

<i>Issue</i>	Less Than Significant or No Impact	Potential Significant Impact Adequately Addressed in MEIR	MEIR Required Additional Review: No Significant Impact	Less Than Significant Impact Due to Mitigation Measures in Project Description	New Additional Significant Impact Not Addressed in MEIR	New Additional Mitigation Measures Required
<b>5.1 Aesthetics.</b> Would the project:						
a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?	■	□	□	□	□	□
b. Substantially damage scenic resources?	■	□	□	□	□	□
c. Substantially degrade the existing visual character of the surrounding area?	■	□	□	□	□	□
d. Create a new source of light and glare that would affect day or night time views?	■	□	□	□	□	□

**Setting**

**Overview**

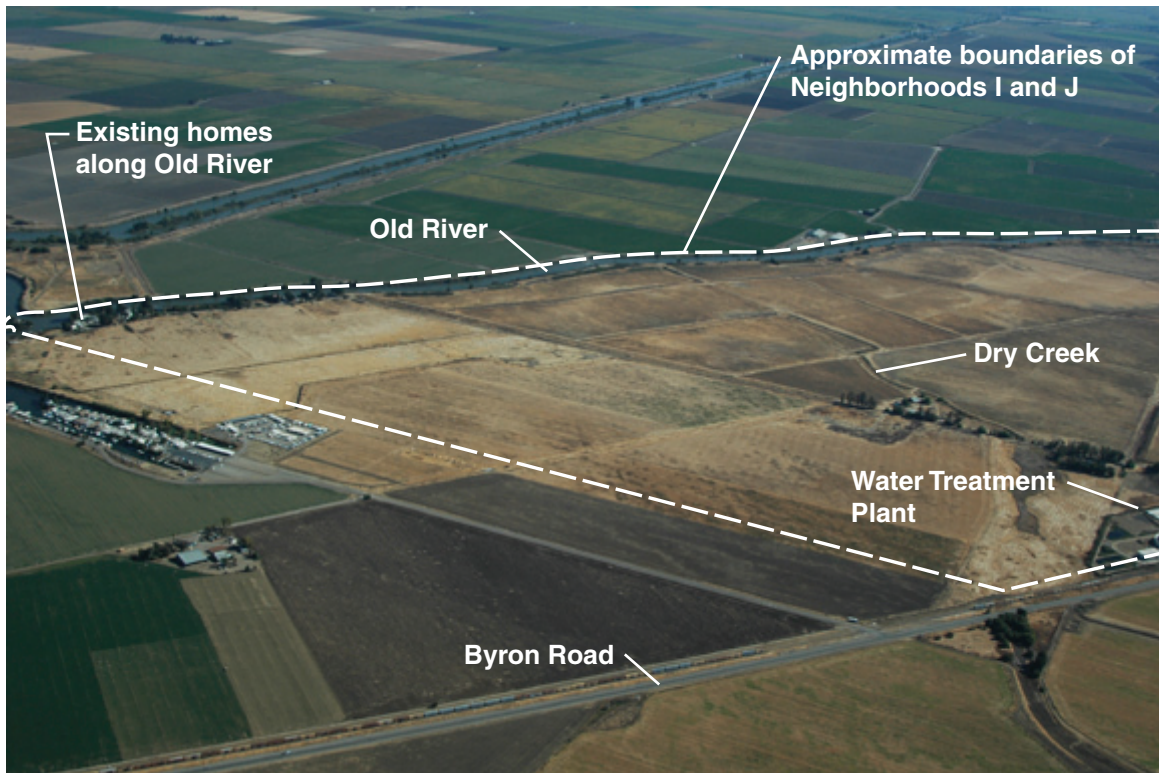
The site of Neighborhoods I and J is currently mostly undeveloped, with lands that have historically been in agricultural use (see Figure 5.1-1). Old River forms the northern boundary of Neighborhood J, and Byron Road forms the southern boundary of both neighborhoods. The main existing development on the project site includes the Mountain House Water Treatment Plant and about 10 existing homes along Old River (see Figure 5.1-1). An existing boat harbor and Alameda County lands are located on the west side of the project site (visible in the left side of Figure 5.1-1[a]). The Dry Creek wetlands are a main natural feature of the site that flow through Neighborhood I. Mountain House Creek is located just east of Neighborhood J.

While Neighborhoods I and J are yet to be developed, Neighborhoods E, F, and G have been developed, as can be seen in Figure 5.1-2. Great Valley Parkway, which forms the eastern boundary of these three neighborhoods, is proposed to continue north to form the dividing line between Neighborhoods I and J. The overall relationship of Neighborhoods I and J to other parts of Mountain House and surrounding lands can be seen in the aerial photograph of Figure 5.1-2(b).

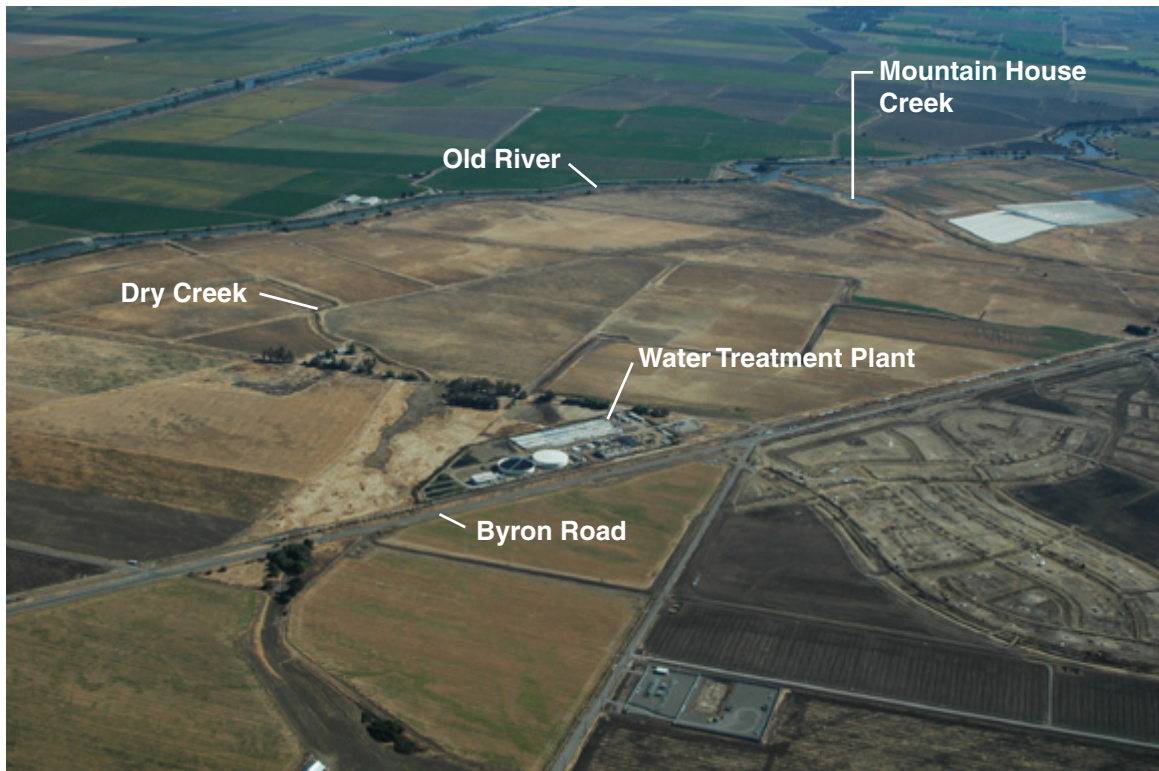
**Views from Public Roads**

The Neighborhood I and J area is visible from public roads that currently exist such as Byron Road and Kelso Road. In the future, Neighborhoods I and J would be visible from new roads to be constructed as part of this development. None of the existing roads in the vicinity of Neighborhoods I and J is designated as a Scenic Corridor in the County General Plan 2010.

The project area is currently in active agricultural production (see Figures 5.1-1(a) and (b)). All of the project area is fairly level, with only a few areas of tree cover near Dry Creek and Mountain House Creek, and near Old River.



a. Aerial view of northwest portion of Neighborhoods I and J. Byron Road visible in foreground.



b. View of central portion of Neighborhoods I and J, looking north.

Figure 5.1-1

SOURCE: A. Skewes-Cox

## EXISTING AERIAL VIEW OF NEIGHBORHOODS I AND J





a. View looking north along Great Valley Parkway with Neighborhoods E, F and G in foreground.



b. View looking north towards Old River and Clifton Court Forebay across recently-constructed Neighborhoods E, F, and G in foreground.

Figure 5.1-2

SOURCE: A. Skewes-Cox

**EXISTING AERIAL VIEWS OF MOUNTAIN HOUSE COMMUNITY**

Scatterings of trees also are located in other parts of the project area. Dry Creek is the only waterway that crosses Kelso Road within the Neighborhood I area. Old River forms the northern boundary of Neighborhood I but is not visible from existing roads due to the levee that screens it from view.

From Byron Road, one looks north into the Neighborhood I and J area, across the railroad tracks towards the Old River levee.

Kelso Road is located in the middle of Neighborhood I, and includes views of a marsh area, Dry Creek, and agricultural fields to the east and west. In the northern portion of Kelso Road, one can see the existing homes along Old River. Kelso Road would be relocated as part of the development of Neighborhood I.

### ***Views from Waterways***

Old River forms the northern boundary of Neighborhood I and the entire Mountain House community. The existing levee along Old River is about 12 feet higher than the ground level to the south, providing long-distance views when one stands atop the levee. Thick riparian vegetation along the banks of the levee creates a visual contrast to the nearby waterway and agricultural fields. Due to the height of the levee, views into the project area from boats using Old River are blocked. Boating use in this part of the river is limited due to the presence of the Department of Water Resources (DWR) barrier, heavy vegetative growth (e.g., Brazilian elodea, sometimes referred to as Brazilian waterweed (*Egeria densa*), and water hyacinth (*Eichornia crassipes*)), lack of marinas in the immediate vicinity, and the shallow depth and narrow width of Old River. The nearest marina is located at the northwest corner of the Mountain House community. Many boaters head north from this point along Old River rather than east along the edge of the Mountain House community. No major roads are located at the northern side of Old River that would provide views into the Neighborhood I area.

### ***Design Review Process***

The Mountain House Community Services District (MHCS D) has adopted the *Mountain House Community Services District Design Manual* (MHCS D, 1999), which addresses the design standards for public facilities that would be under the jurisdiction of the MHCS D. Elements addressed by the *MHCS D Design Manual* include streetscapes, walls and fences, paths, street furniture, lighting, signage, entries, community edges, parks, schools, civic facilities, and public works facilities. The MHCS D will review subdivision plans, building designs, and improvement plans for all new MHCS D facilities within the community for conformance with the *MHCS D Design Manual* and with all applicable Master Plan programs, policies, and standards.

The design review process will also include review by the San Joaquin County Mountain House Design Consistency Review Committee (DCRC), which will review all discretionary and administrative implementing permits within Mountain

House, Tentative Subdivision Maps and Special Purpose Plans, all subsequent development permits including improvement plans for community facilities and buildings, design guidelines for private development, and all development applications and building permits. The purpose of the DCRC is to verify that proposed projects are consistent with the policies and design requirements of the Master Plan, applicable Specific Plan, Development Title, and all other community approvals.

### **Significant Impacts Identified in 1994 MEIR**

The 1994 MEIR identified significant visual impacts of the Master Plan related to the following:

- 1) Alteration of the rural visual quality of the site as seen from local roads, regional freeways, and proposed public pathways.
- 2) Screening of views from public roads towards Mt. Diablo and Mt. Diablo foothills to the west due to new buildings.
- 3) Strong visual contrast of industrial and high-density residential buildings compared to open space and potential for generating long shadows.
- 4) Removal of mature trees that frame views along public roads.
- 5) Potential generation of light and glare visible from public roads and residences.
- 6) Relocation of Weber-Herdlyn power line.

### **Findings Related to Significant Impacts Identified in 1994 MEIR**

For all of the above potential visual impacts, the Master Plan was amended as recommended in the 1994 MEIR mitigation measures. The only mitigation measure not adopted was a recommendation to amend the *MHCSD Design Manual* to define the composition and duties of the Community Review Board since it was determined to be premature to do so at that time.

### **Discussion Regarding Neighborhoods I and J**

- a) *Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?*

Currently proposed development within Neighborhoods I and J would not be substantially different from that evaluated in the 1994 MEIR or the Specific Plan II Initial Study. The existing rural visual quality of the project area would be replaced with urban-type development, with buildings ranging in height from one to two stories. Exceptions to the height limit would be allowed under the County's Development Title for church steeples, flagpoles, chimneys, and ancillary roof structures. All other areas would be limited to two-story construction.

Views from Great Valley Parkway and Central Parkway would be slightly improved compared to the project evaluated in the Specific Plan II Initial Study because the new site plan includes a larger acreage of the golf course adjacent to these two major roadways. New development would be partially screened from view by proposed landscaping along roadways (see Figures 5.1-3(a) and (b) for examples of new landscaping). Landscaping along streets and in public areas would be required as part of the MHCSD design review and approval process. No designated scenic corridors are located in the vicinity of the Mountain House community.

While views toward Mt. Diablo and foothills to the west would be restricted by new buildings and new landscaping, some of these views would be available during winter months when deciduous trees have lost their leaves. Views for boaters along Old River would not be significantly affected, since the existing levee blocks views into the project area and most of the area along the river would be a regional park.

Views from existing homes along Old River would be altered by Neighborhood I development. This development would be visible from viewpoints where residents now overlook agricultural fields. From homes along Old River in the northwest corner of the Neighborhood I area, views across agricultural fields are uninterrupted and these fields are at a lower elevation than the existing homes. With the project, a substantial amount of fill would occur on the south side of Kelso Road to raise homes out of the floodplain, bringing new homes to an elevation about equal to existing homes along the river (see Figure 3-6). Slopes of a 4:1 ratio are proposed for the sides of the relocated Kelso Road. New landscaping with trees and shrubbery would screen new development from view. Fences and home sites would be set back to the south side of new landscaping along the 30-foot future access easement.

As already stated, visual impacts would not be significantly different from what was evaluated in the 1994 MEIR. The Mountain House Master Plan (Section 4.2.7) states that sound walls shall be no higher than 7 feet in height whenever possible. New sound walls would be constructed in Neighborhood J along Central Parkway but would not exceed the restricted 7-foot height limit. An 8-foot-tall "sound berm" would be constructed along the railroad right-of-way at the south end of Neighborhood J, and residences would be set back from the railroad tracks to reduce potential noise impacts. This issue is discussed in greater detail in Section 5.11, Noise.

No additional mitigation measures would be necessary.

*b) Substantially damage scenic resources?*

Some of the scenic resources in the project area include Old River, portions of Dry Creek, and the vegetative tree cover. Dry Creek would be retained in its





a. View looking north along Great Valley Parkway near Neighborhood G. This view shows typical streetscape planting for arterial within Mountain House Community.



b. View along Mascot Boulevard, looking northeast, showing prototypical homes and streetscape within Neighborhood F.

Figure 5.1-3

SOURCE: A. Skewes-Cox

## PHOTOS OF EXISTING MOUNTAIN HOUSE DEVELOPMENT

existing condition which is a change from what was originally proposed as part of Specific Plan II. While some scatterings of trees may be removed for new home construction, a significant number of new trees would be added with the new development. No significant trees visible from a major public roadway would be affected and no mitigation measures would be necessary.

- c) *Substantially degrade the existing visual character of the surrounding area?*

Refer to the discussion under (a) and (b) above.

- d) *Create a new source of light and glare that would affect day or night time views?*

Light and glare were addressed in the 1994 MEIR. No significant new light and glare impacts would result from the project. Lighting recommendations are also included in the text of Specific Plan II which includes Neighborhoods I and J. Lighting is generally to be limited to 12 to 14 feet in height in Neighborhood Centers and is to be shielded. Parking area lights are to be shielded to minimize glare, as stated in Specific Plan II. No additional mitigation measures would be necessary.