4.10 VISUAL AND AESTHETICS

Various policies in the City's General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating visual and aesthetic impacts resulting from planned urban development within the City. All future development addressed by this EIR will be subject to the visual and aesthetic policies listed in Chapter 4, *Goals and Policies*, of the City's General Plan, including the following:

- *Urban Design Policy #1*: Apply strong architectural & site design controls on new development.
- *Urban Design Policy #2*: Private development should include adequate landscaped areas.
- *Urban Design Policy #7*: New development designs should consider security, aesthetics and public safety.
- *Urban Design Policy #24*: New development should preserve ordinance-size and other significant trees.
- *Urban Design Policy #25*: New infrastructure (e.g., roads) in scenic and rural areas should consider natural topography and minimal lighting.
- *Scenic Routes Policy #1*: Development along scenic corridors should be designed to preserve and enhance natural and man-made vistas.
- *Scenic Routes Policy #6*: Development along scenic corridors should preserve significant views of the valley and mountains, especially in (or adjacent to) Coyote Valley, the Diablo Range, and the Santa Cruz Mountains.
- *Scenic Routes Policy #7*: Planning of rural scenic corridors should consider providing access to parks, recreational facilities, bike trails, and cultural attractions.
- *Scenic Routes Policy #8*: Roadway design on scenic rural routes should minimize impacts to native flora and natural topographic features.

In addition to the policies of the San José General Plan, development addressed by this EIR will be required to comply with the following:

- San José Outdoor Lighting Policy (City Council Policy 4-3, as revised 6/20/00)
- San José Design Guidelines

4.10.1 Existing Conditions

The existing visual and aesthetic character of the project area is depicted in the photographs on the following pages and is described in the following text.

The Coyote Valley area of San José can generally be described as a rural, bucolic environment with agriculture being the predominant land use. The Valley floor consists primarily of agricultural fields with scattered structures such as farmhouses, barns, greenhouses, roadside fruit stands, and other residences. Native and orchard trees are also present. The north-south riparian corridor of Coyote Creek is the most prominent natural feature on the Valley floor. The Santa Teresa Foothills and the Diablo Range form the west and east sides of the Valley, respectively. With the exception of some electric transmission towers, these hillsides are generally in a natural, undeveloped condition.

The most prominent man-made structures in the Coyote Valley area are the Metcalf Energy Center and the adjacent substation, which are located at the northerly end of the Valley. The buildings on the IBM campus are also visible on the north side of Bailey Avenue. Other man-made features of

Photo 1 - View of North Coyote Valley looking in an easterly direction, as seen from the Santa Teresa Foothills. Bailey Avenue can be seen on the left side of the photo.

Photo 2 - View of the Santa Teresa Foothills from Bailey Avenue. If constructed, the proposed BOH roadway extension will be visible on the hillside.

PHOTOS 1 AND 2

Photo 3 - Existing agricultural uses in Coyote Valley, as seen from Santa Teresa Boulevard looking northeasterly.

Photo 4 - View of Coyote Valley, looking in a southwesterly direction. Photo was taken near the intersection of Bailey Avenue and Santa Teresa Boulevard.

PHOTOS 3 AND 4

note are three north-south transportation corridors (i.e., US 101, Monterey Road/UPRR, and Santa Teresa Boulevard) and one east-west transportation corridor (i.e.., Bailey Avenue).

The overall visual environment of the project area can be characterized as aesthetically-pleasing. There are unobstructed scenic vistas of the Valley floor and the adjacent hillsides from numerous locations, including US 101. Recognizing that the Coyote Valley area includes substantial scenic resources, a number of agencies have adopted policies aimed at the preservation of such resources:

- The City's General Plan has designated the portion of US 101 through the Coyote Valley, the entire length of Bailey Avenue, and the portion of McKean Road near Calero Reservoir as Rural Scenic Corridors.
- The County's General Plan has designated the entire lengths of Bailey Avenue and McKean Road, as well as the portion of Santa Teresa Boulevard south of Bernal Road, as Scenic Routes. The County's General Plan also recommends that the State designate US 101 (from Blossom Hill Road to the Santa Clara/Sen Benito County line) as a California Scenic Highway.
- The Santa Clara County Open Space Authority has designated the Santa Teresa Foothills and Coyote Ridge (the portion of the Diablo Range that includes the hills on the east side of Coyote Valley) as priority study areas for possible open space acquisition/preservation.

4.10.2 Visual/Aesthetic Impacts

4.10.2.1 *Thresholds of Significance*

For the purposes of this EIR, a visual/aesthetic impact is considered significant if the project would:

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

4.10.2.2 *Effects on Scenic Vistas*

The proposed CVSP significantly alters the existing scenic vistas of the Coyote Valley area. Impacts on scenic vistas would include the following:

- Views of the valley from roadways such as US 101, Monterey Road, Bailey Avenue, and Santa Teresa Boulevard would significantly change. Instead of unobstructed views of the valley floor and the surrounding hillsides, views from many locations would be blocked by numerous buildings. As depicted on the renderings on the following pages, many of the new buildings will be multi-story, some with heights of up to approximately 265 feet (22 stories).
- Views of the valley, whether from the valley floor (existing residences) or from the surrounding hillsides, will no longer be that of a rural and bucolic setting. Views will be that of an urban/suburban environment that is typical of many cities.

Impact AES-1: The proposed CVSP will have a substantial adverse effect on existing scenic views in the Coyote Valley area. **[Significant Impact]**

4.10.2.3 *Damage to Scenic Resources*

As previously described, the implementation of the CVSP would result in obstructed views from US 101 and the loss of trees, potential rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within the view from the highway. Although rock outcropping and historic buildings within the CVSP Development Area cannot readily be seen from the highway, this is a significant impact.

Impact AES-2: The proposed project will result in damage to scenic resources within view of US 101, a scenic highway. **[Significant Impact]**

4.10.2.4 *Change in Visual Character*

The proposed project will develop North and Mid Coyote Valley, an area encompassing approximately 5.3 square miles, which is roughly the size of the City of Campbell. The rural, open space, agricultural character of the area will be changed to an urbanized environment. Existing buildings, which are limited in both number and size, would be demolished and would be replaced by hundreds of new buildings, some with heights of up to 22-stories. Representations of future conditions are shown on Figures 4.10-1 and 4.10-2. Agricultural fields would be replaced with buildings, roads, parks, and urban landscaping.

Impact AES-3: The proposed CVSP will substantially change the existing visual and aesthetic character of the Coyote Valley area. **[Significant Impact]**

4.10.2.5 *New Source of Light or Glare*

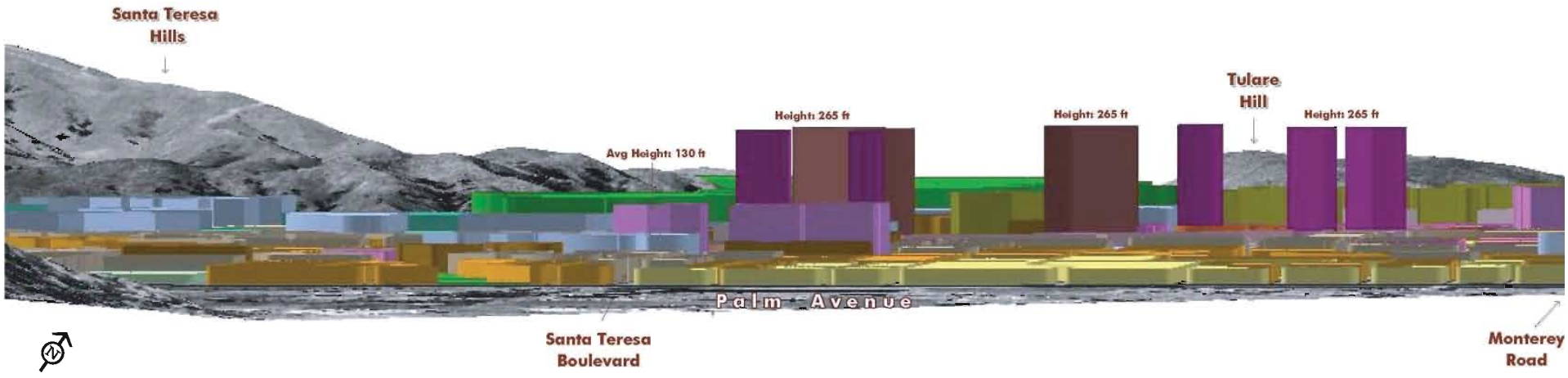
The project would essentially construct a new city in a area that is predominately rural and agricultural. In terms of nighttime views, the change would be significant because large areas with relatively little existing lighting would be replaced with hundreds of buildings. In addition to building lighting, thousands of street lights will be installed, along with the lighting of parking lots, outdoor signage, recreational facilities, etc. While all of this lighting would be designed to minimize spillover, the cumulative effect will be substantial. The project will be required to conform to General Plan policies to minimize light and glare impacts. In accordance with the City's Outdoor Lighting Policy, low-pressure sodium lighting would be required for most types of lighting fixtures in most locations within the CVSP Development Area and the fixtures would be directed downward to avoid spillover onto adjacent areas.

Lights from the urban development would indirectly light the nighttime sky, creating a "glow" effect that occurs over all populated areas.

Impact AES-4: The proposed CVSP will create a new source of substantial light in the Coyote Valley area. **[Significant Impact]**

4.10.2.6 *Visual Impacts from the Bailey-over-the-Hill Alignment*

Impacts to the BOH alignment area are described in this EIR at a programmatic level because an alignment for the roadway has not yet been determined nor has the roadway been designed. Construction within the BOH alignment area would result in significant visual impacts. The existing view of the Santa Teresa Foothills, as seen from the Valley floor in the vicinity of the IBM facility would change due to the BOH roadway extension (refer to Photo 6). The existing scenic view of the undeveloped foothills would be altered by the presence of a 4-lane arterial highway, the construction of which would require substantial grading (cuts and retaining walls) and removal of numerous mature trees including Oak Woodland habitat.

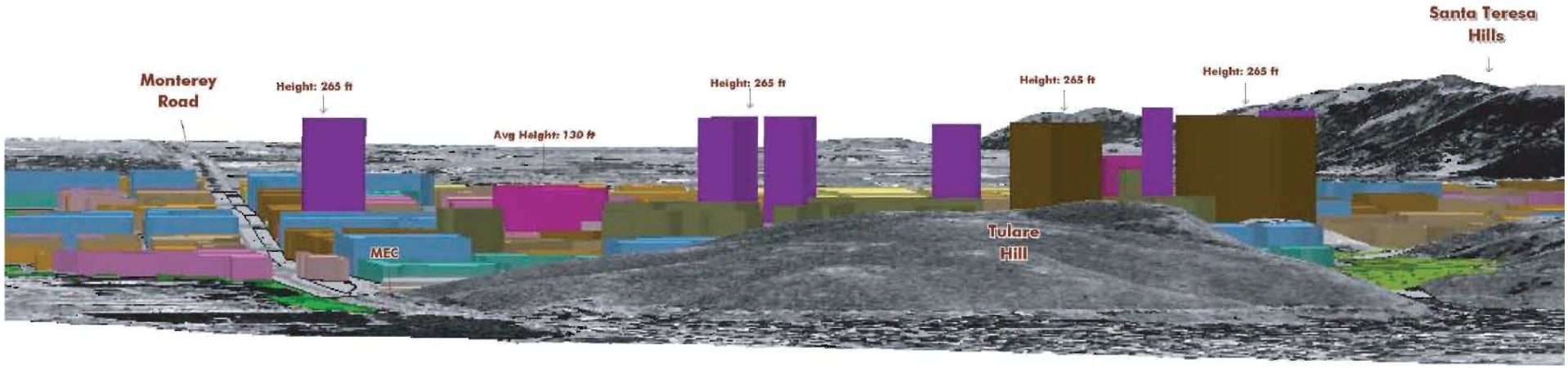


Source: City of San Jose, Department of PBCE, March 07, 2006

Vertical Exaggeration Factor = 2.0

Approx. Scale: 1"=628'

PERSPECTIVE LOOKING IN A NORTHERLY DIRECTION



PERSPECTIVE LOOKING IN A SOUTHERLY DIRECTION

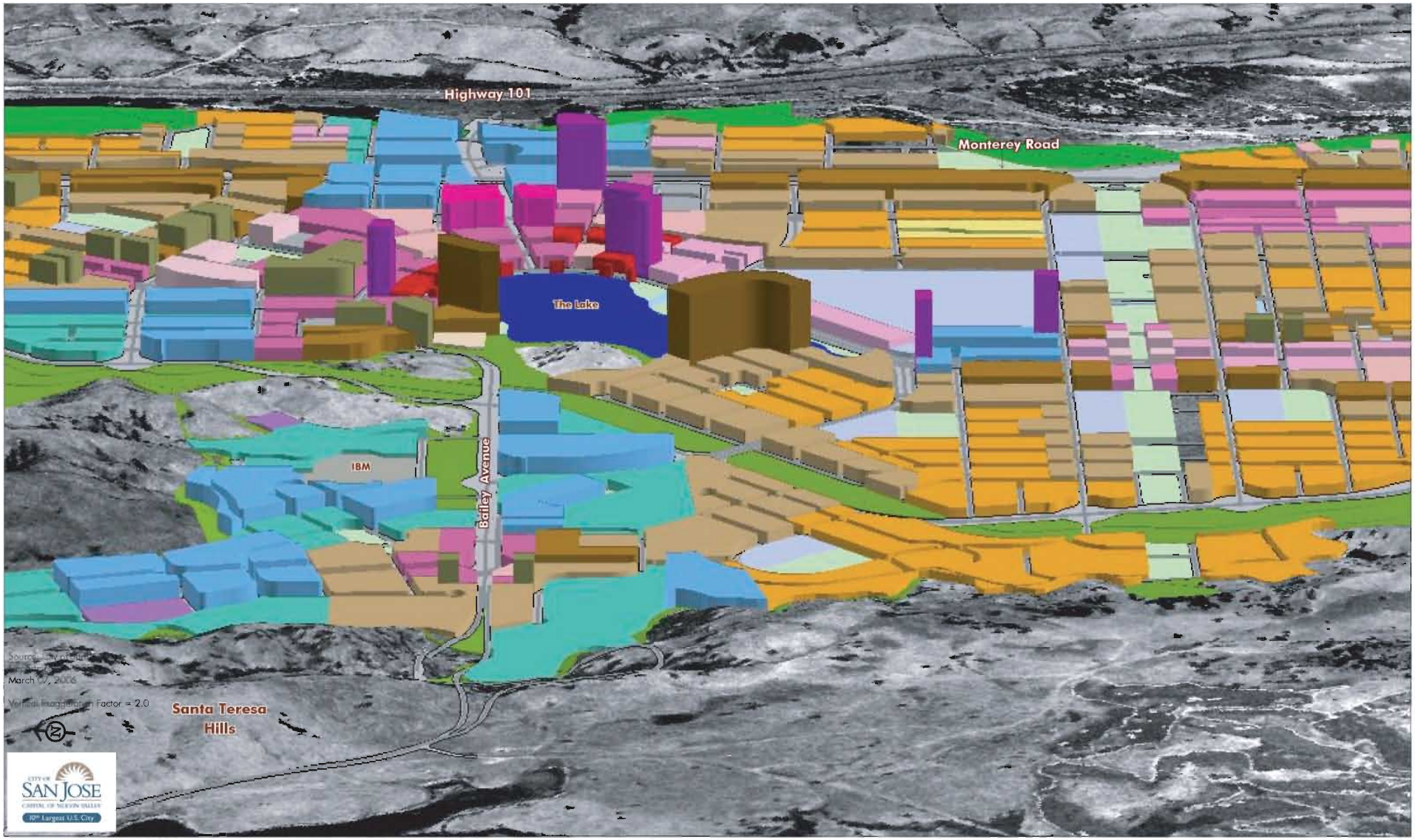
Source: City of San Jose, Department of PBCE, March 07, 2006

Vertical Exaggeration Factor = 2.0

Approx. Scale: 1"=628'

ELEVATIONS

FIGURE 4.10-1



3-D VISUAL LOOKING IN AN EASTERLY DIRECTION

FIGURE 4.10-2

The BOH extension would introduce additional lighting into the Santa Teresa Foothills, both from new street lights and from headlights associated with substantially increased volumes of traffic.

As noted above, the entire lengths of Bailey Avenue and McKean Road are designated as Scenic Routes in the County's General Plan. The proposed project includes the BOH extension, which would convert the westerly portion of Bailey Avenue from a rural 2-lane roadway to a 4-lane arterial. These improvements would require the removal of numerous trees, which are an important component of the scenic character of these roads.

Impact AES-5: The future construction of the BOH roadway would result in significant visual impacts to views from the valley floor and a designated scenic route. Impacts associated with the introduction of new lighting would also be significant. **[Significant Impact]**

4.10.3 Mitigation and Avoidance Measures for Visual and Aesthetic Impacts

As previously described, the policies in the City of San José's 2020 General Plan have been adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental effects resulting from planned development within the City. Future CVSP development projects shall be subject to these General Plan policies, as well as standard measures to mitigate environmental impacts. Additional or modified mitigation measures may be identified based on subsequent environmental review, once specific development is proposed.

The above analysis concluded that the proposed CVSP will result in significant visual and aesthetic impacts. This is not to say that the project would not include many aesthetically-pleasing features. However, there are no feasible mitigation measures that would mitigate the blockage of scenic views, the damage to scenic resources, the significant change in visual character, and the substantial increase in nighttime lighting, all of which would result from the development of the CVSP.

4.10.4 Conclusions Regarding Visual and Aesthetic Impacts

Impact AES-1: The proposed CVSP will have a substantial adverse effect on existing scenic views in the Coyote Valley area. There is no feasible mitigation available to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, adoption of a statement of overriding considerations will be required. **[Significant Unavoidable Impact]**

Impact AES-2: The proposed project will result in damage to scenic resources within view of US 101, a scenic highway. There is no feasible mitigation available to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, adoption of a statement of overriding considerations will be required. **[Significant Unavoidable Impact]**

Impact AES-3: The proposed CVSP will substantially change the existing visual and aesthetic character of the Coyote Valley area. There is no feasible mitigation available to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, adoption of a statement of overriding considerations will be required. **[Significant Unavoidable Impact]**

Impact AES-4: The proposed CVSP will create a new source of substantial light in the Coyote Valley area. Conformance with the City's Outdoor Lighting Policy would reduce these impacts, but not to a less than significant level. There is no feasible mitigation available to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, adoption of a statement of overriding considerations will be required. **[Significant Unavoidable Impact]**

Impact AES-5: The future construction of the BOH roadway would result in significant visual impacts to views from the valley floor and a designated scenic route. Impacts associated with the introduction of new lighting would also be significant. There is no feasible mitigation available to reduce this impact to a less than significant level. Therefore, adoption of a statement of overriding considerations will be required. **[Significant Unavoidable Impact]**