5.1 VISUAL RESOURCES

Implementation of the proposed AG-I-CARP zoning designation would likely result in the addition of approximately three million square feet of new greenhouse ~~structures~~ development to the 14.9 million square feet that presently exists in the project study area. New greenhouse development would be directed to occur on parcels that have existing greenhouses, or that are located adjacent to existing greenhouse development. Due to the large size and plain appearance of greenhouse structures, views of individual greenhouses as seen from adjacent public viewing locations, such as roadways, would have the potential to result in significant visual impacts. Potential night-lighting impacts and glare impacts could be mitigated to less than significant levels. Project buildout would result in the loss of foreground and middle ground views along public view corridors and result in the direct conversion of existing open space lands. The outward expansion of greenhouse cluster areas into important open space corridors would result in the direct conversion of approximately 34 acres of open space land. The direct loss of this limited open space resource and visual impact along public view corridors is considered a significant and unavoidable cumulative impact.

5.1.1 Setting

a. Regional Setting. The Carpinteria Greenhouse Program study area encompasses most of the Carpinteria Valley, which is a long, narrow coastal plain located between the Pacific Ocean and the Santa Ynez Mountains. The urban uses of the City of Carpinteria occupy the south-central portion of the study area, while the surrounding unincorporated areas are devoted primarily to agricultural uses. ~~In the vicinity of Toro Canyon Road to the west, agricultural uses mix with rural residential and Existing Developed Rural Neighborhoods.~~ Agricultural uses mix with rural residential and Existing Developed Rural Neighborhoods north of Highway 192 near Toro Canyon Road and Nidever Road to the west and Shepard Mesa Road to the east. Several small residential communities and numerous individual residences are located throughout the unincorporated portions of the study area.

The Santa Ynez Mountains border the study area to the north and views of the mid- and upper-elevations of the mountains are available from locations throughout the region. The Pacific Ocean and the Carpinteria Marsh are located on the southern border of the project area. Agricultural operations, including a mix of open fields, orchards, and greenhouse developments~~, and related structures are~~ is located throughout the project region. ~~The predominance of agricultural operations provides a rural visual character that is often adjacent to and interspersed with urban uses.~~

b. Project Area Setting. View characteristics can be described in relation to their location within the *viewshed*, or the area visible from a particular viewing area. Foreground views are those immediately presented to the viewer and include objects at close range, typically within approximately a quarter-mile of the viewer. Middle ground views occupy the center of the viewing area, and may include objects that dominate the viewshed. Background views include distant objects and other objects that make up the horizon.

Views of the Santa Ynez Mountains, ocean, and agricultural operations are provided from public viewing locations throughout the study area. The visual characteristics of the project area as seen from major roadways and residential areas that are located in the study area are

Figure 5.1-1

described below. Figure 5.1-1 provides an index to the viewing location of the various pictures illustrated herein.

U.S. Highway 101. U.S. Highway 101 is the major regional transportation corridor through the project region. Views of the upper elevations of the Santa Ynez Mountains form mid- and background views, and can be seen from most portions of the highway. Views of the Pacific Ocean and Carpinteria Marsh are also available from the highway, although most of these views are along limited roadway segments located in the western portion of the study area. Throughout the study area, foreground views from the highway are predominately of a mix of urban and agricultural uses.

Due to the proximity of greenhouse developments ~~and related structures~~ to U.S. Highway 101, individual and groups of greenhouses can be seen from several locations from the northbound and southbound lanes of the highway. A large concentration of greenhouse development ~~and related structures are~~ is located adjacent to the north side of Highway 101 in the western portion of the study area. Views of these structures from the highway are partially limited by landscaping that is located in the median and adjacent to the north side of the highway. Landscaping that has been installed adjacent to many of the greenhouses and related structures also provides a visual buffer. Where there are gaps in the vegetation, and along elevated portions of the highway (i.e. the Santa Claus Lane overpass) prominent foreground views of open field agriculture and greenhouse structures are available (see Figure 5.1-2, Picture 1).

The type and effectiveness of landscaping that has been provided adjacent to greenhouse ~~structures~~ development that ~~are~~ is visible from the highway varies considerably, and ranges from no landscaping to an integrated design of block walls and dense plantings (Figure 5.1-3, Pictures 2 and 3). Landscaping such as a narrow row of trees with wide spaces between each tree provides a partial visual buffer, while a dense row of tall shrubs such as oleander or myoporum can provide a complete visual screen from ground level. Dense landscaping, however, can have the unintended effect of limiting or eliminating foreground and middle-ground views of open space areas.

In the eastern portion of the study area, intervening landscaping and ~~buildings~~ urban development generally limit views of greenhouse~~s and related structures~~ development from the highway. Several greenhouses and shade structures that are located north of the highway can be seen briefly by passing motorists.

Also visible from U.S. 101 are views of open field agricultural operations. A prominent open field view corridor that is located north of the Santa Claus Lane overpass and between Cravens Lane and Nidever Road provides foreground and middle-ground views of open field and orchard agriculture~~operations~~ and background views of the Santa Ynez Mountains. The eastern and western perimeter of this open space corridor is lined with greenhouses that are highly visible to travelers on Highway 101 and Via Real.

Via Real. Via Real is a frontage road located on the north side of U.S. 101. Views of the project area from this roadway are similar to the views that are provided from U.S. 101. However, with slower vehicle speeds, close proximity, and less intervening vegetative

screening, views of greenhouses and related structures development from Via Real are generally more pronounced than the views from the highway.

Highway 192. Highway 192 extends from east to west across the central portion of the study area, near the base of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Foreground views from the highway to the north are primarily of agricultural operations, while the mid-, and background views are predominately of the mountains. Most of the views from the highway to the south are of the immediate foreground, and consist primarily of agricultural operations. Mid- and background views are very limited, as a result of intervening vegetation and greenhouse structures.

The views of agricultural operations that are available from Highway 192 include open fields, greenhouses, plant protection and shade structures (see Figure 5.1-2, Picture 4). These uses are frequently intermixed within a relatively small area**.** Agriculture-related structures and accessory uses, such as offices, storage and distribution centers, can also be seen in isolated areas.

Existing greenhouse development that is visible from Highway 192 is concentrated in the western and central portions of the study area (west of Linden Avenue and east of Nidever Road), where several large clusters of greenhouses and related structures are located primarily on the south side of the highway. Historically, some of the earliest greenhouse development occurred here. Also in the western valley, lands north of Highway 192 are characterized by steeply sloping terrain with views of the foothills and mountains and a combination of orchards and natural vegetation.

The more rural eastern portion of the study area is dominated by open field agriculture; however, scattered greenhouses and related structures development hasve been developed more recently on the north and south sides of the highway. In some places along the highway, pParticularly in the eastern end of the Valley and north of Highway 192, east of the high school, and between Linden Avenue and Casitas Pass Road, panoramic views of open field agriculture are provided (Figure 5.1-2, Picture 4).

Extensive greenhouse development has occurred in the vicinity of the Highway 192 corridor; those that are located adjacent to the roadway obscure views of many of the greenhouses that have been developed on interior lots. Where greenhouses and other related structures have been developed adjacent to the highway, there is often only a minimal (20-foot) building setback from the edge of the roadway. In some instances, the limited setback distance has limited the effectiveness of landscaping to serve as a visual buffer. The type and effectiveness of landscaping that has been provided to serve as a visual buffer for greenhouse development varies considerably, and can range from almost no landscaping to a dense screen that completely hides the adjacent structures. Plant materials that have been used for screening purposes includes orchard trees (i.e. avocado trees), hedges, trees that have been planted in narrow rows, and large shrubs.

Toro Canyon Road. Located in the westernmost portion of the study area, Toro Canyon Road connects Via Real with Highway 192. Views near Via Real are of small open field agricultural parcels. The remainder of the viewshed is dominated by rural residential development,

Figure 5.1-2

Back of color photo

Figure 5.1-3

screened by the undulating topography and a combination of native and landscaped vegetation, with background views of the Santa Ynez Mountains.

Nidever Road. Nidever Road is located in the western portion of the study area, and also connects Via Real with Highway 192. Views from Nidever Road include mid- and background views of the Santa Ynez Mountains to the north, the ocean to the south, and open space/recreation uses to the west. Greenhouse development to the north and east is also visible from the roadway.

Cravens Lane. Cravens Lane extends between Via Real and Highway 192. Greenhouse development along the northern portion of the road is moderately to well screened. A large warehouse/distribution center is also located on Cravens Lane, and is well screened from the roadway by mature landscaping.

Santa Monica Road. Santa Monica Road is located near the center of the study area and extends between Via Real and Highway 192. Land uses that have been developed along this road include a mix of greenhouses and related structures, a large warehouse/shipping facility, open field agriculture, avocado orchards, and residential uses to the south.

Casitas Pass Road. Casitas Pass Road is located in the eastern portion of the study area and connects Via Real with Highway 192. The western side of the roadway is in the City of Carpinteria and has been developed with residential uses. The unincorporated eastern side of the roadway is predominately planted with avocado trees. A cluster of greenhouses and plant protection structures has been developed at the southeast corner of the intersection of Casitas Pass Road and Highway 192. There is generally little screening of the structures that are located adjacent to the roadway.

Residential Areas. Within the unincorporated study area, there are several small residential communities, including Serena Park, La Mirada, Ocean Oaks, and the Shepard Mesa. The location of these residential areas is depicted on Figure 5.1-1. Views of the Carpinteria Valley from the Shepard Mesa roadway, and public roads in the La Mirada community are very limited because of intervening vegetation and topography. Examples of the views of the Valley and greenhouse development that can be seen from public roads in the Shepard Mesa and La Mirada communities are provided in Figure 5.1-3 (Pictures 5 and 6). Public roads in the Serena Park and Ocean Oaks communities do not provide public views of greenhouse development in the project area. Views of greenhouse development from the public roads in Shepard Mesa and La Mirada are extremely limited. However, approximately 22 homes in Shepard Mesa and 35 homes in the La Mirada have panoramic views of the Carpinteria Valley.

Within and to the north of the study area are numerous individual homes that have been developed on lots that are generally five acres or greater in size. In the foothills between Santa Monica Creek and Carpinteria Creek, the are approximately 50 homes; and between Nidever Road and Santa Monica Creek, there are approximately 35 homes. Many of these homes have private views looking across the valley. While these residences are likely to have views of existing greenhouse development due to their vantage point above the valley floor, County policy and practice does not regulate or mitigate for visual impacts upon private viewsheds.

The City of Carpinteria is located south of and adjacent to the project study area. The extent of the views that residences in the City have of greenhouse development is dependent upon a variety of factors, including the orientation of the houses; intervening screening, such as landscaping and fences that are provided on the residential and greenhouse properties; and the setback and the height of the greenhouses. Residential areas in the City that are likely to have at least partial views of greenhouse development include portions of the Sandpiper Mobile Home Park and Franciscan Village, homes along Meadow Circle and La Quinta Drive, and residences at the end of cul-de-sacs located north of El Carro Lane.

Other Open Field Agricultural Areas. Within the project study area, there are several major areas where open field agriculture is the predominant use. These areas include the western portion of the study area to the east and west of Toro Canyon Road, and the area north of U.S. 101 in the eastern portion of the study area. Although public views of these areas are somewhat limited, these large open space areas provide a rural, less developed, appearance to the study area (see Figure 5.1-7).

c. Visual Characteristics of Greenhouse Developments and Related Structures.

Various types of agriculture-related structures have been developed throughout the project study area, including greenhouses, plant protection structures, and shade structures. Accessory and agriculture-related support structures have also been developed, and typically include buildings such as offices, packing sheds, warehouses, and shipping facilities. While the appearance of individual and groups of agriculture-related structures can vary substantially, a description of the "typical" visual characteristics of each of these types of structures is provided below.

Greenhouses. The use of greenhouses has grown steadily since they were first introduced into the Carpinteria Valley in the early 1960's. There is also a great variation in the appearance of the greenhouses due to the varying ages of the structures. For this analysis, existing greenhouses have been grouped into two broad, general categories: "older" and "newer" structures.

Although there is no standard height for greenhouses, older structures generally range in height from about 12 to 20 feet. Older greenhouses and related structures, particularly those located along the Highway 192 corridor, are generally moderately to well screened from the adjacent roadway by mature landscaping (Figure 5.1-4, Pictures 7 and 8). There are numerous examples, however, of older structures that provide minimal or no screening (Figure 5.1-4, Picture 9 and Figure 5.1-8).

Many types of visual buffers have been provided adjacent to existing greenhouse ~~and related structures~~development. Vegetation such as orchard trees make an excellent visual buffer, and present an appearance that is consistent and compatible with views of other orchards in the project region. A greenhouse visual screen located adjacent to U.S. Highway 101 incorporates the use of multiple types of landscaping materials, including trees, shrubs, and a block wall. The appearance of the wall could have been softened by the use of clinging vines. In some instances along Highway 192, large shrubs, some of which have been trimmed into tall hedges, have been planted adjacent to the roadway to serve as a visual buffer. While this type of vegetation makes an effective visual screen for the adjacent greenhouses, the appearance of the

Figure 5.1-4

screen itself can be somewhat imposing and has an unnatural appearance. This effect is particularly noticeable in places where dense vegetation has been installed on the north and south sides of the highway, creating a "tunnel" effect that blocks mid- and background views (Figure 5.1-4, Picture 10).

Newer greenhouses are generally taller than the older greenhouses, and may range in height from about 16 to 28 feet in height. A combination of factors, including minimal setbacks from adjacent roadways, the presence of taller structures that are more difficult to screen, and inadequate or immature landscaping that does not yet provide an effective visual buffer, can make greenhouses more visible from adjacent roadways than older greenhouses (Figure 5.1-5, Picture 11). A "side-by-side" comparison of older and newer greenhouses (Figure 5.1-5 Picture 12) depicts typical differences in structure height and screening from the adjacent roadway.

Other aesthetic concerns regarding greenhouse ~~and related structure~~ development in the project area pertain to the general change in the visual character of the project area; daytime glare from sunlight reflecting off of the material used to construct greenhouses; and night lighting within the structures. Existing conditions relating to these issues are described below.

The development of greenhouses and related structures has contributed to a change in the visual character of many of the properties that are located in the project study area. This change has occurred primarily from the conversion of open field agricultural operations to agriculture-related structures, and the resulting loss of open space. In areas where greenhouse development has occurred near roadways, fore-, mid- and background views from the road are often obstructed by intervening structures and landscaping. When viewed from higher elevations, such as from the foothills to the north, areas with extensive greenhouse development have a white, almost "blank" appearance that is nearly devoid of visual interest.

Greenhouses are typically constructed using a light-colored, opaque glass, plastic or fiberglass material to cover a frame structure. Sunlight reflecting off greenhouse roofs can generate a substantial amount of glare. This impact can affect viewers adjacent to greenhouse development, but primarily affects private viewing locations in the Carpinteria foothills that are higher in elevation than the greenhouses.

Night lighting is often used in greenhouses to assist in the growth of plants. During the development of a plant crop, the lights may be used over a 6-7 week period, for approximately six hours per night. Typically, the lights are timed to be turned on late at night and to be turned off by early morning. In greenhouses, the lights are typically "cycled" or turned on for a short period of time (i.e. five minutes), then turned off for approximately 25 minutes. In open fields, night lighting is used occasionally, however, the lights are generally not "cycled' but rather left on continuously. Many of the newer greenhouses are equipped with "blackout" shades that are deployed automatically and prevent light from escaping from the greenhouse structure.

Shade Structures. Shade structures are typically easy-to-remove wood or metal frame structures, approximately 10-12 feet tall, and covered with sheets of black netting (Figure 5.1-2, Picture 14). Newer shade structures may have frames that are constructed with aluminum, PVC, or steel posts.

Figure 5.1-5

Plant Protection Structures. Plant protection structures are highly variable in appearance and represent a "transitional structure", in terms of function, between a technically sophisticated greenhouse and a common shade structure. Plant protection structures may have wooden or PVC frames covered with plastic sheets or similar material. The cover material on the roof and sides can be removed and replaced as necessary to protect plants from sun or other climate variations. Other plant protection structures may be similar in appearance to a greenhouse – having wooden or aluminum frames, fiberglass roofs, and canvas walls or removable walls for climate control.

Accessory and Agriculture-Related Support Structures. Accessory structures include facilities such as packing sheds, offices, warehouses, and distribution centers that have been developed in support of the agricultural industry, both greenhouse related and not. Other types of accessory structures include refrigeration buildings, heating and cooling units, nutrient mixing tanks, water tanks, etc. The size of the buildings that have been developed for these uses can vary substantially. Offices and packing sheds may be several thousand square feet in area, while larger warehouses and distribution facilities may be 40,000 square feet or more in floor area and reach heights of up to 29 feet. Perimeter landscaping is highly variable, ranging from no landscaping (Figure 5.1-3, Picture 2 and Figure 5.1-5, Picture 11) to extensive screening (Figure 5.1-5, Picture 15).

The need for large, full-service packing / distribution facilities (on-site) has been a recent trend in the greenhouse production industry that will likely continue as competition increases. Construction of these facilities adjacent to public view corridors often obstructs foreground, mid-ground and background views of the mountains, ocean and open field agriculture. The expansive parking lots, truck loading bays, and wide driveway entrances (necessary to accommodate truck turning radii) create an industrial appearance that is very difficult to mitigate (Figure 5.1-6, Picture 16 and 17).

d. Regulatory Setting. The Santa Barbara County Coastal Plan and Coastal Zoning Ordinance allow greenhouse development as an existing permitted use on lands zoned AG-I. Any greenhouse development greater than 20,000 sf cumulative per legal lot requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) and a Development Plan. Packing and shipping facilities are also required to have a Development Plan over 20,000 sf; however, a CUP is required only when the facility is processing product grown off the premises and there is no associated greenhouse development on site. In addition, under the existing zoning, any uncultivated land in the AG-I zone district, may be converted to open field agricultural or orchard production without permits; these zoning provisions will remain unchanged. Open field cultivation is a part of the environmental baseline (existing conditions) and may continue without permits.

The Santa Barbara County Coastal Plan Policy 8-7 and Coastal Zoning Ordinance also require that landscaping plans for all greenhouse projects be submitted for review and approval. Proposed plans *shall include landscaping which, within five years, will reasonably screen the view of ~~said [greenhouse] structures~~ greenhouse development and on-site parking areas from nearby public roads.* Incorporating existing trees and plants that are located on the project site into the landscape plan is also encouraged. The Coastal Plan and Zoning Ordinance also specify minimum lot coverage and setback requirements for greenhouse projects, which provide area for landscape screening and visual relief from building masses along public view corridors.

Figure 5.1-6

Figure 5.1-7

Figure 5.1-8

The Santa Barbara County Coastal Plan indicates that the majority of the project study area has a "rural" land use designation. Coastal Plan Policy 4-3 and the Zoning Ordinance state that in areas designated as Rural "*the height, scale, and design of structures shall be compatible with the character of the surrounding natural environment, except where technical requirements dictate otherwise. Structures shall be subordinate in appearance to natural landforms, shall be designed to follow the natural contours of the landscape, and shall be sited so as not to intrude into the skyline as seen from public viewing places.*"

The Open Space Element of the Santa Barbara County Comprehensive Plan states that U.S. Highway 101 through the project study area deserves "*prime consideration for scenic highway designation*."

5.1.2 Impact Analysis

a. Methodology and Significance Thresholds. The assessment of aesthetic impacts involves qualitative analysis that is inherently subjective in nature. Different viewers will have varying opinions and reactions to changes in a viewshed or the appearance of new buildings and structures. This evaluation compares the existing visual characteristics of the project study area against the potential changes in visual characteristics that could result from the implementation of the proposed project.

The County of Santa Barbara has adopted Visual Aesthetic Impact Guidelines (1994), which provide criteria for determining the potential significance of visual impacts. Key factors in assessing the aesthetic resources of a project site include the physical attributes of the site, its relative visibility, and its relative uniqueness. Four types of areas are especially important: coastal and mountain views, the urban fringe, and travel corridors. Based on criteria contained in the County's *Environmental Thresholds and Guidelines Manual (1995)*, the proposed project would result in a significant visual impact if it would result in one or more of the following conditions:

1) Result in development that would be incompatible in appearance with surrounding uses, structures, or the intensity of existing development.

2) Create new glare sources that would substantially degrade existing visual conditions, or create light sources that would substantially alter nighttime lighting characteristics of the project area.

3) An important visual resource or view would be obstructed.

4) Result in a project-specific condition or view, or cumulatively contribute to an existing condition or view, that could be considered to be objectionable or inconsistent with the character of the project site or region.

In this analysis, changes to existing visual conditions were not considered to be significant if the project-related changes would be subordinate to existing visual environment. Only views available from public viewing locations (such as roadways) were evaluated against the above significance thresholds. Since County policy and practice do not regulate or mitigate for visual

impacts upon private viewsheds, changes to views from private properties were not evaluated as part of the following impact assessment.

b. Project Impacts. The AG-I-OF zone district retains the provisions of the existing AG-I zone district except for greenhouse development of 20,000 sf or more. The conversion of land to open field and orchard agriculture and the construction of less than 20,000 sf of greenhouse development per legal lot are permitted under the existing zone district, as well as the proposed AG-I-OF. As stated in Section 3.0, most land that is suitable for greenhouse cultivation has already been converted to agriculture. Eliminating the *opportunity* to construct greenhouses on slopes greater than 5% will not create an incentive to bring more natural lands into cultivation, as greenhouse development would not have occurred on these slopes anyway. Furthermore, conversion of natural lands to open field and orchard cultivation could occur irrespective of the proposed project. As discussed in Section 3.0, Environmental Setting, these zone district provisions and the impacts associated with their continuation are a part of the environmental baseline and will continue whether or not the project is approved. Therefore, there are no reasonably foreseeable significant visual impacts associated with the proposed AG-I-OF zone district.

The project impacts identified below would result from potential buildout of 3.0 million sf of greenhouse development in the proposed AG-I-CARP zone district.

Impact VIS-1 Development of new greenhouses and related agricultural structures has the potential to result in visual impacts to public viewsheds and loss of open space.

Implementation of the proposed AG-I-CARP zoning designation would guide new greenhouse development onto parcels that have existing agriculture-related structures, or that are located adjacent to existing greenhouse clusters. Of the 54 parcels to be rezoned to the AG-I-CARP zoning designation, seven of the parcels (totaling approximately 25.2 acres in area) have no greenhouse ~~or other related structural~~ development.

As dictated by their function, greenhouse structures are bulky in shape and are generally plain in appearance. Even under ideal situations, it is difficult for landscaping to completely screen the visual effects of greenhouse development. On-site warehouses and distribution facilities can reach heights of up to 29 feet and are often constructed close to roadways for easy access. The expansive parking lots, truck loading bays, and wide driveway entrances can create a visually prominent industrial appearance that is inconsistent with the rural character of the area. Foreground and middle ground views of the structures can be partially screened, however, truck loading bays, parking lots, greenhouse roof peaks and taller warehouses may still be visible from adjacent roadways and distant or elevated viewing locations. Landscaping designed to screen greenhouse structures can also have a negative visual effect by obscuring mid and background views from the roadway and creating a "tunnel" effect when dense vegetation has been installed on both sides of the roadway.

View Corridor Impacts. Proposed greenhouse expansion parcels adjacent to public view corridors include nine parcels located adjacent to Hwy 192, five parcels adjacent to Santa Monica Road, four parcels bordering the Via Real open space corridor, four parcels bordering

the Cravens Lane / Santa Monica Road open space corridor, three parcels adjacent to Cravens Lane, and two parcels along Via Real (Figure 2-4). The development potential for these parcels range from in-fill of underdeveloped greenhouse parcels to conversion of existing open field lands. Due to the proximity of future greenhouse development adjacent to public view corridors, foreground, middle ground and background views would be obstructed by structural development.

Of the 2.7 million sf of potential new greenhouse development on parcels adjacent to public view corridors, approximately 890,000 sf would likely be screened from view by existing greenhouse structures. The remaining 1.8 million sf would need to rely on proposed setbacks and landscape requirements to partially mitigate visual impacts. Greenhouse in-fill along public roadways would be most evident along Santa Monica Road and Highway 192. Future greenhouse development upon six of the eight agricultural parcels fronting Santa Monica Road could result in the construction 720,000 sf of new greenhouse development. While approximately 1.3 million sf of new greenhouse development could occur along the Hwy 192 corridor, more than 50% (710,000 sf) would likely be screened from view by existing development.

Loss of Open Space. A conversion of open space to a developed condition may be considered a significant change in the environment, even if the development is incremental. This is particularly true in instances where the open space represents a finite resource. As stated earlier, the majority of existing greenhouse development (9.1 million sf) in the Carpinteria Valley has occurred south of Highway 192 between Nidever Road and Linden Avenue. As a result, there are only two significant open space corridors remaining in this area. The most prominent open space corridor is located between Cravens Lane and Nidever Road and extends between Via Real and Highway 192 (Figure 2-4). Views of this open space corridor from Highway 101 and Via Real include foreground and middle-ground views of open field agriculture and background views of the foothills and Santa Ynez Mountains. The eastern and western perimeter of this open space corridor is lined with greenhouses that are highly visible to travelers on Highway 101 and Via Real. Views from Highway 192 include foreground and middle-ground views of orchards and open field agriculture, with occasional background views of the Pacific Ocean.

The second open space corridor is located between Cravens Lane and Santa Monica Road and extends south from Highway 192 to just north of Kim's Basin (Figure 2-4). While foreground views from Via Real are partially obstructed by existing development, the middle-ground and background views provide a sense of openness since the skyline is not interrupted with greenhouse roof peaks.

Approximately 15 acres of open space land would be converted adjacent to the Via Real open space corridor and an additional 19 acres adjacent to the Cravens Lane / Santa Monica Road open space corridor. These two open space corridors represent a vestige of open field agriculture in the central study area that has not yet been infringed upon by urban or greenhouse development. The open space corridors not only provide continuity with the rural character of existing foothill agriculture, but they also provide visual relief from the expanse of greenhouse roofs and building masses currently visible in this area. The outward expansion of greenhouse cluster areas into these important open space corridors would result in the direct

conversion of approximately 34 acres of open space land. The direct loss of this limited open space resource is considered a potentially significant impact.

Impact VIS-2 New greenhouse development has the potential to result in significant light and glare impacts.

The increased use in night lighting that could be associated with the new development would have the potential to result in significant visual impacts, particularly if the new greenhouses were located adjacent to residences or visible from public view corridors. The existing use of unshielded growing lights within greenhouses, combined with potential additional night lighting associated with new greenhouse development, could result in significant visual impacts affecting the rural character of the area. The installation and use of blackout shields would reduce potential night-lighting impacts to a less than significant level.

New agricultural structures that could be developed in the AG-I-CARP and AG-I-OF zones may require the use of exterior lighting for safety and security reasons. If exterior lighting were to be located adjacent to a road or residential area, the new lighting would have the potential to result in a significant visual impact.

Sunlight reflecting off of the glass, fiberglass, or plastic material that is used to construct greenhouses can result in a substantial amount of glare. Travelers on public roadways located in the project study area may be subject to glare impacts; however the duration of the glare impact would be extremely brief. The implementation of recommended screening and setback mitigation measures would reduce the potential for glare impacts. Due to the very brief duration of glare impacts while traveling on roadways in the project area, the proposed mitigation measures would be adequate to reduce potential glare impacts to a less than significant level.

5.1.3 Mitigation Measures

a. Existing Comprehensive Plan/Coastal Plan Policies. Included in Section 4.0 of this EIR, Consistency with Locally Adopted Plans and Polices, is a discussion of existing County Comprehensive Plan and Coastal Plan Policies which address visual resources. Of particular relevance to visual resources are the ERME policies and LCP visual resource policies. These policies generally require development to: (1) be subordinate in appearance to natural landforms; (2) preserve the integrity of scenic corridors; (3) not intrude into the skyline as seen from public viewing locations; and (4) be in conformance with the scale and character of existing communities.

b. Proposed Development Standards. Creation of the proposed AG-I-CARP and AG-I-OF zone districts would involve development of new development standards for greenhouse uses. The following measure is proposed to ensure the effectiveness of landscape screening.

Mitigation VIS-1 Landscaping shall be required immediately adjacent to the perimeter of packing sheds and warehouse distribution facilities. Landscaping shall be sufficient to screen the structure within five years and be maintained for the life of the project. *(Addresses Impact VIS-1)*

c. Additional Proposed Mitigation Measures. The following measures are required to reduce visual impacts:

Mitigation VIS-2 All new or retro-fit greenhouse or plant protection structures shall be required to install a mechanized blackout screen system within growing areas to prevent interior night lighting from being visible outside the structure. If the applicant does not intend to use night lighting, the project description for individual greenhouse projects shall clearly state that night lighting within growing areas shall not occur. *(Addresses Impact VIS-2)*

Mitigation VIS-3 Planning & Development shall work with the greenhouse growers to develop an approved landscape plant list for screening greenhouse development. Plants shall be selected based on their ability to achieve desired height and density within five years, plant hardiness and life span, compatibility with the coastal growing region, and ease of maintenance. *(Addresses Impact VIS-1)*

Mitigation VIS-4 Exterior lighting shall be for specific safety purposes only and shall be hooded / shielded to minimize the spread of light off-site and to minimize impacts to the rural nighttime character. *(Addresses Impact VIS-2)*

Mitigation VIS-5 Landscaping within front setbacks shall gradually increase in height away from public roadways. Solid wall fencing shall be prohibited as a means of screening. Chain-link security fencing shall be screened from public view corridors by dense landscaping and or covered with attractive climbing vines. *(Addresses Impact VIS-1)*

Mitigation VIS-6 Required landscape / vegetative buffers shall be depicted on a landscape plan that is submitted to the Planning and Development Department for review and approval. *(Addresses Impact VIS-1)*

Mitigation VIS-7 Landscaping shall be maintained for the life of the project. If landscaping is removed or substantially altered, a landscape plan shall be submitted to P&D for substantial conformity review with the original conditions of approval and replacement landscaping shall be installed and maintained.~~The removal of landscaping or vegetation, for any reason, that has been installed or maintained as a required visual buffer shall be considered to be a substantial change to the previously approved project. Such a change may be cause to require an amendment to the previously issued land use entitlements for the project.~~ *(Addresses Impact VIS-1)*

Mitigation VIS-8 To the extent feasible, new greenhouse development shall be oriented with the roof axis extending from north to south to reduce glare impacts. *(Addresses Impact VIS-2)*

Mitigation VIS-9 Where structures are proposed in existing orchards or adjacent to wind rows, perimeter trees shall be preserved, to the maximum extent feasible, in order to provide visual screening along adjacent public roadways. Remnant orchard trees shall be maintained in good condition to ensure that trees do not become hosts for pests or diseases. *(Addresses Impact VIS-1 & 2)*

d. Recommended Mitigation. The following mitigation measure is recommended to further reduce visual impacts.

Mitigation VIS-10 All greenhouse development should be limited to a maximum lot coverage of 65 percent. *(Addresses Impacts VIS-1 and VIS-2)*

5.1.4 Residual Impacts.

The following discussion identifies the level of significance for project impacts after all available mitigation measures have been applied.

Impact VIS-1 Visual impacts to public view corridors would include the loss of foreground, mid-ground, and background views of open space lands, and changes in the rural character of the area associated with building masses, parking lots, and warehouses which can have an industrial appearance. Additional visual impacts would occur due to the outward expansion of greenhouse clusters into important open space lands, resulting in the direct conversion of approximately 34 acres of open space land. Required landscaping and setbacks would help to partially mitigate the visual impacts. Additionally, reducing maximum lot coverage to 65%, rather than allowing lot coverage to vary between 65% and 75% based on lot size, would further reduce potential buildout to approximately 2.8 million square feet; however, buildout of the proposed project would result in ***significant and unavoidable visual impacts (Class I).***

Impact VIS-2 Implementation of the recommended mitigation measures would reduce potential light and glare impacts to a ***less than significant level (Class II).***

5.1.5 Cumulative Impacts

The Carpinteria Valley is a unique coastal resource, not only within the County of Santa Barbara, but also throughout the entire state. The coastal plain is a finite resource that offers dramatic views of the Pacific Ocean, extensive open field agriculture, and dramatic views of the Santa Ynez Mountains. Significant acreage of contiguous open field agriculture still exist in the eastern valley. However, both urban and greenhouse development during the last forty years has contributed to the decline of significant open space lands, particularly in the central portion of the study area. Future buildout of the proposed project, in conjunction with cumulative non-agricultural development throughout the valley, will contribute to the cumulative loss of open space, impacts to public view corridors, and changes in the rural character of the area. The proposed projects' contribution to these cumulative visual impacts is considered ***significant and unavoidable (Class I).***