G. AESTHETICS AND VISUAL QUALITY

INTRODUCTION

This section addresses existing visual conditions and the potential for the project to affect those conditions, focusing on visual character of the project site and views from surrounding public areas. The physical characteristics of the site and surrounding areas are discussed briefly. For a more detailed description of the land uses that are mentioned below, refer to Section IV.A, Land Use and Planning Consistency. As discussed in the Initial Study (see Appendix A), the project site is not within or near the corridor of a state scenic highway, nor does Redwood City's Strategic General Plan identify any scenic vistas that include the site. The section also describes the visual context of the project site and identifies relevant policies from the Redwood City Strategic General Plan, the Redwood City Zoning Ordinance, the draft *Bayfront Area Visioning Study* (Bayfront Study), the Nice Places Policy, and the Redwood City Planning Division Urban design guidelines.

Two computer-generated visual simulations illustrating "before" and "after" visual conditions from representative public vantage points near the proposed project site are presented as part of this analysis. The locations of the visual simulation vantage points were selected in consultation with City staff. Digitized photographs and computer modeling and rendering techniques were utilized to prepare the simulation images, which are based on project drawings provided by the project architect. This section includes two additional images one from Redwood Creek and one from the interior of the project's central quad, both prepared by the project architects.

SETTING

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Redwood City's aesthetic character is defined by a combination of natural features and development which have shaped the urban configuration and the components of the City. Redwood City is located in southern San Mateo County and is surrounded by the cities of San Carlos, Belmont, Foster City and San Mateo to the north, Menlo Park to the south, and Atherton and the community of Woodside to the west. The project site is situated in the Bayfront Area east of the Bayshore Freeway (U.S. 101), which includes a land area of about 27 square miles, an area of Redwood City roughly four times larger than the land area of the city west of the freeway (General Plan, p. 3-6).

The visual quality of the Bayfront Area is characterized by open and expansive views of horizon, sky, and the hills surrounding southern San Francisco Bay. Views extend from the Peninsula hills to the west; to Redwood Shores, Foster City and the San Mateo Bridge to the north; to the East Bay hills to the east; and to the Dumbarton Bridge and beyond to the south. Throughout the Bayfront Area, shorelines and open inland areas provide views to marshlands, sloughs, and waterways. From many locations where water is not directly visible, the masts of docked or

passing sailboats are visible indicators of the active waterways that help define the Bayfront's visual character.

EXISTING VISUAL CHARACTER

The assessment of existing visual quality is organized according to the following general descriptive categories: site location; landform; vegetation; and land use.

The project site occupies approximately 17.74-acres of land along San Francisco Bay and Redwood Creek, adjacent to the Seaport Office Center and a small boat launching facility on land owned by the Port of Redwood City. The former industrial site contains vacant industrial buildings and equipment consisting of a depressed, graded, and predominantly bare central area surrounded by shallow slopes on three sides. A cyclone fence traverses the southern and western boundaries of the site. Heavy machinery associated with the site's former salt stockpiling use, including rusted metal conveyer towers (gantries), storage tanks, and a single-story quonset-style office and storage shed are located on the southern portion of the site near the Port's day-use parking lot.

A gravel road begins at the southern entrance of the site near the Port day-use parking lot and proceeds along the eastern side of the site to the Cargill Pier. The Cargill Pier, constructed of wood and metal over concrete pilings, extends approximately 150 feet from the shoreline into the Redwood Creek. Along the northern portion of the site, the Marine Science Institute (MSI) operates out of a temporary, two-story facility. MSI uses an existing dock adjacent to its facility as a point of departure for educational journeys on the San Francisco Bay.

The project site contains very little vegetation and no formal landscaping. A few manicured bushes are located along the eastern boundary of the site; brush and grass is also visible at scattered locations throughout the site.

The site is immediately bounded on the north by the waters of Redwood Creek and the Bair Island Wildlife Refuge; on the south by the Port of Redwood City day-use parking lot and proposed long-term boat storage site, an existing boat launch, and by Cardinal Way; on the east by the waters of Redwood Creek, and on the west by Seaport Center, the Seaport Plaza office development, and Cardinal Way. Seaport Center, an office park consistent in terms of its building style, function, and layout, consists of two- and three-story concrete buildings with tinted glass windows and flat roofs. Mature landscaping and a perimeter jogging/bike path are located along Seaport Center's western creek bank.

The project site is generally of low visual quality. The site lacks visually significant geologic, hydrologic, vegetative, or structural features. Moreover, the site exhibits signs of previous disturbance attributable to its former heavy industrial uses which degrade the appearance of the site, especially in the context of existing neighboring uses.

Site Sensibility and Public View Corridors

The project site is part of a number of local and regional public view corridors. A view corridor is an enclosed area of landscape which can be viewed as a single entity that includes the total area visible from a point, or series of points along a linear transportation route. Public view corridors are areas in which views are available from publicly-accessible viewpoints, such as city streets. Within the project area, view corridors include Chesapeake Drive; Cardinal Way; and the Municipal Marina (off of Seaport Boulevard). The discussion that follows includes photographs of the site from locations within these view corridors. These viewpoints are also included on Figure IV.G-1, Viewpoint Location Map.

In general, for the Bayfront Area including the project site, the foreground of most of the view corridors includes mature poplar trees, which stand approximately 50 feet. Many roadways are characterized by double rows of poplar trees flanking the sidewalk. Most existing development within the area is below or near this height, creating continuity of horizon that allows for distant views from surrounding areas. West of the Bayfront Area, the thinly-wooded foothills of the San Andreas valley gradually give way to the densely forested Santa Cruz Mountains that rise to over 2,000 feet above sea level.

Cardinal Way

The project site is visible from Cardinal Way. Cardinal Way is a privately owned local street that begins at Saginaw Drive. Cardinal Way is proposed to become a dedicated public street or legal access easement for the benefit of the public from Saginaw Drive to the southern boundary of the project site. Currently there are views into the project site from Cardinal Way looking north and east. To the west, the Seaport Office Center is visible. Figure IV.G-2, viewpoint 1, shows a view of the project site from the Port's day-use parking lot at the end of Chesapeake Drive. A rusted metal structural frame is visible in the foreground behind a cyclone fence which runs along the southern and eastern boundaries of the site. A rusted, corrugated metal quonset shed is also visible in the background at the entrance to the site.

Viewpoint 2 provides a view of the site to the east from Cardinal Way. From this vantage point, ungraded earth, puddles of water, and a metal storage container are visible in the foreground, and the most visually dominant feature of the site, the conveyor tower, is visible in the background.

Figure IV.G-3 also provides views of the site from Cardinal Way. Viewpoint 3 is representative of views to the north along Cardinal Way. From this vantage point, the site's cyclone fence is visible in the foreground. In the mid-ground, unpaved earth with scattered patches of brush is visible. In the distance, a three-story office building in the Seaport Plaza is visible. Viewpoint 4 provides a view of the site to the east. In the foreground, poplar trees along Cardinal Way partially obstruct views of the site. In the background, the heavy machinery, the conveyor tower, and storage shed are visible at the site's main entrance.

INSERT FIGURE IV.G-1 VIEWPOINT LOCATION MAP

INSERT FIGURE IV.G-2

INSERT FIGURE IV.G-3

Chesapeake Drive

The project site is visible from Chesapeake Drive. Chesapeake Drive is a local street that begins at Seaport Boulevard, and leads to the project site, but terminates at the Port of Redwood City's day-use parking lot at the site's southern boundary. Views of the project site are available looking north along Chesapeake Drive, however, poplar trees in a double row configuration flanking the sidewalk line both the eastern and western sides of Chesapeake Drive, and this view corridor tends to be partially or completely obstructed by the tree canopy, depending on the viewer's position on the street. A "before" and "after" view of the project site as seen from the end of Chesapeake Drive at the site's entrance is included under the discussion of Impact G.3.

Port of Redwood City Boat Launch and Municipal Marina

Immediately adjacent to the project site to the south is the Port of Redwood City boat launch facility. From this vantage point, views of the eastern shoreline of the project site, the Cargill Pier, and Redwood Creek are available.

Across Redwood Creek to the east of the Abbott property are vessels moored at the Municipal Marina. The boats at the Municipal Marina are a varied collection of sailboats, cruisers, floating cabins, and barges that are accommodated in 190 berths. The Municipal Marina also contains over one mile of waterfront parkway as well as other publicly accessible amenities such as picnic spaces and a restaurant. Adjacent to the Municipal Marina is the Seaport Conference Center. The eastern side of the project site, including the Cargill pier is readily visible from the Municipal Marina and Seaport Conference Center in views to the west. A "before" and "after" view of the project site as seen from the Municipal Marina and Seaport Conference Center is included under the discussion of Impact G.3.

Further east and northeast of the project site, the Port of Redwood City and its related industrial features dominate the landscape, including large storage tanks and silos, sand and gravel piles, and loading facilities. The tallest occupied structures are the five- and six-story glass and steel office buildings of the Pacific Shores Center at the east end of Seaport Boulevard. The northern portion of the project site is currently visible from the Port of Redwood City's liquid bulk terminal; however, the project site is not visible from the Pacific Shores development. Pacific Shores is located approximately 1.5 miles to the northeast, and Port of Redwood City uses west of Seaport Boulevard obstruct southwest views of the site.

Bair Island, Redwood Creek, and other Area Views

The Bair Island Wildlife Refuge, part of the Don Edwards San Francisco Bay National Wildlife Refuge, is located across Redwood Creek to the north and west of the project site. Marshlands and tidal plains offer unobstructed views of the project site to the south. Additionally, the project site is visible from viewing locations over water from Redwood Creek and also from the hillsides of Redwood City and adjacent communities. However, from these distances on the hillsides, the project site increasingly becomes a visually indistinguishable element of the waterfront, and the viewer observes a more abstract collection of colors, patterns, and shapes in a collectively larger environment.

While the site is not within or near the corridor of a state scenic highway, the project site is visible to travelers on U.S. 101. The site's most distinguishing visual feature, its steel gantry, is visible in dynamic view sequences in both the northbound and southbound travel lanes. Because of the travel speed along U.S. 101 and the site's distance from the freeway, views are fleeting and the project site does not appear as a distinct visual entity; instead, views of the project site are experienced as part of the greater urbanized area in view corridors east of U.S. 101.

APPLICABLE PLANS AND POLICIES

Adopted City of Redwood City plans and policies regarding visual quality include provisions of the Redwood City Strategic General Plan, the Redwood City Zoning Ordinance, and the Redwood City Planning Division Urban design guidelines. These provisions are identified below for consideration in evaluating the visual impacts of the project. In addition, as noted in the introduction to this chapter, the Bayfront Study, currently under preparation, is anticipated to contain specific recommendations and guidelines for the Bayfront Area, including the project site. When completed, these guidelines are intended to be directly pertinent to consideration and refinement of the proposed project design and its visual aspects.

REDWOOD CITY STRATEGIC GENERAL PLAN

The General Plan contains few policies related specifically to visual quality, though a number are related indirectly. These are contained in the *Land Use, Open Space,* and *Conservation Elements,* and are listed below.

- Achieve and maintain a harmonious relationship between the natural environment and man's use of the land (Open Space Objective 1, p. 9-3).

- The City should preserve and enhance the natural terrain, vegetation, and beauty of Redwood City's various geographical areas (Open Space Policy 0-5, p. 9-3).

- The City should preserve and enhance small parcels of open space in developed areas, wherever practical, especially in those neighborhoods with the greatest park deficiency (Open Space Policy 0-7, p. 9-4).

- Environmentally unique open spaces such as San Francisco Bay, its tributaries, sloughs, and marshlands should be protected and enhanced for conservation and recreation purposes (Conservation policy C-3, p. 10-4).

- The visual qualities of the community should be preserved and improved (Conservation Policy C-7, page 10-4).

OTHER PERTINENT CITY-ADOPTED POLICIES

Nice Places Policy

In addition to the pertinent adopted General Plan policies listed above, the City Council adopted the following policy on September 10, 2001:

- It is the policy of the City of Redwood City that in the design of public and private projects, high priority be given to creating comfortable, enjoyable, and aesthetically pleasing public spaces.

Redwood City Planning Division Urban Design Guidelines

The Redwood City Planning Division Urban Design Guidelines (Guidelines) were drafted primarily for application in Downtown Redwood City; however, the text of the Guidelines does not limit their application solely to Downtown. The Guidelines address a number of specific visual issues which apply to the proposed project, including sunlight and massing, setbacks, and landscape requirements. In summary, the Guidelines seek to improve the quality of individual projects, and this is controlled by the consideration of two important factors: harmony, which looks at how a project relates to its environment; and, compatibility, which is concerned with developing the most successful design for a given use.

The following Guidelines are pertinent to consideration of the project, specifically with respect to site design, building orientation and landscaping:

- Projects shall be designed to enhance the particular characteristics of their environment and specific aspects of the visual quality of the community.

- Natural sunlight provisions shall be encouraged for all projects, particularly in the case of residential developments and public and private outdoor areas. Buildings shall be stepped back where bulk and building mass issues arise.

- Building facades shall be stepped back from the street …in order to avoid a "slab-like" appearance which generates strong wind conditions.

- Excessive reduction in the form of additional setbacks at the upper floors of buildings should be integrated in the building design at stages appropriate to the overall mass of the building.

- For structures over 30 and under 60 feet in height, a one-foot setback is recommended for every two feet in height above the third story or 30 feet, whichever is highest.

- For structures over 60 feet in height, a one-foot setback is recommended for every foot above the sixth story, or 60 feet, whichever is lowest.

- The bases of all buildings fronting on streets shall relate to the pedestrian scale by incorporating various amenities such as well-defined entrance areas, outdoor courtyards, public/private seating, and appropriate lighting conditions. The use of arcades, trellises, colonnades, landscaped pathways, judiciously located porches or porticos, and aesthetically designed entranceways are also recommended for enhancing the streetscape.

- Parking facilities shall be less prominent than the principal structures which they serve, unless they are of exemplary architectural design quality.

- A sense of visual continuity with the adjacent structures, local streetscape, and general area shall be maintained.

- New developments shall be designed to relate to the general proportion, scale, and bulk of the surrounding area.

- The general environmental characteristics of the site shall be respected, including orientation, views, drainage, and other site-specific conditions which determine the selection of plant materials as well as the appropriate location of appurtenances (including open space areas, windows and door placements, and drainage lines).

Redwood City Zoning Ordinance Provisions

The Redwood City Zoning Ordinance contains regulations applicable to the site, including height regulations for the proposed Industrial Restricted (IR) zoning district for the project property. (Although the site is currently zoned General Industrial, the applicant is requesting a rezoning to IR as part of this project. Therefore the following discussion assesses the project with respect to the requirements of the proposed IR zoning district.) It also contains standards to be specifically applied in the approval of Architectural Permit applications, which would be required for the proposed project. A summary of the provisions relevant to visual factors are listed below.

Article 17— IR (Industrial Restricted) District (Section 17.5—Height Regulations):

- No structure shall exceed seventy-five (75) feet in height.

Article 45—Architectural Permits (Section 45.8—Architectural Standards). In approving, conditionally approving, or denying any application for an Architectural Permit, the Zoning Administrator shall base his action upon the following factors:

- The variety in design of the structure and grounds should exist to avoid monotony in the external appearance;

- The size and design of the structure shall be considered for the purpose of determining that the structure is in proportion to its building site and that it has a balance and unity among its external features so as to present a harmonious appearance;

- The extent to which the structure conforms to the general character of other structures in the vicinity insofar as the character can be ascertained and is found to be architecturally desirable;

- The extent to which excessive ornamentation is to be used and the extent to which temporary and second-hand materials, or materials which are imitative of other materials, are to be used;

- The extent to which natural features, including trees, shrubs, creeks, and rocks, and the natural grade of the site are to be retained;

- The reservation of landscaping areas for the purposes of separating or screening service and storage areas from the street and adjoining building sites, breaking up large expanses of

paved areas, separating or screening parking lots from the street and adjoining buildings sites, and separating building areas from paved areas to provide access from buildings to open space areas;

- In the case of any commercial or industrial structure, the Zoning Administrator shall consider its proximity to any R District (residential) and shall consider the effect of the proposed structure upon the character and value of the adjacent R District area.

IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

OVERVIEW

The proposed project would change the appearance of the project site by replacing a former industrial site including vacant industrial buildings and equipment with five new buildings (including a 5-tier parking structure) on landscaped grounds and a replacement facility for the Marine Science Institute (MSI). The proposed project would be developed in phases and at build-out would contain 541,077 square feet, plus approximately 10,000 square feet for the proposed MSI replacement facility. The buildings on the proposed West Coast Research Center campus would be setback from the site's western boundary approximately 15 feet; from the southern boundary approximately 100 feet; and on the northern and eastern site boundaries between 75 and 100 feet.

Campus buildings would range in height from 40 ft to 84 ft, excluding mechanical equipment and other rooftop appurtenances, which are exempt from height regulations per the Redwood City Zoning Ordinance (Section 32.7). The site's taller buildings would be located along the site's northern and eastern edges in order to maximize existing waterfront views. The Phase 1 R&D building would be approximately 59 feet; the Marine Science Institute would be approximately 30 feet; the parking structure 40 feet; and the Phase 2 and 3 R&D buildings would both be 84 feet. In order to further reduce apparent building heights along the waterfront, mechanical penthouses on top of buildings on the project site would be set back from the roof edges (see Figure III-9, Building Sections).

The site would be landscaped in conjunction with the project's proposed phases, with an emphasis on developing a public plaza or "gateway" adjacent to the Marine Science Institute, and a publicly accessible shoreline band that would function as a linear waterfront park. Access to the site would be provided via the site's main entryway, which would be aligned with the southern most portion of Cardinal Way.

APPROACH TO ANALYSIS

The existing visual character of the site and surroundings is determined by the attributes of specific features and patterns that the features have assumed as a result of natural and/or cultural processes. Evaluation of potential project impacts on the existing visual character of the site and surroundings requires analysis of the elements of the project that would be introduced and how those changes (separately or collectively) would affect the character of the site and views of it from off-site locations.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

Based on CEQA criteria, a project would generally be considered to have a significant adverse effect on the environment if it would:

- have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a scenic highway;
- significantly degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or,
- create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

The significance determination is based on consideration of the extent of change related to project visibility from key public vantage points, as well as the degree of visual contrast and compatibility in scale and character between proposed project elements and the existing surroundings, and the sensitivity of the affected view. Project conformance with public policies regarding visual and urban design quality is also considered.

CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

Impact G.1: Construction of the proposed project would create temporary aesthetic nuisances associated with construction activities during each of the project's proposed three phases (an average of 16 months per phase). (Short-Term, Potentially Significant)

Project construction activities would result in exposure of graded surfaces, construction debris, the presence of construction equipment and heavy truck traffic. Prior to the start of construction, the project sponsor would be required to prepare and submit to the City a construction staging and demolition plan that addresses visual, noise, public safety, dust, odor, parking, and traffic impacts during the various stages of development. With respect to visual considerations, the project sponsor would agree to make visual improvements to construction and staging zones during each of the three development phases (as well as between phases) if the zone is not scheduled for construction activity or will remain unused for a period greater than six months. The measures described in Mitigation Measure G.1 below would reduce phased construction impacts on visual quality to less than significant.

Mitigation Measure G.1: The project sponsor shall implement a demolition and construction phasing plan to reduce visual quality degradation during each phase of project construction. (Identified by this EIR)

Construction and staging zones subject to this mitigation measure shall be defined by the Community Development Services Director, and shall consider the size of the area, the nature of the construction activity, and the proximity or visibility of the area to public vantage points or other uses. The visual improvements shall be implemented by the project contractor(s) and shall

be approved by the Community Development Services Director. The intent of these improvements is to aesthetically improve portions of the site that would remain unimproved for an extended period and to screen construction zones from view by passersby along the public streets, trail segments, and sidewalks. Improvements shall include, but are not limited to, the following:

- The project sponsor shall keep the construction zone clear of construction debris and remove construction equipment whenever construction is not anticipated for at least two weeks.

- If a portion of the site is a construction or staging zone, but no activities are scheduled for more than one month in any given construction phase, the project sponsor shall be responsible for regular trash cleanup and watering of any existing landscaping, as applicable.

- The project sponsor shall remove or visually treat fencing around construction zones that front onto a public street, Redwood Creek, or San Francisco Bay in a manner deemed acceptable by the Community Development Services Director, in order to promote safety, connectivity through the site, and pedestrian amenity.

- If a portion of the site is not in use as a construction or staging zone for more than six months due to demolition or construction of a structure, the project sponsor shall improve the site with landscaping (e.g., trees, shrubs and groundcover), decorative fencing and/or seating walls, and pedestrian and bicycle routes that connect to adjacent open spaces and pedestrian/bicycle networks as defined by and to the satisfaction of the Community Development Services Director, to the extent that these facilities would not conflict with site security concerns.

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

PROJECT IMPACTS

Impact G.2: The proposed project would alter the visual character of the site. (Potentially Significant)

The proposed project would substantially alter the visual character of the site from primarily non-active industrial uses with active light industrial, R&D, administrative office, warehousing and ancillary parking uses. Specifically, the visual character of the site would be altered by the proposed architectural and landscaping design of the planned development, as well as an increase in human activity on the site, including pedestrian and vehicular activities on proposed new interior roadways, a parking structure, and pedestrian pathways in and around the site. An overview of the project's proposed massing, layout, and landscaping improvements are discussed in detail in Chapter III, Project Description.

The proposed West Coast Research Center project would be developed in phases over several years pursuant to a set of development standards and design guidelines. Since the final elevations

and designs of the buildings have not yet been completed, the standards and guidelines will include guidance for all aspects of the project design.

The project proposes a number of design elements to "enhance the particular characteristics of their environment and specific aspects of the visual quality of the community (Urban Design Guidelines)." Specifically, the project would improve the visual cohesiveness and linkages on the site by defining a consistent architectural vocabulary for the campus buildings; would establish strong building edges and distinctive pedestrian pathways; and would use landscaping to differentiate different parts of the campus (see Figure III-1, Site Plan). Each structure proposed on the site would be designed from a group of systems or styles by sharing materials and details, with the intent of creating a unified campus (e.g., a master plan) while at the same time retaining some individuality among the buildings. Thus, the project as a whole would appear to "avoid monotony in the external appearance (Zoning Ordinance)."

While development of the project would constitute a visual change to the site, build-out of the proposed project would generally be visually consistent with the type of development in the immediate vicinity. Specifically, the dominant uses in the Harbor neighborhood are office, industrial, open space and water-oriented uses. As shown on Figure III-3 Aerial Photograph of the Project Site and Vicinity, the project site is located immediately adjacent to the Seaport Plaza and the Seaport Center, office park developments oriented around surface parking and landscaped open spaces. Development of the proposed project would also not visually conflict with the existing water-oriented uses on or around the site, as they currently exist on or around the site and would continue to exist under project conditions. These uses include the adjacent Port of Redwood City boat launch, the onsite Marine Science Institute, Cargill's bittern loading and transport operations (through 2010), and the proposed pedestrian waterfront access that would traverse the eastern and northern site perimeter.

Although the mix of uses proposed for the project would not constitute a departure from the types of uses adjacent to it, the project would have a greater scale, density and overall development intensity compared to existing uses in the neighborhood. The heights of the proposed onsite buildings would range from 40 feet to 84 feet to the top of the roof parapet, which would exceed the height limit of 75 feet for the IR Zoning District by 9 feet.[1] The tallest structures, the Phase 2 and Phase 3 R&D buildings, would be located along the eastern side of the site to maximize waterfront views for employees and site visitors. The buildings on the project site would be equal to and greater than the heights of the nearby buildings in the Seaport Plaza and the Seaport Center, which are approximately 50 feet in height.

Despite the fact that the Phase 2 and Phase 3 buildings would exceed the allowable height limit of the IR Zoning District, this would not constitute a significant impact. As recommended by the Urban Design Guidelines, all buildings on the project site (except for the parking structure) would

[1] The existing GI Zoning District on the site allows a maximum building height of 100 feet. However, the project proposes to rezone the site to IR, which permits building heights up to 75 feet. See Section IV.A, Land Use and Planning Consistency, for more information.

include setbacks at their upper levels to minimize their perceived heights and to reduce their overall mass. The Guidelines recommend a one foot setback for every foot above 60 feet in height. Figure IV.G-4 illustrates a representative view of the Phase 3 R&D building from the perspective of a pedestrian on the proposed waterfront pathway. As indicated on the figure, the R&D building would be set back 15 feet from its primary façade above its fourth level and set back a total of 36 feet from its primary façade at its penthouse. Thus, the R&D buildings would meet the setback recommendations included in the Design Guidelines.

Figure IV.G-4 also shows the site lines from a representative public viewing location along the proposed pedestrian walkway. As indicated by arrows representing a pedestrian's line of site, the R&D building's roof would appear to meet the sky at around 76 feet; if architectural elements such as sunscreens or trellises were included on the upper levels, these elements should not project beyond the sight line, so as not to be visible from the multi-use path.

With respect to onsite parking, Redwood City's Urban Design Guidelines recommend parking facilities be "less prominent than the principal structures which they serve, unless they are of exemplary architectural design quality." The project's proposed parking structure would be five levels (including one sub-grade level), but would have a lower floor-to-ceiling height than other onsite buildings, and would be located on the western portion of the site to take advantage of the site's naturally occurring depression. The parking garage would be approximately 40 feet tall, which would be in keeping with the heights of the buildings in the adjacent Seaport Center. Moreover, the project would improve Cardinal Way along the western site boundary to a tree-lined street similar to existing streetscaping on Chesapeake Drive. The row of continuously planted trees would screen views of the parking structure's western elevation from Cardinal Way and from other viewing locations in the Seaport Center. The design of the proposed project also includes a fence, which would provide site security. A temporary, six-foot-tall security fence would be installed around the perimeter of the site during the project's first phase. The permanent fence would likely be constructed out of metal and would contain ornamentation. It would delineate the public and private sectors on the site. In Phase 3 of the project, the temporary fence would be replaced with permanent security fencing around the site's perimeter. The final design of the security fence will be determined at the time the project's architectural permit would be reviewed.

The orientation of the campus buildings on the project site would strengthen pedestrian linkages to and around the site and would likely improve the site's visual character. For example, the Marine Science Institute (MSI), a publicly-oriented use, would be located at the southeastern corner of the site, visible from the Port of Redwood City parking area, and could act as a gateway to the adjacent Port uses and publicly accessible shoreline band. A public plaza would also be developed in front of MSI that could act as a gathering place for groups attending MSI's programs or activities. Additionally, views of and through the project site would likely be enhanced by the site's main entry that would align on axis with Cardinal Way (see Impact G.3, below). Public views north from Cardinal Way into the site of the landscaped quad would terminate at the Perclose building at the site's northern end.

INSERT FIGURE IV.G-4 SECTIONS AND SIGHTLINES

Although the proposed project would be developed at a greater density and intensity than the buildings in the adjacent Seaport Center and Seaport Plaza, the project would not be of such a size or magnitude that it would significantly alter the prevailing visual character of the area. For example, the proposed project would have an FAR of 71% as opposed to a 33% FAR at the Seaport Center and 66% FAR at the Seaport Plaza. The building heights on the project site would range from 40 feet to 84 feet as opposed to approximately 35 feet to 50 feet in the Seaport Center and Seaport Plaza developments. While the buildings on the proposed West Coast Research Center campus would be larger than those surrounding them, the increased height and greater site density would not "significantly degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings."

The project would remove rusted, generally unsightly heavy machinery and various single-story structures, and construct an office park-like development with publicly accessible landscaped areas consisting of amenities for Abbott and other nearby employees, as well as site visitors. The project would include water-oriented outdoor gathering spaces and amenities including an extensive landscaping program, interpretive gardens, an amphitheater, and informational signage related to the site's surrounding ecological features. The project would include pedestrian linkages (multi-use path) to these proposed amenities while not precluding existing water-oriented uses on or around the site (Port boat launch, MSI, etc.). The project acknowledges the unique attributes of the Bayfront Area and seeks to "maximize the visual amenity of this bayfront site (Abbott Laboratories)." Therefore, the project would not be inconsistent with the Redwood City's Nice Places Policy which seeks to create "comfortable, enjoyable, and aesthetically pleasing public spaces." However, in order to ensure that buildout of the proposed West Coast Research Center campus would result in a "Nice Place" in Redwood City, the following mitigation measure has been included as part of the project:

Mitigation Measure G.2: The project applicant shall prepare a master plan and design guidelines that will guide development on the site through all phases of the proposed project. The guidelines shall be submitted with the Planned Development permit application. The master plan and design guidelines shall be completed and approved by the Redwood City Planning Commission as part of the project approval. The project's master plan and design guidelines shall include site development standards and guidelines to assure that all phases of the proposed project incorporate the features of the site plan, including but not limited to: fencing, massing, height, and landscaping. Each phase of the development, including Phase 1, will require a separate Architectural Review permit, including a review of the compatibility of each phase with the master plan and design guidelines. (Proposed as Part of the Project)

In essence, given the low visual quality of the existing site and implementation of Mitigation Measure G.2, the proposed project would improve the site's visual quality by constructing a master planned campus based on consistent architectural themes, and, as such, development of the site could result in a beneficial visual impact.

Significance after Mitigation: Beneficial.

Impact G.3: Development of the project would partially obstruct views of the San Francisco Bay from selected public vantage points. (Less than Significant)

Development of the proposed project would result in a change to the existing views of the site from public viewing corridors in the site's vicinity. View corridors through the site between the proposed campus buildings would be narrow and limited to views to the north from public vantage points to the site's south. East-west views across the site would disappear entirely, except for views at the northern-most end of the site along the shoreline of Redwood Creek. The project would create an appearance of solid building mass from most viewing locations along Cardinal Way and from locations toward the end of Saginaw Drive.

This, however, would not be considered a significant visual impact with respect to view obstruction, because the site is neither within the viewshed of a scenic highway, nor does the Redwood City Strategic General Plan identify the site (or any buildings on it) as a significant visual resource. Further, as discussed in Impact G.2, development of the proposed project would likely result in an improvement to the visual character of the site, because it would transform a mostly-vacant disturbed site with low visual quality to a modern landscaped campus consisting of uses and building types similar to (but at a higher level of building intensity than) those in the adjacent neighborhood. A discussion of the change in the views from public vantage points resulting from project build-out is provided below.

Cardinal Way

The project site would continue to be visible from Cardinal Way under project conditions. Development of the project would, however, limit views once available through the site (and partially of Redwood Creek) from the east to the west, and would specifically obstruct views across the site from locations within the Seaport Center Office Park.

As illustrated on Figure III-1 Site Plan, the site's main entry would be accessible from the southern stub of Cardinal Way, just off of Saginaw Drive. This portion of Cardinal Way would be aligned approximately with the site's north-south axis, would be streetscaped, and would allow for views into the site. Specifically, motorists and pedestrians would see the visitor center and the site's inner quad area, which would be landscaped with various types of trees and shrubbery. In the distance toward the northern end of the site, views would terminate at the elevated walkway connecting the R&D/administrative building to the manufacturing/warehousing building. At the northern-most end of Cardinal Way, views to the east would be available along the landscaped edge of the site's northern waterfront.

Chesapeake Drive and the Port of Redwood City Boat Launch

Under project conditions, the project site would continue to be visible from Chesapeake Drive. As motorists or pedestrians approach the site from the south, the project site would become visible just south of where Saginaw Drive intersects with Chesapeake Drive, however views of the site would continue to be obstructed by trees lining the sides of Chesapeake Drive.

Figure IV.G-5 illustrates a "before" and "after" view at the project site's entrance at the end of Chesapeake Drive. Currently, views of Chesapeake Drive are available in the foreground and the entrance to the project site in the mid-ground. The site's existing cyclone fencing is visible, and the metal corrugated shed can be seen just behind the Port of Redwood City day-use parking lot to the west. In the distance, views of the gantry are partially available on the site's eastern shoreline. Poplar trees are located on the east and west sides of Chesapeake Drive.

With the project, views from this location would change. Foreground views would continue to be of Chesapeake Drive and the Port's day-use parking lot. The proposed relocation of the Marine Science Institute on the site would create a public presence at the site's entry and would include a plaza adjacent to the Port's day-use parking lot. The site's proposed multi-use path would begin at this plaza and meander around the site's eastern and northern shoreline. New landscaping would be planted in front of and adjacent to the proposed MSI building, and as shown in the simulation, the existing poplar trees would remain around the site's entry.

The project proposes to construct a linear park along the site's eastern shoreline band that would range in width from 75 to approximately 100 feet, though at some points the proposed security fence may bisect the park. Thus, even under full build-out conditions, views of the site's eastern shoreline and Redwood Creek (specifically from the Port of Redwood City day-use parking lot) to the north would be partially retained and upgraded because of the proposed landscaping improvements that would occur concurrently with development of each of the project's phases.

Municipal Marina and the Seaport Conference Center

Figure IV.G-6 provides "before" and "after" views of the project site from the Municipal Marina and adjacent Seaport Conference Center. Existing views from this location include small craft moored in the marina, views of the water and the project site in the background. From this location, the most prominent element visible on the site would be the existing gantry formerly used to convey salt. From this vantage point, views are available across the site to the west, and the Seaport Plaza office development is visible in the distance.

With the project, views would change from this point, although the site would continue to be visible from viewing locations to the east from the Municipal Marina and Seaport Conference Center. Views would not, however, be available across the site, as they are under existing conditions. As shown in the simulation, northwesterly views from the Marina and the Seaport Conference Center would include the MSI, the Phase 2, and Phase 3 buildings and a portion of the Phase 1 building on the site's northern shoreline. The project would obstruct views of the Seaport Center office park currently available from the marina. From some locations, views would be available into the landscaped quad in the center of the site through open corridors between the R&D buildings. Moreover, the shoreline band on the site's northern and eastern perimeter would act as a visual transition between the water and the proposed onsite buildings.

INSERT FIGURE IV.G-5

INSERT FIGURE IV.G-6

Other Views

Open water is a complementary visual feature of the property, as waterways surround much of the site. Views of the site would also be available from locations on Redwood Creek north of the site, as well as from Bair Island. As depicted in Figure IV.G-7, views of the site under project conditions would continue to be available from public viewpoints on Bair Island and from boats on Redwood Creek.[2] From these locations, the site would appear to be more densely developed than under existing conditions, as the site currently contains vacant industrial buildings and equipment surrounded by mainly low- to mid-rise office buildings. At project build-out, the site would appear to be one part of an ensemble of office and light industrial developments when viewed from locations on Redwood Creek or Bair Island. Figure IV.G-8 provides a rendering of the Phase 1 building from the site's central quad area looking northeast. From this location, the three-level Phase 1 building would be visible as well as landscaping bordering the interior of the quad.

In conclusion, the project's design and materials would be visually compatible with the architectural quality of newer development in the city's Bayfront area, such as Seaport Plaza and Pacific Shores. The project would be more visually compatible with new area development than the existing variety of storage structures, heavy machinery and the vacant land of the project site. Because the project would not obstruct any significant view corridors identified within the General Plan, effects related to views would be considered less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.

Impact G.4: Development of the proposed project would introduce new sources of light and glare onto the project site and increase ambient light in the site vicinity. (Potentially Significant)

The proposed project would contain roadways, circulation paths, and open spaces at ground level. Lighting of these outdoor spaces could create light and glare impacts on the adjacent offices and public recreational areas. Nighttime lighting would also make the project's structures a prominent visual feature of the area, visible from nearby public areas and open spaces. As such, mitigation is included below to ensure that light and glare effects resulting from the project construction and operation would remain less than significant.

[2] It should be noted that neither Figures IV.G-7 nor IV.G-8 include "before" and "after" views, because these images depict site views from locations not readily available to the majority of people. However, these images are included in this section for the purpose of aiding the discussion relating to the views and architectural vocabulary of the proposed project.

INSERT FIGURE IV.G-7

INSERT FIGURE IV.G-8

Mitigation Measure G.4: The proposed project shall include lighting designed to confine illumination to the project site, to minimize light spillage to adjacent offices, commercial uses, and public open space and recreational areas. The project sponsor shall shield and orient light sources so that they are not directly visible from outside the site. Where appropriate, the project sponsor shall provide structural or vegetative screening for sensitive adjacent uses. The applicant shall also submit a completed photometrics site plan analysis with each of the project's building phases for review and approval by the City's Community Development Services Director. (Identified by this EIR)

Significance after Mitigation: Less than Significant.

REFERENCES – Aesthetics and Visual Quality

(*The references cited below are available at the Redwood City Planning Services Department, 1017 Middlefield Road, Redwood City, California, unless specified otherwise below.*)

Abbott Laboratories, Incorporated, project site plans prepared by Gensler Architecture, Design and Planning, various dates.

City of Redwood City, *City of Redwood City Zoning Ordinance,* electronic version, 2001.

City of Redwood City, *City of Redwood City Strategic General Plan,* as amended, 1999.

City of Redwood City, *Marina Shores Village Draft Environmental Impact Report*, 2003.