K. VISUAL AND AESTHETIC RESOURCES

This section addresses the subject of aesthetics and visual quality. It includes a description of existing visual conditions and an evaluation of the potential aesthetic effects of the proposed stadium project. The visual analysis is based on field observations of the project site and surroundings in addition to review of the following materials: conceptual project site plan; aerial and ground-level photographs of the project area; topographic data; and public planning documents.

1. Setting

This setting section for visual resources addresses regional and local context, views of the project site and its vicinity, as well as view corridors in the vicinity, and relevant policies.

a. Regional and Local Landscape Context. The proposed project site is situated approximately 20 miles southeast of the San Francisco Bay in the City of San Jose, which is characterized by large-scale urban development. The Santa Clara Valley, in which the City sits, is surrounded by grassy hills interspersed with trees; the hills gradually become steeper and densely wooded as they rise in elevation. The northern extension of the Santa Cruz Mountains encloses the Valley to the southwest and contains peaks up to 3,000 feet in elevation. The Diablo Mountain Range forms the eastern Valley boundary and reaches a summit elevation of almost 4,000 feet. The natural landscape of the surrounding mountains forms a distant scenic backdrop for the City's urban development. The majority of the neighborhoods and downtown core encircling the project site contain multiple-story urban development that forms a visual boundary between the neighboring cities and distant mountains.

b. Project Site Visual Context. The project site is located in an urbanized area of San Jose and is visually characterized by a variety of commercial, light industrial, transportation, utility, and office development. The site's topography is generally flat. The site is largely covered in impervious surfaces, with limited existing natural vegetation beyond landscaped areas; however, there are a number of mature street trees throughout the project site. There are 17 buildings on the project site, generally ranging from approximately 2,900 to 150,000 square feet in size, and reaching from one to three stories in height. The fire training tower on the Fire Training site is seven stories in height. Surface parking lots and roadways make up the remainder of the project site.

Figure V.K-1 illustrates the locations from which photos of the site were taken. (See Figure V.A-1 and Photos 1 through 7 in the Land Use section of this chapter for additional views of the site and vicinity.)

c. Project Site Visibility. The project site is generally flat with limited vegetation and is visible from public viewing areas directly surrounding the site, such as the sidewalks and roadways along W. San Fernando Street, Park Avenue (a major collector street), W. San Carlos Street and Bird Avenue (both major arterials). The project site is also visible from the railroad tracks which run parallel to the project site. Train passengers have direct views of the backs of the buildings adjacent to the train tracks as well as intermittent views across the site as trains travel through the area. The project site may be slightly visible from other public viewing areas in the general vicinity. However, the built up urban setting surrounding the proposed project site limits off-site views of the site. Unobstructed views of the entire site are generally only possible from elevated viewpoints. Photo 1 is of the project site, across the railroad tracks, looking northeast from the San Carlos Street overpass. The white roof of the HP Pavilion is visible on the left. The seven-story training tower on the Fire Training site is

visible in the center of the photo. The San Jose Downtown skyline is visible in the background to the northeast.

Photo 1: View of the project site from the W. San Carlos Street overpass, looking northeast

d. Public View Corridors and Viewpoints. The project site is bordered by five public view corridors: W. San Fernando Street, Park Avenue, Bird Avenue, W. San Carlos Street, and the railroad tracks and light rail lines. Designated scenic urban throughways within 1 mile of the project site include I-280 and SR 87. The Los Gatos Creek corridor along the eastern boundary of the project site also provides an important visual and natural resource within the Midtown and Downtown areas and is designated as a scenic trail corridor in the Scenic Routes and Trails Diagram of the City's General Plan.

Visually prominent structures in the area include the HP Pavilion, San Jose Diridon Station, and the fire training tower. The Arena Green public park is located across from the HP Pavilion.

Each of the five public view corridors in the area is discussed below.

(1) W. San Fernando Street. W. San Fernando Street begins east of San Jose State University and continues through Downtown San Jose, passes under SR 87, and continues through the Midtown area, immediately north of the project site. W. San Fernando Street terminates at the rail road tracks (at the western edge of the project site). Views of the project site south from W. San Fernando Street are of buildings on the project site, including Stephen's Meat Products, Patty's Inn and the associated single-family home, and the Amtrak offices. Street trees line W. San Fernando Street, adjacent to the Amtrak offices, as shown in Photo 2.

Photo 2: View west at the intersection of W. San Fernando Street and S. Autumn Street

(2) Park Avenue. Park Avenue is a major collector street that extends west of San Jose State University (at Plaza de Cesar Chavez), continues under SR 87, runs in an east-west direction through the Midtown area, and continues northwest to I-880, and then terminates at Santa Clara University. Park Avenue passes through the project site (utilizing an underpass beneath the rail-road tracks on the project site's western edge), with one- to three-story office buildings to the north and the Fire Training site to the south. Photo 3 is of the Fire Training site southwest from the inter-

Figure V.K-1: Aerial View of the Project Site and Visual Resources Photo Location Map

8 ½ x 11 Color

Back of color Figure V.K-1

section of Park Avenue and S. Autumn Street (where it becomes Bird Avenue). Views of the project site from Park Avenue looking north are of office buildings on the project site and associated surface parking. There are a limited number of street trees along Park Avenue; however, there are several that border the Fire Training site.

Photo 3: View of Fire Training Site, southwest from the Park Avenue/S. Autumn Street intersection

(3) Bird Avenue. Bird Avenue begins in the Willow Glen neighborhood, south of the project site, and continues north over I-280 to Park Avenue, where it splits into S. Montgomery Street and S. Autumn Street. Photos 4 and 5 are of views across the project site, north from the intersection of Bird Avenue (where it becomes S. Autumn Street) and Park Avenue. Views of the project site from Bird Avenue looking north are of office buildings, commercial buildings, light industrial uses, associated surface parking and street trees.

Photo 4: View of S. Montgomery Street, north from Park Avenue

Photo 5: View of S. Autumn Street, north from Park Avenue

(4) W. San Carlos Street. W. San Carlos Street is a major arterial street that begins east of San Jose State University and continues through the Downtown, passes under SR 87 and continues through the Midtown area west to I-880, where it becomes Stevens Creek Boulevard. W. San Carlos Street is elevated at the southern tip of the project site. Photo 6 looks north from this segment of W. San Carlos Street, across the project site (as does Photo 1, above). Views of the project site from W. San Carlos Street close to Bird Avenue looking north are blocked by the vegetation along Los Gatos Creek. Views of the project site from W. San Carlos Street as it crosses over the rail road tracks are generally of the one- to three-story office, commercial or light industrial buildings, the seven-story training tower, surface parking lots and street trees.

(5) Rail Lines. Caltrain, Altamont Commuter Express (ACE), Amtrak, and Vasona Corridor light rail lines parallel the project site to the west. Trains run frequently through the area and rail passengers have direct views of the backs of buildings adjacent to the tracks as well as intermittent views across the site as trains run adjacent to the project site.

Photo 6: Fire Training Site

e. Urban Throughways. All State and Interstate Highways within the City are designated as Urban Throughways (which are considered scenic routes) in the San Jose 2020 General Plan Scenic Routes and Trails Diagram. An Urban Throughway is defined as the actual right-of-way of the scenic route, the shoulders, and any adjacent public improvements which accompany such a route. Scenic Urban Throughways within 1 mile of the project site include I-280 and SR 87.

(1) Interstate 280. I-280 curves in a northeast-southwest direction approximately a ½-mile south of the project site. Existing views of the project site blend within the City skyline, and it is not directly visible from I-280. The 100-foot tall HP Pavilion is also not immediately visible from I-280, and blends within the City skyline.

(2) State Route 87. SR 87 runs in a north-south direction, less than a ¼-mile east of the project site. SR 87 is partially elevated as it parallels the project site; however, views of the project site are generally blocked by tall vegetation.

f. Other Public Viewpoints. Four other key public viewpoints are located near the project site.

(1) Diridon Station. The historic San Jose Diridon Station is located immediately north of the project site, adjacent to the railroad tracks. The train station is served by Caltrain, Altamont Commuter Express (ACE), and Amtrak rail lines. Existing views of the project site from San Jose Diridon Station are largely blocked by tall trees surrounding the station parking lot (see Photo 7).

Photo 7: View south towards PG&E Substation from Diridon Station

(2) Los Gatos Creek. Los Gatos Creek begins just north of the project site, where it splits from the Guadalupe River at the Arena Green, east of the HP Pavilion.

The creek forms the eastern boundary of the project site and is surrounded by heavy vegetation as shown in Photo 8. There are no trails or pathways along the creek in this location; however, a trail is planned for the entire length of the creek. As discussed in Section V.A, Land Use, Reach 5 of the Los Gatos Creek Trail would be located on the eastern portion of the project site.

Photo 8: View of Los Gatos Creek from W. San Carlos Street overpass

(3) Arena Green. The Arena Green is a public park located directly east of the HP Pavilion, across S. Autumn Street. The approximately 14-acre park is part of the Guadalupe River Park and includes a segment of the Guadalupe River Trail along the confluence of the Guadalupe River and Los Gatos Creek, lawn and picnic areas, and a carousel. The project site is not readily visible from the park, as views are largely obstructed by existing buildings.

(4) HP Pavilion. The HP Pavilion is the dominant feature in the Diridon Area and is approximately 100 feet tall. The HP Pavilion hosts hockey games as well as concerts and other sports and musical events. The project site is not readily visible from the HP Pavilion, as views are largely obstructed by existing buildings. Photo 9 (not located in Figure V.K-1) is a view of the HP Pavilion west from the Arena Green.

Photo 9: View of HP Pavilion, west of Arena Green

g. San Jose 2020 General Plan Policies. The City of San Jose 2020 General Plan provides policies which address aesthetic quality related to both the natural and the built environment. The Plan aims to retain and encourage diversity and individual expression in the built environment, while encouraging quality new construction. Policies relevant to the proposed project include:

Community Development Urban Design

- *Urban Design Policy 6:* Proposed structures adjacent to existing residential areas should be architecturally designed and sited to protect the privacy of the existing residences.
- *Urban Design Policy 8:* Design solutions should be considered in the development review process which addresses security, aesthetics, and public safety.
- *Urban Design Policy 16:* When development is proposed adjacent to existing or planned parks or park chains, that development should include public park-frontage roads, wherever feasible.
- *Urban Design Policy 17:* Development adjacent to creekside areas should incorporate compatible design and landscaping including plant species which are native to the area or are compatible with native species.

2. Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The following section discusses potential impacts related to visual and aesthetic resources that could result from the implementation of the proposed project. The section begins with the criteria of significance, establishing the thresholds to determine whether an impact is significant. The latter part of this section evaluates impacts and recommends mitigation measures, where appropriate.

a. Significance Criteria. Implementation of the proposed project would have significant impacts on visual and aesthetic quality if it would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings;
- Substantially damage a scenic resource, including but not limited to, trees and historic buildings;
- Result in the substantial disruption or blocking of existing views or public opportunities to view scenic resources;
- Result in visual resource conditions that would conflict with applicable City of San Jose policies and regulations relating to aesthetics; or
- Introduce new development which would substantially detract from the integrity, character, and/or aesthetic environment of a neighborhood.

b. Less-than-Significant Visual and Aesthetic Resources Impacts. Less-than-significant visual and aesthetic resources impacts of the proposed project are discussed below.

(1) Effect on Scenic Vistas or Disruption of Existing Views. Scenic vistas across the site could include views of the Downtown skyline or distant mountains. However, project site and its vicinity are generally flat and given the urban nature of the site, including the buildings, street trees, and above-ground power lines, views across the project site to the Downtown skyline or distant mountains generally do not exist. In addition the project area and surrounding neighborhoods are urban in nature and surrounded by some of the highest density development in the City. Impacts to scenic vistas within the project site as a result of construction of the proposed baseball stadium and associated parking garage would be less than significant.

The proposed stadium would be visible from public locations at higher elevations several miles away, including the I-280 and SR-87 Urban Throughways and the Santa Cruz and Diablo Mountains ranges. However, at these distances, the proposed stadium would blend within the City skyline. No scenic vistas that would include the project site would be affected by the proposed project.

In addition, the stadium itself would offer scenic views of the City skyline, and the Santa Cruz and Diablo Mountain ranges from the upper elevations of the seating bowl.

(2) Degrade Existing Visual Character. Implementation of the proposed project would result the construction of a 45,000 seat baseball stadium with maximum height of 165 feet, with scoreboards approximately 200 feet and lights approximately 235 feet above finished grade. The visual character of the site is currently defined by one-to three-story commercial, office, light industrial buildings, as well as surface parking and street trees. Because proposed uses are so different from

existing uses in type and intensity, the proposed project would result in a substantial change in the visual character of the project site.

The overall aesthetic quality of the project area is characterized by a mix of uses and transit oriented development, and the architectural styles in the area vary widely. In addition, at approximately 100 feet tall, the HP Pavilion, located two blocks north of the site, is currently the most visually prominent structure in the Diridon Area. Buildings in the downtown core area, less than a ½-mile from the project site, range in height from 25 to 285 feet tall.

The proposed stadium would not degrade the area's visual character, but would contribute to the overall visual character of the area by reinforcing an entertainment and sports related district in the area, and redeveloping the Diridon Area, which would generally compliment the vision set forth in the area plans.

The proposed project has been designed at a conceptual site plan level; detailed design plans have not been developed. The stadium structure, parking garage, and future development site would be subject to design review to ensure the visual character of the site is not degraded.

The potential relocation of the existing substation to the southern tip of the project site would alter the existing visual conditions in this area. The 1.5-acre facility includes 115-kV transmission lines, underground distribution lines, distribution transformers, and electrical switching gear, up to 40 feet in height. The substation, in its current location is visible to train passengers as they approach Diridon Station from the south or motorist parking in the lot south of Diridon Station. The relocated substation would be visible to motorists traveling on W. San Carlos Street and to train passengers as they pass the current Fire Training Center site. However, the relocated substation would not detract from the visual character of the area which includes commercial and industrial uses and appropriate screening techniques and standard design measures would be implemented. Additionally, as discussed in Section V.M, Utilities, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) would determine what additional environmental documentation would be necessary to comply with CEQA prior to relocation approval.

(3) Damage Scenic Resources. Scenic resources may include trees, rock out-croppings, or historic buildings. Cultural resources are considered scenic resources as they often provide visual interest and character. As discussed in Section V.J, Cultural and Paleontological Resources, the proposed project includes the demolition of the KNTV Broadcast Facility, which is listed on the *City of San Jose Historic Resources Inventory* as a Structure of Merit and appears to be both a candidate City Landmark and eligible for the California Register. However, the removal (either by relocation or demolition) of one historic structure from the project site would not result in a significant impact to scenic resources.

(4) Conflict with Policies and Regulations. Continued implementation of the City's 2020 General Plan policies regarding site planning, urban design, and landscaping through the design review process would help ensure that no significant adverse aesthetic impacts would result from the project.

(5) Detract from the Integrity of a Neighborhood. The project site is in the Diridon Area and the Midtown Area of San Jose. The Diridon Area is envisioned as transit and pedestrian oriented

district, with greater connectivity to the traditional downtown center. The Midtown Area includes the Diridon Area and is envisioned as a mixed-use community with high-density commercial and residential uses oriented to transit, while maintaining some industrial and service commercial areas. Consistency with plans for the Diridon Area and Midtown are discussed in Chapter IV, Consistency with Plans and Policies. The proposed stadium would not visually detract from the integrity of the area.

The Delmas Park Neighborhood is east of the project site, bound by Los Gatos Creek, W. Santa Clara Street, SR 87 and I-280. Los Gatos Creek extends north-south and provides a visual barrier to much of the project site. Existing visual characteristics in the vicinity of the Delmas Park Neighborhood include HP Pavilion and the medium- to high-density buildings of the downtown core area. The addition of the proposed stadium would not significantly detract from the integrity of this urban neighborhood.

c. Potentially Significant Visual Resources and Mitigation Measures. The proposed project would adversely impacts scenic resources, including historic resources as described below.

<u>Impact VIS-1</u>: The proposed project would alter the visual character of historic San Jose Diridon Station. (S)

Implementation of Mitigation Measure CULT-2a and CULT-2b would somewhat reduce this impact. However, the alteration of the station's visual setting and feeling would remain a significant impact. (SU)

<u>Impact VIS-2</u>: The removal of all ordinance sized trees on the project site would substantially damage scenic resources. (S)

Mature trees are considered scenic resources as they often provide visual interest and character. As discussed in Section V.E, Biological Resources, construction of the proposed project would result in the removal of all existing on-site trees. A total of 45 ordinance-sized trees occur on the project site. All of these ordinance-sized trees are non-native species or non-local native species except for one blue elderberry and one box elder.

Mitigation Measure BIO-1 requires the loss of ordinance sized trees would be mitigated by implementation of landscaping plans to be reviewed and approved by the City of San Jose. For private projects, the City of San Jose requires tree replacement for those trees greater than 18 inches in diameter with 24-inch box trees at a ratio of 4:1. As a City proposed project, the City would commit to meeting the tree replacement ratio, but given the footprint of redevelopment on the site, replacement trees may be planted beyond the project site in the project area. Implementation of Mitigation Measure BIO-1 would reduce impacts to scenic resources through the loss of trees to a less-than-significant level. (LTS)