3.13 AESTHETICS

This section describes the existing aesthetics setting on the project site and in the vicinity, and discusses plans and policies that are relevant to aesthetics. The general and site-specific discussion of aesthetics contained herein provides the environmental baseline by which environmental impacts are identified and measured. Environmental impacts are discussed in Section 4.0.

3.13.1 REGULATORY SETTING

STATE

Scenic Highways

In 1963, the State Legislature established the California Scenic Highway Program through Senate Bill 1467, provisions of which were added to the Streets and Highways Code. The goal of the California Scenic Highway Program is to preserve and enhance the natural beauty of California, with highways designated based upon the amount of natural landscape visible to a passing motorist (Caltrans, 2006b). Scenic highway designation does not preclude development; however, the program encourages development that does not degrade the scenic value of the corridor (Caltrans, 2007).

There are no officially designated scenic highways located near the project site. The nearest highway segment that is eligible for designation is a segment of State Route 101, which is located across the San Francisco Bay (Bay) approximately five miles west of the project site. This highway segment extends from near the City of Marin north toward Leggett, and does not provide a clear view of the project site.

LOCAL

City of Richmond General Plan

The City of Richmond (City) General Plan provides guidance with respect to visual resources for areas within the City, including the project site. There are also specific guidelines for areas of the City including the project site, which is part of the West Shoreline Planning Area. The Area Specific Guidelines for the West Shoreline are discussed in Section 3.9.1. The following aesthetics-related goals and policies may be relevant to the project alternatives.

Goals

LU-A Improve the aesthetic and economic value of individual sites, the adjacent properties, the neighborhoods and the entire City.

LU-E Preserve visual access to the Bay and other features of the regional landscape.

OSC-Q  Preserve natural open-space areas for visual open space, nature study, community shaping, conservation of natural resources, and conservation of native plant and animal communities.

Policies

LU-A.1  Evaluate project proposals for their contribution to improving Richmond's aesthetic and economic values.

LU-A.4  Require new development adjacent to historical sites to incorporate design elements so as to complement the character of the surrounding historical structures.

LU-A.7  Include art and cultural components in areas of new development and redevelopment.

LU-E.1  Give high priority to preserving and enhancing the potential amenities of the shoreline's variety of edges and the landmark character of the regional landscape.

LU-E.2  Require new development to preserve the unique view opportunities of the shoreline and ridgelines in order to maximize their availability to the public.


OSC-Q.3  Consider lands in areas with high development constraints and high visual importance to the community for open space designation.

OSC-Q.4  Encourage developers to provide dedicated public park land, trails, and facilities instead of in-lieu fees.

3.13.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

PROJECT SITE AREA

The project site occupies approximately 280 acres of dry land on the southwest side of the San Pablo Peninsula. The peninsula is geographically and topographically separated from urban areas of the City, as shown in Figure 3.9-1. Western Drive runs through the project site and connects to Interstate 580 (I-580) approximately 1.5 miles southeast of the project site.

Community Character

Richmond is centrally located in the San Francisco Bay Area (Bay Area), and benefits from the economic growth of major metropolitan areas like San Francisco and new markets in the technology industry. Much of the City is characterized by industrial uses. It is at the center of many major transportation networks including Interstate 80 (I-80) and I-580, shipping ports, Oakland and San Francisco International airports, and the Bay Area Rapid Transit system (BART). Richmond has 32 miles of shoreline, more than any other city on the Bay. The shoreline historically was used for shipping and
industry through World War II and now features trails, parks, scenic views, and historic sites, as well as heavy industry (City of Richmond, 1997b).

Richmond is currently focused on balancing economic development of the waterfront, while maintaining sites of historical significance, open space areas, and recreation for residents and visitors. The southern base of the San Pablo Peninsula serves as a gateway to the City and features mainly industrial and recreational uses.

**VIEWS OF THE PROJECT SITE FROM OFF-SITE LOCATIONS**

**Views From Land**

The project site is situated between the shoreline of the Bay and Potrero Ridge, which blocks any views of the site from further inland. Because of its particular location, the scenic vistas that include the project site are afforded to the viewer from points across the Bay, along the western shore. Vistas A through C are depicted and described on Figure 3.13.1b. Figure 3.13-1a provides a key to the locations from which the photos in Figure 3.13-1b were taken.

**Vista A**

*Vista A* is a view looking toward the project site from a location off San Pedro Road, in the northeastern portion of the City of San Rafael. The Richmond-San Rafael Bridge is visible south of the project site.

**Vista B**

*Vista B* is a view looking toward the project site from a point further south than *Vista A*. East Marin Island and West Marin Island are visible from this view, as is the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

**Vista C**

*Vista C* is a view looking toward the project site from a point immediately north of I-580. The Richmond-San Rafael Bridge is visible south of the project site.

**Visibility of the Project Site**

None of these vistas, looking across the Bay toward the project site, afford a clear view of the site. The viewing direction is determined only in context with other features, primarily the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge located south of the site.

**Views from Bay**

The project site is most clearly viewed from the Bay. These views are afforded to commuters on the ferry that runs between San Francisco and Vallejo, as well as to commercial and recreational boaters. Figure 3.13-2a and Figure 3.13-2b depict views of the project site from the ferry. The main Winehaven
Figure 3.13-1a
Key to Scenic Vista Photos

SOURCE: Upstream Point Molate LLC, 2007; GlobeXplorer Aerial Photograph, 2/27/2004; City of Richmond, 2007; AES, 2008
Vista A is a view looking toward the project site from a location off Point San Pedro Road, in the northeastern portion of the City of San Rafael. The Richmond-San Rafael Bridge is visible on the right side of the photograph. The project site, which is not clearly visible, is located toward the center of the photograph. See Figure 3.13-1a for the location from which the photograph was taken.

Vista B is a view looking toward the project site from a point further south than Vista A. The Richmond-San Rafael Bridge is visible on the right side of the photograph. East Marin Island and a portion of West Marin Island are visible on the left side of the photograph. The project site, which is not clearly visible, is located toward the center of the photograph. See Figure 3.13-1a for the location from which the photograph was taken.

Vista C is a view looking toward the project site from a point immediately north of Interstate 580 on the western side of the San Francisco Bay. The Richmond-San Rafael Bridge is visible on the right side of the photograph. The project site, which is not clearly visible, is located toward the center of the photograph. See Figure 3.13-1a for the location from which the photograph was taken.
Photo 1 was taken from the ferry that runs between San Francisco and Vallejo. It provides a view of the main Winehaven Building (Building No. 1) at the center of the photograph, with the cottages to the left and the Wine Cellar Building (Building No. 6) to the right. The San Francisco Bay is in the foreground, and the forested ridge (Potrero Ridge) along the eastern boundary of the project site is in the background.
Photo 2 is a view of the on-site pier, approaching the project site from the south. The cottages are somewhat visible, just left of the center of the photograph. This is a view afforded to ferry riders traveling from San Francisco to Vallejo.

Photo 3 is another view of the project site from the south. The cottages, partially obscured by trees, are visible at the center of the photograph. To the right of the cottages, parts of Building No.1 and Building No. 6 are visible. This is a view afforded to ferry riders traveling from San Francisco to Vallejo.

Photo 4 is a view of the project site, approaching from the north. Building No. 1 is clearly visible at the center of the photograph, with the cottages to the left and Building No. 6 to the right. This is a view afforded to ferry riders traveling from Vallejo to San Francisco.
Building (Building No. 1) is the most prominent feature of these views. Also visible are the pier, the Wine Cellar Building (Building No. 6), the cottages, and other buildings.

**PROJECT SITE**

**Visual Character**

Despite the highly industrialized land uses in the vicinity, the project site has retained a unique visual character reflecting its natural and cultural history. The eastern boundary of the project site follows Potrero Ridge, which runs northwest to southeast. Potrero Ridge serves as a topographical barrier that separates the project site from land and facilities owned and operated by Chevron. The western boundary of the project site extends into the Bay and includes the pier at Point Molate. Surface elevations range from approximately 440 feet (ft.) along Potrero Ridge to sea level at the Bay. Steep knolls extending from the ridge to the Point divide the property into northern and southern areas (US Navy, 2002). These knolls have slopes greater than 15 percent. Western Drive runs through gently rolling terrain in the southern and northern areas of the site, climbing and descending the knoll between these two areas.

Dominant features on the project site include historic Winehaven buildings, former naval industrial buildings, and open space. Vegetation includes eucalyptus groves, as discussed in Section 3.5. Most existing development lies on the northern portion of the site. In this northern area, features west of Western Drive include three buildings associated with the Winehaven Historic District (Buildings No. 1, 6, and 10), several former naval buildings, pipelines, wastewater treatment ponds, and an abandoned rail line. Features east of Western Drive in the northern area include 29 cottages associated with the Winehaven Historic District, former naval buildings, children’s play areas, and several roads providing access through the hillside. On the western portion of the site, a pier extends 1,450 ft. from the shore. On the southwest portion of the site is Point Molate Beach Park, which is approximately 18 acres and includes parking, children’s play areas, landscaping, paths, and two Quonset huts (US Navy, 2002). The park is currently closed to the public. A portion of the southern area of the project site is a large paved area that was used by the Navy. The remainder of the southern area is mostly open space. Figure 3.13-3 provides a selection of images of the project site.

**VIEWS FROM THE PROJECT SITE**

The immediate vicinity surrounding the project site is dominated by industrial uses and open space. Chevron owns lands adjacent to the project site, and most of the San Pablo Peninsula is used by Chevron and its refinery facilities (US Navy, 2002). To the north there is open space that serves as a buffer for Chevron oil operations, a rod and gun club for Chevron employees, and a marina. Further to the north lies the Point San Pablo Yacht Harbor. To the east is Potrero Ridge, dominated on its east side by
**Photo 1:** Winehaven building, looking west toward the San Francisco Bay and the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

**Photo 2:** Cottages along the eastern side of Western Drive.

**Photo 3:** Building 10 (east of the main Winehaven building), with cottages and eucalyptus grove further east.

**Photo 4:** Narrow on-site road leading west toward the San Francisco Bay.

Source: AES, 2008
**Photo 1:** From the project site, looking west across the San Francisco Bay, with Mount Tamalpais in the background.

**Photo 2:** From the western edge of the project site, looking south along the shoreline.

**Photo 3:** From the western edge of the project site, looking north along the shoreline.

**Photo 4:** From the project site, looking west toward the San Francisco Bay and the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge.

Source: AES, 2008

*Figure 3.13-4*

Views of the Project Area
Chevron’s aboveground storage tanks and refinery facilities. Views of the surrounding area from the project site looking west include the Bay, the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge, Red Rock Island, and Mount Tamalpais (Figure 3.13-4). Views east of the project site are blocked by Potrero Ridge, which separates the site from Chevron-owned land and the remainder of the City.