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## 3.1 - Aesthetics, Light, and Glare

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### 3.1.1 - Introduction

This section describes the existing aesthetics, light, and glare setting and potential effects from project implementation on visual resources and the site and its surroundings. Descriptions and analysis in this section are based on site reconnaissance by Michael Brandman Associates (MBA) as well as visual simulations included within the Plan.

### 3.1.2 - Environmental Setting

#### Aesthetics Character

#### Regional Setting

The City of Vallejo is located in the southwestern portion of Solano County, California. Visual features in the area surrounding Vallejo consist of San Pablo Bay to the west, the City of Benicia to the east, the City of American Canyon as well as undeveloped portions of unincorporated Napa County to the north, and the Carquinez Strait to the south.

Vallejo, population 117,798, is approximately 53.58 square miles in area. The City is centered along State Route 29 (SR-29) and Interstate 80 (I-80), which both traverse north and south through the City. SR-37 also traverses east and west through the City. The southern portion of Vallejo is dominated by high- and medium-density residential land uses, with commercial land uses immediately adjacent to I-80. Mare Island industrial uses are also located in the southwestern portion of the City. The northern portion of the City is dominated by Blue Rock Springs Park and golf course, and medium-density residential uses and additional commercial land uses immediately adjacent to I-80.

#### ***Project Site***

The project site consists of the existing Solano County Fairgrounds, which includes administration and exposition buildings, a horse track, grandstands, equestrian buildings, horse barns, and several parking areas.

#### ***Surrounding Area***

Below is a description of surrounding land uses and views of the project site. Views of the project site are provided in Exhibit 3.1-1 through Exhibit 3.1-5.

#### *North*

A hotel, Courtyard by Marriott, and SR-37 lie to the north of the project site. The Country Club Crest residential subdivision is located beyond the hotel and SR-37.

Trees, vegetation, and SR-37 partially obstruct views of the project site from the residential uses located to the north of SR-37.

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*East*

East of the project lies I-80. A retail center is located beyond I-80. Views of the retail buildings can be seen from the project site.

Views of the project site from the east are mostly unobstructed.

*South*

The proposed development is bordered on the south by Newell Mobile Homes, beyond which a motel is located.

Views of the project site from the mobile homes are partially obstructed by intermittent areas of trees. Views of the project site from the motel are partially obstructed by the mobile homes.

*West*

Fairgrounds Drive is located to the west of the project site. West of Fairgrounds Drive lie Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, Lake Chabot, and a Six Flags Discovery Kingdom parking lot. Dan Foley Park is located to the north and east of the Six Flags Discovery Kingdom parking lot.

Views of the project site from Fairgrounds Drive, Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, Lake Chabot, and the Six Flags parking lot are partially obstructed by trees and vegetation.

**Light and Glare**

***Project Site***

The project site contains structures and improvements (such as light fixtures) that emit sources of light and produce glare.

***Surrounding Area***

The developed commercial and residential land uses in the project vicinity have exterior sources of lighting (e.g., illuminated signage; building-mounted and freestanding light fixtures). Street lighting is present on I-80, SR-37, and Fairgrounds Drive. Vehicles on these roadways are also sources of light and glare in the project vicinity.

**3.1.3 - Regulatory Framework**

**Local**

***City of Vallejo***

*General Plan*

The General Plan establishes the following goals and policies relevant to aesthetics light and glare:

*Land Use Element*

- **Urban Design Goal 3:** To have attractive, exciting shopping areas.
- **Policy 1:** Develop design themes (or theme) that reflect Vallejo's heritage to create a business environment unique to Vallejo.

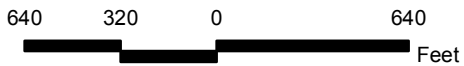


Source: Solano County NAIP, 2009.



Michael Brandman Associates

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## Exhibit 3.1-1 Photograph Vantage Points





Photograph 1: View of project site from westbound Interstate 80.



Photograph 2: View of project site from Interstate 80 overpass looking south.

Source: Michael Brandman Associates, 2011.



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## Exhibit 3.1-2 Site Photographs 1 and 2

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Photograph 3: View of project site from mobile homes to the south.



Photograph 4: View from northern portion of mobile home park.

Source: Michael Brandman Associates, 2011.



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## Exhibit 3.1-3 Site Photographs 3 and 4

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Photograph 5: View of project site from Carl's Jr. looking southeast.



Photograph 6: View of project site from Marriott hotel looking southeast.

Source: Michael Brandman Associates, 2011.



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## Exhibit 3.1-4 Site Photographs 5 and 6





Photograph 7: View of project site looking northwest from Interstate 80.



Photograph 8: View of project site from lake Chabot looking south.

Source: Michael Brandman Associates, 2011.



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## Exhibit 3.1-5 Site Photographs 7 and 8



- **Policy 3:** Encourage the use of an overlaying theme for a shopping area instead of using unusual structural or trim design for advertising purposes. A coordinated color scheme can be used by existing building groups to harmonize, unify and give distinctive identity in areas where all shapes, sizes and architectural design of buildings occur in random order.
- **Policy 4:** Large parking lots should be buffered from the street and other less intense uses with landscaped berms and/or grade changes.

#### *Municipal Code*

- **16.30.060 Development Standards:** Development within the Public Facilities zone is subject to development standards to be determined by the Development Services Director through the site development permit process, or by the Planning Commission through the use permit process as appropriate.
- **16.64.100(A – E) Sign Regulations:** Standards for wall, freestanding, roof and projecting signs are described within this section of the Municipal Code.
- **16.70.020 Screening:** Screening shall be required for Civic, Commercial, Industrial, Agricultural, and Extractive Type Uses along all boundaries other than streets, where the building site abuts residential uses.

### **3.1.4 - Methodology**

MBA evaluated potential project impacts on aesthetics, light, and glare through site reconnaissance and review of applicable plans and policies, including visual simulations included within the Plan. MBA personnel visited the project site and surrounding area on October 28, 2011 to document the site conditions through photography. The City of Vallejo’s General Plan and Municipal Code were reviewed to determine applicable policies and design requirements for the proposed project.

### **3.1.5 - Thresholds of Significance**

According to the CEQA Guidelines’ Appendix G Environmental Checklist, to determine whether impacts to aesthetics are significant environmental effects, the following questions are analyzed and evaluated. Would the project:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista? (Refer to Section 7, Effects Found Not To Be Significant.)
- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway? (Refer to Section 7, Effects Found Not To Be Significant.)
- 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?

### 3.1.6 - Project Impacts and Mitigation Measures

#### Visual Character

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**Impact AES-1:**        **The project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.**

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#### *Impact Analysis*

This impact analysis addresses the potential for the proposed project to substantially degrade the visual character of the project site and its surrounding area.

#### *Proposed Project*

The entertainment area would authorize up to 327,571 square feet of retail, commercial, entertainment, and office space (as a replacement for other Entertainment Mixed-Use [EMU] uses) on 48.8 acres at time of full buildout. The fairgrounds portion of the site would include up to 149,500 square feet of new building space at time of full buildout, including a new exposition hall and a new concert arena/grandstand cover. All existing fair facilities would be demolished, including the golf course and racetrack, with the exception of Gibson Hall, McCormack Hall, a trash shed, a maintenance shed, the livestock building, and a sheep barn, and landscape, circulation, and loading areas. According to the Plan, three parking structures would also be constructed at the site. These private and public development areas are shown in the proposed Land Use Plan, which is Figure 3.1 in the Plan.

#### *Entertainment Area*

##### *Design and Appearance*

This area of the project site is currently vacant and would be redeveloped with new buildings and landscaping that would enhance and improve the existing setting. Proposed buildings for the EMU are not anticipated to exceed a height of 75 feet, while proposed structures within the Entertainment Commercial (EC) areas—including thematic rides—would typically not exceed a height of 250 feet in the center of the parcel. Design Guidelines are included within the Plan that would address architectural design issues such as colors, design elements, and features. Roofing and building materials, as well as fencing, signs, lighting, landscaping, bicycle racks, and pedestrian and bicycle circulation, would also be addressed under these guidelines. Elevations for the entertainment area of the project site are not defined at this time and would be submitted to the City for design permit review at a future date, once development within this project area is proposed. Moreover, the Plan includes design guidelines within Section 4.2.4 for proposed parking areas, including the three proposed parking structures.

##### *Building Coverage*

As stated above, proposed development would consist of up to 327,571 square feet of retail, commercial, entertainment, and office space (as a replacement for other EMU uses) on 48.8 acres at time of full buildout. A maximum Floor Area Ratio (FAR) of 0.2 would be permitted for the EMU district for Phase 1, with the exception of the 2-acre parcel that would allow a FAR of 0.4. Phase 2 would allow a 0.2 FAR for EMU parcels with the same 2-acre, 0.4-FAR exception, while Phase 3

would allow a 0.4 FAR. Conformance with the maximum allowable FAR for the respective district would be reviewed by the City at time of design permit submittal.

#### *Building Height*

As discussed above, proposed buildings for the Entertainment Mixed-Use (EMU) are not projected to exceed a height of 75 feet, while proposed structures—including thematic rides—within the Entertainment Commercial areas are not anticipated to exceed a height of 250 feet in the center of the parcel. Additionally, three parking structures are proposed at a maximum anticipated height of approximately 60 feet (four levels) for the proposed South Parking Structure. The heights of the proposed commercial buildings would be consistent with the height of nearby commercial buildings. The building heights would not result in a significant reduction in views of the Sulfur Spring Mountains because I-80 is elevated above the site. Further, trees, vegetation, and SR-37 partially obstruct views of the project site from the residential uses located to the north of SR-37.

#### *Landscaping Features*

As shown in Exhibit 2-10 of the Project Description, the project would include the establishment of landscaping around most of the project perimeter, throughout the parking areas, and in front of the commercial buildings. Trees would be planted along I-80, SR-37, and Fairgrounds Drive, thereby reducing the view of buildings from the roadways. Site landscaping would also feature public streetscape, park landscape, turf, reinforced turf, and a rain garden. All landscaping would conform to the requirements included within the Plan landscape design guidelines, Section 4.2.3. These guidelines address issues such as authorized plant species, drought-tolerant plants, and water conservation. Conceptual and final landscaping plans would be submitted to the City for review and approval prior the issuance of grading or building permits.

#### *Signage*

Project signage would be developed that is consistent with Section 4.2.5 of the Plan, which addresses signage design guidelines. According to the Plan, four signs are proposed along the site's freeway edges. These signs would include a new electronic/digital sign along SR-37, an upgraded electronic/digital sign along I-80, and two static signs along I-80. All signs would be designed consistent with Section 4.4.6 of the Plan, which addresses electronic readerboards. Specific signage details for proposed structures within the EMU and Entertainment Commercial areas are not known at this time, since development for that project area has not yet been proposed. A sign plan would be submitted to the City for review and approval as part of the design permit review for future development at the subject site. All signs within the private purpose areas should conform to the City Zoning Ordinance Chapter 16.64.

#### *Fairgrounds*

##### *Design and Appearance*

As mentioned above, the golf course and racetrack would be removed and replaced with new buildings and an outdoor exhibition area. Proposed buildings for the Solano County Fair are not

expected to exceed a height of 60 feet. Preliminary building elevations of the Exposition Hall are included within the Project Description as Exhibit 2-11. As discussed above, Design Guidelines that would address architectural design issues such as colors, design elements, and features are included within the Plan. Roofing and building materials would also be addressed under these guidelines. Accordingly, proposed fair facilities would be designed consistent with the applicable design guidelines.

#### *Building Height*

As discussed above, proposed buildings for the Solano County Fair area would not likely exceed a height of 60 feet. According to the Plan, specific fair attractions might include a Ferris wheel (85 to 100 feet tall) visible from I-80. However, these structure heights would not result in a significant reduction in views of surrounding uses because of existing topography, roadways, and vegetation that partially obstruct current views. Further, the proposed structure heights, including the Ferris wheel, are consistent with the height of existing thematic rides and attractions featured at the adjacent Six Flags Discovery Kingdom. As stated above, views of the proposed Ferris wheel would be partially obstructed by existing topography and roadways.

#### *Landscaping Features*

As discussed above and shown in Figure 4.6 of the Plan, the project would include the establishment of landscaping around most of the project perimeter, throughout the parking areas, and in front of the proposed fair buildings. Proposed landscaping within the site designated for fair uses would conform to the requirements included within the Plan landscape design guidelines, Section 4.2.3.

#### *Signage*

Project signage for the Solano County Fair would be developed that is consistent with Section 4.3.6 of the Plan, which addresses signage, lighting, and site furnishings design guidelines. As stated in the Plan, proposed signage would be designed as a comprehensive “family” of elements to announce arrival at entry gates, provide current and upcoming event schedule information, direct vehicles and pedestrians to their destinations, and provide information regarding the Fair’s history and current features.

#### *Surrounding Areas*

The project site is located in a primarily commercial portion of the City of Vallejo. Land uses in the project vicinity consist of existing developed commercial, entertainment, and residential uses. Prominent surrounding land uses include Six Flags Discovery Kingdom, Lake Chabot, the Courtyard by Marriott Hotel, Gateway Plaza, and Newell Mobile Homes. Views from I-80 and SR-37 near the project site currently appear visually disorganized, with a wide variety of architectural styles and uses, some of which are not attractively maintained or visually inviting to prospective visitors to the community. Exhibit 3.1-6 illustrates a perspective view of the proposed Fair of the Future from I-80 and SR-37. The developed commercial, entertainment, and residential land uses surrounding the project site do not possess any unique visual attributes (for example, historic design elements) that could be adversely affected by the proposed project.





View from I-80



View from SR-37

Source: SWA Group, 2011.



Michael Brandman Associates

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## Exhibit 3.1-6 Perspective View from I-80 and SR-37

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Views of the project area as seen from the residential land uses to the north and south of the project area would change from views of the existing, underutilized Solano County Fairgrounds to views of a landscaped, modern fairgrounds and associated commercial and entertainment-oriented development. Views of the project site from the residences located to the north are partially obscured by vegetation, trees, and SR-37. Views of the project site from the mobile homes to the south are partially obstructed by intermittent areas of trees. Because the existing site does not contain any visually significant features and adjacent residences are few in number, visual changes as seen from these residences would not be significant.

Because I-80 is elevated above the site, the proposed project would not interrupt views of the low-lying foothills of the Sulfur Springs Mountains as seen from I-80.

#### *Construction Impacts*

During the construction phase of the project, potential visually obtrusive elements such as construction vehicles, construction materials, site construction trailers, and other temporary construction elements would be located on the project site. Site grading, demolition, and the construction would occur at the subject site. Additionally, construction personnel, equipment, and materials would be at the site. This would result in a temporary change to the visual character of the site. This is considered a change in visual character of the site, but it is not considered a degradation of the visual quality of the site, because temporary elements would be removed upon completion of the construction phase. Because the impacts described would be temporary in nature, less than significant impacts to aesthetics would result and impacts would be less than significant during the construction phase.

#### *Conclusion*

In summary, the proposed project would develop up to 327,571 square feet of retail, commercial, entertainment, and office space (as a replacement for other EMU uses) on 48.8 acres at time of full buildout. The fairgrounds portion of the site would include up to 149,500 square feet of new building space at time of full buildout, including a new exposition hall and a new concert arena/grandstand cover. All existing fair facilities would be demolished with the exception of Gibson Hall, McCormack Hall, a trash shed, a maintenance shed, the livestock building, and a sheep barn, and landscape, circulation, and loading areas. Three parking structures would also be constructed at the site. The project site is located within an area that contains existing, developed commercial, entertainment, and residential land uses. The proposed project would employ traditional city design elements, including a pedestrian-oriented core, and would provide landscaping along street frontages and within parking areas intended to create an appealing entertainment destination with multiple attractions. For these reasons, the proposed project would not degrade the visual character of the project site or its surroundings. Impacts would be less than significant.

#### ***Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation***

Less than significant impact.

### **Mitigation Measures**

No mitigation is necessary.

### **Level of Significance After Mitigation**

Less than significant impact.

### **Light or Glare**

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<b>Impact AES-2:</b>	<b>The project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.</b>
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### **Impact Analysis**

This impact analysis addresses the potential for the proposed project to create a new source of substantial light or glare that could negatively affect day or nighttime views within the project area.

#### *Entertainment Area*

Lighting within the entertainment area would include lighting at the project's perimeter and parking areas. According to the Plan design guidelines, intersection lights should be on 22-foot poles, pedestrian lighting along sidewalks should not exceed 15 feet in height, and parking lot lights are not to exceed a height of 28 feet, excluding the base. Additionally, the uses authorized within the Entertainment Mixed-Use (EMU) and Entertainment Commercial would include building lights that would likely be wall-mounted. Both the parking lot and building lighting fixtures would be designed to cast light downward, thereby providing lighting at the ground level for pedestrian safety while reducing glare to adjacent properties. Conformance with the Plan performance standards for lighting and glare (Section 4.2.5 of the Plan) would ensure that any potential light and glare impacts for the residential units are adequately addressed. The project would not utilize building materials with a high reflectivity that would result in glare. Photometric plans for proposed development within the entertainment area, including thematic ride and electronic signage lighting, would be submitted for City review at a future date in conformance with the Plan performance standards for lighting and glare (Section 4.2.5 of the Plan). Signage lighting would conform to applicable outdoor lighted sign regulations and guidelines, including the California State Outdoor Advertising Association Guidelines, the California Outdoor Advertising Act, and the City Zoning Ordinance Chapter 16.64 regarding signage. Moreover, proposed thematic rides would be set back an appropriate distance from the property lines so they do not cast light and glare onto adjoining properties. Accordingly, impacts would be less than significant.

#### *Fairgrounds*

Lighting within the fairgrounds area of the proposed project would consist of perimeter lighting as well as parking area lighting. Additionally, lighting associated with the permitted uses for the fair, as identified in Section 3.4.1 of the Solano360 Specific, would include wall mounted light fixtures for exhibition halls and related fair uses. The proposed fair structures would not utilize building materials with a high reflectivity that would result in glare. As stated above, proposed lighting would

be designed to cast light downward consistent with the Plan performance standards (Section 4.3.6) for lighting and glare.

According to the Plan, four signs are proposed along the site’s freeway edges. These signs would include a new electronic/digital sign along SR-37, an upgraded electronic/digital sign along I-80, and two static signs along I-80. All signs would be designed consistent with Section 4.4.6 of the Plan, which addresses electronic readerboards, and indicates that digital signs should not contribute to light pollution that would affect nearby residences. In addition, signage lighting would conform to applicable outdoor lighted sign regulations and guidelines, including the California State Outdoor Advertising Association Guidelines, the California Outdoor Advertising Act, and the City Zoning Ordinance Chapter 16.64 regarding signage. Furthermore, the federal Highway Beautification Act and the California Vehicle Code provide restrictions regarding light sources, including those related to or emanating from signs to ensure that lighting or glare would not impair drivers upon freeways.

Project lighting would increase artificial light in the project area and potentially generate glare. However, because onsite lighting would be designed to cast light downward, thereby reducing glare to adjacent properties, and because landscaping proposed for planting along the site’s perimeter—including along Interstate 80, State Route 37—and Fairgrounds Drive, would reduce effects resulting from the project’s lighting and glare, effects would be less than significant.

***Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation***

Less than significant impact.

***Mitigation Measures***

No mitigation is necessary.

***Level of Significance After Mitigation***

Less than significant impact.

**3.1.7 - Residual Significant Impacts**

None identified.

