

Appendix B

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

KINGS BEACH WESTERN APPROACH PROJECT

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Kings Beach Western Approach Project

April 29, 2020

California Department of Transportation

District 3, Placer County,
State Route 28/State Route 267
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Statement of Compliance: Produced in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, as appropriate, to meet the level of analysis and documentation that has been determined necessary for this project.

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VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

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PURPOSE OF STUDY AND ASSESSMENT METHOD

The purpose of this visual impact assessment (VIA) is to document potential visual impacts caused by the proposed project and propose measures to lessen any detrimental impacts that are identified. Visual impacts are demonstrated by identifying visual resources in the project area, measuring the amount of change that would occur as a result of the project, and predicting how the affected public would respond to or perceive those changes. This VIA follows the guidance outlined in the publication *Visual Impact Assessment for Highway Projects* published by the Federal Highway Administration in March 1981.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The County of Placer (County), in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), proposes roadway improvements at and around the intersection of State Route (SR) 267 and North Lake Boulevard (SR 28) to enhance the safety and mobility of all roadway users, and to expand the streetscape aesthetics of the area. The Kings Beach Western Approach Project (project) is a multi-benefit project that proposes to improve the existing signaled intersection by replacing it with a modern roundabout intersection with new lane alignments and pedestrian and bicycle improvements. A roundabout fulfills the recent community plan vision to provide a more welcoming intersection configuration.

Upon completion, the project will connect with the complete streets improvements of the adjacent Kings Beach Commercial Core Improvement Project, provide pedestrian and bicycles facilities (currently there are none), improve vehicular circulation and access from existing residential and commercial uses, substantially increase the area of landscaping, decrease the amount of paved area, revegetate the project site with native plantings, and use natural materials such as stone and wood to enhance the aesthetics of this scenic corridor.

The proposed project is identified by TRPA's EIP program for its beneficial contribution to scenic quality threshold attainment. One of the primary elements of the EIP's Scenic Quality program is to applying design standards for highway structures such as improved lighting, guard rails, median treatments, revegetation of disturbed areas, and treatment of cut-and-fill slopes.¹

Existing Conditions

In the existing condition, SR 267 is a two-lane facility that terminates at the intersection of SR 28. SR 267 is designated as a bicycle route but does not currently have marked bicycle lanes and there are varying-width shoulders. There are no pedestrian improvements along SR 267. The existing SR 267/28 signalized intersection provides lighting and crosswalks only on the northern and western legs. Sidewalks along SR 28 terminate just north of the intersection but do not continue north on SR 267.

¹ TRPA, *EIP Project Tracker*, <https://eip.laketahoeinfo.org/EIPActionPriority/Detail/23>, accessed April 28, 2020.

Project Alternatives

The Project Development Team, consisting of the County, Caltrans, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA), and the GHD team staff, considered the following alternatives for the project in addition to a no-build alternative:

- Alternative 1a: Single Lane Roundabout with Turn Lanes
- Alternative 1b: Single Lane Roundabout
- Alternative 3: Three Leg Hybrid Roundabout
- Alternative 4: Signalized Intersection

Alternatives 1a, 1b, and 2 were dropped from further consideration due to the level of associated impacts. Alternatives 3 and 4 were further examined using the Caltrans Intersection Control Evaluation (ICE) process. The ICE report concluded that Alternative 3 offers improved conditions across more analysis outcomes than the signal alternative. Furthermore, Alternative 3 wholly meets the project's stated Purpose and Need whereas Alternative 3 does not. Therefore, Alternative 3 was selected as the preferred alternative. This VIA compares the preferred alternative with the No-build Alternative.

Project Features

Alternative 3 will remove a significant number of existing features within the right-of-way and on adjacent private properties. All existing asphalt paving, concrete sidewalks, curb, gutter, signals, and signage will be removed, along with approximately 29 trees and a large portion of the manmade stormwater basin at the Old Brockway Golf Course. No features will be removed with the No-build Alternative.

Multiple aesthetic and contextual features are incorporated into Alternative 3 that will help retain and restore the unique character of the community, comply with TRPA thresholds, and generate public acceptance of the project. Specific features include a large planted roundabout, shared pedestrian and bicycle paths, new signage, native plantings in splitter islands and buffer areas, new pedestrian connections along SR 267 and SR 28, screen plantings to block views of service areas, enhanced views of Lake Tahoe, pedestrian-scaled lighting, public art, stormwater treatment/water quality features, and natural materials such as boulders to visually integrate the project into the existing context.

PROJECT LOCATION AND SETTING

The project is located in eastern Placer County, California, in the community of Kings Beach within the Lake Tahoe basin. Specifically, the project can be found on the U.S. Geological Survey 7.5-minute Kings Beach Quadrangle Map, in Section 13 of Township 16 north, Range 17 east and Section 19 in Township 16 north, Range 18 east (Figure 1).

Specifically, the project is at the intersection of SR 267 and North Lake Boulevard (SR 28). This intersection represents the gateway into Kings Beach from the west via SR 28 (Tahoe City) and the north via SR 267 (Truckee and Interstate 80). Limits of the project extend from the intersection of Dolly Varden and N. Shore Blvd (SR 267) to the intersection of SR 28 and Secline Street to approximately the intersection of Agatam Avenue and SR 28. Figure 2 and **Error! Reference source not found.** show the project boundary and proposed roadway alignment.

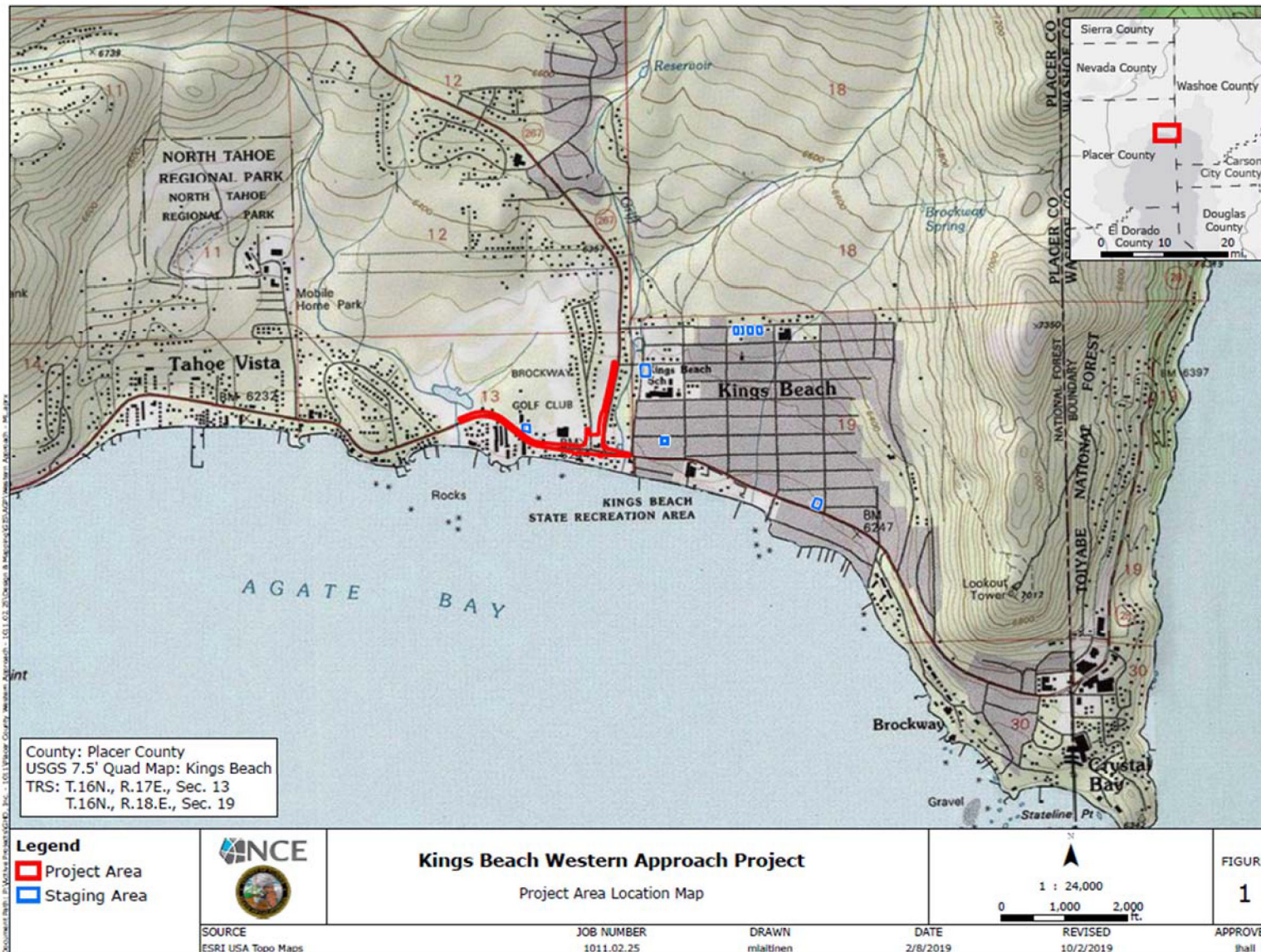


Figure 1. Project Location Map

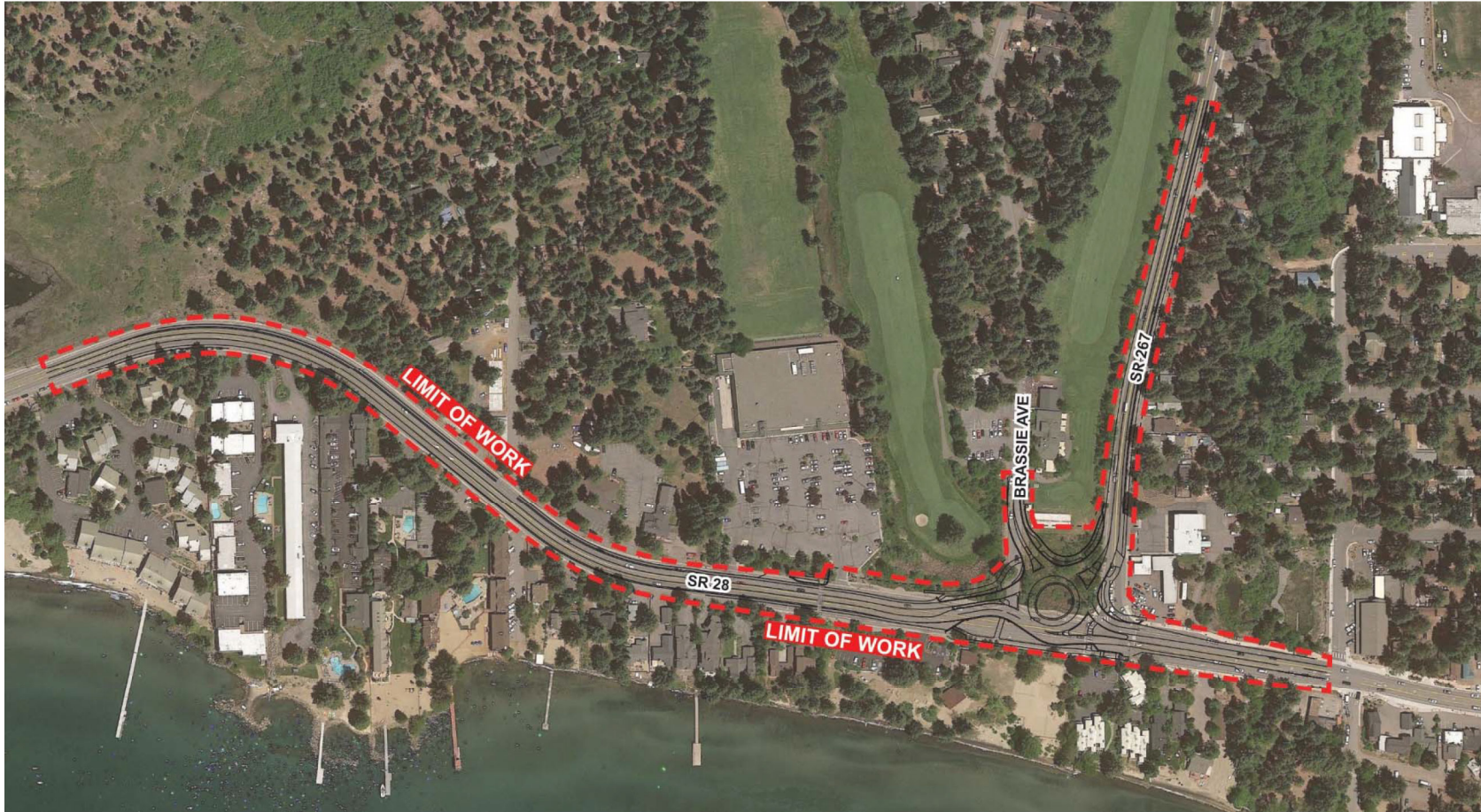


Figure 2. Project Boundary and Proposed Roadway Alignment



Figure 3. Enlarged View, Project Boundary and Proposed Roadway Alignment

The project area contains portions of scenic roadway unit 20A (Tahoe Vista), unit 40 (Broadway Cutoff), and unit 20B (Kings Beach). Tahoe Vista, Broadway Cutoff, and Kings Beach are designated by TRPA as regional scenic roadway corridor due to quality of the existing viewshed and surrounding natural environment. The TRPA threshold for scenic resources is to 'maintain or improve 1982 roadway and shoreline scenic travel route ratings, maintain or improve views of individual scenic resources, and maintain or improve quality of views from public outdoor recreation areas'². Figure 4 shows the locations of these TRPA scenic resource designations.

² TRPA, Environmental threshold carrying capacities, <https://www.trpa.org/about-trpa/how-we-operate/thresholds/>, accessed April 28, 2020.

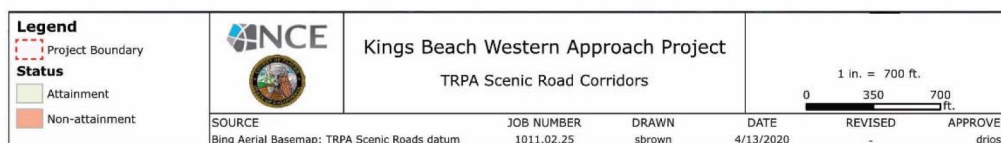


Figure 4. Scenic Corridors

VISUAL RESOURCES AND RESOURCE CHANGE

The visual character and quality of the existing intersection and scenic corridors will be substantially improved. The addition of memorable features, materials, and forms that closely match the surrounding natural environment—including colors and textures found throughout the scenic corridors of the Tahoe Basin--will unify the intersection with the overall Kings Beach Commercial Corridor Improvement Project.

The visual character of Alternative 3 will be much more compatible with the visual character of the surrounding scenic corridors by introducing complex forms composed of varying masses of planting and shapes of the roadway. The existing SR 276/28 intersection has very clearly defined edges; in contrast, the proposed project will be characterized by edges that are less defined. Plantings will create complex edges that are varied and dynamic, blending into the native landscape. In addition, color and glare-reduction will be key components of Alternative 3. Plantings will provide seasonal color and the mix of pavements and their finishes will reduce reflectivity. Highly textured surfaces such as patterned and colored concrete, combined with a diverse plant palette, will provide dynamic surfaces and a high level of coarseness that the existing intersection lacks.

An integrated range of features will create a visually intact landscape and unity will be created by using harmonious visual patterns and materials. Memorable and vivid elements such as public art, shrubs with distinct fall color, and trees with unique bark will define the planted and buffer areas of the project. A visually intact and unified project will be created by using simple palette of planting and paving materials that will screen views of any visual intrusions and closely match the existing visual context of the Lake Tahoe basin. Figure 5 shows a sample landscape plan for the project.

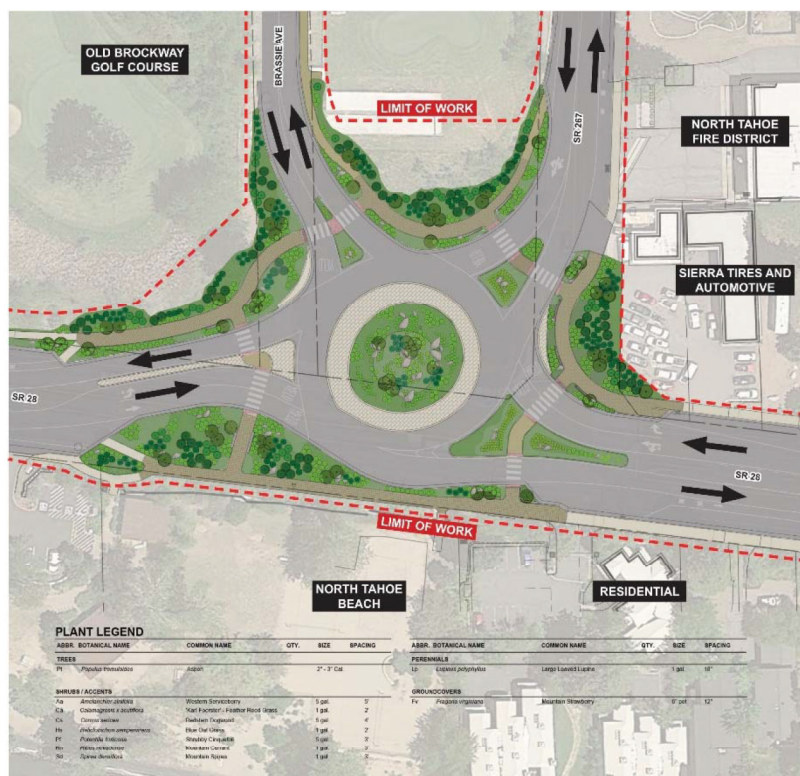


Figure 5. Landscape Plan

The scenic resource change will be moderately-low. The visual character will be substantially enhanced by adding more shapes and visual masses; creating complex edges resembling those in the adjacent natural environment; introducing a broad range of colors that change on a seasonal basis; and building pavements with a range of textures, colors, and surfaces. The visual quality will be modified to make it much more memorable with distinct features and coherent patterns that unify the roundabout with the natural environment of the Tahoe basin, the Complete Streets Commercial Corridor of Kings Beach and TRPA-designated Scenic Road Corridors.

VIEWS AND VIEWER RESPONSE

Figure 6 shows local zoning surrounding the proposed project. *Neighbors* (people with views *to* the road) and *highway users* (people with views *from* the road) will be positively affected by the proposed project.

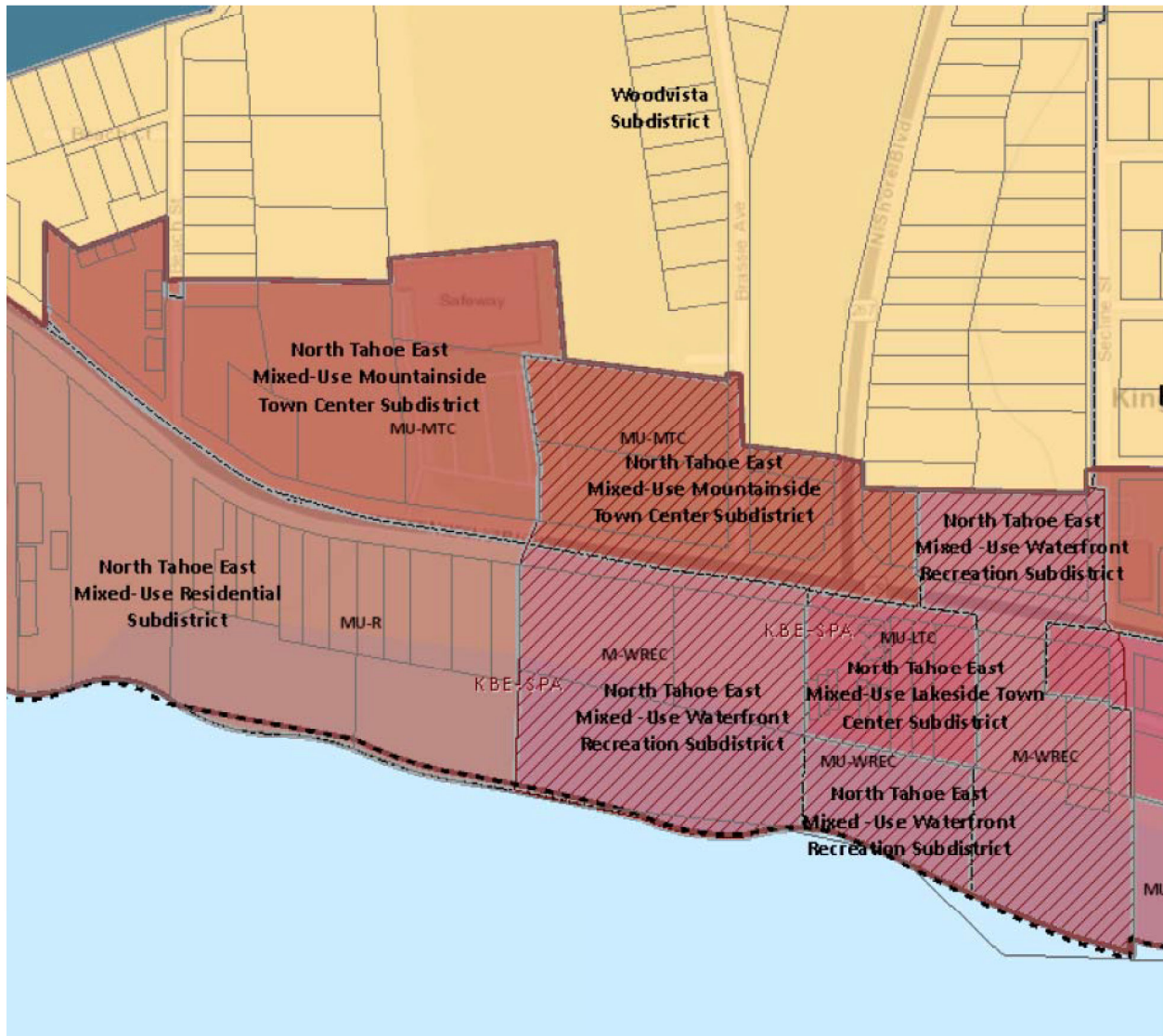


Figure 6. Local Zoning

Neighbors

The number of neighbors to the project is low; the project site is primarily surrounded by open space with a few residential uses to the south and one commercial use in the northeast corner. Based on Caltrans' five levels of viewer response (low, moderate-low, moderate, moderate-high, high), the viewer exposure for the neighbors will be moderate-low.³ Neighbors of the project include residents of adjacent condominiums, single-family residences, and commercial uses. The views from their locations will primarily be

³ U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, "Guidelines for the visual impact assessment of highway projects", January 2015

of native plantings with very limited views of pedestrians or bicyclists on the new shared paths. In addition, views by neighbors will be of short duration. Plantings (evergreen trees and shrubs), berms, and the adjustment of the intersection to the north will reduce opportunities for long direct views of the project.

The viewer sensitivity of the neighbors will also be moderate-low. Currently, the intersection is a dominant visual feature to neighbors. As described above, Alternative 3 will alter the view by emphasizing less visually intrusive elements such as plantings and views of Lake Tahoe. Viewer awareness of the roundabout will also be substantively less than that of the existing condition because they will only have narrow views and clearly defined views necessitated primarily for traffic safety. Both SR 267 and SR 28 are TRPA-designated Scenic Roadway Units. These corridors are highly valued by the local community and features such as native plantings, art, shared paths, and curving roads will be welcomed improvements to the current large expanses of asphalt paving.

Highway Users

The viewer exposure for highway users will be low. Currently, highway users view the intersection from three distinct locations; with the creation of curving roadways, the views will be consistently changing. Due to the volume of traffic on these routes, a large number of highway users will view the project, but the viewing duration for Alternative 3 will be shorter than for the existing condition because drivers will not need to stop at traffic signals.

The viewer sensitivity of the highway users will be low. Currently, highway users can experience long wait times at signals, increasing their awareness of the commercial uses, driveways, asphalt paving, and signage. With the addition of free movements and landscape features, highway users will be more likely to notice the natural character of the plantings and the curving geometry of the roadway. The focus of views will also change; currently, views are straight and broad. The views created by Alternative 3 will be very focused, spanning a much narrower frame. Similar to the neighbors, highway users highly value the scenic qualities of both roads. There has been significant support for Alternative 3 because it will dramatically improve the aesthetic quality of the corridor, increase the physical and visual unity with the Kings Beach Complete Streets, and enhance views of Lake Tahoe and the surrounding mountains.

VISUAL IMPACT

Visual impacts are determined by assessing changes to the visual resources and predicting viewer response to those changes. The visual impacts of Alternative 3 will be short-term and moderately low. The largest impact will be the visual and physical disruption caused by the demolition of the existing intersection, the construction of the roundabout, and the intrusion of staging areas within Kings Beach.

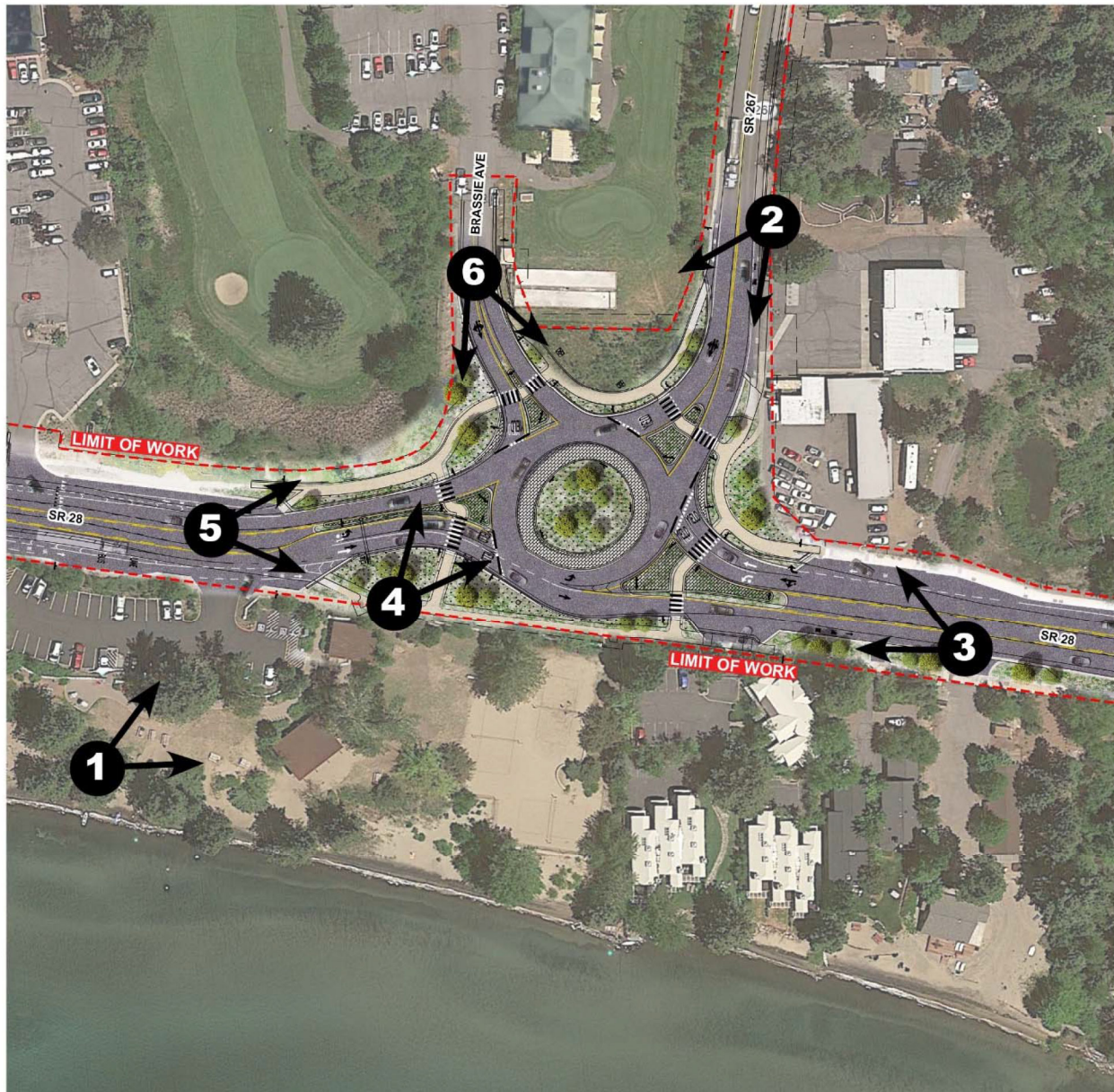
General impacts include:

- Disruption caused by construction (i.e., noise, traffic control, and dust).
- Removal of the man-made stormwater detention basin on the Old Brockway Golf Course.
- Interruption of existing travel patterns, bicycle, and pedestrian circulation.
- Tree removal.
- Staging areas located within Kings Beach

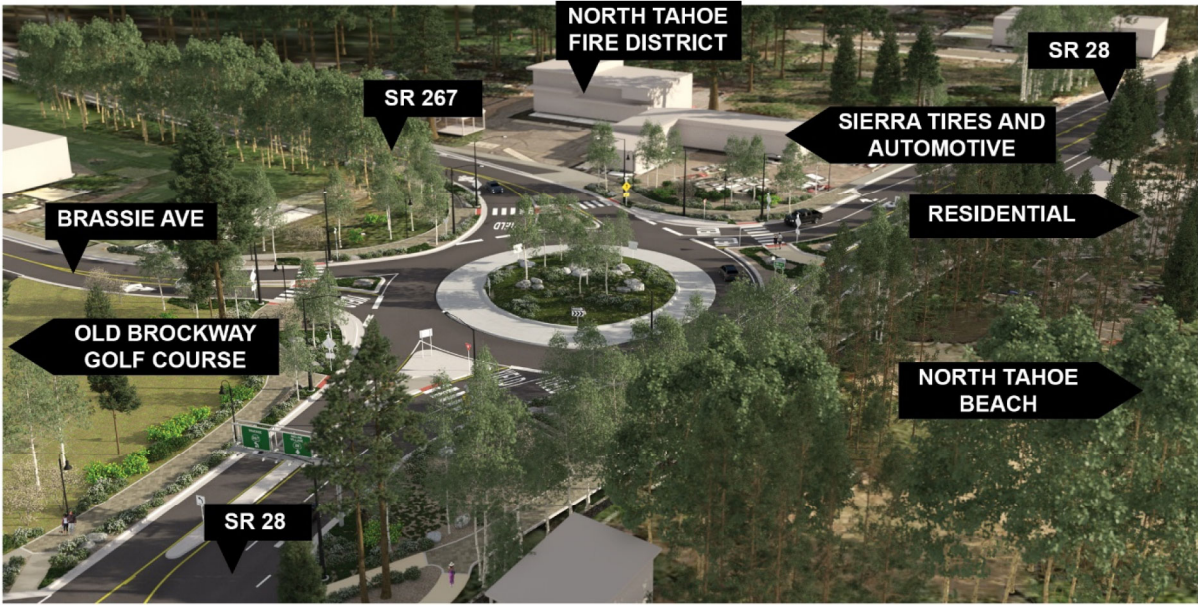
The No-build Alternative will have high visual impacts. Existing views of auto shops, large expanses of asphalt paving, traffic signals, commercial signage, and parking lots will remain, the intersection will not

comply with the TRPA goals for scenic corridors, and the intersection will remain inconsistent with the Kings Beach Commercial Corridor Improvement Project.

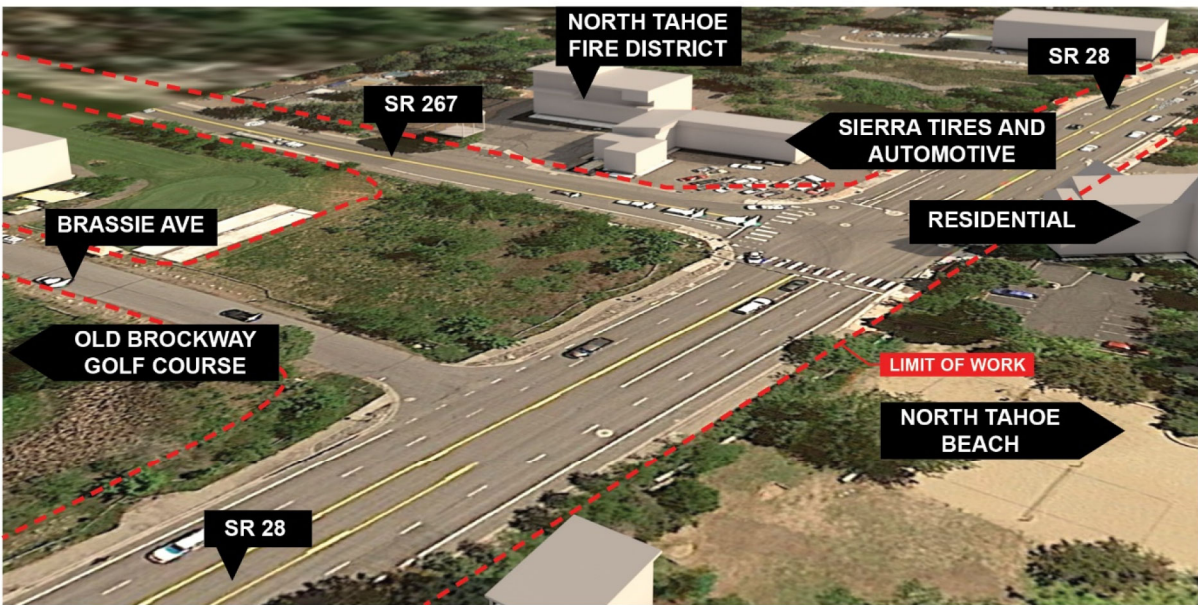
Figures 7-13 provide visualizations to compare the proposed project (Alternative 3) to the existing condition (No-build Alternative) from six viewpoints.



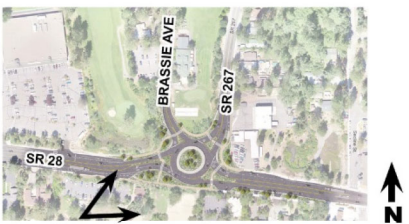
Key Views
Figure 7. Key to Visualization Viewpoints



Proposed aerial view



Existing aerial view



Key View #1 - Project Overview

Figure 8. View #1, Aerial Views of Proposed Project (Alternative 3) and Existing Condition (No-build)



Proposed aerial view



Existing aerial view



Key View #2 - Highway 267 view south

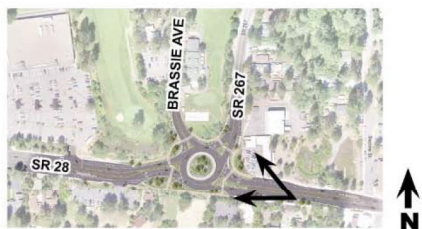
Figure 9. View #2, Aerial Views of Proposed Project (Alternative 3) and Existing Condition (No-build)



Proposed street improvements



Existing street level view

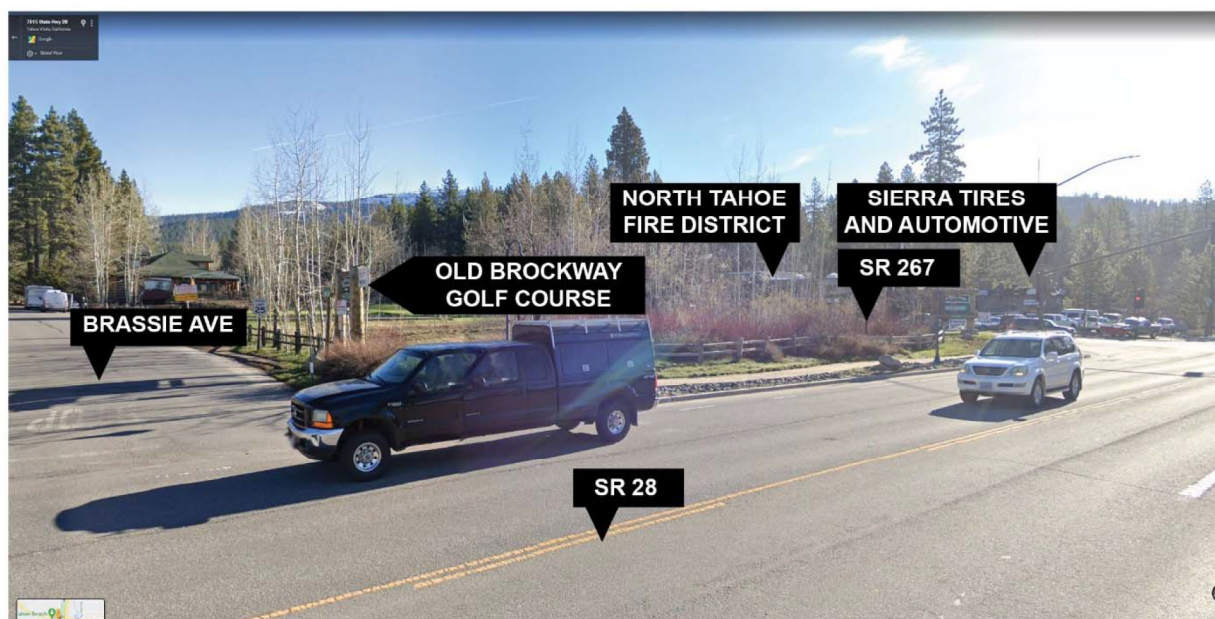


Key View #3 - SR 28 view west

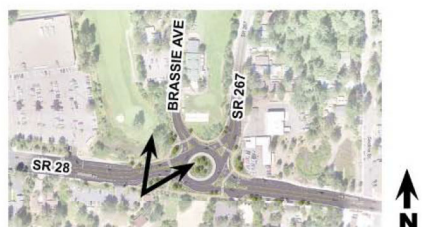
Figure 10. View #3, Street Views of Proposed Project (Alternative 3) and Existing Condition (No-build)



Proposed pedestrian improvements at SR 28



Existing street level view at SR 28



Key View #4 - SR 28 view northeast from North Tahoe Beach

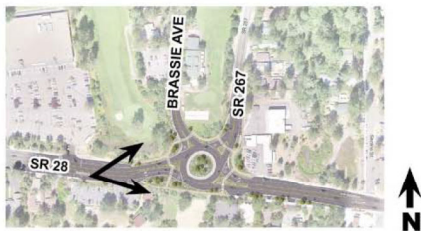
Figure 11. View #4, Street Views of Proposed Project (Alternative 3) and Existing Condition (No-build)



Proposed street improvements



Existing street level view



Key View #5 - SR 28 view east



Proposed street improvements



Existing street level view



Key View #6 - Brassie Avenue view south

Figure 12. View #5, Street Views of Proposed Project (Alternative 3) and Existing Condition (No-build)

CONCLUSIONS

The proposed project, Alternative 3, will result in low visual impacts for all users. The visual character and quality of the existing intersection and scenic corridors will be substantially improved.

The project benefits include:

- Dramatically improve the aesthetic quality of the intersection.
- Use native plantings and natural materials such as stone and wood to match the natural context of Lake Tahoe.
- Connect the intersection to the complete streets facilities within Kings Beach.
- Provide pedestrian and bicycle facilities where none currently exist, compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Limit and improve views of the intersection from existing residential and commercial uses.
- Bring the intersection into conformance with TRPA'S scenic corridor standards.
- Introduce placemaking elements such as pedestrian-scaled lighting, seating, and wayfinding signage.
- Create stormwater treatment areas as possible.
- Enhance views of Lake Tahoe and the mountains.
- Limit views of commercial and residential buildings from the highway.

In contrast, the No-build Alternative will maintain existing conditions with a low Level of Service, no pedestrian or bicycle facilities, a lack of continuity with community planning objectives, and non-conformance with TRPA ordinances.

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