4.0 AESTHETICS
This section addresses the existing visual resources at each of the project sites and vicinity, and discusses the potential impacts of the proposed project on aesthetics and light/glare.

4.0 GENERAL ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS AND REGULATIONS

4.0.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Regional Scenic Resources

Visual resources that characterize Nevada County include the rolling vistas of foothills, valleys, mountains, meadows, forests, wetlands, and habitats unique to the Sierras. Scenic views within the county include mountain peaks such as Castle Peak, vistas of Donner Lake, and the gorge of the South Fork of the Yuba River. The county is predominantly rural in character, with development concentrated in Nevada City, Grass Valley, and Truckee. The scenic values and aggregate appearance of all the cities, towns, and suburban areas define the aesthetic quality of Nevada County. Outside of these communities, residences are scattered throughout the county. In addition, land use patterns and areas preserved as open space contribute significantly to the county’s aesthetic quality. The ownership and operation of forests by the US Forest Service in the Tahoe National Forest and the open lands under the control of the Bureau of Land Management also preserve a significant portion of the county for permanent scenic quality (Nevada County 1996a, p. 18-1).

Scenic Highways

According to the General Plan, scenic routes in the county include Interstate 80 (I-80) and State Routes (SR) 49, 89, 174, and 267 for the entire length of the county; SR 20 from SR 49 to I-80; and Donner Pass Road from the I-80 intersection at Soda Springs to Donner State Memorial Park (Nevada County 1996b, p. 163).

According to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) Scenic Highway Mapping System, while I-80, SR 20, SR 49, SR 89, and SR 174 are eligible state scenic highways, the only officially designated state scenic highway in Nevada County is SR 20 from Skillman Flat Campground to a half mile east of Lowell Hill Road (Caltrans 2015).

In addition, the County has adopted a scenic corridor ordinance that applies a Scenic Corridor (SC) combining district to applicable properties along the SR 49 and SR 20 corridors. None of the project sites are identified as being within the SC combining district.

Light and Glare

There are two typical types of light intrusion. First, light emanates from the interior of structures and passes through windows. Second, light projects from exterior sources, such as street lighting, security lighting, and landscape lighting. “Light spill” is typically defined as the presence of unwanted and/or misdirected light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated. Light introduction can be a nuisance to adjacent residential areas and diminish the view of the clear night sky. In addition, if the light is uncontrolled, it can disturb wildlife in natural habitat areas.

Perceived glare is the unwanted and potentially objectionable sensation as observed by a person when looking directly into the light source of a luminaire. Glare also results from sunlight reflection off flat building surfaces, with glass typically contributing the highest degree of reflectivity.
4.0 AESTHETICS

4.0.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

State

California Scenic Highway Program

The California Scenic Highway Program intends to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to scenic highways. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been so designated. Cities and counties can nominate eligible scenic highways for official designation by identifying and defining the scenic corridor of the highway. The municipality must also adopt ordinances to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor or document such regulations that already exist in various portions of local codes.

SR 49, which is located 0.1 mile west of the Alta Sierra project site, and SR 20, located 0.3 mile north of the Penn Valley site, are eligible for designation as state scenic highways (Caltrans 2015).

Local

Nevada County General Plan

The Nevada County General Plan includes policies intended to protect the visual character of the county and promote visually attractive development through appropriate site and architectural design. The Aesthetics Element includes policies that are designed to protect scenic resources and reduce light and glare impacts. General Plan Aesthetics Element project-related policies include the following:

- Policy 18.6 Discretionary development in Rural Regions and in Community Regions near the Community Boundary shall, wherever possible, preserve natural landmarks and avoid ridge-line placement of structures.
- Policy 18.7 Encourage protection of scenic corridors wherever feasible.
- Policy 18.11 New Commercial, Industrial and Multiple Family development shall utilize fixtures and light sources that minimize nighttime light pollution.

Nevada County Land Use and Development Code

Section L-II 2.7.7 – Scenic Corridor Combining District (SC)

The Nevada County Land Use and Development Code, Chapter II, Article 2.0, Section L-II 2.7.7, includes regulations applicable in the Scenic Corridor combining district. The purpose is to protect and preserve the scenic resources of areas adjacent to highways and roads that have been identified as having high scenic quality and requiring protection for the benefit of residents and visitors.

Chapter II, Article 4.0 – Comprehensive Site Development Standards

Chapter II, Article 4.0 provides regulations to guide the design, location, and development of new land uses and the alteration of existing uses in the unincorporated county. The standards assist in furthering numerous Nevada County General Plan goals, objectives, and policies that provide for the preservation and enhancement of Nevada County’s rural quality and small-town character.
They also assist in promoting General Plan provisions for maintaining the county’s high quality natural landscape and scenic resources, as well as protecting existing historic resources.

**Division L-II 4.2 – Community Design Standards**

The County’s community design standards are intended as a framework to assist in understanding the County’s goals and objectives for high quality development. They provide design interpretations for commercial, industrial, and residential development. The community design standards address building height, building setbacks, height limits for fencing and hedges located within yard setbacks, landscaping requirements, parking lot design standards, requirements for permanent open space and maximum impervious surfaces, equipment screening, and signage standards.

**Section L-II 4.2.8 – Lighting**

Chapter II, Article 4.0, Section L-II 4.2.8 establishes standards to provide for efficient, safe, and attractive outdoor lighting while minimizing nighttime light pollution and energy waste. This section of the code requires all discretionary projects that propose to install outdoor lighting to submit a lighting plan. The code section also requires all outdoor light fixtures to be fully shielded to prevent the light source or lens from being visible from adjacent properties and roadways and requires the use of fixtures with high efficiency lamps. Light poles in the rural zoning districts, including the proposed project site, are restricted to a maximum height of 15 feet.

**Section L-II 4.2.10 – Permanent Open Space/Maximum Impervious Surface**

Chapter II, Article 4.0, Section L-II 4.2.10 was established to conserve and maintain the natural and historic beauty of Nevada County, to promote soil conservation, surface water quality and groundwater recharge, to enhance residential and commercial areas, and to ensure permanent open space and maximum impervious surfaces for all development. Permanent open space is required in all commercial, industrial, multiple-family, public, and recreational zoning districts. For projects that are one acre or more in size and located at less than 4,000 feet elevation, the requirement is a minimum of 15 percent of the total site acreage.

**Section L-II 4.3.17 – Watercourses, Wetlands and Riparian Areas**

Chapter II, Article 4.0, Section L-II 4.3.17 was established to preserve the integrity and minimize the disruption of watersheds and watercourses. The section establishes minimum non-disturbance buffers along various types of waterbodies in which development may not occur unless a Management Plan is prepared by a qualified biologist or botanist that avoids or minimizes impacts to the resource.

**Section L-II 5.3 – Design Review**

Chapter II, Article 5.0, Section 5.3 outlines a procedure by which new development is reviewed for compatibility with surrounding development, natural resources, and/or historic features within the project area. Design review ensures that a proposed development project reflects and retains the rural and historic, small-town character of the county; ensures each community’s unique character, identity, and distinctiveness; encourages visual relief through varied forms, patterns, and styles unified through landscaping, screening, and selected architectural features; and retains natural landforms and native landscaping, protects sensitive environmental resources, and encourages open space. Design review is required for all development permits and use permits for commercial, industrial, and multi-family projects, for structural changes to the exterior of
4.0 AESTHETICS

commercial or industrial buildings, and for exterior visual changes to a project approved by a previous land use permit, unless specifically exempted in a specific section or article of Chapter II of the Land Use and Development Code.

Western Nevada County Design Guidelines

The Western Nevada County Design Guidelines include a menu of design concepts and techniques to assist project developers in enhancing the character of Nevada County by encouraging the highest level of design quality while at the same time providing the flexibility necessary to promote economic viability. The guidelines promote new development that encourages a sense of place and that adds to community identity by inviting pedestrian activity, i.e., placing buildings closer to roads, limiting building size to a human scale, clustering buildings, placing parking behind buildings, breaking up parking lots with trees and walkways, and creating clearly visible entries and public places (Nevada County 2002).

4.0.3 IMPACT METHODOLOGY

Standards of Significance

The impact analyses below are based on the following State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G thresholds of significance, which state that a project would have a significant aesthetic impact if it would:

1) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

2) Substantially damage or fail to protect and preserve scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

3) Substantially degrade the existing visual character of quality of the site and its surroundings, including failing to promote and provide for aesthetic design in new development which reflects existing character.

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

Methodology

The following analyses are based on field observations, aerial photography, and review of the topographic conditions from GIS maps and Google Earth for the project sites and surrounding areas. For the purposes of this analysis, proposed site plans, building elevations, and photosimulations were used to determine how the projects would alter the existing conditions on the sites. The County’s General Plan, site development standards, and applicable design guidelines were reviewed to determine what visual elements have been deemed valuable by the community. The analysis focuses on the manner in which development could alter the visual elements or features that exist in or near the project site, within the visual range or view corridor of each project.

The analysis further considers whether the anticipated alterations to the visual character of the sites would constitute a substantial adverse effect on existing views and scenic resources, which would result in a significant environmental impact. The determination of which changes to the visual environment cross a threshold of “substantial adverse effect” or degradation is based on
the criteria described in the following methodology summary. Following professionally accepted practice in visual analysis, visual impacts are defined as a consequence of three primary factors:

- The existing scenic quality of an area;
- The level of viewer exposure and concern with visual change; and
- The level of actual visual change caused by the project.

The overall visual sensitivity of each location is first established based on existing visual quality, viewer exposure, and viewer concern. These factors are then considered together with the level of expected visual change or contract, and significance. Visual change is an overall measure of contrast in basic visual attributes such as form, line, color, and texture as a result of the proposed project. Thus, a substantial adverse effect can occur when viewers with high levels of overall visual sensitivity (i.e., high viewer concern and visual exposure, in settings of high existing visual quality) encounter high levels of visual change (contrast) or scenic view obstruction as a result of the proposed project.

**Thresholds Not Evaluated**

There are no state-designated scenic highways in any of the project areas and none of the sites can be seen from a county-designated scenic highway. The sites are not located in the SC combining district. Therefore, the proposed projects would have no effect on scenic resources within a state scenic highway. There would be no impact relative to Standard of Significance 2, and this impact is not further evaluated for any of the project sites.

### 4.1 ALTA SIERRA SITE

#### 4.1.1 PROJECT-SPECIFIC SETTING

**Visual Character of the Site**

The Alta Sierra project site is located in the western Sierra Nevada foothills between Alta Sierra Drive and Little Valley Road and consists of three parcels. The 1-acre parcel on which the store would be constructed is vacant, is covered entirely with hardwood and conifer trees, and is situated on a hillside that generally slopes to the south. The septic system tight line and leach field would be constructed on two parcels immediately north of the store site which are developed with commercial use. Elevations on the store parcel range from approximately 1,994 feet in the north to 1,964 feet near the southeastern and southwestern property corners. The site can be seen from Alta Sierra Drive and Little Valley Road, as well as from surrounding properties.

A Management Plan for Oak Resources was prepared for the project site (Costella 2015). According to this plan, the canopy cover within the proposed store site includes approximately 74 oak trees, of which 71 are black oaks and 3 are small valley oaks (Costella 2015, p. 4). The County does not identify the site as being within a scenic corridor or a scenic viewshed, nor is the site located along a state scenic highway.

Photographs of the Alta Sierra project site from a series of key viewpoints in the vicinity, as well as a map showing the location of these viewpoints, are provided in Figures 4.0-1 through 4.0-5.
Visual Character of Surrounding Uses

The area surrounding the Alta Sierra site is characterized by commercial developments, a scattering of single-family homes, and areas of vacant undeveloped land. The store site is surrounded by asphalt or pavement on all four sides, with existing commercial development to the north and south of the site and Alta Sierra Drive and Little Valley Road to the west and east, respectively. West of Alta Sierra Drive are two undeveloped parcels. Other uses to the west include single-story commercial development, with a personal storage facility, a real estate office, and the Oak View Center. Directly east of Little Valley Road is a developed residential parcel. The next closest residential dwelling is approximately 100 feet from the northeastern property boundary and approximately 400 feet from the proposed building. Rural residential uses dominate the landscape east of Little Valley Road, including the Alta Sierra residential subdivision. To the south of the project site is the Alta Sierra Market. To the north of the project site is another developed property with three commercial buildings. Farther north/northwest along Alta Sierra Drive are other commercially developed properties consisting of a variety of uses, including but not limited to a gas station, a bike shop, a pizza parlor, and a specialty wine shop.

Light and Glare

Given the rural character of the Alta Sierra site and the surrounding area, it is expected that only minimal nighttime lighting is visible on or near the site associated with existing residences and vehicles traveling on area roadways. Similarly, there is minimal daytime glare visible in the area associated with glass and other reflective building materials and vehicle windows.

4.1.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

There are no additional regulations, policies, or standards that pertain to the Alta Sierra site other than those described in Subsection 4.0.2, above.

4.1.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Adversely Affect a Scenic Vista and/or Substantially Degrade the Visual Character of the Site (Standards of Significance 1 and 3)

Impact 4.1.1(AS) Development of the Alta Sierra project site as proposed would convert vacant land to commercial development. Such a conversion would fundamentally alter the visual character of the site. (Significant and Unavoidable)

A scenic vista is a viewpoint that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the benefit of the general public. While the General Plan does not establish specific scenic vistas in the county, it does identify visual resources that characterize Nevada County. These include the rolling vistas of foothills, valleys, mountains, meadows, forests, wetlands, and habitats unique to the Sierras. Additionally, scenic views within the county are identified as mountain peaks such as Castle Peak, vistas of Donner Lake, and the gorge of the South Fork of the Yuba River (Nevada County 1996a, p. 18-1).

Implementation of the proposed project would convert the approximately 1-acre store site from a wooded, undeveloped state to a commercial development. New uses would include a 9,100-square-foot, 27-foot-high commercial building; 20,260 square feet of surfaced area with 34
parking spaces;¹ two concrete block screening/retaining walls along the eastern and southern sides of proposed building and parking lot that would vary in height with the natural topography from 6 to 12 feet high; and 7,481 square feet of landscaped area. Proposed building elevations are shown in Figure 2.0-11. Further, development of the project would impact 85 oak trees, including four landmark oak trees on the site and the site of the proposed off-site sewer improvements on two adjacent parcels. The specifics on the oak tree impact and mitigation are discussed in Section 6.0, Biological Resources. All of these activities would affect the visual character of the site and adjacent parcels.

As shown on Figure 2.0-5, the project site is located between Alta Sierra Drive and Little Valley Road, with Alta Sierra Drive a main thoroughfare, resulting in high visibility from both approaches. The project site is set within a cluster of small-scale commercial retail operations surrounded by rural, wooded properties. Immediately north of site is a single-story, multi-tenant commercial center. These structures are set back from Alta Sierra Drive and appear as low-rise, single-story buildings set among trees. From Little Valley Road, views of these buildings are largely blocked by existing trees and vegetation. Farther north are heavily wooded rural residential properties. Immediately east of the site is Little Valley Road and a developed residential property located at the bottom of a small hill below the grade of the project site on the east side of the roadway. Rural residential uses dominate the landscape east of Little Valley Road, including the Alta Sierra residential subdivision. Immediately south of the project site is the Alta Sierra Market, with scattered rural residential properties located farther south. Alta Sierra Market is readily visible from the Alta Sierra Drive/Little Valley Road intersection. However, the building is single-story with a low roof and is not visually prominent. Immediately west of the project site is Alta Sierra Drive and an undeveloped, wooded parcel. Farther north/northwest along Alta Sierra Drive are other commercially developed properties consisting of a variety of uses. The project site is located within an established commercial center, and its development with a commercial use would be a logical expansion of the center and would be visually compatible with existing uses as viewed from Alta Sierra Drive. However, the project would be visually inconsistent with the scale and style of the existing structures and the nearby residential uses as viewed from Little Valley Road.

Figure 4.0-1 shows the location of a series of key viewpoints of the project site from the surrounding area. Photographs of the site in its existing condition, along with a visual simulation of the proposed development at each of these viewpoints, are provided in Figures 4.0-2 through 4.0-5. As shown, the proposed development would be clearly visible from viewpoints A and B but would be visually compatible with the adjacent commercial development and would not result in a substantial change in views. Viewpoint C represents views from the existing residential property located immediately east of the site as well as for motorists traveling northbound on Little Valley Road, which provides access to residential properties to the north and east. As shown in the figure, views at this viewpoint would change dramatically due to the scale of the proposed building and screening/retaining walls and the site’s elevation above the roadway. This viewpoint shows an 18.5-foot building façade atop a retaining wall that is up to 12 feet in height, representing up to 30 feet of solid wall that would be visible along Little Valley Road. From viewpoint D, the proposed development would be almost entirely obscured by the existing trees and vegetation on the northeastern corner of the site and the adjacent parcel.

Per Section L-II 5.3, Design Review, of the Nevada County Zoning Regulations, the proposed project must be reviewed for consistency with applicable, adopted design standards, including the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines (WNCDG), prior to issuance of development permits. The WNCDG encourages environmentally sensitive site design that is consistent with the

¹ Surfaced area includes parking lot and driveway paved areas, hardscape surrounding building, sidewalks, ramps, and curbs.
overall architectural character of the project and community. Consistent with the WNCDG, the Alta Sierra project includes building materials and colors that would blend with the surrounding environment and landscape and help to screen the urban nature of the proposed building. The project features some architectural details along the side and rear exterior walls and screening/retaining wall including low stone veneer columns and an awning. However, the project does not incorporate sufficient architectural features such as windows, structural bays, roof overhangs, and other details to visually break up the appearance of the proposed exterior walls on some of the façades, particularly the walls of the proposed building facing Little Valley Road. The project also fails to comply with the WNCDG by proposing a building with a flat roofline, failing to use a height and scale that is compatible with that of surrounding development, and by failing to design the building as a group of simple forms to reduce its overall bulk.

**MM AS-4.1.1a** requires the addition of architectural features on the eastern and southern exterior walls and along the roofline to further break up the mass of the 30-foot-high structure. To provide further screening of the project site from the adjacent uses, particularly the residential uses to the east, the project proponent would be required to provide a 10-foot-wide landscape buffer in accordance with the Nevada County Code. The proposed landscaping plan shows the retention of eight oak trees and two pine trees along the east edge of the site and extensive landscaping along its entire perimeter with the exception of the access point on Alta Sierra Drive. **MM AS-4.1.1b** would require the project contractor to protect these and other trees on the site to ensure they are successfully retained after construction. In addition, as described previously, the project applicant has proposed two screening/retaining walls just inside of the landscape buffer. However, as proposed, a 30-foot-wide gap would occur between the two walls, which would not provide adequate screening of the site from the residential uses east of Little Valley Road. To further screen the project, mitigation measure **MM AS-4.1.1c** requires the addition of a third wall or extension of the currently proposed walls to close the gap.

The project would also include open space per County requirements and landscaping throughout the site that would serve as an additional buffer for adjacent uses. Implementation of mitigation measures **MM AS-4.1.1a** through **AS-4.1.1d** would reduce the project’s anticipated visual impacts by requiring the addition of architectural features to further break up exterior walls and screening/retaining walls, requiring existing mature trees to be preserved, requiring a continuous wall to better screen the site from the adjacent roadway and residential uses, and requiring more aesthetically-pleasing signage.

Even with these measures, however, development of the Alta Sierra site as proposed would substantially change the existing visual character of the site particularly when viewed from the residential area to the east. As shown in the visual simulations in **Figures 4.0-2 through 4.0-5**, the combined retaining wall and rear façade of the building would still result in a substantial degradation of public views from Little Valley Road. The site is considered to be visually sensitive, as neighbors and community members consider the existing wooded character of the site to be of high visual quality, numerous public comments have been received on the project expressing concern with the change in visual character, and there is a substantial level of visual change caused by the project from a wooded, undeveloped condition to a developed state. Given the substantial degradation and change of public views of a visually sensitive site, this would be a significant impact. A reduced-size project would likely be able to reduce the severity of this impact. However, the design of such a change to the project would be subject to design and fiscal constraints that are beyond the scope of this Draft EIR. Therefore, a reduced project alternative is addressed in Chapter 16.0, Alternatives of this Draft EIR, for consideration by the Planning Commission. Given the area available for landscaping and size of the facades, additional landscaping would likely not reduce the perceived scale of the building from Little
Valley Road. No other mitigation measures are available to eliminate or substantially reduce this impact; therefore, this impact would be **significant and unavoidable**.

**Mitigation Measures**

**MM AS-4.1.1a**  The proposed building design shall be modified to better comply with the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines to create greater visual interest and to break up the mass of building and the roofline. Design modifications could include the incorporation of structural bays, roof overhangs, awnings, and other details along the buildings eastern and southern exterior walls as well as varying the roofline so that it transitions from the height of adjacent buildings to the maximum height of the proposed building and articulating the flat roofline with cornices. No windows shall be added to the buildings eastern or southern exterior walls.

*Timing/Implementation:* Prior to approval of improvement plans

*Enforcement/Monitoring:* Nevada County Planning Department

**MM AS-4.1.1b**  The 17 existing mature trees on the project site and off-site improvement area that will be retained after construction shall be identified on all grading and improvement plans as “trees to be retained.” Prior to grading permit issuance, the Planning Department shall verify that this requirement has been met. Additionally, the developer shall flag the trees in the field that will be retained following construction and shall provide and maintain adequate protection measures for the trees for the duration of all site construction activities. These measures shall include providing highly visible protective barriers around the trees such plastic construction fencing and prohibiting vehicle access and storage of materials, equipment or waste within the protective barriers. The Building Department shall verify that the trees to be retained have been properly marked in the field and protected during the first grading inspection. Construction personnel shall be made aware of these protected trees and the significance of the field markings and protection measures by the general contractor prior to commencing construction activities to minimize potential direct and indirect impacts.

*Timing/Implementation:* Prior to grading permit issuance and throughout construction

*Enforcement/Monitoring:* Nevada County Building Department and Planning Department

**MM AS-4.1.1c**  To minimize potential conflicts between the commercial use of this site and existing residential uses east of Little Valley Road, the developer shall revise project plans to either (1) add a third six foot tall split block face wall designed consistently with other existing walls in the area that will fill the gap shown on the preliminary plans or (2) connect the two proposed screen walls to completely screen the parking lot area. Prior to issuance of final occupancy, the Planning Department shall verify in the field that the wall has been constructed consistent with the approved plans.
Timing/Implementation: Prior to grading permit issuance and throughout construction
Enforcement/Monitoring: Nevada County Building Department and Planning Department

**MM AS-4.1.1d**
The developer shall revise project plans and elevations to include the use of channel letter signage. Cabinet-style signage shall be prohibited. Prior to issuance of final occupancy, the Planning Department shall verify in the field that project signage is consistent with the approved plans.

**Timing/Implementation:** Prior to approval of final occupancy
**Enforcement/Monitoring:** Nevada County Planning Department

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**Create New Sources of Light and Glare (Standard of Significance 4)**

**Impact 4.1.2(AS)**

Development of the Alta Sierra project site as proposed would introduce new sources of light and glare. *(Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)*

The Alta Sierra project would introduce a variety of building materials to the site. Glass, roofing, and car windshields, among others, have the potential to reflect light and create glare visible for some distance from the site. However, as discussed under Impact 4.1.1(AS) above, the proposed project would be reviewed for consistency with the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines prior to issuance of a development permit. The guidelines require that new projects avoid bare metal, highly reflective surfaces (glass, metallic paint, etc.), illuminated roofing, and high contrast or brightly colored glazed tile. Compliance with the design guidelines would substantially reduce the potential for glare from the proposed project. Impacts from glare would be less than significant.

The Alta Sierra project would also introduce new sources of light that currently do not exist on the project site. The nearest residential uses sensitive to light and glare in the project area are located on lots to the east and southeast. The closest home is located approximately 100 feet from the subject property line to the east. Other homes are within 180 to 600 feet of the project site. The plans for the proposed project identify multiple downward-facing wall light fixtures mounted along the parapets of the building, as well as two pole-mounted lights in the parking lot. The proposed signage would be externally illuminated. The Nevada County Zoning Ordinance’s standards for exterior lighting require such lighting to be shielded and directed downward to prevent the light source or lens from being visible from adjacent properties and roadways. The project developer has submitted a site lighting plan *(Figure 4.0-6)*. This plan includes a photometric detail showing the amount of light spill from each individual light. Based on a review of this plan, the majority of the lighting from the project site will be kept within the property boundaries, but there are three areas where light is shown to spill off-site. Therefore, this impact would be potentially significant.

The County’s Land Use and Development Code Section L-II 4.2.8(D)(2) states that “all outdoor lighting fixtures shall be fully shielded to prevent the light source or lens from being visible from adjacent properties and roadways…” According to the site lighting plan submitted by the applicant, all light fixtures are designed to meet International Dark Sky requirements, including being fully shielded. With shielded lighting, the Alta Sierra project would be consistent with the County Lighting Ordinance and would not be anticipated to create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. However, implementation of mitigation measures **MM AS-4.1.2a** and **MM AS-4.1.2b** would be necessary to ensure that project lighting would not expose adjacent properties and roadways to substantial light.
light or glare, consistent with the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code. With mitigation, this impact would be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures

**MM AS-4.1.2a** Prior to building permit issuance, the developer shall submit a final Site Lighting Plan/Photometric Detail that demonstrates that all light spill will be retained on the project site. Potential methods for reducing light trespass onto neighboring roads and properties include replacing the two 400-watt light fixtures located on the southwest and southeast corners of the building with light fixtures of lesser wattage and/or providing additional screening of those features. Additionally, for the northern parking lot lighting, similar or alternative methods, such as reducing the wattage of the lighting fixture or moving the pole farther into the interior of the site, shall be utilized to ensure all new lighting and glare is kept on site. The developer shall install and maintain all lighting consistent with the approved Final Site Lighting Plan. Prior to issuance of final occupancy, the Planning Department shall perform a site visit, during the dark hours, to verify that the installed lighting does not trespass onto neighboring roads or properties.

*Timing/Implementation:* Prior to issuance of building permit and prior to issuance of final occupancy

*Enforcement/Monitoring:* Nevada County Planning Department

**MM AS-4.1.2b** All lighting for advertising must meet the County Lighting and Signage Ordinance requirements. Internally illuminated signage shall be prohibited. All lighting for exterior signage or advertising shall be top mounted light fixtures which shine light downward directly onto the sign. Said lighting shall be fully shielded consistent with International Dark Sky standards. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall submit a final signage plan that eliminates any reference to internally lighted signage and provides details for establishing top mounted lighting for both the monument and wall signs. Additionally, any proposed sign lighting shall be shown and taken into account in the photometric detail in the revised project site lighting plan as required by mitigation measure MM AS-4.1.2a. Prior to issuance of final occupancy, the Planning Department shall perform a site inspection to ensure that the sign lighting is installed consistent with this mitigation measure and the County Zoning Code standards.

*Timing/Implementation:* Prior to issuance of building permit and prior to issuance of final occupancy

*Enforcement/Monitoring:* Nevada County Planning Department
4.0 AESTHETICS

4.2 PENN VALLEY SITE

4.2.1 PROJECT-SPECIFIC SETTING

Visual Character of the Site

The Penn Valley site is in the Sierra Nevada foothills approximately 6 miles west of Grass Valley on a 1.2-acre portion of a 5.95-acre parcel. The general topography of the property is characterized by slightly rolling and flat terrain. Average elevation in the project area is approximately 1,400 feet above mean sea level. The change in grade over the project site is approximately 7 feet.

Vegetation on the site is dominated by annual grassland and a scattering of trees, including valley oak, Oregon ash, white alder, and arroyo willow along the perimeter of the site. In addition, Squirrel Creek is located on the 5.95-acre parcel, but not within the proposed 1.2-acre project area. The area between the stream and proposed development includes flat terrain that is vegetated primarily with non-native grass species. An unnamed drainage on the northern border of the project site flows into Squirrel Creek.

The Penn Valley site is located in an area with commercial development, some small-lot single-family homes, and areas of vacant land. The County does not identify the site as being within a scenic corridor or a scenic viewshed, nor is the site located along a state scenic highway.

Photographs of the Penn Valley site from two key viewpoints in the vicinity, as well as a map showing the location of these viewpoints, are provided in Figures 4.0-7 through 4.0-9.
For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader with information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area.

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016

FIGURE 4.0-2
Alta Sierra Site Viewpoint A
For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader with information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area.

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016

FIGURE 4.0-3
Alta Sierra Site Viewpoint B
For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader with information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area.

FIGURE 4.0-4
Alta Sierra Site Viewpoint C

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016
For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader with information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area.

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016

FIGURE 4.0-5
Alta Sierra Site Viewpoint D
FIGURE 4.0-6
Proposed Lighting Plan – Alta Sierra

ALTA SIERRA DRIVE
LITTLE VALLEY ROAD

130' x 70'
9,100 SQ.FT.
FIGURE 4.0-7
Penn Valley Site Key Viewpoints Location Map

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016

Not To Scale
For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader with information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area.

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016

FIGURE 4.0-8
Penn Valley Site Viewpoint A
For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader with information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area.

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016
Visual Character of Surrounding Uses

As shown in Figure 2.0-6, the project site is located in an area with existing development. To the south is Penn Valley Drive, with the Penn Valley Seventh-day Adventist Church and the Penn Valley Gardens residential subdivision farther to the south. A US Post Office, a gas station, and the Penn Valley Shopping Center are located east of the site. Northeast of the site is vacant land, followed by the Creekside Village mobile home park. Directly north of the site is vacant land and SR 20. Penn Valley Mini Storage is located west of the site.

Light and Glare

The Penn Valley site is located adjacent to a US Post Office and the Penn Valley Mini Storage. Farther east of the site are a gas station and the Penn Valley Shopping Center. All of these uses may generate daytime glare and nighttime lighting levels in the area. However, the County has standards to provide for efficient, safe, and attractive outdoor lighting while minimizing nighttime light pollution and energy waste, as well as design standards which require that projects avoid bare metal, highly reflective surfaces (glass, metallic paint, etc.), illuminated roofing, and high contrast or brightly colored glazed tile. These requirements assist in the reduction of daytime glare and nighttime lighting in the Penn Valley area.

4.2.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

Penn Valley Village Center Area Plan

Chapter III of the Penn Valley Village Center Area Plan includes design guidelines for commercial, industrial, multi-family, and public use development. The guidelines pertain to site planning, building design, signage, lighting design, landscape design, pedestrian and bicycle access, and multi-family residential development (Nevada County 2000).

4.2.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Adversely Affect a Scenic Vista and/or Substantially Degrade the Visual Character of the Site (Standards of Significance 1 and 3)

Impact 4.2.1(PV) Development of the Penn Valley project site as proposed would convert vacant land to commercial development. Such a conversion would fundamentally alter the visual character of a portion of the site. (Less than Significant)

There are no officially designated scenic vistas in the project area. However, the project is located in Penn Valley and as stated previously, views of valleys are considered an important factor in Nevada County’s scenic quality.

The Penn Valley project would convert approximately 1.2 acres of the project site from undeveloped land to a commercial development. New uses would include a 9,100-square-foot, 18- to 27-foot-high commercial building; 24,511 square feet of surfaced area with 46 parking spaces; and 7,039 square feet of landscaped area. All of these components would affect the visual character of the site. Elevations of the proposed building are shown in Figure 2.0-12.

Figure 4.0-7 shows the location of two key viewpoints of the project site from the surrounding area. Photographs of the site in its existing condition, along with a visual simulation of the proposed development at each of these viewpoints, are provided in Figures 4.0-8 and 4.0-9. As shown, the...
proposed development would be clearly visible to motorists and pedestrians traveling along Penn Valley Drive in both directions. However, given the commercially developed nature of the area, the proposed development would be visually compatible and would not represent a substantial negative change to views in the area. 

Per Section L-II 5.3, Design Review, of the Nevada County Zoning Ordinance, the Penn Valley project would be reviewed for consistency with applicable, adopted design standards, including the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines and the design guidelines in the Penn Valley Village Center Area Plan, prior to issuance of development permits. Both the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines and the Penn Valley Village Center Area plan encourage environmentally sensitive site design that is consistent with the overall architectural character of the project and community. Consistent with the design guidelines, the Penn Valley project was designed using building materials and colors that would blend with the surrounding environment and landscape and help to screen the urban nature of the proposed building. As shown in Figure 2.0-12, the building’s exterior walls would incorporate architectural features to increase visual interest. These features include varying rooflines, building materials and colors, awnings, and decorative building-mounted lighting fixtures and door hardware.

In addition, the project would include open space per County requirements and would include landscaping throughout the site that would serve as a buffer for adjacent uses.

The project would add to a change in the existing scenic quality of Penn Valley. However, this change would be consistent with existing adjacent uses and the existing aesthetic qualities of the area. The site is not considered visually sensitive given the surrounding context of development in the area. Further, compliance with the applicable design guidelines and incorporation of open space and landscaping would reduce the project’s visual intrusion by blending the proposed improvements with the surrounding environment. Therefore, development of the Penn Valley site as proposed would result in a less than significant impact to scenic vistas and visual character.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Create New Sources of Light and Glare (Standard of Significance 4)

Impact 4.2.2(PV) Development of the Penn Valley project site as proposed would introduce new sources of light and glare. (Less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)

Development of the Penn Valley project site as proposed would introduce a variety of building materials to the site that may create glare. However, the proposed project would be reviewed for consistency with the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines, as well as the design guidelines contained in the Penn Valley Village Center Area Plan, prior to issuance of development permits. Compliance with the design guidelines would substantially reduce the potential for glare from the proposed project. Impacts from glare would be less than significant.

The proposed project would introduce new sources of light that currently do not exist on the Penn Valley site. The nearest residential uses sensitive to light and glare in the project area are located on lots to the southwest. The closest homes are located approximately 150 feet from the subject property line to the southwest. The plans for the proposed project identify 15 downward-facing wall light fixtures mounted along the parapets of the building, as well as 5 pole-mounted parking lot lights. The Nevada County Zoning Ordinance’s standards for exterior lighting require such lighting to be shielded and directed downward to prevent the light source or lens from being
visible from adjacent properties and roadways. The lighting plan for the Penn Valley site submitted by the project applicant is shown in Figure 4.0-10. Based on a review of this plan, the majority of the lighting from the project site will be kept within the property boundaries, but there are areas identified where light is shown to spill off-site. Therefore, this impact would be potentially significant.

The County’s Land Use and Development Code Section L-II 4.2.8(D)(2) states that “all outdoor lighting fixtures shall be fully shielded to prevent the light source or lens from being visible from adjacent properties and roadways...” According to the site lighting plan prepared by the applicant, all light fixtures are designed to meet International Dark Sky requirements, including being fully shielded. With shielded lighting, the Penn Valley project would be consistent with the County Lighting Ordinance and would not be anticipated to create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. However, implementation of mitigation measures MM PV-4.2.2a and PV-4.2.2b would be necessary to ensure that project lighting would not expose adjacent properties and roadways to substantial light or glare, consistent with the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code. With mitigation, this impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

**MM PV-4.2.2a**  
Prior to building permit issuance, the developer shall submit a final Site Lighting Plan/Photometric Detail that demonstrates that all light spill will be retained on the project site. Potential methods for reducing light trespass onto neighboring roads and properties include replacing the 400-watt parking lot light fixtures located on the south and east with light fixtures of lesser wattage, and/or providing additional screening of those features, and/or moving light poles farther into the interior of the site. The developer shall install and maintain all lighting consistent with the approved Final Site Lighting Plan. Prior to issuance of final occupancy, the Planning Department shall perform a site visit, during the dark hours, to verify that the installed lighting does not trespass onto neighboring roads or properties.

*Timing/Implementation:* Prior to issuance of building permit and prior to issuance of final occupancy

*Enforcement/Monitoring:* Nevada County Planning Department

**MM PV-4.2.2b**  
All lighting for advertising must meet the County Lighting and Signage Ordinance requirements. Internally illuminated signage shall be prohibited. All lighting for exterior signage or advertising shall be top mounted light fixtures which shine light downward directly onto the sign. Said lighting shall be fully shielded consistent with International Dark Sky standards. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall submit a final signage plan that eliminates any reference to internally lighted signage and provides details for establishing top mounted lighting for both the monument and wall signs. Additionally, any proposed sign lighting shall be shown and taken into account in the photometric detail in the revised project site lighting plan as required by mitigation measure MM PV-4.2.2a. Prior to issuance of final occupancy, the Planning Department shall perform a site inspection to ensure that the sign lighting is installed consistent with this mitigation measure and the County Zoning Code standards.
4.0 AESTHETICS

Timing/Implementation: Prior to issuance of building permit and prior to issuance of final occupancy

Enforcement/Monitoring: Nevada County Planning Department

4.3 ROUGH AND READY HIGHWAY SITE

4.3.1 PROJECT-SPECIFIC SETTING

Visual Character of Site

The Rough and Ready Highway project site has an existing commercial building that would be demolished as a part of project development. The project site lies on the west slope of the Sierra Nevada foothills at an elevation of ±2,500 feet and is a fairly level parcel. The site contains mostly non-native varieties of horticultural plants, with the exception of one ponderosa pine and three gray pines.

The site is located in an area developed with rural residential single-family homes, higher-density residential uses including a transitional housing facility and mobile home parks, and areas of vacant undeveloped land. The County does not identify the site as being within a scenic corridor or a scenic viewshed, nor is the site located along a state scenic highway.

Photographs of the Rough and Ready Highway project site from a series of key viewpoints in the vicinity, as well as a map showing the location of these viewpoints, are provided in Figures 4.0-11 through 4.0-14.

Visual Character of Surrounding Uses

The project site is located in a rural residential neighborhood; however, as noted above, there is an existing commercial building on the property. Adjacent land uses include two single-family residences and other rural residential uses to the west. Directly east of the site is West Drive and single-family residential uses, followed by a small mobile home park. South of the site are single-family residential uses. Across Rough and Ready Highway are single-family residential uses and transitional housing, followed by vacant undeveloped land farther to the north. In general, the project area and lands further east and southeast are largely built out with residential uses on relatively small parcels. Land further north and west of the project area is more rural with lower densities and large areas of undeveloped land.

Light and Glare

Given the rural character of the Rough and Ready Highway site and the surrounding area, it is expected that only minimal nighttime lighting is visible on or near the site associated with existing residences and vehicles traveling on area roadways. Similarly, there is daytime glare visible in the area associated with glass and other reflective building materials and vehicle windows.

4.3.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

There are no additional regulations, policies, or standards that pertain to the Rough and Ready Highway site other than those described in Subsection 4.0.2, above.
4.3.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Adversely Affect a Scenic Vista and/or Substantially Degrade the Visual Character of the Site (Standards of Significance 1 and 3)

Impact 4.3.1(RR) Development of the Rough and Ready Highway project site as proposed would maintain the existing commercial use but at a greater scale. Given the rural residential character of the surrounding area, this conversion would be considered to substantially degrade the visual character of the project area. (Significant and Unavoidable)

A scenic vista is a viewpoint that provides expansive views of a highly valued landscape for the benefit of the general public. While the General Plan does not establish specific scenic vistas in the county, it does identify visual resources that characterize Nevada County. These include the rolling vistas of foothills, valleys, mountains, meadows, forests, wetlands, and habitats unique to the Sierras. Additionally, scenic views within the county are identified as mountain peaks such as Castle Peak, vistas of Donner Lake, and the gorge of the South Fork of the Yuba River (Nevada County 1996a, p. 18-1).

There are no officially designated scenic vistas in the area of the Rough and Ready Highway site. However, the site is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada, views of which are considered an important factor in the county’s scenic quality.

Currently, an existing single-story commercial building and associated parking lot are on the project site. The proposed Rough and Ready Highway project would maintain the existing type of use on the 1.02-acre project site as a commercial development. The proposed development includes construction of a 9,100-square-foot, 18- to 27-foot-high commercial building, along with 19,354 square feet of surfaced area, 29 parking spaces, and 8,451 square feet of landscaped area. The proposed project’s building elevations are shown in Figure 2.0-13. The proposed development would be of substantially greater height, size, and scale compared to the existing single-story building and immediately adjacent development, which consists of one-story, single-family detached homes in a rural residential setting. It would also be substantially taller than development on the north side of Rough and Ready Highway, which consists of a combination of one-story, single-family homes and higher-density residential uses including a transitional housing facility and mobile home parks (see Figure 2.0-7). Surrounding the area are rural residential properties and large expanses of wooded vacant land as well as some vineyards directly to the south.

Figure 4.0-11 shows the location of three key viewpoints of the project site from the surrounding area. Photographs of the site in its existing condition, along with a visual simulation of the proposed development at each of these viewpoints are provided in Figures 4.0-11 through 4.0-14. As shown, given the rural nature of the surrounding area, the proposed development would substantially change the visual character and quality of the site and would degrade views of the site from the immediately surrounding residential uses.

The proposed development would be reviewed for consistency with applicable, adopted design standards, including the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines, prior to issuance of development permits. The design guidelines encourage environmentally sensitive site design that is consistent with the overall architectural character of the project and community. The Rough and Ready Highway project includes building materials and colors that would blend with the surrounding environment and landscape and help to screen the urban nature of the proposed building. As shown in Figure 2.0-13, the building’s exterior walls would incorporate architectural
features to increase visual interest. These features include varying rooflines, building materials and colors, awnings, and decorative building-mounted lighting fixtures and door hardware. In addition, the project would preserve a portion of the site as open space per County requirements and would include landscaping throughout the site that would serve as a buffer for adjacent uses. However, the proposed reduction in parking standards allows a larger building design, and the proposed structure would be substantially larger than any other building in the immediate vicinity. Development of the Rough and Ready Highway site as proposed would result in a building that is out of scale with the development in the area and would substantially change views. Given the rural residential nature of the area, such a change would be considered to degrade the visual character and quality of the site and its surroundings.

The existing scenic quality of the project area is largely defined by small-scale rural residential development, which comprises the neighborhood. The level of viewer exposure from public roadways and concern about changes in the viewshed from Rough and Ready Highway and West Drive is high, resulting in visual sensitivity of the site to larger forms that are out of scale with the existing neighborhood. A reduced-size project would likely be able to reduce the severity of this impact. However, the design of such a change to the project would be subject to design and fiscal constraints that are beyond the scope of this Draft EIR. Therefore, a reduced building alternative is addressed in Chapter 16.0, Alternatives of this Draft EIR for consideration by the Planning Commission. Increasing the size of the property to result in less coverage is not possible due to adjacent land ownership. Blocking views of the building from the roadway would not meet with the commercial nature of the project and the need for visibility to the travelling public. The design of the structure meets County standards; however, the impact is substantially adverse in terms of the proportional size and scale of the structure relative to other smaller structures in the vicinity and the visual sensitivity of the site. Given that there are no feasible mitigation measures available to reduce this impact, this impact would be significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

None available.

Create New Sources of Light and Glare (Standard of Significance 4)

Impact 4.3.2(RR) Development of the Rough and Ready Highway project site as proposed would introduce new sources of light and glare. (Less Than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated)

Development of the Rough and Ready Highway site as proposed would introduce a variety of building materials to the site that may create glare. However, the proposed project would be reviewed for consistency with the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines prior to issuance of development permits. Compliance with the design guidelines would substantially reduce the potential for glare from the proposed project by discouraging the use of reflective materials and requiring materials to be painted using a neutral color palette. Impacts from glare would be less than significant.

As stated previously, there is an existing commercial building on the site. The existing use does not have parking lot pole-mounted lights. The only outdoor lighting appears to be spot lights mounted on the building exterior. All of this lighting would be removed with demolition of the existing building.

Implementation of the proposed project would introduce new sources of light that currently do not exist on the project site. The nearest residential uses sensitive to light and glare in the project area are single-family homes located immediately south and west of the site. The plans for the
proposed project identify 11 downward-facing wall light fixtures mounted along the parapets of the building, as well as 2 pole-mounted parking lot lights. The Nevada County Zoning Ordinance includes standards for exterior lighting that require such lighting to be shielded and directed downward to prevent the light source or lens from being visible from adjacent properties and roadways. The lighting plan for the Rough and Ready Highway site provided by the project applicant is shown in Figure 4.0-15. Based on a review of this plan, the majority of the lighting from the project site will be kept within the property boundaries, but there are areas identified where light is shown to spill off-site. Therefore, this impact would be potentially significant.

The County’s Land Use and Development Code Section L-II 4.2.8(D)(2) states that “all outdoor lighting fixtures shall be fully shielded to prevent the light source or lens from being visible from adjacent properties and roadways...” According to the site lighting plan prepared by the applicant, all light fixtures are designed to meet International Dark Sky requirements, including being fully shielded. With shielded lighting, the Rough and Ready Highway project would be consistent with the County Lighting Ordinance and would not be anticipated to create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area. However, implementation of mitigation measures MM RR-4.3.2a and RR-4.3.2b would be necessary to ensure that project lighting would not expose adjacent properties and roadways to substantial light or glare, consistent with the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code. With mitigation, this impact would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

**MM RR-4.3.2a**

Prior to building permit issuance, the developer shall submit a final Site Lighting Plan/Photometric Detail that demonstrates that all light spill will be retained on the project site. Potential methods for reducing light trespass onto neighboring roads and properties include light fixtures of lesser wattage, and/or providing additional screening of those features, and/or moving light poles farther into the interior of the site. The developer shall install and maintain all lighting consistent with the approved Final Site Lighting Plan. Prior to issuance of final occupancy, the Planning Department shall perform a site visit, during the dark hours, to verify that the installed lighting does not trespass onto neighboring roads or properties.

**Timing/Implementation:** Prior to issuance of building permits and prior to issuance of final occupancy

**Enforcement/Monitoring:** Nevada County Planning Department and Building Department

**MM RR-4.3.2b**

All lighting for advertising must meet the County Lighting and Signage Ordinance requirements. Internally illuminated signage shall be prohibited. All lighting for exterior signage or advertising shall be top mounted light fixtures which shine light downward directly onto the sign. Said lighting shall be fully shielded consistent with International Dark Sky standards. Prior to building permit issuance, the applicant shall submit a final signage plan that eliminates any reference to internally lighted signage and provides details for establishing top mounted lighting for both the monument and wall signs. Additionally, any proposed sign lighting shall be shown and taken into account in the photometric detail in the revised project site lighting plan as required by mitigation measure MM RR-4.3.2a. Prior to issuance of final occupancy, the Planning Department shall perform a site inspection to ensure that the sign
lighting is installed consistent with this mitigation measure and the County Zoning Code standards.

**Timing/Implementation:** Prior to issuance of building permit and prior to issuance of final occupancy

**Enforcement/Monitoring:** Nevada County Planning Department

### 4.4 Cumulative Setting, Impacts, and Mitigation Measures

#### Cumulative Setting

The cumulative setting for visual resources consists of each of the project sites, as well as all existing, approved, proposed, and reasonably foreseeable development in the visible range of each project site.

**Alta Sierra Site:** The cumulative setting for the Alta Sierra site is characterized by rural commercial development, hillside residential development, and open space. To guide the future uses in the area, the Nevada County General Plan designates the immediate area as a Rural Center with commercially designated land uses (Highway Commercial [HC] and Neighborhood Commercial [NC]) to the immediate north, south, and west of the site. Surrounding the Rural Center are properties identified with the General Plan land use designation of Planned Residential Community (PRC) to the east, Estate (EST) to the south and west, and Urban Medium Density (UMD) to the north. As shown in Table 17.0-1 in Section 17.0, Other CEQA Considerations, the closest approved project in the surrounding area is Forest Springs Mobile Home Park, which is located approximately 1,800 feet north of the Alta Sierra Rural Center and approximately 1.0 mile from the project site. Hundreds of trees were recently removed from this site as the project began construction, and the tree removal is highly visible from SR 49. However, the Dollar General site is not readily visible to travelers along SR 49 as the project site is approximately 0.10 of a mile from and approximately 50 feet lower in elevation than SR 49, which is the major public view corridor of the Forest Springs Mobile Home Park. Due to these factors and the intervening development on SR 49, these projects lack any substantive visual connection.

**Penn Valley Site:** The cumulative setting for the Penn Valley site is characterized by commercial development, medium-density residential development, and open space. The Nevada County General Plan identifies the immediate area as a part of the Penn Valley Village Center with Community Commercial (CC) land uses adjacent to the site. Surrounding General Plan land uses include Urban Medium Density to the southwest and northeast. There are three Penn Valley projects included in Table 17.0-1 in Section 17.0, Other CEQA Considerations, which is a list of approved and proposed projects in the surrounding area. None of these three projects is on Penn Valley Drive or in the Penn Valley Village Center. Because none of these projects has visual connection to the proposed Penn Valley Dollar General project, they are not included in the cumulative visual setting and analysis.
Figure 4.0-10
Proposed Lighting Plan – Penn Valley

Source: MPA Architects, Inc.
For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These stimulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader with information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area.

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016

FIGURE 4.0-12
Rough and Ready Highway Site Viewpoint A
For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader with information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area.

FIGURE 4.0-13
Rough and Ready Highway Site Viewpoint B

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016
For comparative purposes, site photographs are utilized to demonstrate the general character at different points of the project area. These simulations are subject to change and are intended to provide the reader with information on the form, size, and scale of the proposed improvements within the project area.

FIGURE 4.0-14
Rough and Ready Highway Site Viewpoint C

Source: MPA Architects, Inc., 2016
NEVADA COUNTY LIGHTING REQUIREMENTS

1. ALL OUTDOOR LIGHT FIXTURES SHALL BE FULLY SHIELDED TO PREVENT THE LIGHT SOURCE OR LENS FROM BEING VISIBLE FROM ADJACENT PROPERTIES AND ROADWAYS.

2. EXTERNALLY ILLUMINATED SIGNS AND BUILDING IDENTIFICATION SHALL USE TOP-MOUNTED LIGHT FIXTURES WHICH SHINE LIGHT DOWNWARD.

3. LIGHT FIXTURES MOUNTED ON THE CANOPIES OF CONVENIENCE STORES, RESTAURANTS, OR OTHER SIMILAR BUSINESSES, SHALL BE RECESSED SO THAT THE LENS COVER IS RECESSED OR FLUSH WITH THE BOTTOM SURFACE (CEILING) OF THE CANOPY, AND/OR SHIELDED BY THE FIXTURE OR THE EDGE OF THE CANOPY SO THAT LIGHT IS RESTRAINED TO NO MORE THAN 85 DEGREES FROM VERTICAL. AS AN ALTERNATIVE OR SUPPLEMENT TO RECESSED CEILING LIGHTS, INDIRECT LIGHTING MAY BE USED WHERE LIGHT IS BEAMED UPWARD AND THEN REFLECTED DOWN FROM THE UNDERSIDE OF THE CANOPY. IN THIS CASE FIXTURES MUST BE SHIELDED SO THAT DIRECT ILLUMINATION IS FOCUSED EXCLUSIVELY ON THE UNDERSIDE OF THE CANOPY. LIGHTS SHALL NOT BE MOUNTED ON THE TOP OR SIDES (FASCIA) OF THE CANOPY, AND THE SIDES (FASCIA) OF THE CANOPY SHALL NOT BE ILLUMINATED.

4. USE FIXTURES WITH HIGH EFFICIENCY LAMPS. HIGH PRESSURE SODIUM, AND MERCURY VAPOR LIGHT FIXTURES ARE PROHIBITED.

5. LIGHT POLES SHALL BE RESTRICTED TO A MAXIMUM OF 20 FEET IN HEIGHT EXCEPT THAT ON PARCELS ADJACENT TO RESIDENTIAL OR RURAL ZONING DISTRICTS, THE MAXIMUM HEIGHT SHALL BE RESTRICTED TO 15 FEET.

6. ALL EXTERIOR LIGHTING SHALL BE MAINTAINED AS INSTALLED.

7. LIGHTING SHALL BE TURNED OFF BETWEEN 11 P.M. AND SUNRISE, EXCEPT FOR THOSE BUSINESSES OPERATING DURING THESE HOURS OR WHERE A SAFETY OR SECURITY NEED IS CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED.

8. LIGHTING SYSTEMS, OTHER THAN SIGNS, SHALL INCLUDE DIMMERS, OCCUPANCY SENSORS, TIME CONTROLS OR SEPARATE CIRCUITS, TO ALLOW SECTIONS OF THE LIGHTING TO BE TURNED OFF AS NEEDED.

9. SECURITY LIGHTING FIXTURES SHALL BE SHIELDED AND AIMED SO THAT ILLUMINATION IS DIRECTED ONLY TO THE DESIGNATED AREA AND NOT CAST ON OTHER AREAS. THE USE OF MOTION OR HEAT SENSORS MAY PROVIDE GREATER SECURITY THAN CONTINUOUS LIGHTING AND ARE THE PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE TO CONTINUOUS NIGHTTIME LIGHTING.

10. THE STANDARD FOR CANOPY LIGHTING IS THAT THE LIGHTING MUST BE RECESSED SO THAT THE LENS COVER IS RECESSED OR FLUSH WITH THE BOTTOM SURFACE OF THE CANOPY CEILING SO THAT LIGHT IS RESTRAINED TO NO MORE THAN 85 DEGREES FROM VERTICAL.

Source: MPA Architects, Inc.
Rough and Ready Highway Site: The cumulative setting for the Rough and Ready Highway site is characterized by rural commercial development, single-family residential development, and open space. A large community church is also located approximately one-half mile east of the site, although it is not within the same Sunset neighborhood and cannot be seen from the site. The Nevada County General Plan designates the adjacent lands as Neighborhood Commercial land uses. Surrounding General Plan land uses include Urban High Density, Estate, and Residential. As shown in the list of approved and proposed projects in the surrounding area in Table 17.0-1 in Section 17.0, Other CEQA Considerations, of the approved and proposed projects known at this time, Yuba River Charter School is the nearest approved project. It is located on the Rough and Ready Highway corridor nearly 1 mile east of the proposed Dollar General project. Between the two projects is a large tract of open space and the Sunset neighborhood. Although the Yuba River Charter School project is on the same public road corridor as the proposed Rough and Ready Highway Dollar General, the distance between the two projects precludes its inclusion in the cumulative visual setting of the proposed Dollar General store.

Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Cumulative Aesthetic and Lighting Impacts – Alta Sierra

Impact 4.4.1(AS) The Alta Sierra project site is located in a largely developed rural commercial center surrounded by rural residential development and a highway. Cumulative development in the area would substantially alter the existing visual character of the area and generate substantial new light or glare. (Cumulatively Considerable and Significant and Unavoidable)

Cumulative development in the vicinity of the Alta Sierra project site, as guided by the Nevada County General Plan, would result in the ongoing conversion of vacant and underutilized properties to more urbanized uses. This ongoing conversion will result in a gradual transition from a rural environment dominated by natural features and scattered development to a more urban environment dominated by development. Future development projects would be subject to the County’s development standards and adopted design guidelines, which are intended to protect existing uses, minimize light spillage, and design new development to blend with the character of the surrounding area. Development consistent with these standards and guidelines would ensure cumulative lighting would not result in a significant impact. However, a general conversion from rural to urban uses would result in substantial changes to the visual character of the area that cannot be fully mitigated. Therefore, this would be a significant cumulative impact.

As described in Impact 4.1.1(AS) above, development of the Alta Sierra project site would have a significant and unavoidable impact on the visual character and quality of the site and surrounding area. There are no mitigation measures available that could reduce this impacts to a level of insignificance. Therefore, the proposed project’s contribution to this cumulative impact would be cumulatively considerable and significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

None available.

Cumulative Aesthetic and Lighting Impacts – Penn Valley

Impact 4.4.2(PV) The Penn Valley project site is located in an area developed with similar commercial uses along a developed corridor. Cumulative development would contribute to the ongoing transition of the area to urban uses. Compliance with
existing development standards and applicable design guidelines would reduce cumulative aesthetic and lighting impacts. (Less than Cumulatively Considerable)

Development in the vicinity of the Penn Valley project site includes commercial uses consistent with the Nevada County General Plan and the Penn Valley Center Area Plan. Future development in the area would represent a logical expansion of the existing commercial center that serves the surrounding community. Each development project would be subject to the County’s development standards and adopted design guidelines, which are intended to protect existing uses, prevent light spillage, and ensure that new development blends with the character of the surrounding area. Therefore, the cumulative impact would be less than cumulatively considerable and development of the proposed project would not alter the significance of the overall change.

Mitigation Measures

None required.

Cumulative Aesthetic and Lighting Impacts – Rough and Ready Highway

Impact 4.4.3(RR) The Rough and Ready Highway project site is located in an area dominated by rural residential development and open space. Cumulative development in the area would substantially alter the existing visual character of the area and generate substantial new light or glare. (Cumulatively Considerable and Significant and Unavoidable)

Based on existing zoning and General Plan designations, cumulative development in the vicinity of the Rough and Ready Highway project site would result in the conversion of vacant and underutilized properties to residential and commercial uses in the Sunset neighborhood viewshed. A general conversion from the existing rural residential area to a more developed area would result in a change to the existing visual environment that would be subject to the County’s development standards and adopted design guidelines, which are intended to protect existing uses, minimize light spillage, and ensure that new development blends with the character of the surrounding area.

As described in Impact 4.3.1 (RR) above, the proposed project is larger in scale and size than other commercial uses in the vicinity. The church which is located 0.5 mile to the east on Rough and Ready Highway is an institutional use, which differs in nature from a commercial use. Due to the size and scale of the Rough and Ready Highway project relative to the existing residential development in the immediate vicinity, and the sensitivity of the site which is based on the high level of viewer exposure from Rough and Ready Highway and West Drive, and concern of residential viewers, the project would have significant and unavoidable impacts on the visual character of the site and surrounding area. The larger scale of the proposed project would in turn contribute to the likelihood of the proposal of additional commercial development that, in order to relate aesthetically and economically to the Dollar General store, would also be out of scale with the existing neighborhood. There are no mitigation measures available that could reduce this impact to less than significant. Because of the project’s prominence along Rough and Ready Highway and its scale relative to the surrounding uses, the proposed project’s contribution to this cumulative impact would be cumulatively considerable and significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

None available.
REFERENCES


Costella (Costella Environmental Consulting). 2015. Management Plan for Oak Resources Dollar General - Alta Sierra and Addendum to the Biological Inventory.


———. 2000. Penn Valley Village Center Area Plan Nevada County, California.

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