wetpond**

SOURCE: Newhall Ranch RMDP - February 2007,

FIGURE **4.15-14**

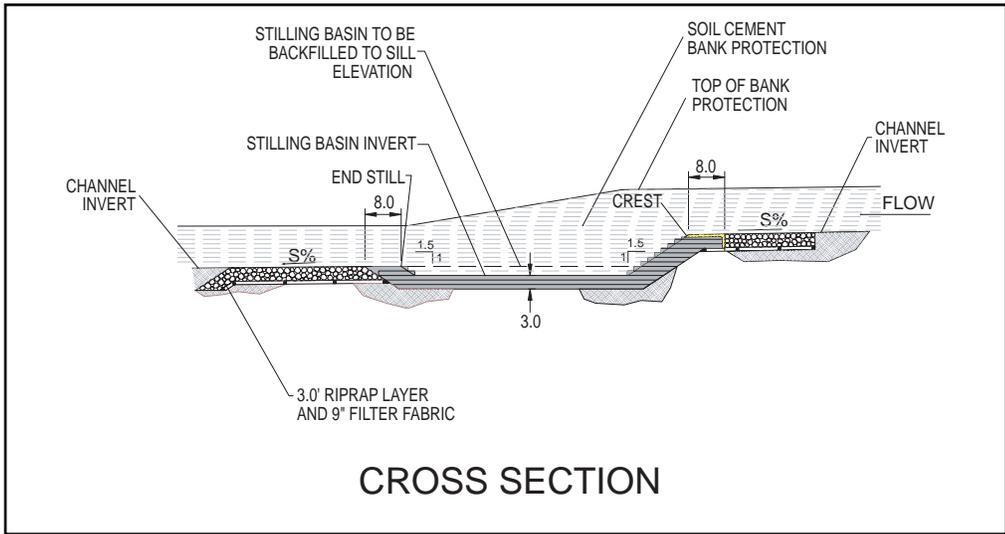
**Debris Basins**



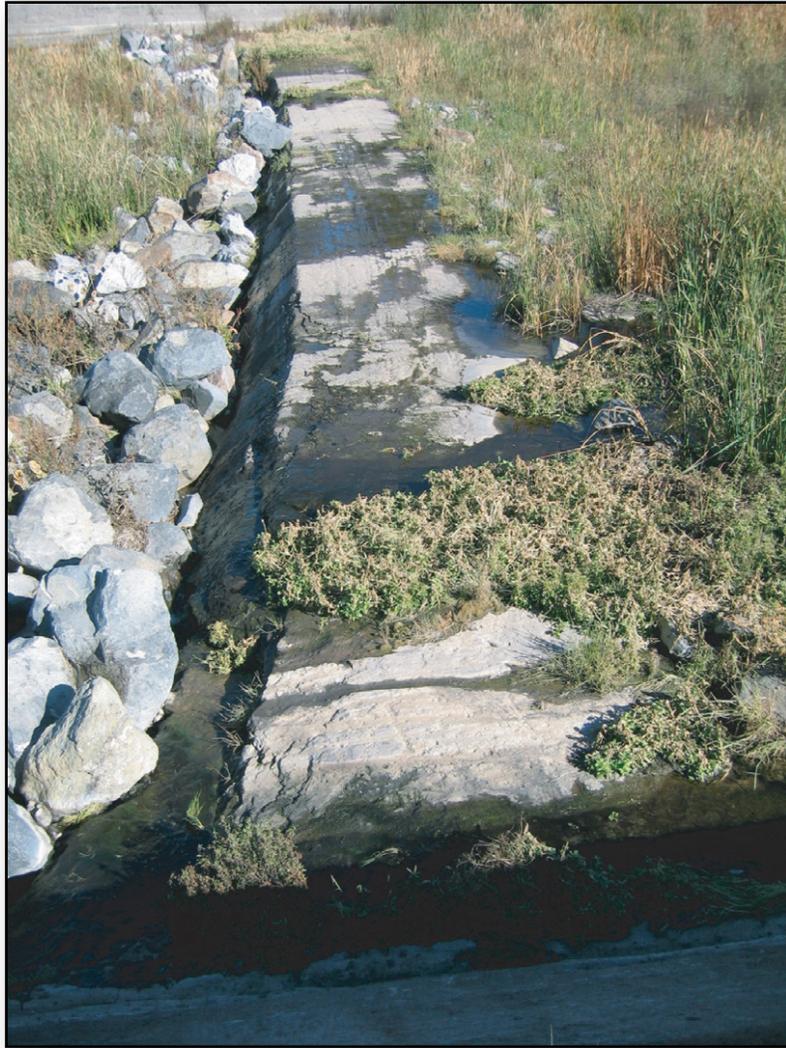
SOURCE: PACE – October 2007

**FIGURE 4.15-15**

Tributary Bridge



**Conceptual Grade Stabilization Structure Design**



**Installation of Drop Structure**

SOURCE: Newhall Ranch RMDP - February 2007

FIGURE **4.15-16**

**Grade Stabilization Structures**

## 4.15 VISUAL RESOURCES

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Construction of these bridges would cause a visual disruption of the River's linear form. It also would introduce new, manmade visual features that would contrast sharply with the natural visual elements of the Valley. (See **Figure 4.15-13** for a visual simulation of the Long Canyon Road Bridge.) These bridges may also obstruct more distant upstream and/or downstream views. However, they would also create new locations from which to view portions of the Santa Clara River Corridor. Although bridges are commonplace structures in the region and the proposed bridges would not block scenic vistas, the bridges would conflict with the natural setting of the River channels and place unnatural material in a natural environment. This would degrade the visual setting of the Project area and result in a significant impact under Significance Criteria 1 and 2, even with implementation of Mitigation Measures SP-4.7-1, SP-5.0-33-35, and VR-1 and VR-2. Although the bridges would result in significant changes to existing visual conditions, as urban development subsequently occurs in the vicinity of the bridges, their appearance would no longer appear to be out-of-context with adjacent visual conditions. New sources of nighttime light and glare also would be created by lighting on the bridges. While a minimum amount of safety lighting is proposed, this would introduce lighting in areas where no lighting presently exists and a significant impact would result under Significance Criteria 3 even with implementation of Mitigation Measures SP-4.7-1, SP-5.0-33-35, and VR-1 and VR-2.

The bank protection proposed along the Santa Clara River primarily would consist of buried soil cement with an associated upland habitat buffer zone. This type of design would reduce the potential for significant visual impacts because the buried bank protection would not be visible, the buffer zone and riverbanks would be restored to a natural appearance and consistent with the surroundings (see **Figure 4.15-12**), and these sites would be unlit. Therefore, the buried soil cement component of the Project would not have a substantial long-term adverse effect on a scenic vista and not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site or its surroundings under Significance Criteria 1 and 2. Additionally, this component would not create new sources of light and glare under Significance Criteria 3.

The proposed Project includes the construction of storm outlets along the banks of the Santa Clara River. These structures would require breaks in the buried soil cement bank stabilization and be surrounded by exposed gunite lining. However, ungrouted riprap would be installed at these edges to provide a transition between the exposed gunite and buried soil cement. (See **Figures 4.15-10** and **4.15-11**.) Therefore, these storm drain outlets would conform to the contour of the gunite lining and not present a three-dimensional visual feature. However, outlets would be visible at close range, most prominently to mobile viewers traveling on Project bridges and the Regional River Trail. Installation of storm drain outlets along reaches of the Santa Clara River would alter the existing natural landscape at those locations by installing unnatural features into an exclusively natural environment. This would degrade the existing visual character of the area resulting in a significant impact under Significance Criteria 1 and 2 even with implementation of Mitigation Measures SP-4.7-1, SP-5.0-33-35, and VR-1 and VR-2. Although the outlets would result in significant changes to existing visual conditions, as urban development subsequently occurs in the vicinity, their appearance would no longer appear to be out-of-context with adjacent visual conditions. The storm drain outlets would not be lighted; therefore, the impact under Significance Criteria 3 would be less than significant.

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## 4.15 VISUAL RESOURCES

Debris basins, detention basins, and water quality basins would be installed, as necessary, on the margins of riparian areas to maintain water quality. Examples of such facilities are illustrated on **Figure 4.15-14**. Although these facilities would cause short-term, localized visual impacts during construction, the completed basins would be visually similar to the adjacent riparian areas. Therefore, the impact under Significance Criteria 1 and 2 would be less than significant. Furthermore, because these facilities would not be lighted, no new sources of light and glare would be created and, therefore, no significant light or glare impacts would be created under Significance Criteria 3.

**Tributaries.** As explained in **Section 2.0**, Project Description, culverted road crossings would cross five different soft-bottom tributaries to the Santa Clara River within the Project area. Additionally, the RMDP also proposes to widen one culvert and two bridges that presently cross drainages beneath SR-126. The appearance of these unlighted bridges is simulated in **Figure 4.15-15**.

Similar to the bridges proposed for the Santa Clara River, these bridges would occur in mostly undeveloped areas characterized by naturally vegetated landforms and stream channels. The construction of these bridges would disrupt the tributaries' linear form, and would introduce a new, man-made visual feature that contrasts sharply with the natural visual elements of the tributaries' riverbeds. While these bridges would create some new scenic viewing locations, the proposed bridges would significantly impact scenic vistas and degrade the existing visual character of the Project site, and impacts would be significant under Significance Criteria 1 or 2. The bridges would not be lighted, therefore, no significant light and glare impacts would be created by these project components under Significance Criteria 3.

Bank stabilization in the form of buried and exposed bank protection is proposed along the Potrero Canyon (approximately 16,435 and 16,176 linear feet (lf) on the west and east banks, respectively), Chiquito Canyon (approximately 7,411 and 7,280 lf on the west and east banks, respectively), San Martinez Grande Canyon (approximately 4,279 and 4,287 lf on the west and east banks, respectively), and Long Canyon (approximately 8,833 and 8,815 lf on the west and east banks, respectively) drainages. Lion Canyon will not contain bank protection along its length, but will incorporate a number of grade control structures to stabilize the channel bed. The buried bank protection would have the same design as that proposed for the Santa Clara River and would reduce the potential for long-term visual impacts because the buried bank protection would not be visible, and the buffer zone and riverbanks would be restored to a natural appearance, consistent with the surroundings. (See **Figures 4.15-10** and **4.15-12**.) Therefore, the buried soil cement would neither adversely affect a scenic vista nor substantially degrade the existing visual character of quality of the Specific Plan site. Because the bank protection would not be lighted, it would not create new sources of substantial light or glare. Consequently, visual impacts created by these completed project components would not be significant under Significance Criteria 1, 2, or 3.

Exposed bank protection would substantially degrade the existing visual character of the Project site. While these impacts would be reduced by Mitigation Measure VR-1, which requires gunite and riprap materials to be neutrally-colored and uniform throughout the Project area, the addition of exposed bank protection into the existing environment would remain significant under Significance Criteria 1 and 2 even with implementation of Mitigation Measures SP-4.7-1, SP-5.0-33-35, and VR-1 and VR-2.

As explained in **Section 2.0**, Project Description, of this EIS/EIR, the RMDP also proposes to construct five soft-bottom channels within the Project area in Potrero Canyon, San Martinez Canyon, Chiquito Canyon, Long Canyon, and Lion Canyon. Within these channels, a series of grade stabilization structures are proposed. The soft bottom channels and buried bank stabilization would allow the establishment of riparian vegetation to screen the grade stabilization structures from public view. At completion of construction activities native vegetation would be planted on the buried bank stabilization. (See **Figure 4.15-16**.) Under Significance Criteria 1 and 2, impacts to scenic vistas and the visual character of the proposed Project area as a result of installation of grade stabilization structures would be considered adverse, but less than significant because they would be screened from public view by new vegetation. Also, because these structures would not be lighted, no significant light and glare impacts would be created under Significance Criteria 3.

**Road Improvements.** Alternative 2 proposes various roadway improvements to SR-126 within the vicinity of the Specific Plan area. Farmland is located on both sides of SR-126 in the areas where the road is proposed to be widened. The terrain in the proposed road improvement areas is relatively flat and is not occupied by structures or unique landforms. The proposed road improvements would expand SR-126 from a four-lane road to a six-lane road. The additional lanes would neither block nor alter scenic vistas in the Project area. Minor lighting (*i.e.*, reflective lights for nighttime driving) would be installed and the road would be paved with non-reflective material (*i.e.*, asphalt). The extension of the pavement could facilitate additional vehicles on the road, and thereby contribute to additional light at nighttime from vehicle headlights and glare from vehicles using the road during the daytime. However, this light and glare source currently exists on SR-126, and the Project's contribution would be within the same corridor. Therefore, although the intensity of the lighting may increase, the lighting would occur within an area with an existing light source. Given the above, the proposed roadway improvements would have less-than-significant impacts to scenic vistas, visual character, and light and glare under Significance Criteria 1, 2, and 3.

**Conclusion.** Implementation of Alternative 2 would result in short-term construction-related impacts, as the visual character of the Project area would be changed during the time that proposed infrastructure improvement would be installed. Impacts resulting from views of infrastructure construction sites would generally be to motorists traveling along SR-126 and I-5, would be of a short duration, and would generally be seen from distant viewing locations. Finally, while some light and glare may be introduced, the impact would again be temporary. Therefore, construction-related impacts to scenic vistas and degradation of visual character are less than significant under Significance Criteria 1, 2, and 3.

Alternative 2 would result in significant direct impacts to the visual character of the Project area because the construction of bridges and exposed bank stabilization would substantially degrade the existing visual character of the Project site. While these impacts would be reduced by Mitigation Measure VCC-VR-1, presented below in **Subsection 4.15.7.2**, requiring gunite and riprap materials to be neutrally-colored and uniform throughout the Project area, the addition of the bridges and other structures into the existing natural environment would remain significant under Significance Criteria 1 and 2. The proposed improvements would have minimal lighting as described above; therefore, these improvements would not result in significant light and glare impacts under Significance Criteria 3.

**SCP Direct Impacts.** The establishment of the proposed spineflower preserves within the Specific Plan and Entrada planning area would not substantially alter the existing visual conditions of the project sites, as the only development that would be provided at the preserves would be fencing and small information signs. Fencing would not impair views across or beyond the preserve sites. Because the SCP would not adversely affect scenic vistas, would not adversely alter the visual quality or character of the Project site or the surroundings, and would not create any new sources of light or glare, no direct adverse impacts to visual resources would occur under Significance Criteria 1, 2, or 3.

### 4.15.6.2.2 Indirect Impacts

**RMDP Indirect Impacts.** Implementation of the proposed RMDP would indirectly facilitate build-out of the Specific Plan. As discussed in **Subsection 4.15.1.1**, the County adopted a Statement of Overriding Considerations for visual impacts when the Specific Plan was approved. The proposed Project's Land Use Plan, including locations of proposed facilities and Specific Plan development facilitated by the proposed Project, is included in **Figure 2.0-7** of this EIS/EIR.

The Specific Plan site is visible from the view corridors identified in **Subsection 4.15.4.1.1**, and build-out of urban uses on the site would significantly impact visual resources. A detailed analysis of the impacts of the Specific Plan on visual resources was presented in Section 4.7, Visual Qualities, of the Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999). The Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR identified three view corridors from which the Specific Plan is visible: (1) the Santa Clara River/SR-126 corridor; (2) the Chiquito Canyon Road corridor; and (3) the I-5 corridor. Eight viewsheds were identified within the three view corridors where large or permanent viewing audiences have prominent views of a portion of the Specific Plan area. Two additional viewsheds were identified from locations outside of the three view corridors. The first additional viewshed is from a Valencia residential neighborhood, and the second is from the Rim of the Valley Trail. A view analysis was conducted for each of these viewsheds to determine the significance of the Specific Plan's effects on the visual qualities of these views. This was accomplished through computer modeling techniques that provided three-dimensional perspectives to illustrate the view of the developed Specific Plan site within each of the viewsheds. Due to the view-blocking effects of intervening topography, much of the area proposed for development is not visible from areas off the Specific Plan site. Specific examples of this are development areas proposed for middle and upper Potrero Canyon, and the upland portions of Airport Mesa, now part of what is called Mission Village, not directly near the bluff edge.

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## 4.15 VISUAL RESOURCES

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The Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999) states that, approximately 5,852 acres (or 49 percent) of the total Specific Plan area would remain in Open Area and SMAs, including: (1) the High Country SMA; (2) the vegetated Santa Clara River Corridor SMA and adjoining bluffs and steep canyons covered with oak trees; (3) significant topographic features, such as Sawtooth Ridge and Ayres Rock; and (4) other Open Areas. Despite the amount of open land that would be provided, development proposed adjacent to the Santa Clara River Corridor that parallels SR-126 would significantly alter the visual characteristics of the corridor. (See **Figures 4.15-17** through **4.15-24**.) Views in Chiquito Canyon also would be significantly altered as a result of Specific Plan implementation. (See **Figures 4.15-25** and **4.15-26**.) **Figures 4.15-27** through **4.15-32** provide visual simulations of proposed Specific Plan development as viewed from the I-5 viewing corridor. **Figures 4.15-33** and **4.15-34** provide visual simulations of Specific Plan development as viewed from elevated portions of the city of Santa Clarita. Lastly, **Figure 4.15-35** presents a visual simulation of Specific Plan area, as viewed from the Rim of the Valley Trail, south of the Specific Plan site.

While development that is proposed near the Santa Clara River Corridor, for the most part, is not replacing prominent visual features, such as vegetation or bluffs, the images of residential development, roadways, bridges, and other human activity would be a significant change from the existing characteristics of the site. Such development also would introduce sources of outdoor illumination that do not presently exist. Outdoor lighting, such as street lights and traffic signals, are essential safety features in development projects that involve new streets and intersections, and cannot be eliminated if the proposed Specific Plan is implemented as planned. The Specific Plan contains many features, which are geared toward creating an attractive urban community. Chapter 3.0 and 4.0 of the Specific Plan contain Development Regulations and Design Guidelines, respectively. These regulations and guidelines address grading, lighting, fencing, landscaping, signage, architecture, and site planning. However, despite such regulations and guidelines, significant visual impacts would still result from the change in the visual character of the site from rural to urban. Consequently, such significant visual impacts would be unavoidable.

The mitigation measures identified in the Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999), (SP-4.7-1 and SP-4.7-2 and SP-5.0-33 through SP-5.0-35) combined with the design elements included in the Specific Plan itself, would reduce the visual impacts of the Specific Plan development. Elements include, but are not limited to:

- Preservation of natural Santa Clara River vegetation and bluffs;
- Preservation of tributaries to the Santa Clara River and other Open Areas;
- Placement of the regional River Trail in between SR-126 and the River;
- Regulation and limitation of urban uses between SR-126 and the River, which create large windows for viewing the Santa Clara River Corridor, the vegetation and bluffs, and the Santa Susana Mountains from SR-126;
- Preservation of the High Country SMA/SEA 20;
- Preservation of significant topographic features, such as Sawtooth Ridge and Ayers Rock;

- Installation of landscaping; and
- Preservation of significant oak tree stands.

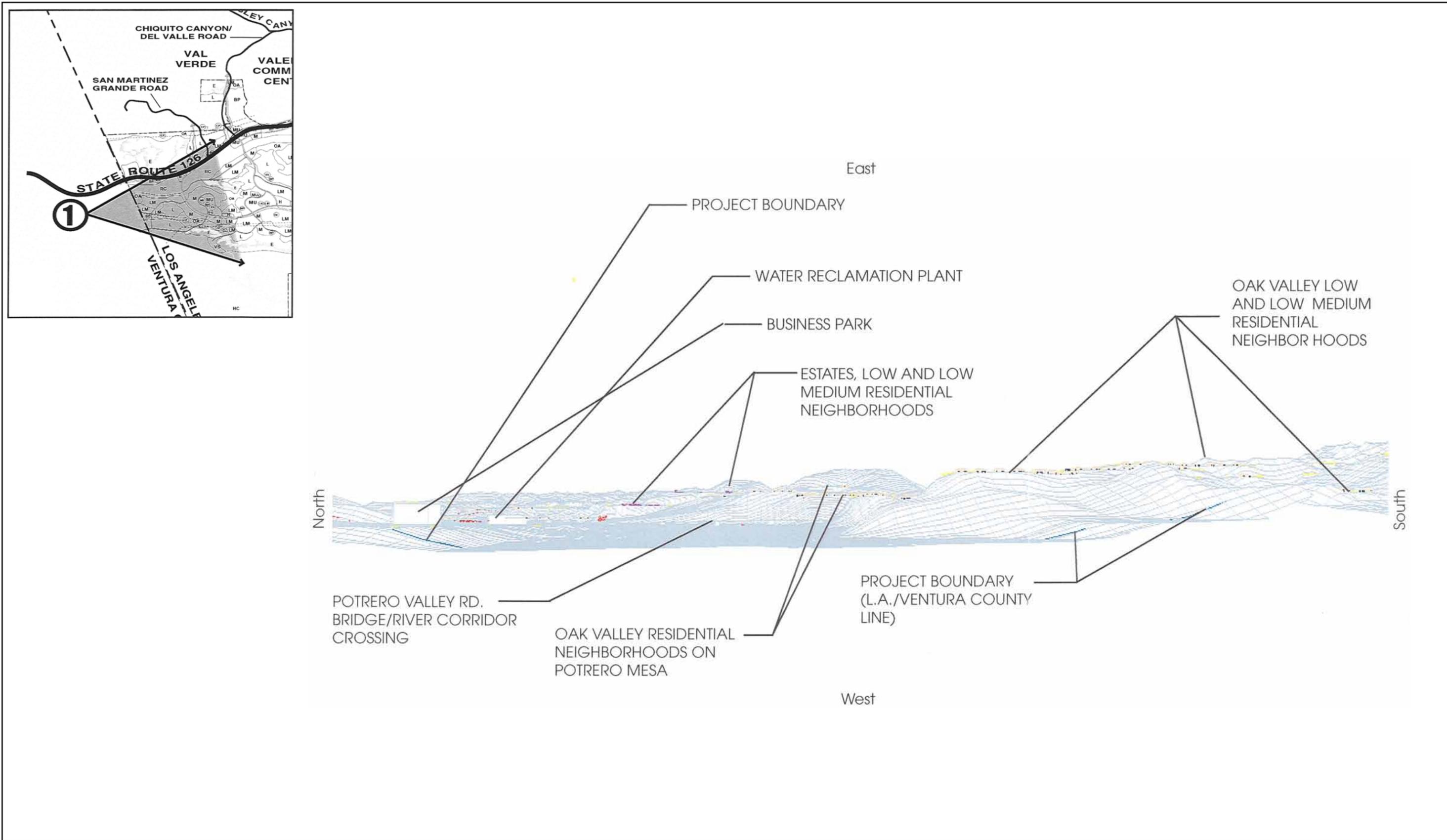
As mentioned above, Chapters 3.0 and 4.0 of the Newhall Ranch Specific Plan contain Development Regulations and Design Guidelines, respectively. They are intended to provide a comprehensive set of regulations governing the use and development of land in order to achieve a development image that blends into adjoining natural landscapes and reduces the alteration of natural landforms and scenic natural features found on the Specific Plan site. The Specific Plan also includes landscape standards directing the use of drought-tolerant and native plants (including the replacement of removed oak trees) that would further highlight the surrounding natural environment. The Development Regulations and Design Guidelines address:

- Setbacks (Specific Plan, Table 3.4-1);
- Building heights (Specific Plan, Table 3.4-1);
- Signage (Specific Plan, Section 3.6);
- Parking (Specific Plan, Section 3.7);
- Site planning (Specific Plan, Section 4.3);
- Architecture (Specific Plan, Section 4.4);
- Fencing (Specific Plan, Section 4.5);
- Landscape design (Specific Plan, Section 4.6);
- Lighting (Specific Plan, Section 4.7); and
- Grading (Specific Plan, Section 4.8).

However, because of the magnitude and severity of the significant visual impacts occurring upon build-out under the Specific Plan, implementation of the mitigation measures described in **Table 4.15-1** and listed in **Subsection 4.15.6** would not reduce impacts to a level below significant. (See also Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999), Section 4.7.) Indirect visual resource impacts of the proposed RMDP are, therefore, considered significant and unavoidable under Significance Criteria 1, 2, and 3, even with implementation of Mitigation Measures SP-4.7-1, SP-5.0-33-35, and VR-1 and VR-2.

**SCP Indirect Impacts.** Implementation of the proposed SCP would indirectly facilitate development within the Specific Plan area and the VCC and Entrada planning areas.

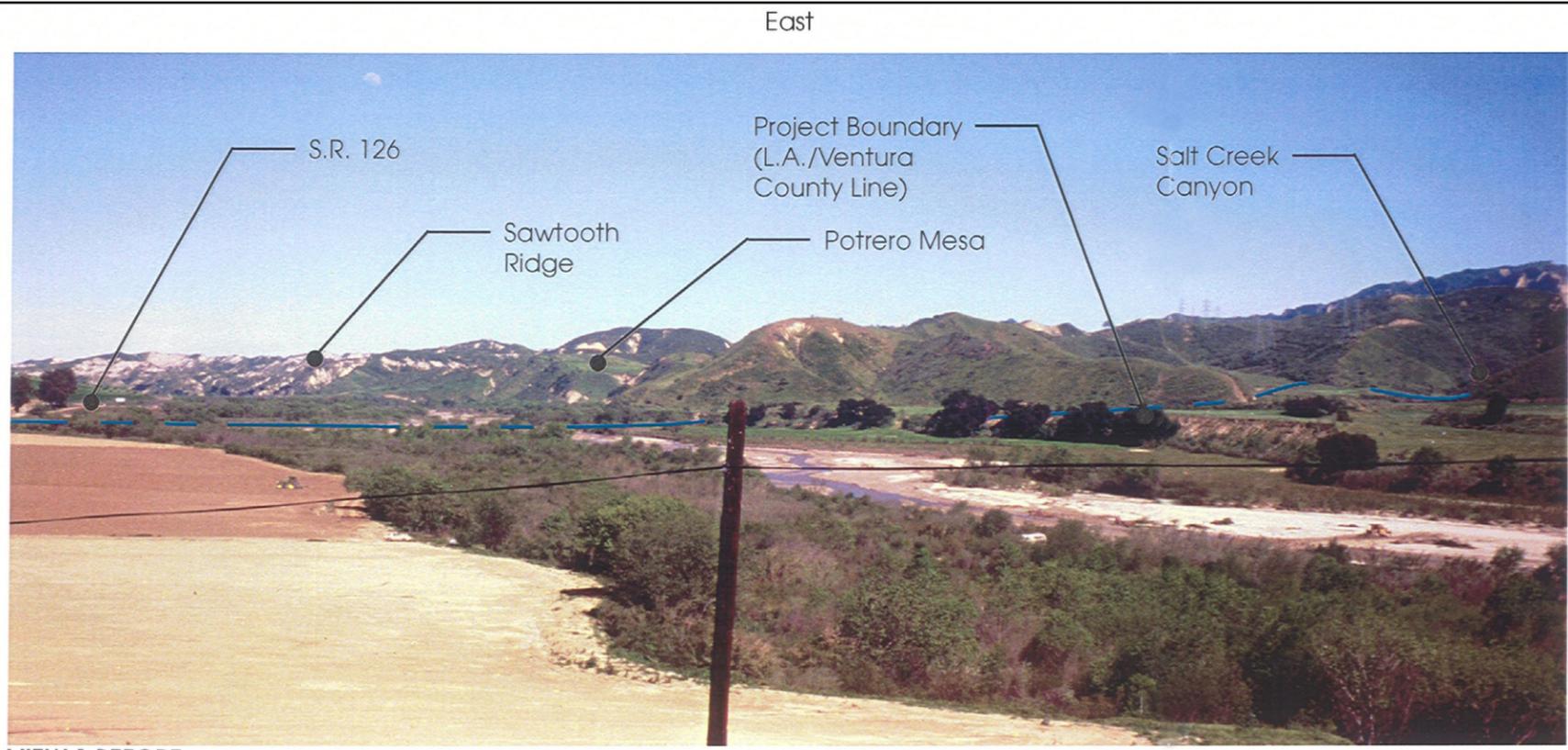
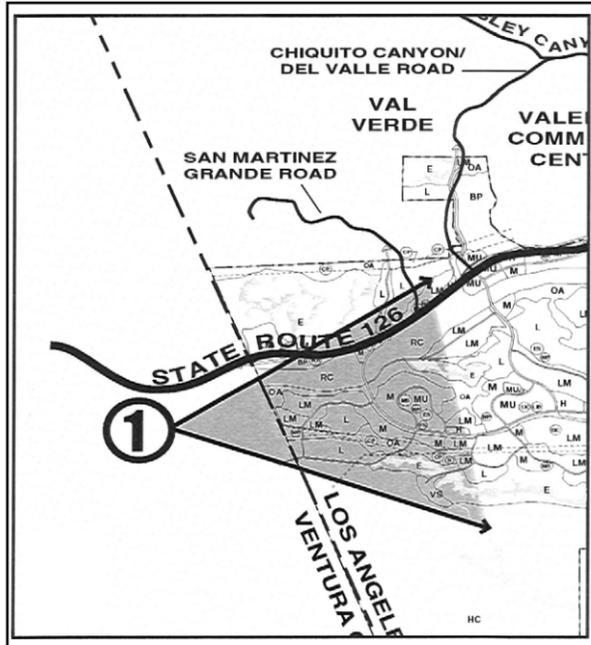
As mentioned above, a detailed analysis of the impacts of the Specific Plan on visual resources was presented in Section 4.7, Visual Qualities, of the Newhall Ranch Revised Draft EIR (March 1999), and that analysis concluded that such impacts would be unavoidably significant due to the permanent change in the visual landscape on the Specific Plan site.



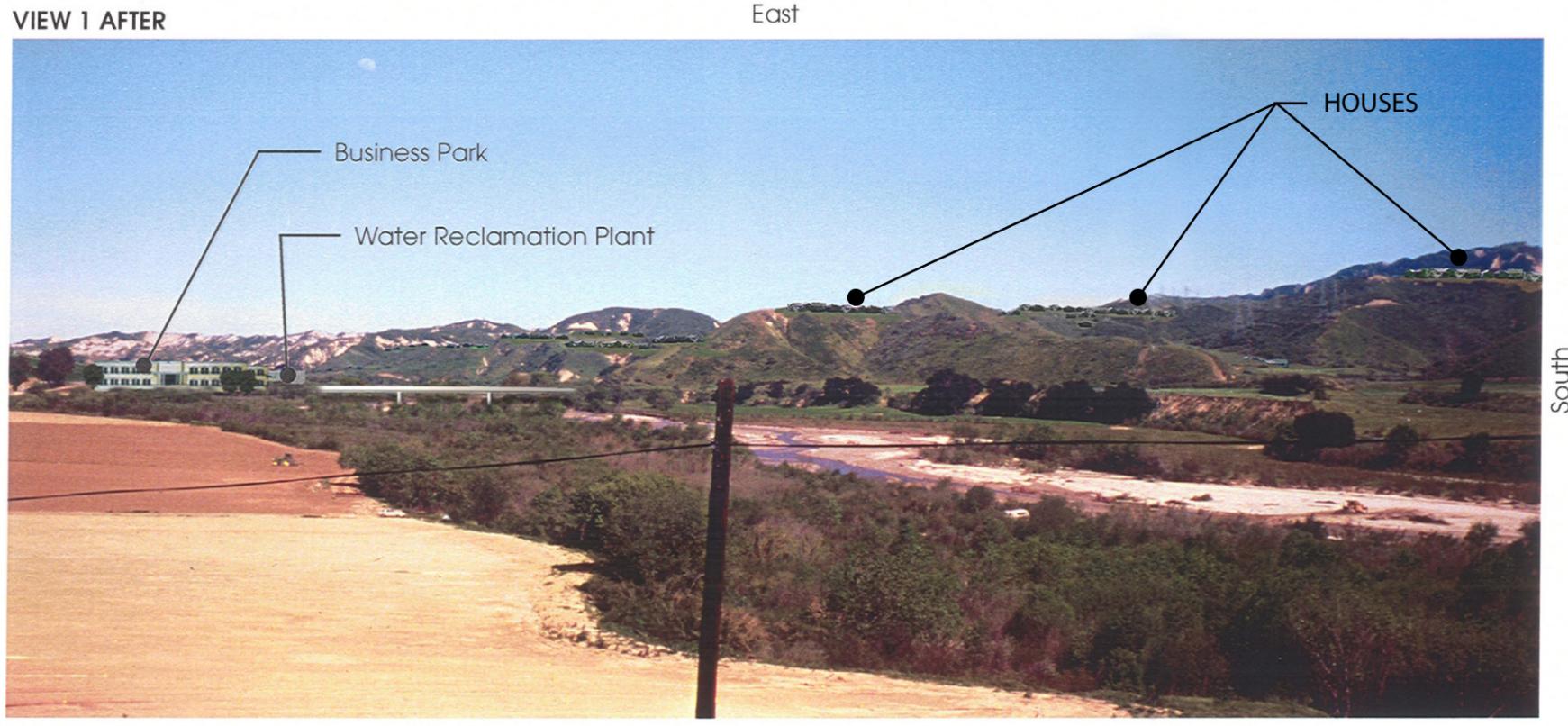
SOURCE: FORMA

**FIGURE 4.15-17**

Santa Clara River / SR-126 View Corridor - Location 1



VIEW 1 BEFORE



VIEW 1 AFTER

SOURCE: FORMA

FIGURE 4.15-18

Santa Clara River / SR-126 View Corridor - Location 1