5. Aesthetics

This chapter describes visual resources near the proposed project and evaluates potential impacts the proposed project may have on the landscape's aesthetic character. This chapter analyzes whether Plan Concept 1 or Plan Concept 2 of the Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan would alter the environment's perceived visual character and cause visual impacts.

5.1 Environmental Setting

Visual resources are generally defined as the landscape's viewable natural and built features. Landforms, water, and vegetation patterns are among the natural landscape features that define an area's visual character, whereas buildings, roads, and other structures reflect human modifications to the landscape. These natural and built landscape features are considered visual resources that contribute to the public's experience and appreciation of the environment.

5.1.1 Regional Setting

The project site is located on the eastern edge of the Sacramento Valley in western Placer County (Figure 1-1) between the cities of Roseville and Lincoln. Parts of the areas north and west of the project area are generally characterized by open land containing grazing, field crops, and other agricultural uses. A small residential area is located two miles west of the Western Placer Waste Management Authority's (WPWMA's) center property; there is another residential area 2 miles northeast of the project site in the City of Lincoln. To the east, development in the City of Rocklin includes residences, commercial uses, and a university, among which are open, undeveloped grassy areas. The city of Roseville, located south of the project, is dominated by residential development, with residences located 1 mile from WPWMA's southern property line. The foothills and mountains of the Sierra Nevada are visible east of the project area, although they are not dominant features because of distance and atmospheric haze. The Sutter Buttes are visible northwest of the project area but, like the Sierra Nevada, are not a dominant feature because of distance and atmospheric haze. On a clear day, the Coast Ranges are visible approximately 40 miles to the west of the project site (Placer County 2019a).

Areas surrounding the WPWMA site are characterized by relatively flat terrain with natural grasslands and agricultural uses, such as field crops and grazing. Development is mostly rural, with pockets of urbanized land developed primarily for industrial uses. The lack of tall vegetation and buildings allows viewers in the area to see parts of the cities of Rocklin and Lincoln in the middle ground, with views of the foothills in the background, although small changes in elevation or the presence of buildings, tall bushes, or trees can obscure long-range views from viewpoints throughout the area. Thunder Valley Casino Resort and the WPWMA's Western Regional Sanitary Landfill (WRSL) are the two most prominent visual features in the area, although their prominence depends on the viewer's distance from these facilities. From nearby vantage points, particularly from Fiddyment Road and Athens Avenue, the WRSL appears as a low hill that is seasonally vegetated. A power transmission line transects the area northwest to southeast, and the large transmission line towers are visible from most of the area. Lower-voltage power lines are located adjacent to some roads in the area. The area's visual character is largely agricultural and rural, with some developed commercial and industrial areas (Placer County 2019a).

Views in the area are generally considered to be low to moderate in quality. The area has low vividness because it lacks distinctive scenic resources, and there are no distinguishable topographic, geologic, or other natural features. Facilities such as the WRSL and the nearby Athens Industrial Area (which includes the CEMEX Lincoln cement plant, the PC Exploration company, several wood recycling operations, and the

A&A Concrete Supply operation) generally have low visual order in the landscape, and intrusions are not in visual harmony with the landscape. In these areas, there is low unity and low intactness. Other areas such as agricultural areas with agriculture-related development, as well as business park areas, have some visual order and have intrusions consistent with the landscape. In these areas, there is moderate unity and moderate intactness (Placer County 2019a).

5.1.2 Project Area

The site is located on the WPWMA's three existing properties, generally at the intersection of Athens Avenue and Fiddyment Road, as described in Section 1.2 and shown on Figure 1-2. The three contiguous properties total 928 acres (Figure 1-3) and are described as follows:

- Approximately 155-acre eastern property, which is undeveloped and leased by WPWMA to a private entity for cattle grazing.
- Approximately 314-acre center property, which includes the existing Material Recovery Facility (MRF) building, composting facility, construction and demolition (C&D) materials processing area, public waste drop-off area, household hazardous waste (HHW) facilities, WRSL, stormwater ponds, scalehouse facilities, landfill gas (LFG)-to-energy plant, the site entrance infrastructure, and a Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) transmission line easement.
- Approximately 459-acre western property, part of which is currently leased to the City of Lincoln for discharge of reclaimed water and part of which is leased for model airplane operations. A sublessee of the City of Lincoln resides on this property in a single-story residential structure located at the end of the dirt road that extends directly west from the intersection of Athens Avenue and Fiddyment Road. The same PG&E transmission line easement that extends along the southwestern corner of the center property extends through the south-central portion of this property.

Within the project site, land is generally flat with pre-landfill-development elevations ranging from approximately 100 feet above mean sea level (msl) in the south to 135 feet above msl in the center of the site. The existing landfill rises to a peak elevation of 196 feet above msl.

5.2 Regulatory Setting

Federal, state, and local regulations were reviewed for applicability to the proposed project.

5.2.1 Federal

There are no applicable federal plans or laws related to aesthetics and relevant to the proposed project.

5.2.2 State

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) of 1970, as amended.

CEQA generally requires state and local government agencies to inform decision makers and the public about the potential environmental impacts of proposed projects, including impacts to visual resources, and to reduce those environmental impacts to the extent feasible.

***Streets and Highways Code*, Article 2.5 State Scenic Highways.**

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 adjacent to highways. The state

regulations and guidelines governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the *Streets and Highways Code*, section 260 et seq. A highway may be designated as "scenic" depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the landscape's scenic quality, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the travelers' enjoyment of the view.

There are no officially designated State Scenic Highways located within the proposed project viewshed (Caltrans 2019).

5.2.3 Local

The WPWMA is a Joint Powers Authority (JPA) composed of Placer County and the cities of Lincoln, Rocklin, and Roseville to own and operate a regional recycling facility and sanitary landfill. As a JPA, the WPWMA considers local regulations and consults with local agencies, but County and city regulations are not applicable, as the County and cities do not have jurisdiction over the proposed project. Accordingly, the following discussion of local goals and policies associated with visual resources is provided for informational purposes only.

Placer County General Plan

The relevant goals and policies from the Placer County General Plan applicable to visual resources within the proposed project area are presented in this section.

> Goal 1.K: To protect the visual and scenic resources of Placer County as important quality-of-life amenities for County residents and a principal asset in the promotion of recreation and tourism.
>
> - Policy 1.K.3: The County shall require that new development in rural areas incorporates landscaping that provides a transition between the vegetation in developed areas and adjacent open space or undeveloped areas.
>
> Goal 1.O: To promote and enhance the quality and aesthetics of development in Placer County.
>
> - Policy 1.O.1: Except as otherwise provided in the Design Guidelines of an approved Specific Plan, the County shall require all new development to be designed in compliance with applicable provisions of the Placer County Design Guides Manual.
> - Policy 1.O.9: The County shall discourage the use of outdoor lighting that shines unnecessarily onto adjacent properties or into the night sky.

Placer County Design Guidelines

Placer County has adopted design guidelines, and procedures are established under the County Zoning Ordinance for performing design review. The County's design guidelines are applicable to all commercial, industrial, and multifamily development and identify principles related to a building's height, bulk, color, and scale. Other subjects covered include architectural design, site planning, parking and circulation, and signs. Specific site planning and design criteria are included for commercial, industrial, and multifamily development.

Placer County Landscape Design Guidelines

Placer County also maintains landscape design guidelines (Placer County 2013) applicable to the design review process. The landscape design guidelines contain a series of "general requirements" for

landscaping, including preserving existing trees and shrubs where feasible; a 15 percent site coverage landscape requirement; requirements for landscape design and scale consistency; requirements for water-efficient landscaping; standards for planting area sizes; a requirement for landscaping along property borders; screening to minimize light, noise, and physical distractions; use of deciduous trees in parking lot interiors; screening parking, loading, and other similar areas; and a requirement for comprehensive master landscape plans for major developments. Other guidelines pertaining to planting size, installation, maintenance, and irrigation are also described in the guidelines manual.

Sunset Area Plan

The proposed project is located within an area covered by the Sunset Area Plan (SAP) (Placer County 2019b). The relevant goals and policies from the SAP applicable to visual resources are presented in this section.

Goal LU/ED-3: Design and Land Development Practices. To promote high-quality design and land development practices in the Sunset Area.

- Policy LU/ED-3.7: Screening to Avoid Visual Impacts. The County shall require outdoor storage or activity areas to incorporate screening elements to reduce the visual impact of such activities. Such elements shall include opaque fencing and landscaping. The stacking of materials in outdoor yard areas shall be restricted to reduce visual impacts. No materials stored immediately adjacent to screening elements should exceed the height of the screen. Materials stored higher than a screen shall be confined to the middle of the yard area.
- Policy LU/ED-3.9: Lighting. The County shall balance the need for lighting in new developments with concern for the environment and existing uses by encouraging the use of efficient, strategic, and aesthetic lighting methods that address public safety and reduce light pollution. Lighting design should adhere to the following principles:
  - A. Lighting on site should be designed to promote pedestrian comfort and safety and to enliven public gathering places.
  - B. Lighting for individual buildings should be integrated into the architecture.
  - C. Lighting shall be designed to minimize projection into adjacent properties and onto adjacent roads and not provide a source of glare.
  - D. The height of light standards in parking areas shall not exceed eighteen (18) feet.
  - E. Energy-efficient technology should be used wherever possible.

5.3 Impact Analysis and Mitigation Measures

5.3.1 Thresholds of Significance

The thresholds of significance for assessing impacts come from the CEQA Environmental Checklist. For aesthetics, the CEQA Checklist asks, except as provided in *Public Resources Code* Section 21099, would the project

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

- In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage points). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?
- The proposed project vicinity does not include designated scenic vistas or scenic resources, including trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings within a state scenic highway. Therefore, these CEQA Checklist questions are not discussed further in this chapter.

5.3.2 Analysis Procedure

This analysis of the visual resource issues associated with the proposed project was prepared in accordance with the visual impact assessment system developed by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* (2015). FHWA invested considerable resources in developing and implementing this method. As a result, it is robust and widely used to provide systematic evaluations of visual change.

The FHWA method addresses the following primary questions:

- What are the visual qualities and characteristics of the existing landscape in the project area?
- What are the potential effects of the project's proposed alternatives on the area's visual quality and aesthetics?
- Who would see the project, and what is their likely level of concern about, or reaction to, the way the project visually fits within the existing landscape?

Applying the FHWA method entails the following six steps:

- Establish the project's area of visual influence.
- Determine who has views of and from the project (the viewer).
- Describe and assess the landscape that exists before project construction (the affected environment).
- Assess the response of viewers looking at and from the project, before and after project construction (viewer sensitivity or concern).
- Determine and evaluate views of the project for before and after project construction (simulations).
- Describe the potential visible changes to the project area and its surroundings that would result from the project.

The initial step in the evaluation process was to review planning documents applicable to the project area to gain insight into the type of land uses intended for the general area and the guidelines given for the protection or preservation of visual resources. Consideration was then given to the existing visual setting within the project viewshed, which is defined as the geographical area in which the project can be seen. Site reconnaissance was conducted to view the site and surrounding area, identify potential key observation points (KOPs), and take representative photographs of existing visual conditions. The photographs used as the basis for preparing the simulations were taken with a single-lens reflex digital camera set to take photographs with a focal length equivalent to that of photographs taken with a

35-millimeter (mm) camera with a 50mm lens (view angle 40 degrees). Photographs from the site reconnaissance were selected to represent the "before" conditions from each of the potential KOPs. Within the viewshed area, five KOPs were selected to be used as the basis for analyzing the proposed project's visual effects. The existing visual conditions seen in the views from each of the KOPs were evaluated by using the FHWA visual quality assessment system that entails use of a numerical rating system.

The FHWA visual quality assessment asks: Is this particular view common or dramatic? Is it a pleasing composition (a mix of elements that seem to belong together) or not (a mix of elements that either do not belong together or contrast with the other elements in the surroundings)?

Under the FHWA visual quality analysis system, the visual quality of each view is evaluated in terms of its vividness, intactness, and unity:

- Vividness is defined as the degree of drama, memorability, or distinctiveness of the landscape components. Overall vividness is an aggregated assessment of landform, vegetation, water features, and human-made components in views.
- Intactness is a measure of the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements. This factor can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes, as well as in natural settings. High intactness means that the landscape is free of unattractive features and is not broken up by features and elements that appear out of place. Low intactness means that visual elements that are unattractive or detract from the quality of the view can be seen.
- Unity is the degree of visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole. High unity frequently attests to the careful design of individual components and their relationship in the landscape or refers to an undisturbed natural landscape.

Each of these visual quality dimensions is documented by using an FHWA rating sheet. For each dimension, a numerical rating score on a scale from 1 to 7 is assigned, where a score of 1 indicates very low visual quality, a score of 4 indicates moderate or average visual quality, and a score of 7 indicates very high visual quality. The scores for each of the three dimensions are added and then averaged to generate an overall visual quality score.

The views from each of the five viewpoints selected as KOPs for this analysis are described, and the results of the FHWA-based evaluation of their visual quality are documented in Section 5.3.3.

To provide a basis for evaluating the project's impacts on these views, visual simulations were produced to illustrate the "after" visual conditions from each KOP. Computer modeling and rendering techniques were used to produce simulated images of the site views as they will appear after the proposed project is developed. Existing topographic and site data provided the basis for developing an initial digital model. Engineers provided engineering drawings, digital data, and landfill height information for the proposed project. The data were used to create three-dimensional digital models, which were then combined with the digital site model to produce a complete computer model of the proposed project. These simulations provide the viewer with a clear image of the location, scale, and visual appearance of the proposed project. The images are accurate within the constraints of the available site and project data.

Based on review of the simulated project views from each KOP, the visual quality of each view was reevaluated, using the FHWA visual quality evaluative system. Results of the evaluations of the existing and project views from each KOP are documented on the FHWA worksheets that are attached as Appendix B. The evaluations of the existing and project views were compared to determine the degree of

visual change. Based on assessing the degree of visual change that the proposed project's development will bring and evaluating the sensitivity of the view, the overall visual impact was determined and expressed in terms of impact level (very low to very high).

Once all effects were examined, a determination was made as to whether any potential impacts would reach a level that would be significant under the four CEQA Guidelines checklist questions discussed in Section 5.3.7.

5.3.3 Key Observation Points

To structure the analysis of the proposed project's effects on visual resources, the project's viewshed was defined. The viewshed is the area surrounding a project from which the project is or could be visible to viewers based on topography, vegetation, and the built environment. Based on the area's generally flat terrain and the expanded landfill's proposed maximum height, it was assumed that topography would not fully screen the landfill from view from any location within a 4-mile study area. Vegetation and built-environment features that could screen the project from view would be assessed during field reconnaissance.

Locations within the 4-mile study area that could be the most sensitive to the proposed project's potential visual impacts were identified prior to the site visit. Locations used as KOPs for previous WPWMA environmental documents and for the SAP Environmental Impact Report (EIR) were also identified and considered. Existing visual conditions were photo-documented from potential sensitive receptor locations throughout the study area during site visits conducted on October 1, 2019, and November 1, 2019. Views from the inventory of viewpoints captured within the study area were reviewed, and five were selected as KOPs to be used for evaluating the proposed project's visual effects. Figure 5-1 shows each KOP location relative to the project site.

Based on the observations made in the field and review of photographs, the existing visual conditions of the views from each of the five KOPs were documented and evaluated. Assessments of existing visual conditions were made by applying the approach to landscape evaluation that is part of the methodology for visual impact assessment developed by the FHWA as described in Section 5.3.2. The baseline existing conditions seen in the views from each of the five KOPs are described in the following subsections.

KOP 1

KOP 1 is located near the Sun City Lincoln Hills Community Center. Sun City Lincoln Hills is a planned 55+ residential development of more than 6,000 homes. Figure 5-2 is a photograph of the existing view looking southwest toward the proposed project site, which is approximately 4 miles away.

Taken from a slightly elevated location on a slope, the photograph shows the manicured grounds of a golf course in the immediate foreground, dotted with the occasional large pine or oak tree and sand trap. Generously sized homes with red- and brown-tile roofs are located adjacent to the golf course and are part of the Sun City Lincoln Hills development. Large portions of the middle ground are screened from view by intervening trees and residences. What is visible consists of additional residential development and tan-colored open space. Thunder Valley Casino Resort's 17-story tower and large parking structure are seen at center left. The existing landfill is difficult to distinguish, but it is visible to the right of the casino. Mountains that form the western border of the Central Valley are located approximately 40 miles from KOP 1 and are faintly visible in the background.

The golf course and adjacent residential development—the dominant visual elements—are attractive and meticulously maintained. Though heavily influenced by human development, the view's intactness

remains high, with the casino tower and parking garage presenting as minor encroaching elements. Unity is also high, as the view is a generally satisfying blend of natural and human-built visual elements. Overall visual quality of the view from KOP 1 is moderately high.

The project area is only partially visible from KOP 1 because of intervening buildings and large trees. Viewers would be Lincoln Hills residents, guests, and community center staff. The golf course and community center are heavily trafficked facilities within the community, and view duration may range from minutes to several hours. However, viewers may tend to be more focused on their activities than on the views beyond the property. Overall viewer exposure from KOP 1 is moderately low.

Overall visual sensitivity from KOP 1 is moderate based on the moderately high visual quality of the view and a moderately low degree of exposure in an area where viewer concern is assumed to be moderate.

KOP 2

KOP 2 is located off Twelve Bridges Drive near the State Route 65 southbound highway exit. From this southwest-facing view, the project area is located 2 miles in the distance. See Figure 5-3 for a photograph of the existing condition.

An open field of ochre-colored dried grasses and shrubs extends out from the viewpoint. Large oak and eucalyptus trees are scattered throughout the scene, generally along roadsides and as screening for industrial land uses in the vicinity. The north-south aligned Industrial Avenue crosses the image from left to right. An electrical distribution line and a railroad track that parallel Industrial Avenue are also visible in the foreground. In the middle ground, the Thunder Valley Casino Resort tower and parking structure dominate the left-hand side of the view. The existing landfill surface is visible in the center of the image, though it is partially screened by existing vegetation. At this distance, the landfill is a somewhat natural-appearing topographic feature. A mountain range approximately 40 miles away is faintly seen on the right-hand side of the photograph.

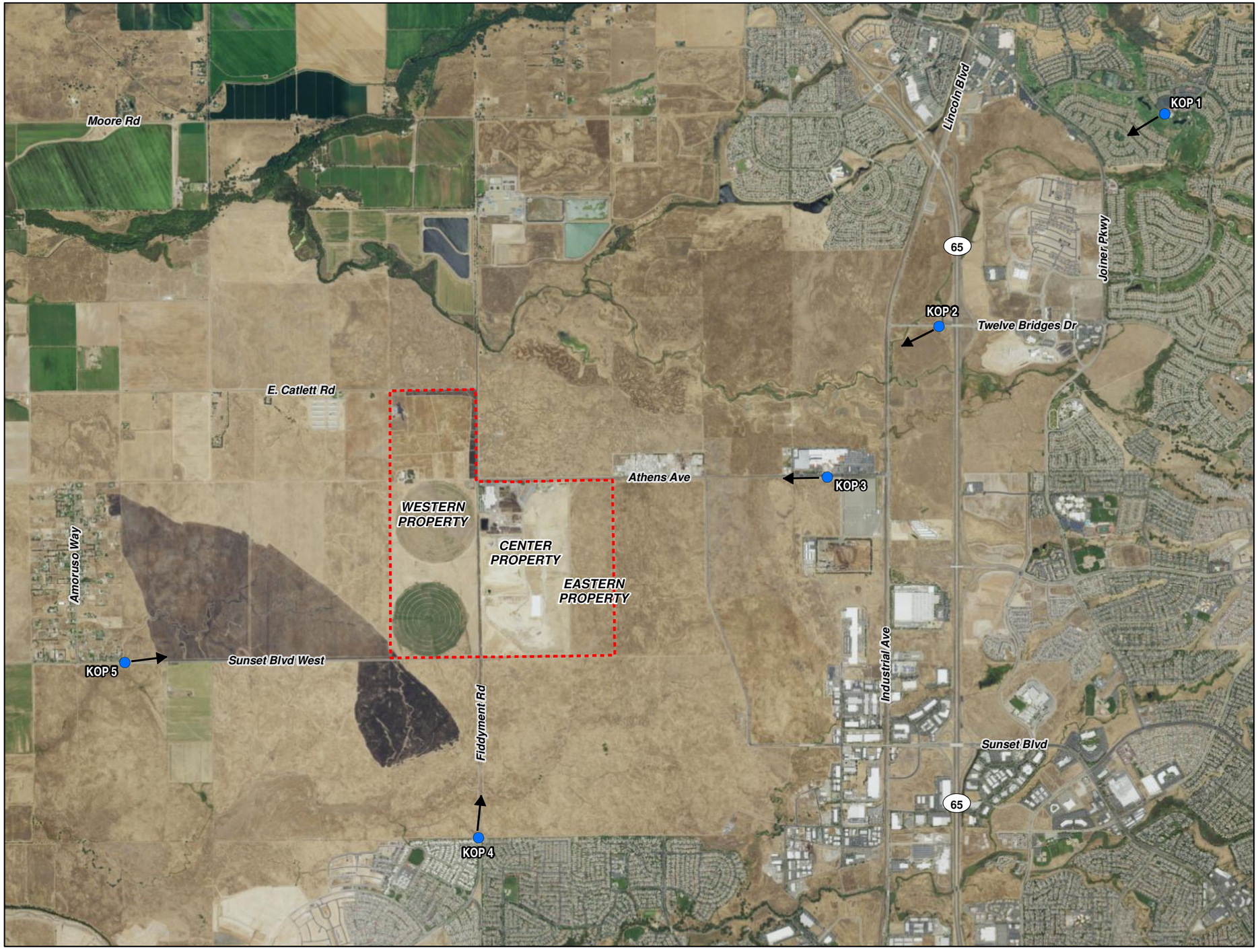
Save for the distant mountains in the background, the view lacks distinctive or memorable components that would increase visual quality. The casino tower and parking deck are the view's most vivid features, though they represent intrusive elements that contrast with a scene that is otherwise dominated by open space. Overall visual quality from KOP 2 is moderately low.

Project site visibility from this KOP is high, though intervening large trees may provide a low level of screening. Aside from Twelve Bridges Drive and State Route 65, the KOP is surrounded by open space, so viewers would be limited to persons traveling through the area by vehicle. As such, viewing times would be brief, likely no more than 1 to 2 minutes. Overall viewer exposure from KOP 2 is moderate.

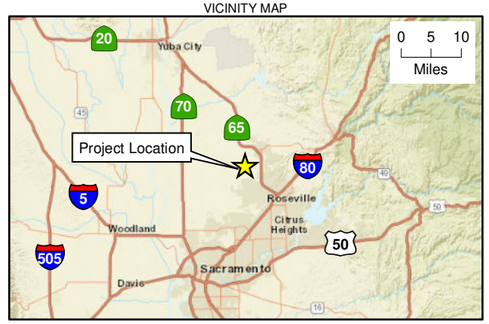
Overall visual sensitivity from KOP 2 is moderate based on the moderately low visual quality of the view and a moderate degree of exposure in an area where viewer concern is assumed to be moderate.

KOP 3

Located south of Athens Avenue and across the street from the main entrance to the Thunder Valley Casino Resort, KOP 3 faces west toward the project site. The existing condition view is presented on Figure 5-4. While the casino is a heavily trafficked local attraction, the surrounding area is largely undeveloped open space. Several industrial-use facilities are located south and west of the casino along Industrial Avenue and Athens Avenue.



VICINITY MAP



LEGEND

- Project Boundary
- Key Observation Point (KOP) and Photograph Direction

N

0 0.5 1
Miles

Figure 5-1. Key Observation Points
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

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KOP 1 – Existing view from near the Sun City Lincoln Hills Community Center looking southwest toward the landfill.

Figure 5-2. KOP 1 – Existing Condition
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Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

KOP 2 – Existing view from Twelve Bridges Drive looking southwest toward the landfill.

Figure 5-3. KOP 2 – Existing Condition
Draft Environmental Impact Report
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KOP 3 – Existing view from Athens Avenue looking west toward the landfill.

Figure 5-4. KOP 3 – Existing Condition
Draft Environmental Impact Report
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Two different and contrasting landscapes are documented in KOP 3. On the left-hand side of the image, south of Athens Avenue, flat, open fields of dried grasses and shrubs give way to the subtle rise of the existing landfill 1.5 miles from the viewpoint. Between the KOP and the project site, a row of wood distribution poles traverses the view from left to right. Farther in the distance, beyond the project site, a large electrical transmission line is visible. Though influenced by human development, the landscape appears natural. On the right-hand side of the image, along Athens Avenue and to the north, human development dominates. The casino, with its large parking structure, tall hotel tower, and attractively landscaped grounds, sharply contrasts with the open space across the street. An electrical distribution line running along the southern side of Athens Avenue neatly divides the scene and is an additional intrusive element. Lacking memorable landscape elements and with moderately low levels of intactness and unity, overall visual quality at KOP 3 is low to moderately low.

Current project site visibility from the area near KOP 3 is high. Land in the area is generally flat and open with no vegetation or trees of significant size to provide screening. Viewers would be a mix of persons visiting or working at the casino, staff of nearby industrial facilities, and drivers using Athens Avenue. Among these viewer groups, visitors to the casino would have a moderate level of visual concern, while others would have a low to moderate level of concern. View duration would generally be short, limited to a few minutes for travelers driving along Athens Avenue or for visitors entering and exiting the casino.

Overall visual sensitivity from KOP 3 is moderate based on the moderately low visual quality of the view and a high degree of exposure in an area where viewer concern is assumed to be moderate.

KOP 4

KOP 4 is a view from west of Fiddyment Road looking north toward the project site, which is located 1 mile from the viewpoint. Areas immediately south of the project site are characterized by open space. Beyond 1 mile south, open space transitions to newer single-family residential development. Figure 5-5 documents the existing visual conditions at KOP 4.

Green- to brown-colored riparian grasses and shrubs of moderate height are visible in the immediate foreground of the view. Fiddyment Road and an adjacent row of wooden utility poles divide the areas beyond into east and west, though the landscape on both sides of the road is defined by flat, open space. Existing vegetation consists mostly of dried grasses and shrubs; however, there are a limited number of larger trees in view. An electrical transmission line supported by lattice steel structures is seen crossing the photograph from left to right. On the right-hand side of the image, the existing landfill mound rises slightly above the otherwise flat terrain. The existing landfill base is marked by a row of pine trees that were planted along the property's southern boundary to provide visual screening.

Scenic resources visible from KOP 4 are limited to distant foothills and mountains, the nearest of which are approximately 10 miles to the east. Though somewhat natural appearing, the view from KOP 4 is influenced by human development and contains intrusive elements such as the utility poles and road signage. Overall visual quality of the view is average.

Existing landfill visibility is high, as there are few natural or human-made elements to provide visual screening. From the distance of KOP 4, the row of tall pine trees planted for this purpose does little to obscure the existing landfill from view. Viewers would consist of two main groups, the first being drivers traveling through the area along Fiddyment Road. Their views of the landfill would be short, lasting no longer than a few minutes, and their level of visual concern would be moderate. The second viewer group would consist of persons viewing the area from their nearby residences. In general, views would be limited to residences that are adjacent to the open space south of the project site. Residences not bordering the

KOP 4 – Existing view from Fiddyment Road looking north toward the landfill.

Figure 5-5. KOP 4 – Existing Condition
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

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open space would likely have any views toward the landfill screened by other residences. Residential viewers tend to have a higher level of visual concern and experience longer viewing durations.

Overall visual sensitivity from KOP 4 is moderate based on the average visual quality of the view and a high degree of exposure in an area where viewer concern is assumed to be moderate.

KOP 5

Figure 5-6 presents the east-facing view from KOP 5, which is located along Sunset Boulevard West, 2 miles west of the project site near a small community of residential development along Amoruso Way. Aside from this pocket of low-density residential, land uses to the west of the project site are either agricultural or open space.

The smooth asphalt surface of Sunset Boulevard West travels out from the viewpoint along the right-hand side of the image and is paralleled by a row of wooden utility poles. To the north of the road, a vast, generally flat open space extends out toward the foothills of the Sierra Nevada mountain range, which begin to rise approximately 10 miles in the distance. The existing landfill mound is seen to the left of Sunset Boulevard West, but it is difficult to detect because of its distance, relatively low profile, and the coloring of its slopes, which matches the surrounding open space. The landfill base is marked by a row of pine trees that were planted along Fiddyment Road to provide visual screening. The teal-colored MRF building is visible toward the center of the view.

Intactness and unity are average to moderately high, as the scene is a natural-appearing view of open fields with foothills rising in the distance. Both are somewhat degraded by the visible human-made elements. Vividness is enhanced by the presence of the distant foothills, but the view otherwise lacks memorable features. Overall visual quality is average.

Existing landfill visibility is high, as there are few natural or human-made elements to provide visual screening. From the distance of KOP 5, the row of tall pine trees planted for this purpose does little to obscure the landfill from view. Viewers in the area of KOP 5 would be like those described for KOP 4, consisting of motorists using Sunset Boulevard West and residents of the community off Amoruso Way.

Overall visual sensitivity from KOP 5 is moderate, based on the average visual quality of the view and a high degree of exposure in an area where viewer concern is assumed to be moderate.

KOP 5 – Existing view from Sunset Boulevard West looking northeast toward the landfill.

Figure 5-6. KOP 5 – Existing Condition
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Placer County, California

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5.3.4 Character Photographs

Figures 5-7 through 5-15 present character photographs that provide additional context for the proposed project setting.

Figure 5-7. Character Photograph 1
View looking southwest from a park at the Sun City Lincoln Hills Community Center. Large trees on the property screen the landfill from view.

Figure 5-8. Character Photograph 2

View looking southwest from a residential subdivision under construction 2.5 miles northeast of the project site. The existing landfill is visible in the center of the photograph, to the right of the Thunder Valley Resort Casino.

Figure 5-9. Character Photograph 3
View looking southwest from Dr. Nathan Dubin Neighborhood Park, located 2.0 miles from the project site. The existing landfill is visible on the left-hand side of the image, while the large, teal-roofed MRF building and other landfill support facilities are seen toward the center.

Figure 5-10. Character Photograph 4
View looking southeast from near the intersection of Moore Road and S. Dowd Road, roughly 2.0 miles from the project site. Dense vegetation and tall trees growing along a creek screen views of the project site from this point and other areas to the north.

Figure 5-11. Character Photograph 5
View looking south-southwest from Moore Road, 2.0 miles north of the project site. The existing landfill is visible on the center left side of the image. The structure in the foreground screens the view toward the MRF building and other landfill support facilities.

Figure 5-12. Character Photograph 6
View looking southeast from the northwestern corner of the western WPWMA property. A facility used for model airplane operation is seen to the right, while the existing landfill and support facilities are visible in the center and to the left.

Figure 5-13. Character Photograph 7
View looking north from Fiddyment Road on the western side of the project site. Existing trees planted along the eastern side of Fiddyment Road effectively screen the landfill from view.

Figure 5-14. Character Photograph 8
View looking northwest from Fiddyment Road across the western WPWMA property. The open field in view is currently leased to the City of Lincoln for discharge of reclaimed water.

Figure 5-15. Character Photograph 9
View looking east-northeast from the intersection of Sunset Boulevard West and Amoruso Way. Dense vegetation and tall trees within the nearby residential community screen the landfill from view.

5.3.5 Project Appearance

The WPWMA has identified two separate concepts for implementing the Waste Action Plan, both of which are evaluated at an equal level of detail in the following assessment of visual effects. Plan Concept 1 and Plan Concept 2 contain similar elements, but the locations and characteristics of the elements vary between the two. Table 5-1 summarizes proposed project elements associated with each Plan Concept that may affect visual resources. Refer to Chapter 3, Project Description, for detailed information about all proposed project elements. Plan Concept 1 and Plan Concept 2 layout maps are provided as Figure 3-1 and Figure 3-7, respectively.

Table 5-1. Summary of Landscape Changes Associated with Plan Concept 1 and Plan Concept 2

Waste Action Plan Project Element	Environmental Baseline	Plan Concept 1 Change	Plan Concept 2 Change
Waste Recovery			
Expanded and Redesigned Organics Management Operation	Organics management operation located in the northern part of the center property using windrows	Expanded organics management relocated to the center part of the western property using ASP	Expanded organics management operation within the northern part of the center property using ASP; Requires relocation of waste in Modules 1, 2, 10, and 11
	Two compost leachate collection ponds on center property	50% increase in overall pond capacity and removal of pond on center property	50% increase in overall pond capacity and removal of pond on center property
	Compostable materials received outside	Potential construction of a food waste receiving building	Potential construction of a food waste receiving building
Expanded and Redesigned C&D Materials Processing Operation	C&D materials processing located in the northern part of the center property	C&D materials processing operation increased in size by 2 to 3 times on the center property	C&D materials processing operation increased in size by 2 to 3 times on the center property and integrated with expanded composting operation and redesigned public waste drop-off; requires relocation of waste in Modules 1, 2, 10, and 11
Expanded and Redesigned Public Waste Drop-Off Area Operations	Public waste drop-off area operations (tipping area, buy-back center, HHW) located in the northern part of the center property	Public waste drop-off area operations expanded, redesigned and relocated to western property; new facilities include a public tipping area, material buy-back center, an HHW drop-off area, a reuse store, and an entrance kiosk with vehicle queuing	Expanded and redesigned public waste drop-off operations on the center property; new facilities include public tipping area, a material buy-back center, an HHW drop-off area, and a reuse store; requires relocation of waste in Modules 1, 2, 10, and 11
Waste Disposal			
Expanded Landfill Disposal Capacity	Waste footprint located on center property in one contiguous landfill footprint	Waste footprint expanded to eastern property in one contiguous landfill footprint	Waste footprint expanded to western property with landfill footprints on both the center property and western property
	Current elevation – 196 feet above msl and permitted peak elevation – 295 feet above msl	Height increase above current conditions – 129 feet; Height increase	Height increase above current conditions – 129 feet; Height increase above

Table 5-1. Summary of Landscape Changes Associated with Plan Concept 1 and Plan Concept 2

Waste Action Plan Project Element	Environmental Baseline	Plan Concept 1 Change	Plan Concept 2 Change
		above currently permitted conditions – 30 feet	currently permitted conditions – 30 feet
	Permitted waste footprint – 231 acres	Waste footprint expands by 89 acres to 320 acres	Waste footprint expands by 131 acres to 362 acres
	Waste capacity exhausted by approximately 2058	Estimated increase in landfill site life by approximately 43 years	Estimated increase in landfill site life by approximately 52 years
	Eventual relocation of Waste Recovery operations on currently permitted Module 9 to allow for future landfill disposal	Elimination of currently permitted Module 9 for future Waste Disposal	Elimination of currently permitted Modules 8 and 9 for future Waste Disposal
Excavation of Existing Solid Waste	Waste previously placed in non-Subtitle D lined modules (Modules 1, 2, 10, 11)	Modules 1, 2, 10, and 11 would be excavated, and the contents relocated to an onsite Subtitle D-compliant module; Excavated modules would be lined and reused for future Waste Disposal when needed	Modules 1, 2, 10, and 11 would be excavated, and the contents relocated to an onsite Subtitle D-compliant module; A portion of Module 11 would be lined and reused for future Waste Disposal, and the remaining excavated module areas would be backfilled with clean soil within 3 years to accommodate expansion of solid waste activities on the center property
	Peak elevations of Modules 1, 2, 10, and 11 do not exceed approximately 170 feet above msl	The peak elevation of Modules 1, 2, 10, and 11 would be approximately 325 feet above msl	A portion of Module 11 would be relined and incorporated into the remaining waste cells, which would be approximately 325 feet above msl. Modules 1, 2, 10, and part of 11 would be filled with clean soil to match the surrounding ground elevation
Landfill Environmental Monitoring and Control Systems	Leachate, surface water, and LFG management systems	The leachate, surface water, and LFG management systems would be expanded to accommodate the expanded landfill footprint and height	The leachate, surface water, and LFG management systems would be expanded to accommodate the expanded landfill footprint and height and duplicated for the landfill expansion on the western property

Table 5-1. Summary of Landscape Changes Associated with Plan Concept 1 and Plan Concept 2

Waste Action Plan Project Element	Environmental Baseline	Plan Concept 1 Change	Plan Concept 2 Change
Complementary and Programmatic Elements			
Complementary and Programmatic Elements	Grazing operations on the eastern property, solid waste operations on the center property, and irrigation and model airplane operations on the western property	Project Level – Development of up to 300,000 square feet of building plus exterior infrastructure for complementary solid waste management elements. Industrial uses may include compatible technologies, pilot study areas, university research areas, and an LFG to compressed natural gas area Program Level – Up to 1.6 million square feet of industrial uses that are complementary to the solid waste management elements	Project Level – Development of up to 300,000 square feet of industrial uses Program Level – Development of up to 1.6 million square feet of industrial uses
		Project Level – Located on the northern part of the western property Program Level – Primarily in the northern and southern parts of the western property, plus locations on the center property, although some uses may be developed in closer proximity to the solid waste project elements or within areas not yet developed with solid waste project elements	Project Level – Located on the northern part of the eastern property Program Level – Primarily on the eastern property, plus locations on the center property and southern part of the western property, although some uses may be developed in closer proximity to the solid waste project elements or within areas not yet developed with solid waste project elements
Supporting Elements			
Waste Recovery and Waste Disposal – Supporting Elements	Materials recovered from the MRF operations are stored either within or outside of the MRF building, depending on material type and space constraints	Construction of a new recovered materials storage building and increased ability to store recovered materials inside	Construction of a new recovered materials storage building and increased ability to store recovered materials inside
	Stormwater ponds on center property	New and expanded stormwater ponds on western, center, and eastern properties	New and expanded stormwater ponds on western and center properties

Table 5-1. Summary of Landscape Changes Associated with Plan Concept 1 and Plan Concept 2

Waste Action Plan Project Element	Environmental Baseline	Plan Concept 1 Change	Plan Concept 2 Change
	Road crossings between center and western property limited to public roads	Separated facility-only crossing of Fiddyment Road that would connect center and western properties	Separated facility-only crossing of Fiddyment Road that would connect center and western properties
	Maintenance facility on the center property	Center property maintenance facility would be upgraded, and a new satellite maintenance facility would be constructed on the western property (for compost and public waste drop-off operations)	Center property maintenance facility would be upgraded, and a new satellite maintenance facility would be constructed on the western property (for landfill operations)
	Administration building on the center property	Expansion to, or addition of, a second administration building with an education center and parking	Expansion to, or addition of, a second administration building with education center and parking
	Entrance facilities on Athens Avenue	Upgraded Athens Avenue entrance facilities, including site access and scalehouse infrastructure when needed	Upgraded Athens Avenue entrance facilities, including site access and scalehouse infrastructure
	Restricted dirt road access to western property at the Fiddyment Road and Athens Avenue intersection	New paved site entrance to western property at the Fiddyment Road and Athens Avenue intersection to accommodate public access to the western property	New paved site entrance to western property at the Fiddyment Road and Athens Avenue intersection to accommodate expanded landfill operation
	Wastewater and fire protection water line used for the existing public waste drop-off area operations	A new wastewater and new fire protection water line extending to the western property would be necessary to service the relocated public waste drop-off area operations	A new wastewater and fire protection water line extending to the western property would be necessary to service the expanded landfill operations
	Landscaping and fencing located along parts of the center property	Expanded perimeter landscaping and fencing to surround entire project site	Expanded perimeter landscaping and fencing to surround entire project site

Effects Common to the Plan Concepts

Lighting.

The WPWMA uses portable lights at the landfill working face and along the access road from the MRF. Portable lights generally consist of two-wheeled trailers that include 30-foot extendable masts with four 1,000-watt parallel metal halide lamps. The lamps are powered by a diesel engine included on the trailer. The lights include shielding to minimize light scatter off the project site. Two to four portable trailer lights are used for the site, depending upon the distance of the landfill tipping (unloading) area to the landfill working face. Lighting is only used during the fall, winter, and spring when darkness occurs before 8:30 p.m. (WPWMA 2017).

Only a moderate increase in the overall level of lighting is expected for continued and expanded landfill operation, because the new landfill areas would be phased and the active filling in each area at any one time would be restricted to a relatively small part of the larger area. However, as the landfill increases in height, the active working face will be at higher elevations; thus, the working face and associated night lighting have the potential to be more visible. Additionally, as new landfill areas are developed (on the eastern property for Plan Concept 1 and the western property for Plan Concept 2), night lighting will be introduced in areas where no lighting currently exists.

Relocating the organics management operation and public waste drop-off area to the western property for Plan Concept 1 will introduce lighting to the western property. This lighting would be the minimum required for site security and would be consistent with Placer County General Plan and SAP policies that lighting be screened and not shine unnecessarily onto adjacent properties or into the night sky, and that light pollution be minimized.

Similarly, introducing programmatic and complementary manufacturing elements to the western and eastern properties will introduce new sources of lighting that do not currently exist. It is assumed that any such developments will include lighting that is screened and minimized, consistent with Placer County General Plan Policies, General Plan Design Guidelines, General Plan Landscape Design Guidelines, and SAP Policies.

WRSL Cover.

No change to disposal and cover procedures are expected to occur as a result of the proposed project. Current practices involve minimizing the work area over which waste is spread to control odor and litter. Additionally, the waste is covered at least daily with a layer of compacted soil or alternative daily cover.

Currently, the WPWMA continuously revegetates portions of the WRSL that have been disturbed for erosion control and water quality. This practice of continuous revegetation results in landfill slopes that resemble the surrounding landscape, as shown on Figure 5-5, the existing condition of the site from KOP 4. WPWMA would continue the practice of continuous revegetation for the proposed project.

Site Beautification and Perimeter Fencing.

Site beautification for the proposed project includes landscaping or vegetation, and irrigation at the new administrative building, main entrance, and site perimeter as well as fencing along the perimeter of the site. Plan Concepts 1 and 2 include 1,000 and 500 square feet of landscaping or vegetation for the new administrative building and main entrance, respectively. The plan concepts include varying lengths of irrigation, perimeter vegetation, and fencing, depending on the facility configuration.

Existing perimeter fencing would be maintained to the extent feasible. Under Plan Concept 1, new fencing would be used to enclose the composting facility on the western property and the landfill on the eastern property. For Plan Concept 2, new fencing would be needed to enclose the landfill on the western property. In all cases, a 6-foot-high chain-link fence or comparable would be used.

Litter.

Litter control measures are based on the wind conditions for the day and season. Normally, portable litter control fences are placed in the immediate vicinity of the landfill working face to contain windblown litter. If necessary, additional fences are placed adjacent to the landfill working face. When necessary, a work crew polices the litter fences near the landfill working face, the site itself, access roads and adjacent properties, as necessary. The WPWMA's MRF and WRSL operators are responsible for removing litter blown offsite to surrounding properties, as agreed to by adjacent landowner(s). At the end of each operating day, or more frequently on high-wind days, the working area is patrolled for litter. Litter is removed from the daily-cover stockpile, areas between the landfill working face and the litter fences, and vehicle unloading area. Litter in the areas around the vehicle unloading area and any push trails to the landfill working face are also picked up before the end of the day (WPWMA 2017). Litter control efforts at the WPWMA facility would continue for the proposed project and expand as needed with increasing levels of waste received at the site.

Litter is also generated by vehicles hauling waste en route to the facility. As the proposed project would extend the life of the WPWMA's facility and increase waste quantities being transported to the site, the potential for litter to be generated along haul routes is expected to continue.

Complementary and Programmatic Elements.

Both Plan Concept 1 and Plan Concept 2 reserve space for future complementary and programmatic elements to be developed by third parties. As described in Chapter 3, Project Description, uses may include compatible technologies and manufacturing operations, a pilot study area, a university research area, and an LFG-to-compressed natural gas, hydrogen or other renewable fuels area; all activities that would use materials from the facility to generate beneficial products.

Associated developments are expected to be consistent with the WPWMA property's Eco-Industrial zoning and land use designation with regard to type of use, scale, and appearance. Complementary and programmatic elements will generally be consistent with Industrial Zone Development Standards, as described in the Sunset Area Implementing Zoning Regulations (Placer County 2019b). These standards specify setbacks from the property line, ranging from 15 to 50 feet and a maximum height of 100 feet. Towers, poles, water tanks, and similar structures may be constructed higher than 100 feet.

Representative photographs of the types of facilities that may be considered as part of the complementary and programmatic elements are shown on Figures 5-16 through 5-18.

Of the 1.9 million square feet of industrial uses that could be developed on the WPWMA facility during the life of the proposed project, 300,000 square feet are considered at a project level in this analysis, while the remaining 1.6 million square feet are considered at a program level (see Chapter 4, Approach, for additional information). For Plan Concept 1, the 300,000 square feet of industrial use are assumed to be located on the northern part of the western property, while these uses for Plan Concept 2 would be located on the northern part of the eastern property.

Figure 5-16. Representative Complementary and Programmatic Element – Biogas Plant
Source: iStock

Figure 5-17. Representative Complementary and Programmatic Element – Biomass Facility
Source: iStock

Figure 5-18. Representative Complementary and Programmatic Element – Warehouse
Source: iStock

5.3.6 Visual Effects Assessment

As previously noted, the systematic evaluation of visual effects from Plan Concept 1 and Plan Concept 2 was conducted by using FHWA worksheets, which are attached as Appendix B and provide more complete details regarding the comparison between existing and simulated views,[16] as summarized in the following subsections.

Plan Concept 1

Simulated views of the developments proposed in Plan Concept 1 are presented on Figures 5-19 through 5-23. Two simulations are provided for each KOP location: one showing the project in the year 2050 and one showing the project at Full Buildout (estimated at year 2101).

[16] Proposed project features shown in the simulated views include the final grading plan for the WRSL at year 2050 and at Final Buildout, and the organics management operation on the western property for Plan Concept 1. These project components were identified as those project-level components most likely to be visible from offsite locations and therefore affect the visual character and quality of the project vicinity. Future complementary and programmatic elements for which facility designs and final locations are not currently specified were not included in the simulations.

a. KOP 1 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 2050, as seen from near the Sun City Lincoln Hills Community Center.

b. KOP 1 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 Full Buildout, as seen from near the Sun City Lincoln Hills Community Center.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-19. KOP 1 – Plan Concept 1
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

a. KOP 2 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 2050, as seen from Twelve Bridges Drive.

b. KOP 2 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 Full Buildout, as seen from Twelve Bridges Drive.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-20. KOP 2 – Plan Concept 1
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

a. KOP 3 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 2050, as seen from Athens Avenue.

b. KOP 3 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 Full Buildout, as seen from Athens Avenue.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-21. KOP 3 – Plan Concept 1
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

a. KOP 4 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 2050, as seen from Fiddyment Road.

b. KOP 4 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 Full Buildout, as seen from Twelve Bridges Drive.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-22. KOP 4 – Plan Concept 1
Draft Environmental Impact Report
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a. KOP 5 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 2050, as seen from Sunset Boulevard West.

b. KOP 5 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 1 Full Buildout, as seen from Sunset Boulevard West.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-23. KOP 5 – Plan Concept 1
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KOP 1.

As seen in the simulated views, the expanded landfill mound would be partially visible in 2050 and increasingly visible at Full Buildout. However, given the distance of the landfill from KOP 1 (approximately 4 miles) and the screening effects of tall trees in the view, overall visual character and quality would be only slightly reduced from current conditions.

In addition to the expanded landfill mound, other proposed project elements may be visible from KOP 1, but these elements are relatively small in size and scale when viewed from a 4-mile distance and would not contribute to a reduction in quality of view.

KOP 2.

The expanded landfill mound would be clearly visible, though partially screened by intervening vegetation, when viewed from KOP 2. The height of the landfill would be similar in 2050 compared with Full Buildout; however, by 2101, the mound will have expanded its footprint farther north and will appear to be approximately twice the size. Other proposed project elements would likely be screened from view by existing trees or the expanded landfill mound.

Existing overall visual character and quality at KOP 2 was rated as moderately low and would be reduced by implementing Plan Concept 1 but would remain moderately low. While the Thunder Valley Resort Casino's 17-story tower currently dominates the view, the expanded landfill would create a second visual focus, particularly by Full Buildout. The view's intactness would decrease because of the presence of a larger intrusive element. Though only faintly visible on a clear day, the landfill would partially obscure views toward the distant Coastal Ranges to the west.

Viewers in the KOP 2 area are generally commuters traveling in vehicles and would tend to have short viewing times and lower levels of concern, limiting the impact of the reduction to visual character and quality.

KOP 3.

The view from KOP 3 looks out over an open field that offers no vegetative screening, resulting in high visibility of the landfill. Under Plan Concept 1, the proposed expanded landfill mound would initially rise in the south and then grow toward the north. At Full Buildout, the mound would appear to be the same height but approximately twice as large as it would in 2050. The landfill's form would contrast with the otherwise flat and open terrain in the area. However, the dirt or naturally vegetated surface of the landfill may blend with the surrounding fields of dried grasses and shrubs.

Overall visual quality at KOP 3 is currently low because of a lack of vivid landscape features and the presence of visually intrusive elements such as the casino parking structure and row of utility poles that parallels Athens Avenue. Even at Full Buildout of the project, the casino facility tends to dominate the view and draw more viewer attention than the landfill. Still, the expanded landfill would be an additional human-built feature that contrasts with the rural and agricultural character of the area and contributes to a reduction in visual quality. Other proposed project elements would likely be screened from view by the existing and expanded landfill mound.

Viewers from this location would be a mix of persons visiting or working at the casino, staff of nearby industrial facilities, and drivers using Athens Avenue. Commuters traveling in vehicles would tend to have short viewing times and lower levels of concern. Casino staff and visitors would generally be spending their time within the complex and would not be focused on views toward the landfill. Similarly, the

attention of staff of nearby industrial developments would typically be on activities within a facility and not the views beyond. With generally lower levels of viewer concern at KOP 3, the extent of the impact to visual resources would be limited.

KOP 4.

The landfill is highly visible from KOP 4, which looks out from a residential community south of the landfill over flat open space. As expansion of the landfill would begin in the south and then grow toward the north, there are few noticeable differences between the simulation of Plan Concept 1 2050 and Full Buildout. In other words, growth of the landfill after 2050 would generally be screened from view. Other proposed project elements on the center property would also be screened from view by the landfill mound from KOP 4. Development proposed on the western property may be visible from this location and would result in additional visual impacts, particularly in the case of elements that would be taller than the perimeter fence and landscaping.

Overall visual quality of the view is currently moderate and reflects the area's rural and agricultural character. The existing landfill is visible but relatively natural appearing and does not dominate the view. By 2050, the landfill will be both considerably taller and wider, greatly increasing the visibility of an intrusive element. The landfill would come to be the visual focus of the view and screen the Sierra Nevada foothills currently visible to the north and northeast. Additionally, proposed complementary and programmatic development on the western property may be visible after 2050. These changes would result in a drop in visual quality, from moderate to moderately low.

Residential viewers tend to have high sensitivity to visual changes because they spend more time in the area and are accustomed to the existing views. With a notable drop in visual quality in an area with sensitive viewer groups, changes to the visual landscape that result from implementing Plan Concept 1 may be significant.

KOP 5.

The landfill mound to be expanded under Plan Concept 1 would be highly visible from KOP 5. The existing landfill is visible but not particularly noticeable. Facing east toward the Sierra Nevada foothills, the low rise of the landfill fits with the natural topography of the view. The coloring of the landfill slopes blends with the surrounding area's open spaces. However, by 2050, the landfill will have increased in height and become much more noticeable compared with current conditions. At Full Buildout, the mound will be a dominant feature of the view and obscure views of the distant foothills. These changes would result in a drop in visual quality, from moderate to moderately low.

Plan Concept 1 includes a proposal to expand the organics management facility and relocate it to the center portion of the western property. This proposed facility is depicted in the 2050 and Full Buildout simulations; however, given the 1.75-mile distance from KOP 5 and the facility's low profile, visibility is low, and impacts to visual quality would be slight. Other project elements proposed on the center and western property may also be visible from KOP 5 and would result in additional visual impacts, particularly in the case of elements that would be taller than the perimeter fence and landscaping.

KOP 5 is located near a small residential community at the intersection of Amoruso Way and Sunset Boulevard West. Residential viewers tend to have high sensitivity to visual changes because they spend more time in the area and are accustomed to the existing views. With a notable drop in visual quality in an area with sensitive viewer groups, changes to the visual landscape that result from implementing Plan Concept 1 may be significant.

Plan Concept 2

Simulated views of the developments proposed in Plan Concept 2 are presented on Figures 5-24 through 5-28. Two simulations are provided for each KOP location: one showing the project in the year 2050 and one showing the project at Full Buildout (estimated to be year 2110).

KOP 1.

The visibility and visual effect of proposed elements under Plan Concept 2 would be similar to Plan Concept 1 as viewed from KOP 1. In 2050, the expanded landfill mound would be partially visible. A second landfill mound proposed for the western property would be fully screened by intervening vegetation seen in the center right-hand side of the view. By Full Buildout, both landfill mounds would be increasingly visible but would remain largely screened. Overall visual character and quality would be only slightly reduced from current conditions.

In addition to the expanded landfill mound, other proposed project elements may be visible from KOP 1, but these elements are relatively small in size and scale when viewed from a 4-mile distance and would not contribute to a reduction in the quality of the view.

KOP 2.

The visibility and visual effect of proposed elements under Plan Concept 2 would be slightly increased compared with Plan Concept 1 as viewed from KOP 2. The second landfill footprint proposed under Plan Concept 2 is visible to the west of the existing expanded mound. Both footprints would continue to be expanded north, and by Full Buildout, they would stretch to cover much of the view from the casino tower to the right-hand side of the image. Intervening vegetation would partially screen the landfill and other proposed project elements.

The presence of a second landfill mound may make it more likely that a viewer's attention would be drawn to the project. Though terrain near the landfill is generally flat, there are occasional topographic features in the area, particularly to the east toward the Sierra Nevada foothills. This makes it possible that a casual observer viewing the site from a distance may mistake the landfill for a naturally occurring hill. A second spatially distinct but visually similar landform would likely make it clear that these landscape features are human-built, which may negatively affect an observer's experience of the view.

Existing overall visual character and quality at KOP 2 was rated as moderately low. Visual character and quality would be reduced with implementation of Plan Concept 2 but would remain moderately low.

KOP 3.

The visibility and visual effect of proposed elements under Plan Concept 2 would be very similar to Plan Concept 1 as viewed from KOP 3. The second landfill footprint proposed for the western property under this Plan Concept would be visible in both 2050 and at Full Buildout, but it is located farther from the KOP, so it appears smaller than the landfill footprint that would be expanded onto the eastern property. Similar to KOP 2, the presence of two landfill mounds as repeating elements in the landscape draw attention to the presence of these human-built features. By 2110, the two landfill mounds would stretch from north of Athens Avenue to the left-hand side of the view and would contribute to a reduction of the overall visual quality of KOP 3.

Plan Concept 2 would use the eastern property for complementary and programmatic elements, which may be visible from this location and would result in additional visual impacts, particularly in the case of elements that would be taller than the perimeter fence and landscaping.

KOP 4.

Visual impacts resulting from implementation of Plan Concept 2 would be similar to those of Plan Concept 1 at KOP 4. Under this Plan Concept, the existing landfill footprint would not be expanded onto the eastern property. As a result, the expanded landfill would still screen northeast-facing views of the Sierra Nevada foothills but to a lesser degree than under Plan Concept 1. A second landfill mound would be constructed on the WPWMA's western property, to the west of Fiddyment Road, visible in the simulations on the left-hand side. At Full Buildout, the eastern mound would appear to be slightly larger than in 2050, whereas the western mound would be moderately larger. Other project elements proposed on the center property would be screened from view by the landfill mound from KOP 4. Development of the complementary and programmatic elements proposed on the western and eastern properties may be visible from this location and would result in additional visual impacts, particularly in the case of elements that would be taller than the perimeter fence and landscaping.

Visual character and quality at KOP 4 would be reduced from moderate to moderately low with implementation of Plan Concept 2. In an area with sensitive residential viewers, this change may be significant.

KOP 5.

Plan Concept 2 would construct a second landfill mound on the western property of the WPWMA site. This new footprint would be located approximately 0.5-mile closer to KOP 5 than the mound on the center property. Though the two mounds would reach the same maximum height, a closer mound on the western property would appear to be larger from the vantage point of KOP 5, which is directly west of the landfill.

By 2050, the mound on the western property is clearly visible in the center of the view, while the expanded mound on the center property is seen on the right-hand side. At Full Buildout, the two mounds will be large enough to dominate the view and screen most of the Sierra Nevada foothills that are currently visible when facing east from KOP 5. As such, implementation of Plan Concept 2 would result in increased visual impacts compared with Plan Concept 1 at KOP 5.

Some of the other project elements proposed on the center and eastern properties may be visible from KOP 5 through at least 2050, but these elements are relatively small in size and scale when viewed from a 2-mile distance and would not contribute to a reduction in the quality of the view. Once it has grown sufficiently large, the landfill mound on the western property would fully screen these elements from view. Development of the complementary and programmatic elements on the western property occurring after 2050 may be visible from this location and would result in additional visual impacts, particularly in the case of elements that would be taller than the perimeter fence and landscaping.

KOP 5 is located near a small residential community at the intersection of Amoruso Way and Sunset Boulevard West. Residential viewers tend to have high sensitivity to visual changes because they spend more time in the area and are accustomed to the existing views. With a notable drop in visual quality in an area with sensitive viewer groups, changes to the visual landscape that result from implementing Plan Concept 2 may be significant.

a. KOP 1 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 2050, as seen from near the Sun City Lincoln Hills Community Center.

b. KOP 1 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 Full Buildout, as seen from near the Sun City Lincoln Hills Community Center.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-24. KOP 1 – Plan Concept 2
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

a. KOP 2 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 2050, as seen from Twelve Bridges Drive.

b. KOP 2 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 Full Buildout, as seen from Twelve Bridges Drive.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-25. KOP 2 – Plan Concept 2
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

a. KOP 3 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 2050, as seen from Athens Avenue.

b. KOP 3 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 Full Buildout, as seen from Athens Avenue.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-26. KOP 3 – Plan Concept 2
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

a. KOP 4 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 2050, as seen from Fiddyment Road.

b. KOP 4 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 Full Buildout, as seen from Twelve Bridges Drive.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-27. KOP 4 – Plan Concept 2
Draft Environmental Impact Report
Renewable Placer: Waste Action Plan
Placer County, California

a. KOP 5 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 2050, as seen from Sunset Boulevard West.

b. KOP 5 – Simulated view of Plan Concept 2 Full Buildout, as seen from Sunset Boulevard West.

Simulations are artistic renderings of what the project features are expected to look like following implementation of the Proposed Project.

Figure 5-28. KOP 5 – Plan Concept 2
Draft Environmental Impact Report
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Placer County, California

5.3.7 Impacts and Mitigation Measures.

A discussion regarding whether the visual effects of the Proposed Project will be significant pursuant to CEQA is provided in the following subsections. The CEQA Guidelines define a "significant effect" on the environment to mean a "substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in any of the physical conditions within the area affected by the project, including objects of historic or aesthetic significance" (*14 California Code of Regulations 15382*).

IMPACT 5-1	**Impacts to Visual Character and Quality**. The proposed project would expand Waste Recovery and Waste Disposal activities onto currently vacant portions of the project site and an expanded and taller landfill would reduce the visual quality of the site and its surroundings, resulting in a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Plan Concept 1.

Plan Concept 1 would expand Waste Recovery and complementary and programmatic elements onto the western property and waste disposal elements onto the eastern property. The project elements on the western property would be visible to local viewers but would not represent a significant change to the overall landscape. The project elements on the western property would be consistent with the ECO Industrial designation of the site. Plan Concept 1 would expand the landfill's footprint and increase its maximum elevation by 129 feet compared with the existing condition. While the existing landfill mound is at a low enough elevation that it tends to blend in with its setting, the landfill as proposed under Plan Concept 1 would be much more prominent because of its larger size and height, resulting in greater levels of visual contrast with the surrounding open space and agricultural land uses. In many nearby views, the landfill would grow to become the dominant visual element. Additionally, the landfill would screen east- and northeast-facing views toward the Sierra Nevada foothills and mountains, the key scenic resources visible from the project area. The overall visual character and quality of the local landscape would be reduced from current levels. These effects would be experienced by sensitive receptors near the landfill, particularly residential communities immediately to the south and west. Therefore, the visual impacts associated with Plan Concept 1 would be significant.

Plan Concept 2.

Plan Concept 2 would also result in significant impacts to visual character and quality. While the final landfill elevation would be the same, the footprint of Plan Concept 2 would be 42 acres larger than Plan Concept 1. However, in comparing the simulations of the two Plan Concepts, the larger size of Plan Concept 2 may be discernable from some viewing locations, but it is not obvious. Plan Concept 2 also proposes the construction of a second, discrete landfill mound, which would increase the likelihood that a viewer would recognize the mounds as human-built landscape features, potentially having a negative effect on their experience of the view. These differences, resulting in a larger and more easily recognizable landfill, slightly increase the level of impact compared with Plan Concept 1.

Mitigation Measure 3-1: Impacts to Visual Character and Quality.

Because both Plan Concepts would expand the landfill's final elevation substantially above the surrounding area, mitigation measures intended to visually screen the landfill from local and distant viewpoints would be ineffective. Therefore, no mitigation measures are available to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level.

Level of Significance after Mitigation.

Impacts to visual character and quality would remain significant.

IMPACT 5-2	**Impacts from Light or Glare**. New sources of light and glare would be consistent with local regulations intended to control and reduce lighting impacts. Additionally, proposed project lighting would not be out of scale in rapidly developing western Placer County. Impacts would be **less than significant**.

Plan Concept 1.

Plan Concept 1 would reconfigure the existing WPWMA facility layout, including the construction of several new facilities, and as such, would result in new sources of light and glare during project construction and operation. All temporary construction lighting and permanent facility lighting would be consistent with related local regulations, which are generally intended to control and reduce impacts associated with light and glare on neighboring properties.

Impacts of new light and glare sources associated with construction are limited by their nature because they are temporary. Construction of new facilities associated with Plan Concept 1 would occur in phases over a period of years, after which these sources of light and glare would be removed. To the extent feasible, project construction will be limited to daytime hours, further reducing the impacts of temporary lighting, which would be less than significant.

With the construction of several new facilities, there would be a net increase in the amount of permanent lighting required. However, the WPWMA facility is in close proximity to several cities, each a considerable source of existing light. New facility lighting would not be out of scale with surrounding development and would represent an incremental increase in the total amount of lighting used in the vicinity. Impacts to day and nighttime views from light or glare would be less than significant.

Plan Concept 2.

The two Plan Concepts would generally introduce similar amounts of new light and glare; however, impacts under Plan Concept 2 would be slightly increased compared with Plan Concept 1 because the landfill would operate for a longer period of time under Plan Concept 2. Impacts would remain less than significant.

IMPACT 5-3	**Impacts from Offsite Litter Generation**. Litter is generated offsite by vehicles accessing the MRF and the WRSL, resulting in a **significant and unavoidable** impact.

Plan Concept 1.

Litter is generated off the site by uncovered waste-haul vehicles accessing the MRF and the WRSL facilities. Prior WPWMA environmental documents concluded that this impact would be considered significant and unavoidable because even with an extensive litter control program in place, substantial litter would continue to be generated on local roads from uncovered waste-haul vehicles. Plan Concept 1 would increase the amount of material received at the facility, potentially increasing the amount of offsite litter generated, and extend the period over which it is received by many decades. Based on the prior EIR's conclusion that offsite litter generation from waste-haul vehicles would be considered a significant and unavoidable impact, Plan Concept 1's contribution to an increased amount of offsite litter generation and to the extended duration of this impact would also be considered significant and unavoidable.

Plan Concept 2.

Plan Concept 2 would result in a significant and unavoidable impact that would be increased compared with Plan Concept 1 because of the 9-year-longer landfill site life associated with Plan Concept 2.

Mitigation Measure 5-3: Impacts from Offsite Litter Generation

Although an extensive offsite litter control program is in place at the facility and would continue in the future with implementation of the proposed project, the impact of increased litter through the extended life of the WRSL would be considered significant and unavoidable. Therefore, WPWMA would implement a tarping policy that requires incoming loads to use tarps, thus minimizing the potential for offsite litter generation. However, even with implementation of a tarping policy, this impact would remain significant.

Level of Significance after Mitigation

Impacts caused by offsite litter generation would remain significant.

5.4 References

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