

4.1 Aesthetics, Visual Quality, and Light and Glare

This section describes the visual resources in the vicinity of the Project Area, and the associated regulatory framework. The impact analysis presents the significance criteria used to evaluate impacts on identified resources as a consequence of implementing the Project or alternatives, the methods used in evaluating these impacts, and the results of the impact assessment based on the applied significance criteria.

4.1.1 Setting

The study area relevant to the analysis of impacts to visual/aesthetic resources encompasses the landscapes directly affected by, and the surrounding areas that would be within the view of, Project-related facilities and activities. This analysis focuses on travel route views, views of and within parks and recreational areas, and views from designated scenic vistas.

4.1.1.1 Definitions Related to Visual Resources

Visual resources consist of the landforms, vegetation, rock and water features, and human modifications that create the visual character and sensitivity of a landscape. A number of factors are documented for the existing visual resources of the study area in order to determine the manner in which those resources or characteristic landscapes may be modified by the Project and alternatives. The primary existing visual condition factors considered in this study area are defined below and include: Visual Quality, Viewer Exposure, Viewer Types and Volumes, and Visual Sensitivity.

Visual Quality is defined as the overall visual impression or attractiveness of an area as determined by the particular landscape characteristics, including landforms, rock forms, water features, and vegetation patterns. The attributes of line, form, and color combine in various ways to create landscape characteristics whose variety, vividness, coherence, uniqueness, harmony, and pattern contribute to the overall visual quality of an area. For the purposes of this EIR, visual quality is defined according to three levels:

- *Indistinctive, or industrial*: generally lacking in natural or cultural visual resource amenities typical of the region
- *Representative*: typical or characteristic of the region's natural and/or cultural visual amenities
- *Distinctive*: unique or exemplary of the region's natural or cultural scenic amenities

Viewer Exposure addresses the variables that affect viewing conditions from potentially sensitive areas. Viewer exposure considers the following factors:

- Landscape visibility (i.e., the ability to see the landscape)
- Viewing distance (i.e., the proximity of viewers to the Project)

- Viewing angle – whether the Project would be viewed from above (superior), below (inferior) or from a level (normal) line of sight
- Extent of visibility – whether the line of sight is open and panoramic to the Project Area or restricted by terrain, vegetation and/or structures
- Duration of view

Viewer Types and Volumes of use pertain to the types of use (i.e., public viewers including recreationalist and motorist) and amounts of use (i.e., number of recreational users or motorists) that various land uses receive.

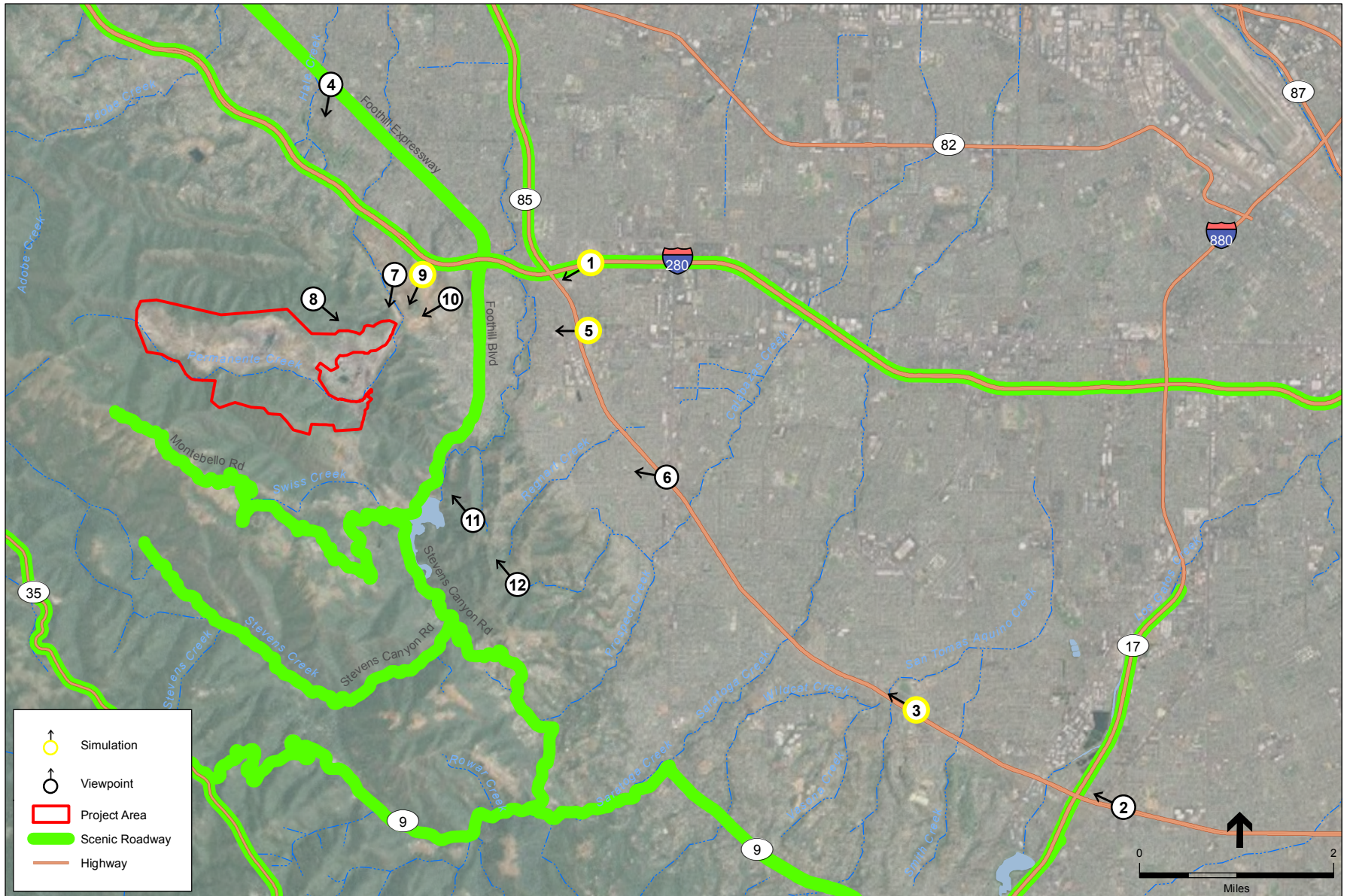
Visual Sensitivity is the overall measure of an existing landscape's susceptibility to adverse visual changes. People in different visual settings, typically characterized by different land uses surrounding a project, have varying degrees of sensitivity to changes in visual conditions depending on the overall visual characteristics of the place. In areas of more distinctive visual quality, such as designated scenic highways, designated scenic roads, parks, and recreation and natural areas, visual sensitivity is characteristically more pronounced. In areas of more indistinctive or representative visual quality, sensitivity to change tends to be less pronounced, depending on the level of visual exposure. This analysis of visual sensitivity is based on the combined factors of visual quality, viewer types and volumes, and visual exposure to the Project and alternatives. Visual sensitivity is reflected according to high, moderate and low visual sensitivity ranges.

4.1.1.2 Regional and Local Setting

A series of photographs taken from representative public vantage points portray the existing visual character of Project Area and surrounding viewpoints. **Figure 4.1-1** is a viewpoint map that depicts, by photograph numbers, the location and directions from which these setting photographs were taken. Figure 4.1-1 also shows scenic roadways in the vicinity of the Project. **Figures 4.1-2a, 4.1-2b, and 4.1-2c** present the setting photographs, which were assigned numbers by order of mention in following subsections. The photographs depicting viewsheds are limited in the sense that they provide only fixed viewpoints and cannot demonstrate all views of or from the Project Area or along a site's perimeter.

Existing Visual Quality of the Region

The Project Area is located in an unincorporated area of the western foothills of the County near the City of Cupertino, approximately 2 miles west of the intersection of Interstate 280 and Highway 85. The Project is proposed entirely within the boundaries of the approximately 3,510-acre Lehigh Permanente Quarry (Mine ID No. 91-43-0004) property (the "site"). The Project Area includes the existing Quarry pit, the WMSA, the EMSA, the crusher/Quarry office support area, surge pile, Rock Plant, the Exploration Area, the PCRA, and open space "buffer" areas that serve to physically separate operations at the site from other uses in the surrounding environs.



SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011a; County of Santa Clara, 2008

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Figure 4.1-1

Viewpoint Map with Scenic Roadways



Photo 1: Mary Avenue Bicycle Footbridge looking southwest over Interstate-280



Photo 2: Bascom Avenue overpass looking northwest over State Route 85



Photo 3: Northbound State Route 85 near Quito Road, southeast of Saratoga Avenue on-ramp, looking northwest



Photo 4: South Springer Road at Foothill Expressway looking southwest

4.1-4

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011a

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Figure 4.1-2a
Setting Photos



Photo 5: Westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard, just east of the State Route 85 interchange, looking west



Photo 6: Northbound De Anza Boulevard on the State Route 85 overpass, looking west

4.1-5



Photo 7: Entrance to Rancho San Antonio County Park looking southwest



Photo 8: Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve, PG&E Trail looking southeast

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011

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Figure 4.1-2b
Setting Photos



Photo 9: Rancho San Antonio County Park, Cristo Rey Drive at Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail looking southwest



Photo 10: Rancho San Antonio County Park, Anza Knoll looking southwest



Photo 11: Fremont Older Open Space Preserve, Coyote Ridge Trail looking northwest



Photo 12: Fremont Older Open Space Preserve, Maisie's Peak looking northwest

4.1-6

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011a

Lehigh Permanente Quarry Reclamation Plan . 211742

Figure 4.1-2c
Setting Photos

The Project Area lies within the hilly eastern foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains, which are part of California's Coast Range and separate the San Francisco Bay from the Pacific Ocean along most of the San Francisco Peninsula. Much of the Coast Range remains undeveloped, and the site includes and is surrounded by large open space areas that serve as buffers between the mining-related uses and the heavily urbanized floodplain, which contains the surrounding cities of Los Altos, Cupertino, and Saratoga, and the town of Los Altos Hills. Natural landforms on and in the vicinity of the Project Area are generally curvilinear and irregular in outline and gently rounded as forms, and are considered visually distinctive.

The site is bordered by large open space areas to the north, south, and west, and is in close proximity to urban areas to the east. To the north and northeast are Rancho San Antonio County Park (which is connected to several open space preserves, including Montebello Regional Open Space and Los Trancos Regional Open Space), and Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District (MROSD) land. The closest residential areas are in the cities of Cupertino, Los Altos, Palo Alto, and Saratoga; and the communities of Loyola and Los Altos Hills. A separate mining operation, the Stevens Creek Quarry, is located immediately south of the Project Area.

Existing Visual Quality of Project Area

Landform

Topography of the Project Area and surrounding area is characterized by a series of east-west trending ridges and valleys with slope gradients ranging from gentle to steep. Steep slopes predominate, with flatter terrain occurring within some previously-disturbed areas in the Project Area. Elevations within the site as a whole generally increase from east to west, ranging from about 500 feet above mean sea level (amsl) near the entrance to the Project Area to about 2,640 feet amsl at the western and southwestern site boundaries. Elevations within the Project Area range from approximately 500 feet amsl at the eastern edge to approximately 2,000 feet amsl at the western edge. The mining-related areas within the Project Area are highly disturbed areas (i.e., industrial), while the surrounding vegetated buffer areas are generally intact (i.e., distinct). Permanente Creek, a stream that is tributary to San Francisco Bay, has its headwaters in the western portion of the site and flows through the Project Area.

On-Site Land Uses

The Quarry primarily produces cement-grade limestone and lower grade limestone and greenstone suitable for use in construction aggregate products. Currently, materials are extracted from the Quarry pit and overburden is disposed of in the EMSA and along the west wall of the Quarry pit. When the EMSA reaches capacity, overburden would be placed in the Quarry pit. In 2007 (the Project baseline), overburden was deposited in the WMSA. The Project Area's mining uses are existing and ongoing. The existing operational areas would be reclaimed by the Project, including: the Quarry pit, WMSA, EMSA, crusher/Quarry office support area, surge pile, and Rock Plant. In addition, an area south of Permanente Creek that has been disturbed by prior exploratory activities (the Exploration Area) and a portion of the Permanente Creek area (the PCRA) also would be reclaimed, although neither area has been subject to mineral extraction.

Settling ponds for Quarry pit run-off and operational water ponds also are operated and maintained within and adjacent to the Project Area.

The predominant visual quality of the Project Area is heavy industrial. This character is conveyed through the mining pits, stockpiles of extracted materials, equipment, buildings, machinery, siltation ponds, and conveyor belts that can be seen throughout. However, the surrounding buffer areas, which are also part of the site, contrast with the industrial uses and provide large areas of relatively undisturbed, densely vegetated, visually distinctive open space. Maintenance of the areas that already have been revegetated includes the monitoring of native grass species, shrubs and trees, irrigation as necessary to encourage the establishment of planted trees and shrubs, and installation, maintenance and monitoring of the protective cages that have been installed around most container plantings to reduce damage caused by browsing deer.

Non-quarrying uses and activities occurring in the Project Area include plowing for fire breaks and construction and maintenance of dirt roads. An inactive powerline and a natural gas pipeline currently cross the EMSA, although they would be removed as part of the ongoing surface mining activities (Lehigh, 2011).

Light and Glare

As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, there is no existing lighting plan for the Project Area. There are five light plants in the Project Area, each of which is 5,000 watts; three are located in the Quarry pit, one is located at the EMSA, and one is located at the belt conveyor transfer. Portable lighting is moved as needed within the Project Area. Pole-mounted sodium, metal halide, or fluorescent lighting generally is used.

Night lighting currently is used within the Rock Plant and strategically as required for nighttime work within the Project Area. There is no fixed lighting for Quarry access roads. Although existing night lighting has been designed by the Applicant to minimize glare onto neighboring areas, nighttime lighting is visible from surrounding communities on the valley floor and the County has received reports of glare from the residents of the surrounding communities. For example, lights in the WMSA are visible at night from the valley floor and from as far away as Interstate 680.

No public roads exist within the Project Area or the larger site. All sources of light on the site are associated with existing surface mining and Cement Plant operations.

4.1.1.3 Viewer Types and Exposures

The Project Area is not publicly accessible and is separated from public open space, streets, and sidewalks by vegetated buffer areas and a relatively long stretch of private road. Stevens Creek Boulevard transitions to Permanente Road at the site boundary, and marks the beginning of private property. From there, the Project Area is accessible only via the Applicant's internal road network. However, the Project Area is clearly visible from vantages throughout Santa Clara Valley. The WMSA in particular is visible from middleground (0.5 mile to 2 miles), and background (beyond 2 miles) distances, given its elevated, eastern-facing hillside location. As stated above, Quarry lights in the WMSA are visible at night from as far away as Interstate 680.

Given the large geographic area from which the Project would be seen, public viewer groups and vantage points were established to provide a representative cross section of the how the public would perceive the affected landscape, including the most visually sensitive locations. Public viewer groups¹ and vantage points assessed in this section include:

- **Motorists along major and scenic roadways:** Interstate 280 (State Eligible Scenic Highway and County-designated State Scenic Route); State Route (SR) 85 and Foothill Boulevard/Expressway² (County Scenic Freeways, Expressways, Arterial, and Rural Routes); Montebello Road (County Local Road Needing Scenic Protection); and Stevens Creek Boulevard and De Anza Boulevard (major roadways in the study area);
- **Visitors to recreational areas:** Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve, Rancho San Antonio County Park, and Fremont Older Open Space Preserve; and
- **Designated scenic vistas:** Anza Knoll (Rancho San Antonio County Park), and Maisie's Peak (Fremont Older Open Space Preserve).

For each of the viewer groups identified in the study area, viewer exposure conditions were determined based on knowledge of the Project Area and site visits conducted April 14, 2010; September 3, 2010; September 1, 2011; and November 2, 2011 (ESA, 2010; ESA, 2011). Variables considered include the viewing distance, angle of view, the extent to which views are screened or open, and duration of view. Viewing distances are described according to whether the Project activities would be viewed within a foreground (within 0.5 mile or 2,640 feet), middleground, or background zone. Viewing angle and extent of visibility consider the relative location of the Project Area to the viewer and whether visibility conditions are open or panoramic, or limited by intervening vegetation, structures or terrain.

Duration of view pertains to the amount of time the Project Area or facilities typically would be seen from a sensitive viewpoint. In general, duration of view would be less in instances where the Project would be seen for short or intermittent periods (such as from major travel routes and recreation destination roads) and greater in instances where the Project would be seen regularly and repeatedly (such as from public use areas).

Motorists on Major or Scenic Travel Routes

As discussed above, scenic and major highways and routes in the study area include I-280, SR 85, Foothill Boulevard/Expressway, Montebello Road, Stevens Creek Boulevard and De Anza Boulevard. Traffic volumes are classified as low (less than 10,000 vehicle trips per day), moderate (10,000 to 20,000) and high (more than 20,000 vehicle trips per day), given the average traffic volumes in the vicinity of the Project.

¹ Private views are not evaluated in this document because, under CEQA, the question is whether the Project would affect the environment of persons in general, not whether it would affect particular persons. *Mira Mar Mobile Community v. City of Oceanside*, 119 Cal.App.4th 477, 492 (2004) ("neither state nor local law protects private views from private lands"). Although the Project Area is visible from private residences, such views are not considered public views.

² South of its intersection with I-280, the road is called Foothill Boulevard; north of its intersection with I-280, the road is called Foothill Expressway.

Interstate 280

I-280 is an important regional travel corridor within the study area, with eight-lanes running north-south to connect the cities of San Francisco and San Jose. As indicated in Figure 4.1-1, I-280 is an Eligible State Scenic Highway from SR 17 to the northwest border of the County, and a designated State Scenic Route in the County General Plan (DOT, 2011; County of Santa Clara, 2008). The character of I-280 in the vicinity of the Project is visually distinct; motorists are surrounded by scenic views of the Santa Cruz Mountains to the west, and views of cities to the east of I-280 are screened by intervening hills. The landscape is distinct and dominated by trees, vegetation and hillsides, though views become more representative as the highway travels through urban centers including the City of Cupertino.

The Project Area is located approximately 1 mile southwest of the closest segment of I-280, and would be viewed in middle to background distance. In the study area, traffic volumes are high, estimated at 123,000 to 141,000 vehicles per day (City of Cupertino, 2005). Given the hilly topography and prevalence of tall trees along I-280, views of the Project Area are generally fully screened from motorists' views. However, the Project Area is visible from segments of the highway, particularly for northbound traffic east of the I-280/SR 85 interchange. Figure 4.1-2a, Photo 1, shows the existing view of the Project Area taken from the Mary Avenue Bicycle Footbridge, which spans I-280, approximately 2 miles from the Project Area. This perspective is representative of views seen by motorists traveling north on I-280, looking southwest. As shown in the photo, views of the Project Area are moderated somewhat by the relatively long distance to the Project Area, and by other intervening visual features including highway overpasses, signage, landscaping, roads, and buildings. Views toward the site are dominated by natural features associated with vegetated hillsides and open space uses that surround the site. The industrial uses in the Project Area mark an interruption in vegetation, and the site is perceived as a patch of exposed rock amidst lush open space areas. Motorists' views would be of short to medium duration because they would be exposed partially screened views of the Project Area for short distances. Given the distinct visual quality of the area, the high number of viewers, short to moderate view duration, and distance from which the Project would be viewed, visual sensitivity of I-280 to the proposed changes is considered moderate.

State Route 85

SR 85 is a north-south highway connecting the cities of Mountain View and San Jose. From U.S. Highway 101 south to I-280, SR 85 is designated by the County General Plan as a Scenic Freeway, Expressway, Arterial or Rural Route (County of Santa Clara, 2008). In the vicinity of the Project, the highway is six lanes, and the visual character of the landscape is mixed, comprised of trees and hills in the background to the west, and residential and commercial developments in the fore and middleground to the east and west. Figure 4.1-2a, Photo 2 shows the view of a motorist looking northeast over SR 85 from the Bascom Avenue overpass in the City of Campbell, towards the Hwy 17 interchange (a non-scenic portion of the highway). Utility structures are an established feature along the highway, and highway on-and off-ramps are prominent along SR 85. The visual quality of the portion of SR 85 in the vicinity of the Project is representative of highway-oriented development in the County, with views of visually distinct hills in the background.

Traffic volumes along SR 85 in the study area are high, with an annual average daily traffic (ADT) level ranging from 99,000 to 123,000 vehicles per day (City of Cupertino, 2005). The Project Area is approximately 1.5 miles west of SR 85 at its closest location, and views from SR 85 would be within middleground and background ranges. Because of the orientation of the Project Area and intervening topography and structures, the Project Area (particularly the EMSA) is primarily visible to motorists heading northbound on SR 85. Figure 4.1-2a, Photo 3, shows the view from the perspective of a motorist traveling north on SR 85 near Quito Road, southeast of the Saratoga Avenue on-ramp, looking northwest. This location represents one of motorists' clearest views of the Project Area, although the location is not part of the designated scenic portion of highway. As shown in this photo, motorists have clear and unobstructed background views of the surface mining operations along the ridgeline. From this vantage point, the Project Area is viewed within the context of other mining-related structures and appears as patches of exposed rock partially covered with stockpiles of overburden deposits. The color of overburden materials appears as tan to grey in long-range views of the site and the contrast between overburden materials and the vegetated, gently sloped surrounding terrain is clearly discernible. Along SR 85 in general, views of the Project Area range from open and panoramic to fully obscured by the surrounding hilly terrain, curves in the road, and structures, depending on the motorist's location. View duration would be short to medium, depending on the length of time the motorist is on SR 85, the location of the motorist, and the speed with which the motorist is traveling. Given the representative to distinct visual quality of the road, the high number of viewers, the short to medium view duration and open visibility, overall viewer sensitivity is moderate to high for SR 85.

Foothill Boulevard/Expressway

Foothill Boulevard/Expressway is a County Scenic Freeway, Expressway, Arterial, and Rural Route that generally runs in a northwest/southeast direction north of I-280 (Foothill Expressway), and a north-south direction south of I-280 (Foothill Boulevard) (County of Santa Clara, 2008). The areas surrounding the four-lane road are flat to the east, and characterized by residential and commercial structures. To the west of the road, the surrounding areas range from flat to hilly, and are dominated by residential structures and associated buildings such as schools and churches, as well as landscaping including trees, shrubs and flowers. Views generally encompass a suburban, residential and commercial landscape. The visual quality of the area is representative of this portion of the County, punctuated by views of distinctive natural scenic amenities, including the Santa Cruz Mountains, to the west.

Foothill Boulevard is located directly east of the site and serves as a connecting road for vehicles traveling between the site and I-280. Views from Foothill Expressway are within middleground and background ranges. In the study area, traffic volumes range from low to moderate, estimated at 8,000 to 16,000 vehicles per day (City of Cupertino, 2005). Figure 4.1-2a, Photo 4 shows the view at the intersection of Foothill Expressway and South Springer Road in the City of Los Altos. The photo represents the perspective of a motorist at the traffic light on South Springer Avenue facing southwest, about to cross Foothill Expressway. As the photo shows, to see the Project Area from Foothill Expressway a motorist would have to turn his head to the southwest, and would only have brief glimpses of portions of the Project Area in an opening between mature stands of trees. Views of Project Area along Foothill Boulevard/Expressway would be fleeting and visible

while passing through intersections, with the driver's head turned west toward the Project Area. With the exception of intersection crossings, views are fully obscured by intervening topography. Given the representative and distinct visual quality of the area, the low to moderate number of viewers, short view duration, and low visibility, visual sensitivity to the changes proposed by the Project is considered low to moderate.

Stevens Creek Boulevard

Although not a designated scenic roadway, Stevens Creek Boulevard in the cities of Cupertino and Santa Clara is a major roadway in the study area.³ Stevens Creek Boulevard is located directly east of the site and serves as a main access point for vehicles traveling between the site and SR 85. The roadway runs east-west and ranges from a two-lane to an eight-lane arterial. Views along Stevens Creek Boulevard are dominated by the urban streetscape, low-rise commercial structures along each side of the boulevard, and a variety of landscaping, ranging from low-lying shrubs to 30-foot mature trees. The visual quality of Stevens Creek Boulevard is representative of the residential/commercial portion of the cities of Cupertino and Santa Clara.

Traffic volumes on Stevens Creek Boulevard in the study area range from moderate west of SR 85 (11,000 vehicles per day) to high east of SR 85 (29,000 vehicles per day) (City of Cupertino, 2005). The Project Area is west of the road, and views of the site would be within middleground and background ranges. Figure 4.1-2b, Photo 5 shows motorists' perspective traveling east on Stevens Creek Boulevard, just east of the SR 85 interchange, approximately 2 miles from the Project site. In this view, the vegetated foothills act as a scenic backdrop to the otherwise urban quality of the boulevard. The Project Area is viewed within the context of other mining-related structures and appears as patches of exposed rock partially covered with stockpiles of overburden deposits. The color of overburden materials appears as mostly grey in long-range views of the site and the contrast between overburden materials and the vegetated, gently sloped surrounding terrain is clearly discernible. However, views of the Project Area from the boulevard are moderated somewhat by the relatively long distance to the Project Area, and by other intervening visual features, including landscaping, roads, and buildings. Given the representative character of the road, the moderate to high number of viewers, the medium view duration and partially screened to open visibility, overall viewer sensitivity is moderate for Stevens Creek Boulevard.

De Anza Boulevard

De Anza Boulevard is a major roadway in the vicinity of the Project. South De Anza Boulevard traverses SR 85 in City of Campbell, approximately 3 miles southeast of the Project Area, and provides views of the Project Area from several intersections along the roadway. The roadway runs north-south and with six lanes near the SR 85 interchange. Views along De Anza Boulevard are dominated by the urban streetscape, consisting of low-rise commercial structures along each side of the boulevard including shopping centers, gas stations, and office buildings, and a variety of landscaping. The visual quality of De Anza Boulevard is representative of urban development in the County.

³ Stevens Creek Boulevard becomes Permanente Road west of Foothill Boulevard, near the Project site.

Traffic volumes on De Anza Boulevard in the study area are high, estimated at 25,000 to 48,000 vehicles per day (City of Cupertino, 2005). The Project Area is west/northwest of the roadway, and views of the area would be within background range. Figure 4.1-2b, Photo 6 shows motorists' perspective traveling north on De Anza Boulevard, stopped at traffic signal on the SR 85 overpass, approximately 3 miles from the Project Area. Given the orientation of the Project Area, a motorist would have to turn his head to the west to see the area. In this view and other views from De Anza Boulevard, the Project Area is viewed in the distance as patches of exposed rock partially covered with stockpiles of overburden deposits on the otherwise vegetated scenic foothills. However, views of the Project Area from De Anza Boulevard are generally partially to fully screened by intervening topography and buildings, and are moderated somewhat by the relatively long distance to the Project Area, and by other intervening visual features, including landscaping, roads, and commercial and residential buildings. Given the representative character of the road, the high number of viewers, the short view duration and partially to fully screened visibility, overall viewer sensitivity is low to moderate for De Anza Boulevard.

Montebello Road

Montebello Road, located south of the Project Area in an unincorporated area of the County, is designated as a County Local Road Needing Scenic Protection (see Figure 4.1-1) (County of Santa Clara, 2008). However, the Project Area is not visible from Montebello Road (County of Santa Clara, 2011c). As such, views from this road are not analyzed in this EIR.

Parks, Recreation Areas, and Scenic Vistas

Section 4.16, *Recreation*, provides a full list of parks and recreational areas near the Project Area. Views of the Project Area are visible from only a few of these areas, because of screening by intervening topography, structures, trees and other vegetation. Specifically, the following recreational areas provide views of the Project Area: Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve, Rancho San Antonio County Park, and Fremont Older Open Space Preserve.

Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve and County Park

The 3,988-acre Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve, managed by the MROSD, is located adjacent to north of the site boundary and a portion of the Project Area. The 165-acre Rancho San Antonio County Park, located adjacent to the eastern edge of the Open Space Preserve and approximately 0.25 mile north of the EMSA, is owned by Santa Clara County Parks and Recreation Department (SCCPRD) but is leased to and operated by MROSD. Because visitors to the Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve must park at the Rancho San Antonio County Park, and because trails are contiguous between the Preserve and the Park, the Rancho San Antonio Open Space Preserve and Park is discussed as one entity in this document (the RSA Preserve/Park). The RSA Preserve/Park provides 2,300 acres of hiking, bicycling and/or equestrian trails, as well as other recreational features. The RSA Preserve/Park is the most frequented preserve in the MROSD, with an estimated 491,000 annual visitors (Baldzikowski, 2011).

The RSA Preserve/Park provides views of the Project Area from many locations. Visitors first have a brief glimpse of the tip of the EMSA overburden deposit at the RSA Preserve/Park

entrance. As shown in Figure 4.1-2b, Photo 7, the overburden deposit is subordinate in the landscape and appears as a small brown ridge lacking vegetation, anterior to an oak-covered ridgeline. Visitors have more pronounced views of the Project Area while hiking the PG&E Trail and the Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail. The PG&E Trail is mostly situated on the north-facing slope of the hillside approximately 0.25 mile north of the Quarry surface mining operations areas, forming the northern property line of the site for most of the western portion of the property (SCCPRD, 2011). The visual quality of the PG&E Trail is distinct and exemplary of the region's natural scenic amenities, and the trail provides panoramic views of the San Francisco Bay, Santa Clara Valley, and surrounding mountains. Views of the Project Area from the PG&E Trail are predominantly fully screened by intervening topography and vegetation. However, partially screened views of the EMSA overburden deposit are visible from a short segment of the trail approximately 1.5 miles from its beginning, where the trail passes under a transmission line. Hikers on the trail do not directly face the Project Area, but can see the tip of the overburden deposit as a grey/brown ridge in the distance to the south, if scanning the horizon (Figure 4.12-b, Photo 8). Views are visible from a short stretch of trail (less than 0.25 mile); as such, duration of view would be short. Given the distinct visual quality, foreground viewing distance, fully to partially-screened landscape visibility, short duration of view and high number of viewers, the overall visual sensitivity of the viewshed is moderate.

Figure 4.1-2c, Photo 9, provides the view from Cristo Rey Drive in the City of Cupertino, adjacent to the Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail, approximately 1 mile northeast of the Project Area. The Project Area represents an industrial component in a generally distinct viewshed that also includes residential areas representative of the local suburban landscape. From this vantage point, the Project Area appears visually connected to the surrounding Quarry-related structures and only the upper elevations of overburden deposits are visible. The Project Area sits lower than the highest ridgeline and this somewhat tempers its prominence among the vegetated hillsides. The distinctive domes and towers of the Cement Plant are visible from this vantage point, including the preblend dome, the steel silos, the tertiary crusher, and the preheater/precalciner tower. Views of the Project Area are visible off and on during the approximate 3-mile Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail, though the location in Photo 9 represents one of the viewsheds with the clearest views of the Project Area. Given the distinct/representative/industrial visual quality of the site, the partially- to fully-screened views of the Project Area, the middleground viewing distance, the medium duration of view, and the high number of viewers, the overall visual sensitivity of the viewshed is high.

The Anza Knoll is a designated scenic vista off of the Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail, approximately 1 mile northeast of the Project Area. The Anza Knoll provides a bench overlooking the San Francisco Bay, Santa Clara Valley, and surrounding mountains. Views are scenic and distinct for visitors facing north (San Francisco Bay), east (Santa Clara Valley), and south (surrounding mountains). Views to the west are industrial, as the viewshed includes a large substation and clear views of Quarry operations. Specifically, as shown in Figure 4.1-2c, Photo 10, views of the distinctive domes and towers of the Cement Plant are clearly visible behind the bench, including the preblend dome, the steel silos, the tertiary crusher, and the preheater/precalciner tower. In the foreground, next to the Quarry is a large substation. So although the scenic vista includes open and panoramic views of the Project Area within the foreground, given the direction of the bench

and the informational placard facing east, the Project Area is not a part of what makes the designated vista scenic. Nevertheless, because of the distinct visual quality surrounding the vista, the fact that visitors would likely turn around and face the Project Area while visiting the vista, the high number of visitors, and short to medium view duration, visual sensitivity at Anza Knoll is considered moderate to high.

Fremont Older Open Space Preserve

The 793-acre Fremont Older Open Space Preserve (Fremont Older Preserve) is located approximately 1.5 miles south of the Project site. The Fremont Older Preserve includes 14.7 miles of hiking, equestrian, and bicycle trails, and connects to additional trails within the adjacent Stevens Creek County Park (MROSD, 2011). The Fremont Older Preserve receives over 164,000 visitors annually, and is the second-most highly frequented preserve in the MROSD (Baldzikowski, 2011).

Views of the Project Area are visible primarily from the Coyote Ridge Trail, a roughly 2.1 mile trail that traverses the Fremont Older Preserve in a north/south direction. The visual quality of the trail is generally distinctive, with intermittent views of industrial transmission towers and lines, and nearby residences. Views of the Project Area along the lower (northern) portion of the trail range from fully to partially-screened by intervening topography and trees. Figure 4.1-2c, Photo 11 shows a view of the Project Area approximately 0.5 mile from the northern trailhead within Fremont Older Preserve. As shown in Photo 11, the WSMA, Quarry pit, and Cement Plant all are visible in the viewshed background. Other features in the viewshed include the Stevens Creek Quarry in the middleground, a transmission line that runs over the trail in the foreground, and chaparral and oak-covered ridges in all directions. As the trail climbs steeply to Maisie's Peak, a designated scenic vista and the highest point in Fremont Older Preserve, the intermittent views of the Project Area become more open and panoramic. Figure 4.1-2c, Photo 12 shows the view from Maisie's Peak. The Project Area is clearly visible, including the WMSA, the Quarry pit, a small portion of the ESMA, as well as the roads within the Quarry and the Cement Plant. However, given the 360-degree sweeping view afforded from Maisie's Peak, the Project Area is a small feature in a wide and stunning viewshed. From Maisie's Peak and other locations on the Coyote Ridge Trail, views also include the Mount Hamilton and Diablo Ranges, the San Francisco Bay, East Bay cities as far north as Berkeley, the Santa Clara Valley, Monte Bello and Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserves, the Stevens Creek Quarry, several transmission lines, and nearby residences (ESA, 2011). Duration of view is short for visitors to Maisie's Peak, but medium for hikers on the Coyote Ridge Trail. Trail users primarily have their backs to the Project Area while ascending the trail, and have views of the Project Area off and on for the roughly 2.1 mile descent. Given Fremont Older Preserve's distinct visual quality, fully screened to open and panoramic visibility, medium view duration, and high number of viewers, visual sensitivity within this viewshed is high.

Table 4.1-1 summarizes the visual sensitivity findings of major travel routes, scenic travel routes, recreational areas, and designated scenic vistas from which the Project Area is visible.

**TABLE 4.1-1
SUMMARY OF VISUAL SENSITIVITY FINDINGS
VIEWER TYPES, VISUAL EXPOSURES, AND VISUAL QUALITY**

Viewer Type/Location	Visual Quality	Viewer Exposure and Volumes	Visual Sensitivity
Motorists			
Interstate 280	Distinct	Partially to Fully Obstructed Views in Middleground and Background High Number of Viewers Short to Medium View Duration	Moderate
SR 85	Distinct/ Representative	Open and Panoramic to Fully Obstructed Views in Middleground and Background High Number of Viewers Short to Medium View Duration	Moderate to High
Foothill Boulevard/ Expressway	Distinct/ Representative	Partially to Fully Obstructed Views in Middleground and Background Low to Moderate Number of Viewers Short View Duration	Low to Moderate
Stevens Creek Boulevard	Representative	Open to Fully Obstructed Views in Middleground and Background Moderate to High Number of Viewers Medium View Duration	Moderate
De Anza Boulevard	Representative	Partially to Fully Obstructed Views in Background High Number of Viewers Short View Duration	Low to Moderate
Montebello Road	Distinct	Fully Obstructed Views in Background Low Number of Viewers No View Duration	None
Recreational Areas			
RSA Preserve/Park, PG&E Trail	Distinct	Partially to Fully Obstructed Views in Foreground High Number of Viewers Short View Duration	Moderate
RSA Preserve/Park, Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail (Cristo Rey Drive)	Distinct/ Representative/ Industrial	Partially to Fully Obstructed Views in Middleground High Number of Viewers Medium View Duration	High
Fremont Older Preserve, Coyote Ridge Trail	Distinct	Open and Panoramic to Fully Obstructed Views in Background High Number of Viewers Medium View Duration	High
Scenic Vistas			
RSA Preserve/Park, Anza Knoll	Distinct/ Industrial	Open and Panoramic Views in Middleground High Number of Viewers Short View Duration	Moderate to High
Fremont Older Preserve, Maisie's Peak	Distinct	Open and Panoramic Views in Background High Number of Viewers Short View Duration	High

4.1.1.4 Regulatory Setting

State of California

California Scenic Highway Program

In 1963, the California legislature created the Scenic Highway Program to protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands next to the highways. The state statutes governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, §260 et seq. A highway may be designated as “scenic” depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon travelers’ enjoyment of the view. New visual intrusions in views from State Eligible Scenic Highways could impact their future designation as Scenic Highways.

There is one state scenic highway in the study area; as discussed in Section 4.1.1.3, I-280 is an Eligible State Scenic Highway from SR 17 to the northwest border of the County (DOT, 2011). From the Santa Clara-San Mateo County line north to San Bruno, I-280 is an Officially Designated Scenic State Highway.

County of Santa Clara

General Plan

The County General Plan, initially adopted in 1994 and amended in August 2010, is a comprehensive, long-term plan for the physical development within the County. As discussed above in Section 4.1.1.3, *Viewer Types and Exposures*, the General Plan designates many scenic resources in the County, including roads and highways. In its Regional Parks and Scenic Highways map (County of Santa Clara, 2008), the County General Plan designates Highway 85, Foothill Expressway (north of I-280), and Stevens Canyon Road (south of Stevens Creek Boulevard) as “Scenic Freeways, Expressways, Arterial and Rural Routes.” These roads are generally to the west, northwest, and southwest of the Project Area and are publicly accessible. Montebello Road, south of the Project Area, is designated as a “Local Road Needing Scenic Protection” and is also publicly accessible. All of the aforementioned roads are within approximately 2 miles of the Project Area. Scenic roadways in the Project vicinity are shown in Figure 4.1-1.

The General Plan also identifies the West Valley Hillsides Preservation Area (the foothills of the Santa Cruz Mountains), within which the Project Area is located. The West Valley Hillsides Joint Planning Review, a collaborative effort of the cities of Cupertino, Monte Sereno, Saratoga, Los Gatos and the County, has developed joint land use principles and objectives to minimize the visual impacts of hillside development and to provide mechanisms for resolution of future hillside land use issues. The primary purpose of this Special Area Policy within the County General Plan is to limit the expansion of urban development into hillside areas. However, the following policies are applicable to the Project:

West Valley Hillsides Preservation Area

Policy R-LU 197: The natural beauty of the West Valley hillsides area should be maintained for its contribution to the overall quality of life of current and future generations.

Policy R-LU 199: New land uses within the West Valley hillsides area should be limited to non-urban uses that are compatible with the preservation of the natural appearance of the hillsides.

Policy R-LU 201: The West Valley cities and the County should work cooperatively to maintain the natural appearance of the West Valley hillsides and should establish procedures for resolving inter-jurisdictional land use issues that may arise in this area.

The General Plan contains additional goals and policies that are applicable to all development projects in the unincorporated areas of the County. The Countywide and Rural Unincorporated Areas chapters of the General Plan contain various policies associated with visual quality, which are pertinent to the Project (County of Santa Clara, 1994):

Growth and Development Chapter

Policy R-GD 17: Design Review Zoning Districts, including Design Review Guidelines, shall apply to primary viewshed areas most immediately and directly visible from the valley floor, lands up to and including the first ridge, or those within approximately one to two miles distance from the edge of the valley floor.

Policy R-GD 31: Ridgelines and ridge areas have special significance for both public policy and private interests. Ridgeline and hillside development that creates a major negative visual impact from the valley floor should be avoided or mitigated, particularly for those areas most immediately visible from the valley floor. Ridgeline development policy should also take into account the need to allow reasonable use and development of private land.

Land Use Chapter

Policy R-LU 16: Hillsides: Mountainous lands and foothills unsuitable and/or unplanned for annexation and urban development. Lands so designated shall be preserved largely in natural resource related and open space uses in order to:

- a. support and enhance rural character;
- b. protect and promote wise management of natural resources;
- c. avoid risks associated with the natural hazards characteristic of those areas; and
- d. protect the quality of reservoir watersheds critical to the region's water supply.

Policy R-LU 17: These lands also contain such important resources as grazing lands, mineral deposits, forests, wildlife habitat, rare or locally unique plant and animal communities, historic and archeological sites, and recreational and scenic areas of regional importance, which serve to define the setting for the urbanized portions of the County. Given the importance of these lands to the County's overall quality of life, allowable uses shall be consistent with the conservation and wise use of these resources and levels of development shall be limited to avoid increased demand for public services and facilities.

Parks and Recreation Chapter

Policy R-PR 39: The natural scenery which exists along many of the County's highways should be protected from land uses and other activities which would diminish its aesthetic qualities.

Resource Conservation Chapter

Policy R-RC 98: Hillsides, ridgelines, scenic transportation corridors, major County entryways, stream environments, and other areas designated as being of special scenic significance should receive utmost consideration and protection due to their prominence, visibility, and overall contribution to the quality of life in the County.

Policy R-RC 102: Structures on ridgelines must be located, constructed or landscaped so that they do not create a major negative visual impact from the Valley floor. Land should be divided in such a way that building sites, if possible, are not located on ridgelines.

Policy R-RC 103: Development in rural areas should be landscaped with fire resistant and/or native plants which are ecologically compatible with the area.

The Project would be consistent with these policies.

Zoning Ordinance

The Project Area is within the Design Review Combining District, Santa Clara Valley Viewshed (d1). As stated in §3.20.040 of the County Code, "the -d1 combining district is intended to conserve the scenic attributes of those hillside lands most immediately visible from the valley floor. It is intended to minimize the visual impacts of structures and grading on the natural topography and landscape, using a combination of supplemental development standards, design guidelines, design review, and use of process incentives for smaller and less visible projects." Development standards and procedures use a tiered regulatory structure based primarily on building size: the "-d1" district applies to construction or modification of buildings, such as residences and accessory structures. Because the Project is a modification of an existing reclamation plan, and because no new buildings are proposed, the guidelines associated with the "-d1" district would not apply to the Project.

Surface Mining and Land Reclamation Standards

The County Surface Mining and Land Reclamation Standards (Standards) were approved by the Board of Supervisors (BOS) on March 20, 1993 (and revised by the BOS on August 29, 2000) in order to comply with and implement the provisions of the State Surface Mining and Reclamation Act of 1975 (SMARA) (Public Resources Code §2710 *et seq.*) as amended, and the Public Resources Code sections by adopting procedures for reviewing, approving, and/or permitting surface mining operations, reclamation plans, and financial assurances in the unincorporated areas of the County (County of Santa Clara, 2000). The Standards set forth the general procedural, operational, and reclamation requirements that must be complied with, where applicable, by aggregate mining and production operations in the County. With regard to visual quality, the following sections are applicable to the Project:

Section 11: Standards for Land Reclamation

- b. **Staging.** Reclamation may be done in stages compatible with continuing operations, or on completion of all excavation, removal, or fill as approved by the Planning Commission. Reclamation may be in the form of preparation for use of the land for agricultural, residential, commercial, industrial, or open space and recreational use; or other appropriate use of the property.

- h. **Replanting.** Within six months, or a time period as approved by the Planning Commission, after surfaces have been graded to their final contours suitable measures shall be taken to establish vegetation capable of stabilizing the soil on areas where revegetation is possible and rock is not exposed. The vegetation types shall be approved by the Planning Commission and shall be cared for by the applicant until the soil is adequately stabilized to withstand the elements without erosion. When necessary provisions for irrigation shall be made.
 - (1) When quarrying progresses in stages of a series of benches, the Planning Commission may require each bench or group of benches to be landscaped when the excavation is completed on that particular bench or benches.
 - (2) Vegetation. Permittee shall make use of available research regarding vegetation methods and the selection of species having good survival characteristics for the topography, resoiling characteristics, and climate of this area. Native species are recommended wherever practicable. Reclamation plans may also include development of screens and roadside plantings at mines currently in operation, where such screens and plantings are practicable and desirable.

- i. **Removal of Structures, Equipment and Stockpiles.** All structures, equipment, and stockpiles, except required fences, shall be entirely removed from excavations within six (6) months after termination of operations, or such other time as determined by the Planning Commission. Within the same period, individual sewage disposal systems shall be removed in accordance with the recommendations of the County Environmental Health Services.

4.1.2 Baseline

The overall baseline date for this EIR is June 2007, the date of the County's Notice of Preparation of an EIR to evaluate potential environmental effects of the Applicant's first application to amend the approved 1985 Reclamation Plan. Documentation establishes that, by 2007, some materials storage already had occurred in the EMSA (OMR, 2006; County of Santa Clara, 2006, 2007).

4.1.2.1 Project Area Except the EMSA

The County and the EIR preparers have reviewed the available setting photographs against the land use patterns surrounding the Project and have concluded that views of the Project Area (except for the EMSA) as viewed from major and scenic roadways and other public vantage points did not change considerably between 2007 and 2010, or between 2010 and 2011. For non-EMSA Project Areas, setting photographs are available from 2008 (**Figure 4.1-3**, Photo 7), 2010 and 2011 (Figures 4.1-2a, 4.1-2b, and 4.1-2c). Figure 4.1-3, Photo 7, provides a view of the Project Area taken from Stevens Creek Boulevard just west of the SR 85 interchange (at the U.S. Post Office parking lot), in 2008. This photo can be compared to Figure 4.1-2b, Photo 5,



Photo 1: Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail near Cristo Rey Drive in 2007



Photo 2: Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail near Cristo Rey Drive in 2007

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Photo 3: Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail near Cristo Rey Drive in 2008



Photo 4: Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail near Cristo Rey Drive in 2008

SOURCE: County of Santa Clara, 2011b

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Figure 4.1-3a
Baseline Photos



Photo 5: Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail near Cristo Rey Drive in 2008



Photo 6: Interstate 280 west of State Route 85 interchange in 2007



Photo 7: Stevens Creek Boulevard west of State Route 85 interchange in 2008

4.1-22

which shows a view from Stevens Creek Boulevard taken in 2010, just east of the SR 85 interchange. The photo in Figure 4.1-3, Photo 7 is significantly more focused in on the Project Area than Figure 4.1-2b, Photo 5, which amplifies the perceived visual prominence of the Project Area. However, a close analysis of Figure 4.1-2b, Photo 5 shows that the Project Area, as perceived from this viewpoint, is visually unchanged between 2008 and 2010. Consequently, with the exception of the EMSA, the available setting photographs adequately represent visual conditions substantially similar to what would have been observed in June 2007. For this reason, the 2010 and 2011 photographs are relied upon in this EIR as the baseline for analysis of all components of the Project other than the EMSA.

4.1.2.2 The EMSA

For purposes of evaluating aesthetic impacts related to the proposed reclamation of the EMSA, although the setting photographs referenced in Section 4.1.1.3 (Figures 4.1-2a, 4.1-2b, and 4.1-2c) were taken in 2010 and 2011, the analytical baseline takes into consideration photographs taken in 2007 and 2008 (County of Santa Clara, 2011b). Figure 4.1-3 provides photographs of views of the EMSA taken from or near Cristo Rey Drive at the Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail in 2007 and 2008 (Photos 1 through 5), and a view from I-280 east of the SR 85 interchange in 2007 (Photo 6). To account for visual changes that occurred in the EMSA between 2007 and 2010, this analysis contrasts Figure 4.1-3, Photos 1 through 5, with Figure 4.1-2b, Photo 9, which shows a similar viewpoint in 2010. The analysis also contrasts Figure 4.1-3, Photo 6, with Figure 4.1-2a, Photo 1. As shown in the comparisons, in 2007 the height of the EMSA overburden pile appears to be slightly lower than in 2010, resulting in an increased visibility of some industrial Quarry structures, including Cement Plant conveyor belts. Overall, Figure 4.1-3, Photos 1 through 6, in conjunction with the setting photos taken in 2010 and 2011, accurately depict the physical environmental condition that would be subject to change as a result of the Project or alternatives. Given the availability of data at the time visual simulations were created, the setting photographs used to create simulated post-Project conditions were taken in 2010 and 2011; however, this analysis of potential impacts of the Project compares simulated post-Project conditions to the baseline conditions captured in the 2007 and 2008 setting photographs.

4.1.2.3 Other Areas to be Reclaimed

Other areas now proposed for reclamation as part of the Project (including, for example, the Quarry pit, onsite private roadways, the surge pile, structures and facilities in the Rock Plant, Exploration Area and PCRA) would not have been visible in 2007 from the viewpoints described above for the same reasons of topography and public inaccessibility that they are not currently visible from those locations.

4.1.3 Significance Criteria

Consistent with County of Santa Clara Environmental Checklist and Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the Project would have a significant impact if it would:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;

- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings;
- d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area;
- e) If subject to Architecture and Site Approval (ASA), be generally in non-compliance with the Guidelines for ASA; or
- f) If within a Design Review Zoning District for purposes of viewshed protection (d, -d1, -d2), conflict with applicable General Plan policies or Zoning Ordinance provisions.

4.1.3.1 Definition and Use of Significance Criteria

The determination of impact significance is based on combined factors of visual sensitivity and the degree of adverse visual change that the Project would cause. In this context, an adverse impact to visual/aesthetic resources may occur when: (1) an action perceptibly changes the existing physical features of the landscape that are characteristic of the region or locale; (2) an action introduces new features to the physical landscape that are perceptibly uncharacteristic of the region or locale, or become visually dominant in the viewshed; or (3) an action blocks or totally obscures aesthetic features of the landscape. Determining the significance of visual changes in the landscape depends on how noticeable the Project features would be from different views, and varying viewing conditions (angle of view, distance, and primary viewing directions) from which the Project could be seen. The primary elements in determining the significance of overall visual change caused by the Project are visual contrast, Project dominance, and view blockage, as discussed below.

Visual Contrast

Visual contrast is a measure of the degree of change in line, form, color, and texture that the Project would create, when compared to the existing landscape. Visual contrast ranges from none to strong, and is defined as:

- ***None*** – The contrast between Project elements and the existing landscape is not visible or perceived.
- ***Weak*** – The element contrast can be seen but does not attract attention.
- ***Moderate*** – The Project elements begin to attract attention, but are not so strong that they could dominate the characteristic landscape.
- ***Strong*** – The element contrast demands the viewer's attention and cannot be overlooked.

Project Dominance

Visual dominance is a measure of a project feature's apparent size relative to other visible landscape features in the viewshed, or seen area. A feature's dominance is affected by its relative location in the viewshed and the distance between the viewer and feature. The levels of visual dominance are:

- **Subordinate** – Where the new feature(s) would be visible, but would not be the primary object(s) in the view;
- **Co-dominant** – Where the new feature(s) share the viewers attention with other existing features in the view; and
- **Dominant** – Where the new feature(s) demand the viewer’s attention over existing features of the view.

View Blockage or Impairment

View blockage or impairment is a measure of the degree to which a project’s features would obstruct or block views to aesthetic features due to the project’s position and/or scale. Blockage of aesthetically pleasing landscape features or views can cause adverse impacts, particularly in instances where scenic or view orientations are important to the use, value or function of a particular land use.

Overall Adverse Visual Impact

As stated above, the determination of impact significance is based on combined factors of visual sensitivity and the degree of visual change that the Project would cause. The inter-relationship of these two overall factors in determining whether adverse visual impacts are significant is shown in **Table 4.1-2**. For reference, visual sensitivities are identified in Table 4.1-1 and the Overall Degree of Visual Change is addressed in the impact discussions in Section 4.1.5.

**TABLE 4.1-2
 GUIDELINES FOR DETERMINING ADVERSE VISUAL IMPACT SIGNIFICANCE**

Overall Visual Sensitivity	Overall Degree of Visual Change				
	Low	Low to Moderate	Moderate	Moderate to High	High
Low	Not Significant	Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant
Low to Moderate	Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant
Moderate	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant
Moderate to High	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Significant
High	Adverse, but Not Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Adverse and Potentially Significant	Significant	Significant

Not Significant impacts may or may not be perceptible and are considered minor in the context of existing landscape characteristics and view opportunity.

Adverse, but Not Significant Impacts are perceived as negative but would not substantially alter the landscape to a degree that would conflict with significance criteria.

Adverse and Potentially Significant Impacts are perceived as negative and may, depending on Project- and site-specific circumstances, substantially alter the landscape to a degree that would conflict with significance criteria.

Significant impacts with feasible mitigation may be reduced to less than significant levels or avoided altogether. Without mitigation or avoidance measures, significant impacts would conflict with significance criteria.

4.1.3.2 Visual Simulations

Visual simulations, presented as part of this aesthetic analysis, illustrate representative “before” and “after” visual conditions in the Project Area and surrounding environs. In the text below, the evaluation of potential impacts associated with the Project is based, in part, on comparing the “before” and “after” visual conditions as portrayed in the set of simulations and assessing the degree of visual change that the Project would bring about. The significance determination is based on the evaluation criteria described above.

The simulations presented in this section illustrate the location, scale, and conceptual appearance of the Project as seen from three key viewing locations. The set of images shows views of the Project Area from various local major and/or scenic roadways. Figure 4.1-1 depicts the simulation photo viewpoint locations for the visual simulations in **Figures 4.1-4a through 4.1-7c**.

The visual simulations of the Project portray representative public views. The simulation vantage points are as follows:

1. View from Mary Avenue Bicycle Footbridge spanning I-280 looking west (Figures 4.1-4a, b, and c)
2. View from SR 85 near Quito Road, southeast of the Saratoga Avenue on-ramp, looking northwest (Figures 4.1-5a, b, and c)
3. View from Stevens Creek Boulevard at SR 85 looking west (Figures 4.1-6a, b, and c)
4. View from Cristo Rey Drive at Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail looking southwest (Figures 4.1-7a, b, and c)

These visual simulations are presented in color, two images per page. For all figures the top photo portrays the existing visual condition photograph, and the bottom photo shows the visual simulation. The existing visual condition image for Figures 4.1-4 and 4.1-7 were photographed in July 2010, and the existing visual condition images for Figures 4.1-5 and 4.1-6 were photographed in September 2011⁴. All photographs were taken using a digital single lens reflex (SLR) camera. All of the images use a 50 mm lens which represents a horizontal view angle of approximately 40 degrees, which is the “normal” field of view for the average human observer (Environmental Vision, 2011b).

Figures 4.1-4a and 4.1-7a show simulations of the EMSA (the only portion of the Project Area visible from the represented viewpoints) at the completion of Phase 1, which represents the end of Project construction within the EMSA. Figures 4.1-4b and 4.1-7b show simulations of the EMSA 5 years after the completion of Phase 1, and Figures 4.1-4c and 4.1-7c show simulations of the EMSA 20 years after the completion of Phase 1, both considered the long-term (i.e. permanent) visual conditions associated with the maintenance phase of the Project.

⁴ See Section 4.1.3 for a discussion of development of the baseline used in this analysis. Analyses of impacts to views of the EMSA take into consideration the setting photo used in Figures 4.1-4 and 4.1-7 (taken in 2010), as well as the baseline setting photos in Figure 4.1-3 (taken in 2007 and 2008). Analyses of impacts to views of the



Existing view from Mary Avenue Bicycle Footbridge looking southwest over Interstate-280



Visual Simulation of Project site at completion of Phase 1 (i.e., the completion of construction in the EMSA)

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2010

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Figure 4.1-4a

Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from Mary Avenue Bicycle Footbridge looking southwest over Interstate-280



Visual Simulation of Project site five years after completion of Phase 1 (i.e., five years after the completion of construction in the EMSA)

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2010

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Figure 4.1-4b
Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from Mary Avenue Bicycle Footbridge looking southwest over Interstate-280



Visual Simulation of Project site 20 years after completion of Phase 1 (i.e., 20 years after the completion of construction in the EMSA)

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2010

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Figure 4.1-4c
Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from northbound State Route 85 near Quito Road, southeast of the Saratoga Avenue on-ramp, looking northwest



Visual Simulation of Project site at completion of Phase 2

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011a

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Figure 4.1-5a
Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from northbound State Route 85 near Quito Road, southeast of the Saratoga Avenue on-ramp, looking northwest



Visual Simulation of Project site at completion of Phase 3

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011a

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Figure 4.1-5b

Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from northbound State Route 85 near Quito Road, southeast of the Saratoga Avenue on-ramp, looking northwest



Visual Simulation of Project site 20 years after completion of Phase 3

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011a

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Figure 4.1-5c
Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard, just east of the State Route 85 interchange, looking west



Visual Simulation of Project site at completion of Phase 2

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011a

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Figure 4.1-6a

Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard, just east of the State Route 85 interchange, looking west



Visual Simulation of Project site at completion of Phase 3

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011a

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Figure 4.1-6b

Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from westbound Stevens Creek Boulevard, just east of the State Route 85 interchange, looking west



Visual Simulation of Project site 20 years after completion of Phase 3

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2011a

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Figure 4.1-6c
Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from Cristo Rey Drive at Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail looking southwest



Visual Simulation of Project site at completion of Phase 1 (i.e., the completion of construction in the EMSA)

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2010

Lehigh Permanente Quarry Reclamation Plan . 211742

Figure 4.1-7a

Existing and Visual Simulation Photos



Existing view from Cristo Rey Drive at Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail looking southwest



Visual Simulation of Project site five years after completion of Phase 1 (i.e., five years after the completion of construction in the EMSA)

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2010



Existing view from Cristo Rey Drive at Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail looking southwest



Visual Simulation of Project site 20 years after completion of Phase 1 (i.e., 20 years after the completion of construction in the EMSA)

SOURCE: Environmental Vision, 2010

Figures 4.1-5a and 4.1-6a show simulations of the Project at the completion of Phase 2 (i.e., during construction); Figures 4.1-5b and 4.1-6b show simulations of the Project at the completion of Phase 3 (i.e., when the performance standards for revegetation have been achieved); and Figures 4.1-5c and 4.1-6c show a simulation of the Project 20 years after the completion of Phase 3 (i.e., during Project maintenance).

4.1.4 Discussion of Criteria with No Impact to Visual Resources

As explained in this section, the Project would cause no impact related to criteria e) and f). By contrast, it could cause an impact related to criteria a) through d), each of which is analyzed in Section 4.1.5 below.

e) The Project would be generally in compliance with the Guidelines for ASA.

ASA typically is required for commercial, institutional, office, industrial, and multiple-family residential uses. The procedure commonly augments the use permit process to establish detailed conditions on approved developments (County of Santa Clara, 2011). This criterion applies to the construction or major modification of buildings and developments. Because the Project is a modification of an existing reclamation plan, and because no buildings are proposed, these criteria would not apply to the Project, and there would be no impact.

f) Although located within a Design Review Zoning District, the Project would not conflict with applicable General Plan policies or Zoning Ordinance provisions.

This criterion applies to the construction or major modification of buildings and structures. The Project does not propose to construct any buildings. The Project does propose one structure, a conveyor; however, the conveyor would not be subject to d1 regulations. The County Zoning Ordinance §3.20.030 states, “Development within areas zoned “-d” shall be subject to the provisions of Chapter 5.50: Design Review.” The purpose of Chapter 5.50 is “to assure quality residential development in areas deemed visually sensitive.” Moreover, §3.20.040(A) states, “Development standards and procedures shall utilize a tiered regulatory structure based primarily on building size....” The conveyors are not “buildings” (as defined in County Code Chapter 1.30) nor are they a residential development. Because the d1 regulations would not be applicable to the Project, there would be no impact.

4.1.5 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Temporary (i.e., limited to the period of time when active reclamation activities are occurring) construction-related impacts to visual quality would result from the presence of construction equipment, materials, and work crews within the Project Area, increased levels of dust, and from temporary changes to the visual quality of the site through the alteration of topography and landscaping. Project implementation would occur in three phases over approximately 20 years: Phase 1 (2011-2020), Phase 2 (2021-2025), and Phase 3 (2026-2030). Monitoring and maintenance-related (i.e., long-term) impacts to visual quality would occur after the vegetation planted as part of

the Project became established within the viewshed. See Chapter 2, *Project Description*, for descriptions of processes and activities that would be engaged in to accomplish reclamation of each of the Project components, and descriptions of success criteria for reclamation.

a) Would the Project have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Impact 4.1-1: Construction of the Project would have a substantially adverse effect on a scenic vista during an interim period. (*Significant and Unavoidable Impact*)

As discussed in the Setting, there are two designated scenic vistas with views of the Project Area: Maisie's Peak in Fremont Older Preserve, and Anza Knoll in the RSA Preserve/Park.

Maisie's Peak offers 360-degree scenic views that include the Project Area approximately 3 miles to the northwest (Figure 4.1-2c, Photo 12). Given the distance of the Project and the myriad other features that dominate the landscape (i.e., the Mount Hamilton and Diablo Ranges, the San Francisco Bay, east bay cities as far north as Berkeley, the Santa Clara Valley, Monte Bello and Picchetti Ranch Open Space Preserves, the Stevens Creek Quarry, several transmission lines, and nearby residences), the Project Area is a small feature in the viewshed, and construction activities would be generally imperceptible to visitors to the scenic vista. As such, there would be no visual contrast. The Project would not dominate the landscape, and would be subordinate to other features in the viewshed. In addition, construction would not block or obstruct scenic views from Maisie's Peak. The perceived overall visual change from construction activities to visitors at Maisie's Peak would be low. Despite the high visual sensitivity of Maisie's Peak, the overall impact to this scenic vista would be adverse but less than significant.

The Anza Knoll scenic vista looks north, east, and south, facing away from the Project Area. However, visitors to the Anza Knoll would face the Project Area while ascending the trail to the knoll, and would likely turn around and face the Project Area while visiting the knoll, given that the knoll is located atop a hillside and provides 360-degree panoramic views. Project contrast at this location would be strong: given the close proximity of the Project Area (approximately 1 mile to the southwest of the vista), and the strong industrial quality of the Project Area in a generally distinct viewshed (see Figure 4.1-2c, Photo 10), Project construction would demand the viewer's attention and could not be overlooked. (Although there is not a visual simulation showing viewers' perspective from Anza Knoll, Figure 4.1-7a shows a simulation of the Project site at the completion of construction from the Hammond-Snyder Loop, which leads to the Anza Knoll. Viewers at the Anza Knoll would have a less obscured, closer, and more panoramic view of the Project site than is portrayed in Figure 4.1-7a.) Despite the abundance of other elements in the 360-degree view afforded by the vista, the presence of construction equipment and activity would dominate or co-dominate the viewshed. Furthermore, during the establishment of vegetation on the site, the EMSA initially would be grey in color, and then yellow after hydroseeding. This would contrast with the oak woodland and chaparral in the background, which is predominantly green. Because the Project Area would be behind viewers appreciating the vista, construction would not block or obstruct views of the scenic features in the viewshed. Construction activities would also not block views of the scenic ridgeline behind the EMSA, as the EMSA would not rise high enough to impact such views. Nevertheless, during construction of

the overburden area and prior to the establishment of vegetation (approximately 10 years), the overall visual change at the Anza Knoll would be moderate to high. Given the moderate to high visual sensitivity of the Anza Knoll, per Table 4.1-2 impacts to this scenic vista would be adverse and potentially significant.

Mitigation: None feasible. Because of the large size of the Project Area and its geographic relation to the scenic vista on the hillside, it would be impossible to screen views of the Project Area. Artificial screening such as fencing would be incapable of obscuring views of the large Project Area, given the viewers' elevated perspective. A more aggressive planting plan to establish mature vegetation (e.g., oak trees, other evergreens) immediately on the EMSA would reduce visual contrast between initial planting, hydroseeding, and eventual maturation under the normal revegetation plan; however, mature trees could not be planted on the intervening slopes, only the benches. Furthermore, such an aggressive planting plan would not address visual contrast that would exist during construction of the overburden pile, particularly the dominant presence of construction equipment and activity.

Significance after Mitigation: Significant and Unavoidable.

Impact 4.1-2: Monitoring and Maintenance of the Project would not have a substantially adverse long term effect on a scenic vista. (*Less than Significant Impact*)

For visitors to Anza Knoll and Maisie's Peak, monitoring and maintenance activities in the Project Area would be perceived as an increase in mature vegetated open space. From Anza Knoll, the EMSA overburden stockpile would be transformed from a grey/brown mass to a downward sloping hillside covered with native vegetation and generally consistent with the surrounding natural topography. From Maisie's Peak, the EMSA, WMSA, and Quarry pit all would be transformed such that formerly industrial areas comprised of patches of exposed rock partially covered with grey stockpiles of overburden deposits would appear largely natural and scenic, and the scenic views of the foothills would appear relatively undisturbed. Monitoring and maintenance of revegetation efforts would continue until reclamation is certified as complete. From both scenic vistas, the change in the Project Area would be seen and could begin to attract attention, resulting in a weak to moderate, but positive, visual contrast. However, the Project would not dominate the landscape. On the contrary, the Project would substantially diminish the presence of the Project Area as the site would visually blend with the surrounding natural landscape, adding to the scenic nature of the viewshed and decreasing the presence of industrial components in a distinct viewshed. In neither location would the increased height of the EMSA be sufficient to block views of surrounding scenic mountains. The overall degree of visual impact would be moderate, and positive in comparison with existing conditions. As such, long-term impacts associated with monitoring and maintenance of the Project would be less than significant.

b) Would the Project substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

As indicated above in the discussion of the Project's visual setting, I-280 is a State Eligible Scenic Highway with views of the Project Area. Furthermore, there are numerous County-designated scenic highways and routes in the vicinity of the Project Area, including SR 85 and Foothill Boulevard/Expressway. The following viewpoint analysis assesses the impacts from the Project Area to views from these eligible and designated scenic highways and routes. Impacts from non-scenic roadways are assessed below under Impacts 4.1-4 and 4.1-5.

Impact 4.1-3: Construction of the Project would substantially damage scenic resources within a state- or County-designated scenic highway or route during the period of time when active reclamation activities are occurring. (*Significant and Unavoidable Impact*)**Views from I-280**

As discussed above, Figure 4.1-4a shows a simulation of the EMSA (the only portion of the Project Area visible from the Mary Avenue Bicycle Footbridge) at the completion of Phase 1, which represents completion of Project construction within this portion of the Project Area. Motorists traveling on I-280 would have a similar view of the Project Area as shown in the simulation, from a slightly lower elevation as they would be under the footbridge. For motorists on I-280, the re-contoured hillsides during construction would result in a moderate visual contrast in that the Project elements begin to attract attention and begin to dominate the characteristic landscape. The changes to the visual character of the site itself would include, during construction of the EMSA, an increased prominence and extent of disturbed areas, and the creation of a new, distinctly unnatural landform. As shown in Figure 4.1-4a, Project construction would result in areas of graded overburden extending above the height of some of the intervening vegetation and structures. This would be particularly noticeable immediately following the completion of construction but before the vegetation has time to establish and mature. The overburden, predominantly grey in color, would contrast with the surrounding natural features and could be perceived as continuation of the mining-related industrial uses to the west and south. This would not be considered a significant impact to the visual character of the site itself, since the visual quality of the site is already poor. However, development of the EMSA would alter and further disrupt the overall visual character of the West Valley hillsides area, and further degrade this important visual resource. The changes would be incremental and would gradually intensify as overburden material is deposited and graded on the site, and then would gradually diminish as reclamation is completed and vegetation becomes established. Nevertheless, during the several years of Project construction, and for several more years after completion of the fill structure and before establishment and maturation of vegetation, construction activities would result in a moderate to high degree of visual change for motorists on I-280. In conjunction with I-280's moderate visual sensitivity, temporary impacts to scenic views from this scenic roadway resulting from construction activities would be adverse and significant.

Mitigation: No feasible mitigation measures have been identified to reduce the significance of this impact. Artificial screening such as fencing would be incapable of obscuring views of the Project Area, because of the extensive height of the EMSA. A more aggressive planting plan to establish mature vegetation (e.g., oak trees, other evergreens) immediately on the EMSA would reduce visual contrast between initial planting, hydroseeding, and eventual maturation under the normal revegetation plan; however, mature trees could not be planted on the intervening slopes, only the benches. Furthermore, such an aggressive planting plan would not address visual contrast that would exist during construction of the overburden pile, particularly the dominant presence of construction equipment and activity.

Significance after Mitigation: Significant and Unavoidable.

Views from Highway 85

For motorists traveling on SR 85, the re-contoured hillsides would result in a moderate visual contrast as the Project could be seen but would not dominate the characteristic landscape. Figures 4.1-5a and 4.1-5b show the visual effects of construction from the perspective of a motorist on SR 85, northbound near Quito Road, southeast of the Saratoga Avenue on-ramp, looking northwest. As shown in Figure 4.1-5a, and similar to the discussion for views from I-280, Project construction would result in some areas of graded overburden in the WMSA extending above the height of some of the intervening vegetation and structures, particularly at the completion of Phase 2 and before revegetation has become established. The overburden, predominantly grey in color, would contrast with the surrounding natural features and could be perceived as continuation of the mining-related industrial uses to the west and south. In other locations, excavation the WMSA stockpile would reduce the height of overburden material within the viewshed. By the completion of Phase 3 (Figure 4.1-5b), the hillside no longer would consist of grey overburden, and would be covered with vegetation that blends into the surrounding natural hillside. Overall, during construction of the Project, the changes in vegetation created by Project construction could certainly be seen in the early stages, but by later stages would transition the industrial site into revegetated open space. Moreover, mining activities are currently visible within the WMSA, and were visible under 2007 baseline conditions; as such, the presence of equipment and vehicles associated with construction activities would not represent a change above baseline conditions. Given the distance to the Project Area, the Project would be subordinate to or co-dominant with other features in the viewshed, including transmission towers, trees, highway signs, buildings and topography. The Project would not block views of the scenic Santa Cruz Mountains in the background. Ultimately, construction activities would result in a low to moderate degree of visual change for motorists on SR 85, and would represent an improvement above baseline conditions after the completion of Phase 3 (Figure 4.1-5b). In conjunction with SR 85's moderate to high visual sensitivity, temporary impacts to scenic views from this scenic roadway resulting from construction activities would not be significant.

Views from Foothill Boulevard

For motorists on Foothill Boulevard/Expressway, construction of the Project would result in a weak visual contrast. From the select locations from which the Project Area would be visible, the

temporarily increased visibility of graded overburden would not attract motorists' attention particularly as a motorist would have to turn his head to view the Project Area. Even when staring towards the Project Area, the Project would be subordinate to other visible landscape features in the viewshed such as the towering trees, streetlights and commercial and residential structures (see Figure 4.1-2a, Photo 4). The Project would not block views of the scenic elements of Foothill Boulevard/Expressway, and the overall visual change would be low. Combined with Foothill Boulevard/Expressway's low to moderate visual sensitivity, impacts from construction would not be significant.

Impact 4.1-4: Neither active reclamation activities nor monitoring and maintenance of the Project would result in long term substantial damage to scenic resources within a state- or County-designated scenic highway or route. (*Less than Significant Impact*)

Figure 4.1-4b shows a simulation of motorists views of the EMSA from I-280 five years after the completion of reclamation activities in this portion of the Project Area. Figure 4.1-4c shows a simulation of the EMSA from I-280 20 years after active reclamation concludes. Figure 4.1-5c shows a simulation of the Project from SR 85 20 years after reclamation activities conclude. These simulations present representative views of the Project Area from scenic roadways during the monitoring and maintenance period of the Project, as vegetation planted as part of the Project would be established within the viewshed at this point in time.

Figures 4.1-4b, 4.1-4c, and 4.1-5c all show that, for motorists on representative scenic roadways, the period of time when reclamation is being monitored and maintained would be perceived as an increase in mature vegetated open space in the Project Area, as the existing contours of the benches and slopes of the excavation would be transformed to a downward-sloping hillside generally consistent with the surrounding natural topography. Formerly industrial areas comprised of patches of exposed rock partially covered with grey/brown stockpiles of overburden deposits would appear largely natural and scenic, and the scenic views of the foothills would appear relatively undisturbed. Long-term monitoring and maintenance of revegetation efforts would continue until reclamation is certified as complete. The change in the Project Area would be seen and could begin to attract attention, resulting in a weak to moderate, but positive, visual contrast. The Project would not dominate the landscape. On the contrary, the Project would substantially diminish the presence of the Project Area as the site would visually blend with the surrounding natural landscape, adding to the scenic nature of the viewshed. The increased height of the EMSA would not be sufficient to block views of surrounding scenic mountains. The overall degree of visual impact would be moderate, and positive. As such, long-term impacts of the Project would be less than significant.

c) Would the Project substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings?

Impact 4.1-5: The Project would alter and substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Project Area during the period of time when active reclamation activities are occurring. (*Significant and Unavoidable Impact*)

As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the Project is located entirely on private property. Physical access to the area would be allowed only with authorization. As such, the Project Area is primarily visually accessible to the public from local roadways and recreational areas. Public views of the Project Area from scenic roadways are analyzed under Impacts 4.1-3 and 4.1-4. Therefore, the analysis of this potential impact focuses on possible degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the Project Area itself, as well as views of the Project Area from representative major roadways and recreational areas in the vicinity of the Project Area.

As discussed in Section 4.1.1.2 above, the Project Area is characterized by heavy industrial features, including mining pits, stockpiles of extracted materials, equipment, buildings, machinery, siltation ponds, and conveyor belts that are present throughout the site. See Chapter 2, *Project Description*, for a detailed description of the features that would be removed under the Project. The surrounding buffer areas, which are also part of the site, contrast with the industrial uses and provide large areas of relatively undisturbed, densely vegetated, visually distinctive open space.

Visual contrast is a measure of the degree of change in line, form, color, and texture that the Project would create, when compared to the existing landscape. Because the existing landscape reflects past and ongoing surface mining activities, construction of the Project would consist of similar kinds activities and features as the Project (e.g., movement and removal of overburden; excavation of mineral commodities using excavators; hauling of materials using trucks and conveyors; grading final slopes to engineered slopes and benches, etc.) Prior to establishment of revegetation, the Project would not fundamentally change the industrial character of the site when viewed from public viewpoints.

Major Roadways

Because portions of the Project Area, particularly the WMSA, are visible from locations throughout Santa Clara Valley, Stevens Creek Boulevard and De Anza Boulevard were chosen as representative major roadways based on the Project's viewshed, visual exposure and important viewer groups.

The simulations in Figures 4.1-6a and 4.1-6b show the Project Area during active reclamation as seen from Stevens Creek Boulevard, the closest major roadway in the vicinity of the Project. The Project is slightly perceptible in the distant hillside, despite recontouring of the hillside and movement of overburden. Visual contrast from the roadway would be none from some locations, where the contrast between Project elements and the existing landscape is not visible or perceived, and weak in other locations where construction could be seen but would not attract attention. As shown in Figures 4.1-6a and 4.1-6b, Project elements would not dominate the landscape relative to other visible landscape features in the viewshed, and would be subordinate to development along

the roadway and scenic foothills in the distance. The general character of the site as a mining facility would not change, and construction of the Project would not block or impair views of the surrounding scenic foothills. Overall visual change would be low. Given the moderate visual sensitivity of Stevens Creek Boulevard, impacts would adverse but less than significant. Changes in the viewshed from De Anza Boulevard and other local roadways would be similar to those described above for Stevens Creek Boulevard, as portrayed in Figures 4.1-6a and 4.1-6b. Given the low to moderate visual sensitivity of De Anza Boulevard, impacts from this location would be less than significant.

Recreational Areas

The simulation in Figure 4.1-7a shows the Project Area during construction as seen from the Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail, adjacent to Cristo Rey Drive, in the RSA Preserve/Park (see Figure 4.1-3 for additional baseline photographs from this location). This viewpoint is one of the most visually sensitive locations within the RSA Preserve/Park, and quarry components are very prominent features within the existing landscape. As shown in Figure 4.1-7a, which depicts the Project Area at the completion of construction but before revegetation has become fully established, during construction the height of the EMSA overburden stockpile would be raised, significantly increasing the presence of grey/brown overburden within the viewshed. Despite the fact that the higher hillside would screen views of industrial components of the Cement Plant, the overall visual contrast between overburden materials and the vegetated, gently sloped surrounding terrain would be clearly discernible, demanding the viewer's attention. The increased prominence and extent of disturbed areas, and the creation of a new distinctly unnatural landform would be particularly noticeable immediately following the completion of construction but before the vegetation has time to establish and mature. Figure 4.1-7b shows that by 5 years after the completion of construction, the hillside would begin to blend with the surrounding hillside as vegetation fills in and the site is transformed into a more scenic hillside. As shown in Figures 4.1-7a and 4.1-7b, the increased height of the EMSA during construction would not be sufficient to block views of the surrounding scenic hillsides, or other scenic features in the landscape. Nevertheless, especially given the long construction timeframe (approximately 10 years at the EMSA), the overall visual change during construction would be moderate to high. Given the high visual sensitivity of the Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail, impacts to this recreational area during the implementation of active reclamation activities would be significant.

Other viewsheds within the RSA Preserve/Park also would be impacted by the proposed reclamation activities. As shown in Figure 4.1-2b, Photo 8, the PG&E Trail offers views of the upper elevations of the EMSA overburden deposits. Although the existing overburden deposits are not a dominant feature in the landscape, the substantial increase in the height of the overburden deposit during construction could block views of the scenic mountains behind the EMSA. In conjunction with the presence of off-road trucks and other equipment in an otherwise natural setting, reclamation activities would begin to attract attention and begin to dominate the characteristic landscape. The overall visual change to hikers on the PG&E Trail would be moderate to high. Given the moderate visual sensitivity of this viewshed (i.e., the distinct quality of the surroundings, partially to fully obstructed Project views in the foreground, high number of viewers and short view duration), impacts to PG&E Trail users would be significant.

Mitigation: No feasible mitigation measures have been identified to reduce the significance of this impact. Artificial screening such as fencing would be incapable of obscuring views of the Project Area, because of the extensive height of the EMSA. A more aggressive planting plan to establish mature vegetation (e.g., oak trees, other evergreens) immediately on the EMSA would reduce visual contrast between initial planting, hydroseeding, and eventual maturation under the normal revegetation plan; however, mature trees could not be planted on the intervening slopes, only the benches. Furthermore, such an aggressive planting plan would not address visual contrast that would exist during construction of the overburden pile, particularly the dominant presence of construction equipment and activity.

Significance after Mitigation: Significant and Unavoidable.

Views of the proposed reclamation activities from Fremont Older Preserve would be substantially less perceptible than at RSA Preserve/Park. As seen in Figure 4.1-2c, Photo 11, from Coyote Ridge Trail the Project Area appears within the background zone, behind the Stevens Creek Quarry, a large transmission line, and intervening mountains. Mining activities currently are visible within the WMSA, and were visible under 2007 baseline conditions; as such, the presence of equipment and vehicles associated with construction activities would not represent a change above baseline conditions for this viewshed. Given the distance between Fremont Older Preserve and the Project Area, the Project would be subordinate to or co-dominant with other features in the viewshed, including the Stevens Creek Quarry, transmission towers, trees, and scenic topography. Reclamation activities would not block or obstruct scenic features within the Fremont Older Preserve, and the overall visual change perceived by preserve visitors would be low. Despite the high visual sensitivity of Coyote Ridge Trail, overall impacts to visitors of Fremont Older Park would be adverse but less than significant.

Impact 4.1-6: The implementation of active reclamation activities would alter, but not permanently substantially degrade, the existing visual character or quality of the Project Area. (*Less than Significant Impact*)

The scenic character of Project Area itself ranges from industrial within the site to distinct in the surrounding buffer areas. Figure 4.1-6c portrays the Project Area during the monitoring and maintenance period, 20 years after completion of Phase 3, from the perspective of a motorist on Stevens Creek Boulevard; Figure 4.1-7c shows the Project Area during the monitoring and maintenance period, 20 years after completion of active reclamation activities, from the perspective of a hiker on the Hammond-Snyder Loop Trail in the RSA Preserve. As shown in the simulations, and as is discussed above under Impact 4.1-4, implementation of the Project would remove industrial features within the viewshed and replace them with mature vegetated open space. Specifically, the existing contours of the benches and slopes of the excavation would be transformed to a downward-sloping hillside generally consistent with the surrounding natural topography. Patches of exposed rock partially covered with grey stockpiles of overburden deposits would be graded and replanted with native vegetation and oak woodland habitats to make the Project Area visually consistent with the surrounding vegetation and topography. The

end result would be largely natural and scenic, and the scenic views of the foothills would appear relatively undisturbed.

The change in the Project Area would be seen and begin to attract attention from public viewers, resulting in a weak to moderate visual contrast. The Project would substantially diminish the dominance of the Project Area within the visual landscape, by removing industrial features incongruent with surrounding scenic hillsides, and ensuring that the site would visually blend with the surrounding natural landscape. The overall degree of visual change would be moderate, and beneficial; as such, overall impacts to the visual character of quality of the Project Area itself would be less than significant. When viewed from major roadways in the vicinity of the Project, such as Stevens Creek Boulevard, the overall degree of visual change would be moderate and beneficial. Given the moderate visual sensitivity of Stevens Creek Boulevard, and the low to moderate visual sensitivity of De Anza Boulevard, impacts from these and other major roadways would not be significant. For recreational areas, the visual change also would be moderate and beneficial. Even for viewers in the RSA Preserve/Park, despite the fact that the raised height of the EMSA could partially obscure some views of scenic ridgeline, particularly from the PG&E Trail, overall the Project would eliminate industrial features in an otherwise distinct viewshed. As shown in Figure 4.1-7c, the increased height of the EMSA would effectively screen many Cement Plant components, improving the visual quality and character of the site. Given the moderate and beneficial visual change, overall impacts to recreational areas would be less than significant.

d) Would the Project create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Impact 4.1-7: Lighting required for the Project would not adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the Project Area. (*Less than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated*)

As discussed in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, the hours of operation and intensity of existing operations is not expected to change during Project implementation, compared to baseline conditions. Surface mining activities currently may take place in the Project Area 24 hours per day, 365 days per year, although actual operating days and hours vary depending on market conditions and the level of production. Most of the work occurs in 8-hour shifts, with shift hours from 6:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., and from 2:30 p.m. to 12:00 midnight.

Currently there are no mineral extraction activities taking place in the EMSA; as such, there is no lighting at night in this portion of the Project Area. Because implementation of the Project could take place any time of day, including after dark, any night lighting used in the EMSA would represent an increase above existing night lighting conditions, causing a potentially significant adverse impact to nighttime views from public locations in the study area. With implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-5, the Project would not result in new, more frequent, or more intensive daytime or nighttime operations within the Project Area during the active reclamation period, and would not, therefore, result in a substantial new source of light or glare.

Mitigation Measure 4.1-7: No night lighting shall be allowed permitted on the east-facing slope of the EMSA or any other location within the EMSA that would be visible from public locations on the Santa Clara Valley floor including roadways.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

Impact 4.1-8: The Project would not create new permanent sources of light or glare that would affect daytime or nighttime views in the area. (*Less than Significant Impact*)

As discussed in Section 4.1.1.2, the Project Area contains five 5,000-watt light plants. Night lighting currently is used within the Rock Plant and at strategic locations as necessary for work in progress. All existing lighting within the Project Area would be removed at the completion of Phase 3. Therefore, monitoring and maintenance of the Project would result in a reduction of lighting and glare in the Project Area, and impacts therefore would be less than significant.

4.1.6 Alternatives

4.1.6.1 Alternative 1: Complete Backfill Alternative

Reclamation activities associated with Alternative 1 would be similar to the Project. Like the Project, Alternative 1 would not conflict with applicable General Plan policies or Zoning Ordinance provisions (No Impact). Alternative 1 would differ from the Project in that overburden materials stored in the EMSA would be back filled into the Quarry pit upon the conclusion of mineral extraction activities. Specifically, approximately 4.8 million cubic yards of overburden stored in the EMSA would be returned to the Quarry pit during reclamation Phase 2. The resulting changes in the contours of the EMSA would be perceptible from scenic vistas, scenic roadways, major roadways, and other locations throughout the Santa Clara Valley floor. Specifically, removing the EMSA would eliminate the screening of views of the industrial uses occurring at the Cement Plant. This removal would result in greater active reclamation-period (short-term) and monitoring and maintenance period (long-term) impacts to the Anza Knoll scenic vista, which were significant and unavoidable and less than significant, respectively, for the Project. Alternative 1 would also result in greater short-term and long-term impacts to motorists on scenic roadways, which were significant and unavoidable and less than significant, respectively, for the Project. Furthermore, Alternative 1 would result in greater short-term and long-term impacts pertaining to the alteration and degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the Project Area, as perceived by nearby recreational users of the RSA Preserve/Park. These impacts were significant and unavoidable and less than significant, respectively, for the Project. With implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-5, Alternative 1 would have the same impacts as the Project pertaining to construction lighting (less than significant). Overall, implementation of Alternative 1 would be less environmentally advantageous than the Project relative to aesthetics, visual quality, and light and glare.

4.1.6.2 Alternative 2: Central Materials Storage Area Alternative

Reclamation activities associated with Alternative 2 would be similar to the Project. Like the Project, Alternative 2 would not conflict with applicable General Plan policies or Zoning Ordinance provisions (No Impact). Alternative 2 would differ from the Project in that the reclamation of the eastern and central portions of the EMSA would begin immediately, and overburden generated by continued mining in the Quarry pit would be stored in an area farther removed from RSA Park/Preserve. Because reclamation of the EMSA would begin immediately upon reclamation plan amendment approval, short-term visual impacts as perceived from scenic vistas, scenic roadways, major roadways, and other locations throughout the Santa Clara Valley floor would be less than under the Project (which were significant and unavoidable). However, long-term impacts to visual resources would be greater than under the Project because the EMSA would be shorter than under the Project, and, consequently, less effective in screening views of the industrial uses occurring at the Cement Plant. As such, Alternative 2 would result in greater long-term impacts to the Anza Knoll scenic vista and greater long-term impacts to motorists on scenic roadways, which were each less than significant for the Project. Furthermore, Alternative 2 would result in less short-term and but greater long-term impacts pertaining to the alteration and degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the Project Area, as perceived by nearby recreational users of the RSA Preserve/Park. These impacts were significant and unavoidable and less than significant, respectively, for the Project. With implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-5, Alternative 2 would have the same impacts as the Project pertaining to construction lighting (less than significant). Overall, implementation of Alternative 2 would be less environmentally advantageous than the Project relative to aesthetics, visual quality, and light and glare.

4.1.6.3 No Project Alternative

Reclamation activities associated with the No Project Alternative would be similar to the Project, but 7 years later than under the Project. Like the Project, the No Project Alternative would not conflict with applicable General Plan policies or Zoning Ordinance provisions (No Impact). The No Project Alternative would differ from the Project in that overburden would not continue to be stored in the EMSA; as such, the final contours of the EMSA under the No Project Alternative would be lower than under the Project, and consequently less effective in screening views of the industrial uses occurring at the Cement Plant. Short-term visual impacts as perceived from scenic vistas, scenic roadways, major roadways, and other locations throughout the Santa Clara Valley floor would be similar to the Project (which were significant and unavoidable). However, long-term impacts to visual resources would be greater than under the Project, because the industrial uses occurring at the Cement Plant would be more visible to the public. As such, the No Project Alternative would result in greater long-term impacts to the Anza Knoll scenic vista and greater long-term impacts to motorists on scenic roadways, which were each less than significant for the Project. Furthermore, the No Project Alternative would result in less short-term and but greater long-term impacts pertaining to the alteration and degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the Project Area, as perceived by nearby recreational users of the RSA Preserve/Park. These impacts were significant and unavoidable and less than significant, respectively, for the Project. With implementation of Mitigation Measure 4.1-5, the No Project Alternative would have the same impacts as the Project pertaining to construction lighting (less than significant).

Overall, implementation of the No Project Alternative would be less environmentally advantageous than the Project relative to aesthetics, visual quality, and light and glare.

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