4.1 AESTHETICS

This section addresses existing visual conditions in the plan area, including visual character and scenic views. The section considers the potential for implementation of the New General Plan to affect visual character and scenic views and to introduce new sources of light and glare. This section is based on information provided in the Urban Design Background Report and the Land Use Technical Report prepared in August 2008, as well as on a field reconnaissance in the plan area and consultations with City staff.

4.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

Visual Character

The visual characteristics of the plan area are representative of its bayside and hillside location, with large expanses of natural features interspersed with manmade development. For the purposes of this analysis, the plan area has been divided into several sub-regions, representative of the varied visual patterns, including Downtown, neighborhoods, the Bayfront and Port area, Bair Island, Redwood Shores, and the unincorporated areas within the City’s sphere of influence. Major gateways and corridors also exhibit distinct visual patterns as described in this section. Figure 4.1-1 shows the location of neighborhoods and other areas referred to in this section.

Downtown

Figures 4.1-2 and 4.1-3 show existing visual conditions in Downtown. The visual character of Downtown is shaped by a mix of visual elements: building form and height, architectural detailing, and streetscapes. Most Downtown buildings are two to three stories in height, but there are several four- to 10-story buildings near the County Government Center on Winslow Street and near Jefferson Avenue. Several four- and five-story buildings are present on Main Street and Walnut Street. A prominent architectural feature in Downtown that exceeds 100 feet in height is the Historic Courthouse dome.

The irregular building height pattern combined with several landmark buildings, such as the Historic Courthouse and the Fox Theater, provide a distinct “sense of place,” in relatively sharp contrast to surrounding and nearby areas. The street grids of Downtown also lend to its unique visual character. Downtown’s central blocks are oriented on an almost purely north-south, east-west grid, whereas outlying blocks are aligned on somewhat rotated axes. The grids meet in Downtown at Marshall and Winslow streets near the Courthouse. In a sense, the meeting of two distinct street patterns is representative of Downtown’s centrality; it is a meeting place of the street grid networks.

Another factor contributing to Downtown’s unique visual character is that many of its buildings are aligned along inside edges of sidewalks, which create a distinct “street wall” effect along some major streets, including Walnut Street and Main Street. Two large gateway signs frame the Broadway Corridor east of the Caltrain tracks, with the easternmost gateway sign located at Spring Street, just one block east of Main Street.
Historic Courthouse Square

Downtown Streetscape - Main Street
City Hall

Parking Lot
Certain areas in Downtown provide a visual character reminiscent of an “outdoor room” where the combination of relatively narrow roadways, wide sidewalks and plazas with street furniture, raised or marked pedestrian crossing areas, uniform street trees and landscaping, contribute to an almost enclosed and inviting feeling, particularly for people on foot or on bicycles. Such areas include the Courthouse Square area, the area near City Hall along the northern edge of Middlefield Road, and the commercial blocks of Broadway between Winslow Street to the west and Main Street to the east.

In contrast to the above, other portions of Downtown have a visual character that is less fine-grained, consisting of more inwardly-focused buildings and areas that cater to automobile usage. Examples of these features include the County Government facilities, street-fronting surface parking lots and parking garages (including several such facilities along the northern reaches of Middlefield Road, and Jefferson Avenue, as well as the parking lots near the intersection of these streets) and relatively wide streets (particularly Veterans Boulevard). While landscaping treatments and site planning practices soften the visual appearance of some of these areas, they retain an open, flat, paved character that contrasts with the otherwise more visually contained, “outdoor room” visual character in other portions of Downtown.

**Neighborhoods**

The discussion of the neighborhoods is organized by the prominent neighborhood areas within the plan area. Figure 4.1-1 shows the location and approximate boundaries of each neighborhood described below. Figure 4.1-4a through Figure 4.1-4d also show typical views of the neighborhoods within the plan area.

**Centennial Neighborhood**

The Centennial neighborhood is northwest of Downtown, between Veterans Boulevard east of the Caltrain tracks, Edgewood Road and Jefferson Avenue. Whipple Avenue cuts laterally across the neighborhood, creating a physical and visual buffer between the north and south sides.

This mid-20th century residential neighborhood is developed with large trees and small homes developed in a grid pattern on the “Alphabet Streets.” To the southeast, the Mezesville area consists of homes with areas of wide planting strips along the streets. Residential porches, stoops, and patios provide a visual sense of openness within the neighborhood, combined with grassy front lawns, mature trees, and other landscaping as seen in Figure 4.1-4a. Mezes Park also provides focus with trees, grassy areas, and recreational facilities posing a contrast to the surrounding urban residential character.

**Central and Palm Neighborhoods**

Photographs of existing conditions in the Central and Palm neighborhoods are provided in Figure 4.1-4a.

The Central and Palm neighborhoods are located on the southwest side of El Camino Real between Jefferson Avenue and Woodside Road, with El Camino Real providing a visual edge between the neighborhood and Downtown to the west. The Union Cemetery and
Woodside Road provide visual edges to the east. Rows of mature deciduous and evergreen trees in the cemetery lend a park-like canopy to the cemetery.

The cemetery provides a visual buffer between the Palm neighborhood and the Woodside Road arterial. Along the Palm Neighborhood, Woodside Road is a separated, four lane arterial with a landscaped median between northbound and southbound travel lanes. For many stretches of Woodside Road, the landscaping has grown to approximately twenty or more feet in height, so that travelers, including motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians, experience a sense of visual enclosure on these sections of the road.

The Central and Palm neighborhoods are nearly “built out” in that most areas are developed with one- to three-story residential buildings with a strong concentration of planned development complexes replacing original greenhouses or orchards from the first half of the 20th century. The visual character is of an urbanized neighborhood. Duplexes and two to four story apartment buildings are the most visually prominent in these neighborhoods, but the area also includes numerous post war single family homes and duplexes with front yards, many of which have low fences. The major streets of these neighborhoods, including Roosevelt and Madison, are relatively wide. These wider streets lend an open, unenclosed visual character to the area, which contrasts with other nearby neighborhoods, where streets are more shaded and/or enclosed by a tree canopy. In this visual context, utility poles and lines (where they have not been undergrounded) and street lighting (where provided) become more visually prominent. Red Morton Community Park and Hawes Park provide visual contrast, introducing landscaped open space into the overall developed suburban environment.

**Stambaugh-Heller/Redwood Village Neighborhood**

The Stambaugh-Heller and Redwood Village neighborhoods are located between Downtown and Douglas Avenue. The visual character of the Stambaugh-Heller and Redwood Village neighborhoods are of a relatively dense and developed environment with a central cluster of historic-era architectural design forms. The area located immediately south of Downtown near Chestnut Street, known as “Eastern Addition” was the City’s second subdivision. Many of the one- and two-story buildings within the center of the neighborhood have historic, Victorian-era design styles, with prominent roof forms and rectangular double-hung windows. There are also several one- and two-story buildings between Charter Street and Douglas Avenue, as well as higher density development near Stambaugh Street and Charter Street. The remainder of the neighborhood is generally developed with bulky rectangular three-story buildings with parking on the ground floor, representative of the 1950s and 1960s apartment building type architectural style. **Figure 4.1-4a** shows a typical view of the Stambaugh-Heller and Redwood Village neighborhoods.

Jardín de Niños Park provides a recreational component to the relatively dense and older developed feel of the area. The streetscapes are lined with overhead power lines, broken and narrow sidewalks, and very few street trees or areas of landscaping. The railroad tracks also add a notable manmade visual feature to the neighborhood.
Arlington Neighborhood

This lower density residential neighborhood features large homes of various traditional architectural styles on larger lots. The Arlington neighborhood is bordered by the Cordilleras Creek to the north, El Camino Real to the east, Alameda de las Pulgas to the west, and Whipple Avenue to the south. Wide and winding streets lined with extensive areas of green vegetation and large, mature trees contribute to the overall visual character of the area, as shown in Figure 4.1-4b. Many trees in the neighborhood follow the course of Cordilleras Creek (although the creek itself is largely invisible except in private backyard areas). The “leafy” neighborhood visual character increases as one travels southwest towards Alameda de las Pulgas, as well towards the creek to the north.¹

Sequoia and Eagle Hill Neighborhoods

The Sequoia and Eagle Hill neighborhoods are located between Whipple Avenue and Jefferson Avenue, just southwest of El Camino Real. The visual character of these neighborhoods is primarily that of a small scale traditional single-family environment, as seen in Figure 4.1-4b. The residential streets are generally lined with mature trees, well-maintained sidewalks, and landscaped yards with grass and shrubbery. Overhead power lines also are located along the streetscapes, but are visually blocked by many of the mature trees and vegetation.

Near El Camino Real in the Sequoia neighborhood, Sequoia High School provides a visual transition from residential areas to the west and the commercial character to the east. The school, which takes up an entire City block, is visually well-integrated into the neighborhood insofar as the campus is largely surrounded by trees and many of the buildings on the campus have an historic character with architectural themes that are echoed in surrounding residential areas. As discussed further in Section 4.5, Cultural Resources, the entire campus is considered an historic district. Several buildings within the Sequoia neighborhood are also considered potential historic resources due to their historic architectural design dating to the mid-20th century. A strong cluster of pre-World War II homes are found in the vicinity of Hopkins Avenue and Iris Street, as well as in the Mt. Carmel area, near Fulton Street and Katherine Avenue.

Canyon Neighborhood

The Canyon neighborhood is located south and west of Alameda de Las Pulgas. Characterized by rolling hills, the Canyon neighborhood has a “leafy” suburban character,² with large one- and two-story single family dwellings on large lots with associated landscaping, including clusters of mature trees. Figure 4.1-4c shows a typical view of the Canyon neighborhood. Relatively narrow and curving streets are typical in this

¹ Personal Communication with Charles Jany, City of Redwood City, 2009.
² Personal Communication with Charles Jany, City of Redwood City, 2009.
Oakwood Neighborhood

Canyon Neighborhood

Roosevelt Neighborhood

Friendly Acres Neighborhood

Oakwood Neighborhood
neighborhood. As a result of the hilly topography, some of the homes on these streets are located high above the level of the road; others are located below road level. This presents a visual contrast with the relatively flat and rectilinear streets of the neighborhoods to the east.

**Roosevelt Neighborhood**

The Roosevelt neighborhood begins south of Valota Road. The visual character of this neighborhood is shaped by numerous single family dwellings with landscaped front yards, as shown in Figure 4.1-4c. The area contains a mix of one and two story homes with attached garages and front yard driveways. The street pattern of the Roosevelt neighborhood is a modified grid; the area includes several cul-de-sacs that stand in contrast to the other neighborhoods, which are more typically rectilinear. The features lend the area a post war suburban visual character.

**Friendly Acres Neighborhood**

The Friendly Acres neighborhood is primarily between Bay Road and U.S. 101 at the southeast corner of the plan area. The neighborhood map of the City includes the Haven Avenue corridor (northeast of U.S. 101) in the Friendly Acres neighborhood. The area southwest of U.S. 101 is primarily residential, while the area northeast of U.S. 101 is primarily industrial, as described below.

Southwest of U.S. 101, the neighborhood is comprised primarily of one- and two-story residential buildings on relatively small lots. Figure 4.1-4c shows a typical view of this portion of the Friendly Acres neighborhood. Buildings within the neighborhood include a mix of duplexes and single-family dwellings and are generally small in size, the majority of which were developed after World War II. A mix of landscaped/fenced yards and driveways line the streetscape. The neighborhood contains several cul-de-sacs lending a more suburban feel in places.

Northeast of U.S. 101, the Haven Avenue corridor presents an industrial visual character with the exception of several mobile home parks immediately west of the Marsh Avenue intersection. Buildings in this area are typically large in scale, and are composed of metal or stucco, with minimal front yard setbacks. The relative lack of landscaping here, the auditory proximity of U.S. 101, and frequent large vehicle traffic associated with adjacent industrial uses add to the industrial character of the area.

**Oakwood Neighborhood**

The Oakwood neighborhood, located across Woodside Road from the Palm neighborhood, is notable for its “leafy” urban village character. Figure 4.1-4c shows a typical view of the Oakwood neighborhood. The neighborhood is characterized by relatively narrow streets, many lined with medium-sized trees, with approximately one- to three-story residential developments on relatively small lots. Landscaped parkways and relatively minimal front, side, and backyard setbacks contribute to a clustered village environment.

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3 Personal Communication with Charles Jany, City of Redwood City, 2009.
Some portions of the neighborhood lack sidewalks; utilities have been undergrounded in some but not all portions of the neighborhood.

**Woodside Plaza Neighborhood**

The Woodside Plaza neighborhood, located immediately south of the Central and Palm neighborhoods, has a typical suburban visual character, with one- and two-story post-World War II homes developed in a curvilinear grid pattern. Figure 4.1-4d shows a typical view of the Woodside Plaza neighborhood. A variety of mature trees, street lamp posts, and sidewalks border the relatively wide neighborhood streets. Maddux Park in the center of the neighborhood provides a swath of green open space in the midst of the neighborhood; the numerous buildings of adjacent Henry Ford School introduce a more institutional visual character into the area.

**Farm Hill**

The Farm Hill neighborhood, located at the southernmost portion of the plan area, south of Alameda de Las Pulgas and east of Jefferson Avenue features primarily single-story post-World War II, larger ranch-style architecture, evoking rectangular forms and earth tones. Although most sidewalks run immediately along gently sloping streets, private landscaping and mature trees soften the visual character of the neighborhood. Figure 4.1-4d shows a typical view of the Farm Hill neighborhood.

**Bayfront and Port of Redwood City**

Figure 4.1-5 shows a typical view of the natural visual features of the Bayfront area. The visual quality of the Bayfront and Port areas is influenced by prominent natural and manmade features. Open shorelines, waterways, and some vegetated marshlands are in close proximity to the industrial buildings and utilitarian structures and machinery present in the area. Steel and cement structures, chemical tanks, and piled materials are located near the confluence of the Redwood Creek and Westpoint Slough. Smaller industrial structures and one- and two-story buildings closer to the U.S. 101/Woodside Road interchange also add to this visual environment.

The Bayfront area also includes a recreational marina, with marina docking areas and boats along the shorelines and inlets. A houseboat neighborhood also exists within the Bayfront area. To the north and west, houseboats of a wide variety of shapes, sizes, and styles line the inner bank of Redwood Creek, as seen in Figure 4.1-6. Several low density residential developments are also located in the southern Bayfront area.

**Bair Island**

Bair Island, a 3,000-acre open space and National Wildlife Refuge area located in the northern portion of the plan area along the San Francisco Bay, has a distinctive natural, undeveloped visual character, marked by flat vegetated marshlands with winding sloughs. As a National Wildlife Refuge area, human activity and presence on Bair Island is limited; it is most commonly viewed from surrounding or nearby areas. Bair Island provides a visual break in the otherwise developed character of the U.S. 101 corridor.
Tidal Marshes, Slough and Waterway

Marina and Port of Redwood City
Redwood Shores

**Figure 4.1-6** shows existing conditions in Redwood Shores. The Redwood Shores neighborhood, located in the northern and western most portions of the plan area, is both geographically and visually distinct from the remainder of the plan area. Since Redwood Shores was developed as a master planned community, there is a visual continuity and consistency within itself in architectural themes, building setbacks, and landscaping. Water is an important visual element in Redwood Shores, visible in the lagoon in the center of the neighborhood and in views from streets radiating off of Redwood Shores Parkway and Marine Parkway. Additionally, modern glass and steel commercial developments are located west of the Bridge Parkway landscaped lateral street, furthering the mix of urban and natural visual environments.

**Unincorporated Neighborhoods**

The plan area also includes several unincorporated areas within the City’s sphere of influence, including North Fair Oaks, Emerald Hills, and Selby. **Figure 4.1-7** shows typical views of these unincorporated neighborhoods.

**North Fair Oaks**

The North Fair Oaks area is located in the eastern portion of the plan area, north of El Camino Real and west of Marsh Road adjacent to Friendly Acres. Off of the main commercial thoroughfare (Middlefield Road), North Fair Oaks’s residential streets feature primarily one- and two-story homes, including many small lot single family dwellings and a number of duplexes. **Figure 4.1-7** shows a typical view of the North Fair Oaks neighborhood. Street trees and landscaping in this neighborhood vary widely; some streets have dense landscaping and trees with ornamental masonry fences; others have relatively few green visual features. Middlefield Road has a lively, commercial visual character; many of the buildings are brightly colored and/or include colorful signs that are visually prominent.

**Emerald Hills**

The Emerald Hills area is mostly southwest of Alameda de las Pulgas and north of Farm Hill, in the moderately sloping foothills leading to the Santa Cruz Mountains, which form a ridge along the San Francisco Peninsula. The visual character of this area reflects a mixture of country-type suburban residential and natural elements, as shown in **Figure 4.1-7**. Heavy greenery and dense clusters of mature trees line the winding roadways in this area. As there are typically no sidewalks or curbs, the vegetation provides a visual buffer between the paved roadways and dispersed low-density one- and two-story residential dwellings. The homes are typical of 1940s through 1970s architectural design, many with rural style elements. Overhead power lines also are tucked within the vegetation, providing a visual mixture of a natural and urban aesthetic character. The Emerald Hills area includes portions of Edgewood County Park, whose combination of open grasslands and tree-covered rolling plains provide a linkage to the visual environment of the I-280 corridor.
Selby

The unincorporated Selby neighborhood is located to the south of the City limits, east of Woodside Road and south of Valota Road adjacent to the Oakwood Neighborhood. The visual character of the Selby area suggests an exclusive suburban area, with lower-density, large single-family dwellings interspersed within dense mature trees and other vegetation, as shown in Figure 4.1-7. The narrow winding roads are lined with vegetated hedges, which provide a physical and visual buffer between the public roadway and private homes. In many places, echoing the streetscapes of the adjacent Town of Atherton, streets lack sidewalks. The long front-yard setbacks and large lots also add a sense of exclusivity, as the homes are visually separated by extensive landscaping.

Major Gateways and Corridors

Several gateways and high traffic volume corridors run through the plan area providing a sense of entry into parts of the plan area. Figure 4.1-8 shows the location of the major gateways and corridors and Figures 4.1-9 and 4.1-10 show typical views of the major transportation corridors.

Woodside Road

Woodside Road is the major northeast-southwest corridor through the plan area and serves as a significant “gateway” connecting U.S. 101 to I-280.

From U.S. 101 to about El Camino Real, the corridor is relatively open with adjacent heavy commercial and residential areas influencing the corridor’s visual character. Within this segment, the corridor is marked by roadway signage, overhead street lamps, and highway landscaping, primarily rows of oleander bushes and Caltrans chain link fencing. There are no sidewalks on this section of Woodside Road.

Through the Palm and Oakwood neighborhoods, Woodside Road is a parkway-style roadway with suburban, park-like features and street landscaping with a connection of two- to three-story apartment buildings. Figure 4.1-9 shows a typical view of Woodside Road in this portion of the plan area. To the far south, in the Woodside Plaza/Selby neighborhood area, Woodside Road takes on a more eclectic suburban character, with a mix of commercial, institutional, and residential uses, some with parking areas at the street’s edge.

El Camino Real

With the exception of the freeways, El Camino Real is the principal north-south corridor of the San Francisco Peninsula. With some notable exceptions, El Camino Real is primarily a regional commercial corridor between Daly City in the north and Santa Clara to the south. Within the plan area, El Camino Real retains a commercial character, but different segments have variations in their visual character.

North of Downtown, El Camino Real is lined with three one to three story, low-density commercial structures, many of which have minimal setbacks from the street and sidewalk. Older commercial strip-like development, paved parking lots, overhead street
Woodside Road

El Camino Real (Downtown)

Middlefield Road (North)

Whipple Avenue (Gateway to Redwood City)
lamps, newly landscaped medians, and older narrow concrete sidewalks with limited landscaping are the dominant visual features.

The central segment of El Camino Real from Brewster Avenue to Woodside Road runs along the southwestern edge of Downtown. Figure 4.1-9 shows a typical view of El Camino Real through Downtown. This segment of the El Camino Real corridor is lined with relatively more dense commercial developments, narrow concrete sidewalks, and inconsistent street tree planting. Shopping centers and the Caltrain station introduce open parking lot areas along the corridor. Between James Street and Maple Street, the El Camino Real corridor is lined with one- to five-story commercial and residential buildings with a vegetated median and street landscaping. The buildings have limited setbacks, creating a “street wall” effect on this corridor. Overall, the central segment of the El Camino Real corridor represents an urban visual environment, with the greatest density of urban visual features in the central Downtown area.

To the south near the Woodside Road flyover, the El Camino Real corridor is lined with small lot urban development and one- to three-story buildings. Overhead power lines and street lamps replace the street trees and the vegetated median previously seen in the other segments of the El Camino Real corridor. Expansive paved parking lots are seen between the street frontage and adjacent buildings, representing a less dense urban environment than that of the central segment of El Camino Real. However, most of the eastern portion of El Camino Real to the east of Selby Lane in this area is located within the unincorporated area of the County within the City’s sphere of influence.

**Middlefield Road**

Middlefield Road is considered an important southern entrance to Downtown from Woodside Road and the unincorporated portion of the City and beyond. To the northwest of Woodside Road, the Middlefield Road corridor is a mix of older one- and two-story structures, including small multi-family buildings, as shown in Figure 4.1-9. Overhead power lines crossing Middlefield Road and the lack of streets trees helps create an urban visual character of the corridor. The narrow sidewalks with limited other landscaping, the buildings, paved roadway, and overhead power lines are the dominant visual features, with a spur rail line leading to the Port at Chestnut Street.

To the southeast of Woodside Road, the visual character is influenced by large retail structures and a variety of commercial buildings with associated paved surface parking fronting the roadway and limited vegetation.

**Whipple Avenue**

Whipple Avenue is considered the main northern “gateway” to the City, connecting U.S. 101 to Edgewood Road and I-280 and beyond. Northeast of El Camino Real, Whipple Avenue provides a small-scale residential environment traversed by a wide roadway with gas stations at major intersections, as shown in Figure 4.1-9. Street landscaping is limited. To the northwest of Whipple Avenue is the “Alphabet Street” neighborhood, with mid-20th century small-scale residential developments. The modest historic district, known as the Mezesville district, is located southeast of Whipple Avenue. Segments of
Whipple Avenue have very wide planting strips, which tends to diffuse the extensive crossings of overhead power lines.

**Broadway**

In Downtown, the Broadway corridor is comprised primarily of low commercial structures with linear street landscaping and mature trees lining the commercial roadway south of Downtown. To the east of Downtown, large buildings with expansive, paved surface parking and clusters of one-story rectangular buildings are the prevalent visual features. A well-known visual landmark on Broadway is the “gateway” sign near the Spring Street split, which includes the noted phrase “Climate Best by Government Test.” A “modern” version of this historic arch was installed near the railroad tracks at Broadway, as shown in Figure 4.1-10.

**Main Street**

Similar to the Broadway corridor, the Main Street corridor is lined with mature trees. The street trees provide a visual buffer between Main Street and the adjacent one to four-story buildings, as shown in Figure 4.1-2. The structures are varied in shape and style, providing an urban yet small town visual character amidst the street landscaping. The Main Street corridor traverses through a historic district in the City.

**Veterans Boulevard**

The Veterans Boulevard corridor is closely-connected to U.S. 101, representing a strong transportation-oriented highway-like visual environment, as shown in Figure 4.1-10. Veterans Boulevard is a wide roadway with portions of it within a 25-foot wide landscaped setback and pedestrian facilities. Auto-oriented shopping centers with paved, minimally landscaped, surface parking lots and rectangular strip-mall structures in combination with the wide roadway create a visually urban environment. The Kaiser Hospital facilities also front several blocks of the western side of Veterans Boulevard, adding to the parkway-lined urban environment.

**Alameda de las Pulgas**

The Alameda de las Pulgas is a two lane corridor through the Canyon, Roosevelt, and Woodside Plaza neighborhoods. Its characteristics vary as it traverses the City from Woodside to Edgewood Roads. The dominant visual features southeast of Jefferson are mature street trees, bike lanes, and sidewalks lining the roadway. Northwest of Jefferson the road narrows considerably and is less consistent in terms of street trees. Parking areas are limited and there is no room for separated bike lanes. Figure 4.1-10 shows a typical view of Alameda de las Pulgas southeast of Jefferson Avenue. The corridor is lined with one- and two-story residential dwellings. The overall visual environment is that of a relatively well-maintained residential neighborhood corridor.

**Farm Hill Boulevard/Jefferson Avenue**

This corridor serves as a major east-west connector in the plan area, linking I-280 to Downtown. Way-finding signs to Downtown are relatively new visual landmarks just northeast of I-280 on Farm Hill Boulevard. Southwest of Downtown, the corridor has a
steep grade and is a wide, heavily traveled, primarily residential street traversing several traditional neighborhoods. **Figure 4.1-10** shows a typical view of the Farm Hill Boulevard/Jefferson Avenue corridor. Through Downtown, the streetscape is lined with small, interspersed street trees, sidewalks, and two- to three-story rectangular building fronts.

**Scenic Resources and Outstanding Scenic Attractions**

Scenic vistas are located in the southern and western portions of the plan area within the elevated hillside neighborhoods. Public views of scenic resources, including the San Francisco Bay, and its associated baylands, sloughs, and marshes, and the urbanized San Francisco Bay Peninsula, are primarily available from four points within the elevated hillsides, including the Easter Cross, Easter Bowl, Canada College and the Edgewood County Park. Scenic vistas from the Easter Cross, Easter Bowl, and Edgewood County Park also afford panoramic views of urban settlement, rural clusters among abundant vegetation, lakes, rock outcrops, the Santa Cruz Mountains, winding roads, and hills beyond the San Francisco Bay. These panoramic views encompass the entire plan area and beyond towards the forested side of the Santa Cruz coastal mountains. Views of Bair Island are also afforded from the scenic vistas. While the majority of Bair Island consists of a vacant, open landscape, there are man-made facilities, such as utility corridors with overhead electric transmission lines that traverse across the baylands and sloughs. The open landscape of Bair Island provides a visual break in the urban fabric of the plan area and surrounding communities.

**Major Gateways and Corridors**

The plan area has several street corridors that provide visual entrances into the City. Jefferson Avenue, Whipple Avenue, Woodside Road, El Camino Real, Broadway, Veterans Boulevard, and Middlefield Road are considered the main “gateways” into the City. Specifically, Broadway, Middlefield Road, and Whipple Avenue provide gateways into Downtown. The visual character of these corridors has been described previously in this section. Gateways into the Redwood Shores area include Marine Parkway and Redwood Shores Parkway. Way-finding signage is also located on several of the major gateways and corridors, including El Camino Real at Edgewood Road, Middlefield north of Woodside Road, Jefferson Avenue just west of El Camino Real, and Farm Hill Road near I-280.

No officially designated or any eligible state scenic highways traverse the plan area. The closest state scenic highway to the plan area is I-280, which is located just to the west of the plan area. Portions of the plan area, particularly Edgewood County Park, are visible to motorists traveling on the I-280 corridor.
Transportation Corridors; Broadway, Veterans Boulevard, Alameda de la Pulgas, Farm Hill Boulevard/Jefferson Avenue
Light and Glare

The plan area is primarily urbanized, with substantial sources of existing light and glare, including streetlights along roadways, parking lots, service stations, lighted recreation facilities, and residential and non-residential buildings. The existing light and glare within the plan area is generally consistent with light and glare sources within the neighboring cities of a similar size. Structures containing glass, metal, or polished exteriors or roofing materials throughout the plan area also reflect the natural sunlight and man-made light sources that create localized daytime glare.

Light pollution is created by the developed uses in the plan area. Light pollution also is referred to as “sky glow,” which is a result of outdoor lighting that is directed to or reflected in the sky. Light pollution creates a visual haze of light that obscures night-sky views of celestial bodies. In areas near astronomical telescopes, such as Mt. Hamilton near San Jose and Mt. Palomar in San Diego County, light pollution is a critical concern for the continued utility of observatories. Communities near these facilities enforce stringent controls to limit the spread of light pollution. Although the plan area is not within the area of influence of the observatory at Mt. Hamilton, nor any other major research telescope, light pollution remains a concern.

4.1.2 Regulatory Setting

State Scenic Highways Program

The State Scenic Highways Program was created by the California State Legislature in 1963 and is under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). The program is intended to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment. The state laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highway Code, Sections 260 through 263. A highway may be designated as a scenic highway by Caltrans depending on how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler’s enjoyment of the view.

The status of a proposed state scenic highway changes from eligible to officially designated when the local governing body applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a Scenic Highway. The San Mateo County General Plan identifies the I-280 corridor and its associated viewshed as a state scenic corridor (the Junipero Serra Corridor).4

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4 San Mateo County General Plan, Chapter 4, Visual Quality.
Title 24 Outdoor Lighting Zones

In 2001, the California Legislature passed a bill requiring the California Energy Commission (CEC) to adopt energy efficient standards for outdoor lighting for both the public and private sector. In November 2003, the CEC adopted changes to the Building Energy Efficient Standards within Title 24. These standards became effective on October 1, 2005, and specify outdoor lighting requirements for residential and nonresidential development. The intent of the new standards is to improve the quality of outdoor lighting and help reduce the impacts of light pollution, light trespass, and glare. The standards regulate lighting characteristics, such as maximum power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls to turn lighting on and off. Different lighting standards are set by classifying areas by lighting zone. The classification is based on population figures in the 2003 Census and the areas can be designated as LZ1 (dark), LZ2 (low), LZ3 (medium), or LZ4 (high). Lighting requirements for dark and rural areas are stricter in order to protect the areas from new sources of light pollution and light trespass. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the entire plan area is defined as an urban area and is therefore designated as LZ3 per the CEC classification standards.

San Francisco Bay Plan

The San Francisco Bay Plan (Bay Plan) is a policy tool that allows the San Francisco Bay Conservation and Development District (BCDC) to "exercise its authority to issue or deny permit applications for placing fill, extracting materials, or changing the use of any land, water, or structures within the area of its jurisdiction," which includes the San Francisco Bay and lands within 100 feet of its shoreline.5

The Bay Plan serves as the guide for BCDC and includes policies applicable to visual and aesthetic resources within the City. The Bay Plan recommends that urban development be clustered, so as to maximize views of the San Francisco Bay and to conserve natural landscape features and maximize shoreline access.

The Appearance, Design and Scenic Views Chapter of the Bay Plan contain several policies pertaining to visual quality and aesthetic character, including:

- **Policy 1:** To enhance the visual quality of development around the Bay and to take maximum advantage of the attractive setting it provides, the shore of the Bay should be developed in accordance with the Public Access Design Guidelines.

- **Policy 2:** All Bayfront development should be designed to enhance the pleasure of the user or viewer of the Bay. Maximum efforts should be made to provide, enhance, or preserve views of the Bay and shoreline, especially from public areas, from the Bay itself, and from the opposite shore. To this end, planning of waterfront development should include participation by professionals who are knowledgeable of the Commissions’ concerns, such as landscape architects, urban

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designers, or architects, working in conjunction with engineers and professionals in other fields.

- **Policy 4**: Structures and facilities that do not take advantage of or visually complement the Bay should be located and designed so as not to impact visually on the Bay and shoreline.

- **Policy 8**: Shoreline developments should be built in clusters, leaving open area around them to permit more frequent views of the Bay. Developments along the shores of tributary waters should be Bay-related and should be designed to preserve and enhance views along the waterway, so as to provide maximum visual contact with the Bay.

- **Policy 9**: “Unnatural” debris should be removed from sloughs, marshes, and mudflats that are retained as part of the ecological system. Sloughs, marshes, and mudflats should be restored to their former natural state if they have been despoiled by human activities.

- **Policy 14**: Views of the Bay from vista points and from roads should be maintained by appropriate arrangements of heights of all development and landscaping between the view areas and the water. In this regard, particular attention should be given to all waterfront locations, areas below vista points, and areas along roads that provide good views of the Bay for travelers, particularly areas below roads coming over ridges and providing a “first view” of the Bay.

**San Francisco Bay Trail Plan**
The San Francisco Bay Trail Plan, adopted in 1989 by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), proposes the development of a regional hiking and bicycling trail around the perimeter of San Francisco and San Pablo bays. The Bay Trail Plan includes several visual policies that call for the creation and/or preservation of views along the San Francisco Bay and the recognition of exceptional landscapes.

**San Mateo County General Plan**
Within the plan area, several neighborhoods (Emerald Hills, Selby, North Fair Oaks, and portions of the Canyon neighborhood) are under the jurisdiction of San Mateo County. Development in these areas is subject to the San Mateo County General Plan, which includes a Visual Quality element and a Conservation and Open Space element that set forth goals and policies relevant to the visual quality of the plan area. In particular, the County General Plan includes a Design Review Overlay district, which imposes more stringent design and development standards for new construction and remodels. The overlay district extends into portions of the Emerald Hills and North Fair Oaks neighborhoods.
Redwood City Zoning and Sign Ordinances

The Redwood City Zoning Ordinance provides standards that direct the visual character and quality of development associated with related land uses. Height and architectural standards are defined for the various zoning districts throughout the City to “protect and enhance the natural beauty of the environment, provide for the orderly and harmonious appearance of structures and grounds.”

Furthermore, the City has an established Sign Ordinance, which provides regulations regarding signage in the City and requires that information by signs on regulated land to be presented safely and effectively. It is the intent for any signs on regulated land to enhance the quality of the visual environment, aid in attracting shoppers and other visitors, and promotes traffic safety and convenient circulation for motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Redwood City Architectural Review Committee

The City’s Architectural Review Committee (ARC), as established by Resolution No. 11497, is responsible for addressing the architectural design and form of structures in the City. The ARC advises the City Council, Planning Commission, and Zoning Administrator on matters concerning building and landscape architecture, site design, and signs. The City’s Urban Design Guidelines are used for the basis of such reviews. The ARC also provides other recommendations pertaining to architectural matters regarding private and public projects in the City as deemed appropriate.

The ARC is responsible for addressing only the portion of structures facing a public street or place, and the portions of the sides of a structure that are within 50 feet of any portion of the structures that faces upon a public street or place. One- and two-story additions to single-family residential units are reviewed by City planning staff. For all other alterations, additions, and new structures, approval of an architectural permit is based on the following:

- The existence of sufficient variety in the design of the structure and grounds to avoid monotony in the external appearance.
- The size and design of 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.

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7 Redwood City, Redwood City Sign Ordinance, Section 3.57, Section 3.58, and Section 3.59. 2007.
4.1 Aesthetics

- 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 accessibility of off-street parking areas and the relation of parking areas with respect to traffic on adjacent streets.
- 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 building 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 considers the project’s proximity to any residential districts and the effect of the proposed project upon the character and value of the adjacent residential district.
- The provision of permeable areas and drainage design appropriate to capture and treat stormwater runoff prior to its discharge from the site including, but not limited to, the use of vegetated swales, landscape features, permeable pavement materials, infiltration basins or engineered designs.

Redwood City Historic Resources Advisory Committee

The Historic Resources Advisory Committee (HRAC) was established in March 1980 by City Ordinance No. 1815 and amended by Ordinance No. 1923 in January 1986. The purpose of the HRAC is to advocate the preservation and appropriate rehabilitation of historically significant properties and structures, including safeguarding the City’s heritage by providing for the protection of landmarks; encouraging public knowledge and understanding of the City’s role in local and regional history, fostering civic and neighborhood pride and sense of identity; promoting the enjoyment and use of historic and cultural resources; and strengthening the economy of the City by protecting and enhancing historical features.

Project Consistency Analysis

New development that would be allowed under the New General Plan has the potential to result in conflicts with the previously described plans, policies, and regulations related to visual resources. The City’s adherence to and application of project policies, implementation programs and other measures contained within the New General Plan would, however, result in consistency with these plans, policies and regulations. These policies and implementation programs are described in Appendix A.

As there are no designated scenic highways within the plan area, adoption of the New General Plan would not introduce development that would affect the scenic quality of a designated highway and would thus be consistent with the State Scenic Highway Program.
The City will continue to require compliance with Title 24 lighting zones. The New General Plan includes several policies and implementation programs intended to reduce light pollution and limit excessive sources of light and glare. Thus, development allowed by adoption of the New General Plan would be consistent with the Title 24 lighting zone regulations within the plan area. Policy NR-4.4 of the New General Plan would promote lighting that reduces glare and light pollution. Program NR-20 would also establish an over-illumination information and design assistance program, where the City would consult with developers to use methods and equipment to reduce unnecessary lighting and over-illumination in new development.

Adoption of the New General Plan would allow increased urban development within and adjacent to Downtown and along corridors, consistent with the recommendations of the Bay Plan to preserve natural landscapes and the Bay Trail Plan to maintain views of the San Francisco Bay. New General Plan policies and implementation programs also seek to enhance views of the San Francisco Bay and to preserve views of open space resources. For example, Policy BE-20.5 of the New General Plan would enhance views towards the Don Edwards San Francisco National Wildlife Refuge and the adjacent baylands. Policy BE-10.5 would establish design guidelines specific to the Waterfront Neighborhoods to ensure that new development considers its location on the Bay.

Specific policies and implementation programs within the New General Plan would ensure consistency with the City’s Zoning Ordinance through updating the Zoning Ordinance and Zoning Map to reflect the New General Plan Land Use Map. Thus, the allowable visual treatments within the plan area would be consistent with the Zoning Ordinance. Specifically, Policy BE-22.1 would strive for consistency between the New General Plan and the Zoning Ordinance. This consistency would be achieved through Program BE-1, which calls for an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance and Map to reflect the New General Plan Land Use Map upon adoption of the New General Plan.

Development allowed by adoption of the New General Plan within the plan area would continue to be subject to design review. Several New General Plan policies and implementation programs are dedicated to the preservation of historic structures while allowing for an increment of infill development. Additionally, the New General Plan policies include establishing design guidelines for neighborhoods, major corridors, and centers within the plan area. Specifically, New General Plan Program BE-12 involves the preparation of design guidelines that identify the City’s expectations for planning, designing, and reviewing development. The Architecture Review Committee would be included in the process of developing the design guidelines for the plan area.

While the New General Plan would allow for increased residential development within the North Fair Oaks neighborhood, the North Fair Oaks neighborhood is located within the City’s unincorporated area and would remain under the purview of the San Mateo County General Plan. The allowable development under the New General Plan for the North Fair Oaks neighborhood, would only become official should the area (or portions thereof) be annexed to the City and therefore subject to the policies and programs in the New General Plan. Annexation of portions of the North Fair Oaks Neighborhood could occur on a parcel by parcel basis, but there are currently no plans to annex this area. San Mateo
County is currently in the process of updating the 1979 North Fair Oaks Community Plan, which provides goals, policies, and strategies for physical development and neighborhood character within this neighborhood. A draft plan is scheduled to be completed in Summer 2011 and approved by the Board of Supervisors by September 2011.8

The New General Plan does not contain any policies and/or implementation programs that would allow for the substantial alteration of the existing visual character of the unincorporated areas of the Emerald Hills and Selby neighborhoods, representing consistency with the San Mateo County General Plan.

### 4.1.3 Thresholds of Significance

The City has not established local CEQA significance thresholds as described in Section 15064.7 of the State CEQA Guidelines. Therefore, significance determinations utilized in this section are from Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines. A significant aesthetic impact could occur if development allowed by the New General Plan would:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### 4.1.4 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

The analysis of the potential impact that adoption of the New General Plan could have on visual resources is based on information provided in the *Urban Design Background Report* and the *Land Use Technical Report* prepared in August 2008, a field reconnaissance in the plan area, and consultations with City staff.

Based on the densities and type of development allowed under the New General Plan, the evaluation considers the potential impacts to the existing regional and local visual character, including potential shadowing impacts, and scenic vistas. Potential light and glare impacts that could occur from development that would be allowed by the New General Plan are considered in the context of their proximity to sensitive viewers.

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Issues Not Discussed Further

*Substantially Damage Scenic Resources Within a State Scenic Highway*

According to a review of a Caltrans-maintained list of eligible and officially designated scenic highway, the closest officially designated state scenic highway to the plan area is I-280, approximately one-half mile west of the plan area. Limited portions of the plan area, specifically Edgewood County Park and a portion of the Cañada College campus in Redwood City, are visible to motorists traveling on the I-280 corridor. Views of I-280 from the plan area are also limited by intervening topography and suburban development in the western and southern portions of the plan area. As the project would not result in any changes to the allowable density of the existing visible developments and the Edgewood County Park would maintain its existing vegetated, open space visual features, impacts are not anticipated to scenic resources along I-280. Therefore, this issue is not discussed further.

*Substantially Degrade the Existing Visual Character of Exterior Residential Neighborhoods*

Adoption of the New General Plan would not alter the existing visual character of the residential neighborhoods located in the southwestern, southern, and eastern portions of the plan area, including the Eagle Hill, Canyon, Farm Hill, Roosevelt, Woodside Plaza, and Oakwood neighborhoods and the unincorporated areas of Emerald Hills and Selby. (Refer to Impact 4.1-2 for a discussion of changes to the visual environment in the unincorporated North Fair Oaks neighborhood). The primary visual character of these “exterior” neighborhoods (in that these neighborhoods are not within or immediately adjacent to Downtown) is that of low to medium density development with one- and two-story buildings. While there are a several three-story buildings located within these neighborhoods (primarily within the Roosevelt neighborhood), their overall presence is limited and they do not establish the dominant visual environment. Adoption of the New General Plan would not introduce new types of building forms or allowable maximum intensities, densities, and building heights beyond what is currently developed in these exterior neighborhoods. The general massing and physical character of these neighborhoods would, therefore, remain unchanged. Additionally, the New General Plan would not result in a change to the allowable development standards from what is already permitted under the 1990 General Plan. The New General Plan would maintain the medium to low density development standards in these areas.

The New General Plan would also include several policies that would seek to maintain the visual character of the existing neighborhoods. Policies BE-1.1, BE-1.4, BE-BE-1.5, BE-1.8, and BE-2.3 would seek to improve the visual environment through the enhancement of the individual character of each neighborhood, while maintaining a cohesive aesthetic environment throughout the plan area by requiring design compatibility for new

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development and requiring design interfaces between each neighborhood. These policies would also encourage the development of district plans for each neighborhood to better define the aesthetic character.

As the New General Plan would not allow for development types inconsistent with what is already built in these exterior neighborhoods and that the New General Plan policies seek to maintain the visual character of these areas, adoption of the New General Plan would not result in a change to the overall physical scale and visual form of these exterior neighborhoods. There would be no impact to the existing visual character of these neighborhoods.

Project Impacts

**Impact 4.1-1:** Adoption of the New General Plan would allow increased development within existing urban areas that could alter views across the plan area available from scenic vistas along the southern and western portions of the plan area. (Less than Significant)

Scenic vistas are primarily available from the southern and western portions of the plan area, including views from the Edgewood County Park, Easter Cross, Cañada College, and Easter Bowl. Their elevated location in the viewshed provides opportunities for expansive views across the plan area, including nearby Peninsula communities and San Francisco Bay. Because the development that could be allowed by adoption of the New General Plan would be primarily concentrated in existing urban areas, views from these designated scenic vistas would continue to be of a dense built environment within the urban areas, contrasted by the large expanses of open space at Bair Island and Greco Island looking north towards San Francisco Bay. The allowable 12-story buildings in portions of Downtown and buildings up to six stories in height in the surrounding Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods along the major corridors like El Camino Real and Woodside Road would not significantly interfere with views towards San Francisco Bay from Edgewood County Park, the Easter Cross, or Easter Bowl, because of the distance and elevation of these viewpoints from the Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods and major corridors.

Furthermore, views of lakes, winding roads, and the Santa Cruz Mountains from the scenic vistas would not be impacted by the development allowed by the New General Plan. As the development allowed by the New General Plan would primarily occur as infill development within existing urbanized areas, the allowable development within the plan area would not intervene between scenic vistas and the identified visual attractions. Views of the lakes, winding roads, and the Santa Cruz Mountains would continue to be afforded to the east and south of the scenic vistas, while new allowable development would be located to the north. Thus, future development that would be allowed under the New General Plan would not significantly obstruct views from the scenic vistas located within the southern and western portions of the plan area.

Adoption of the New General Plan would allow increased urban development within the Mixed Use–Waterfront Neighborhood along the Redwood Creek channel. The New
General Plan sets forth density and intensity limits for this neighborhood, as well as prescribing a number of standards for the City to consider in determining allowable height, including parcel size and relation to surrounding areas. It does not, however, identify a numerical height limit for new development in the neighborhood.

While increased development in this neighborhood would introduce more urban forms into the lower viewshed, the views from Easter Bowl, Easter Cross, and Edgewood County Park would not be substantially altered because of the relatively small portion of the total view affected by this neighborhood, and the distance and elevation of the scenic vistas from the neighborhood. Views of and across the San Francisco Bay, adjacent baylands, sloughs, and waterways would continue to be available from the scenic vistas.

Views of the large expanses of open space north of U.S. 101 would not be altered by adoption of the New General Plan. Bair Island and Greco Island would remain as open space areas under the New General Plan. Additionally, the New General Plan does not call for a change of the salt crystallization ponds east of Seaport Boulevard. Therefore, views from the scenic vistas across these flat open lands towards San Francisco Bay, the associated baylands, and eastern hills beyond the Bay would remain unchanged.

As project-level plans are prepared for the new development in the plan area, including anticipated transportation improvements, each will be required to undergo project-level environmental review processes to identify any visual impacts and impose any appropriate mitigation measures, per Program BE-2 of the New General Plan. As detailed in Appendix A, Program BE-2 would require environmental review of individual development applications pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Moreover, the New General Plan includes several policies that support the preservation of scenic views within the plan area. Policies BE-6.3, BE-8.1, BE-20.5, and BE-23.9, as shown in Appendix A, encourage quality design and visual compatibility, minimizing visual impacts of development on hillside areas, enhancing the appearance of the City and Don Edwards San Francisco National Wildlife Refuge from U.S. 101, and protecting open space resources in the City.

With adherence to and implementation of these New General Plan policies, program-level impacts to scenic vistas would be less than significant. No additional mitigation is required. Individual developments within the plan area will be required to undergo project-specific environmental review. If project-level significant visual impacts are identified, specific mitigation measures will be required under CEQA.
Impact 4.1-2: Development allowed by the New General Plan could change the scale and intensity of existing residential development within Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods. The range of policies and programs encouraging visual compatibility, context sensitivity and connectivity for future development projects could minimize the potential to adversely impact the overall visual quality of these neighborhoods. (Less than Significant)

The Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods, Centennial, Stambaugh-Heller/Redwood Village, and Central, are post-war, mixed-density and historically influenced neighborhoods. Adoption of the New General Plan could allow changes to the existing scale and density of these residential neighborhoods. Development allowed by the New General Plan would allow increased building heights and densities beyond what currently exists, which could alter the existing form and scale of these neighborhoods. These Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods are primarily developed with one- to two-story structures and associated landscaping. Of the three neighborhoods, the Central neighborhood, located southeast of Downtown, has the highest density due to the presence of duplexes and two- to four-story apartment buildings throughout the neighborhood. While there are existing four-story structures built within the Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods, their presence is limited and they do not establish the primary visual character of the neighborhoods. The development allowed by the New General Plan could increase the height and massing of structures within the neighborhoods, which would result in a change to the existing visual character.

Additionally, the visual appearance of the Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods is influenced in places by existing historic buildings. Increases to the levels of development in these areas, as compared to existing conditions, could affect the visual environment surrounding these historic buildings. As more fully addressed in Section 3.5, Cultural Resources, the New General Plan includes a number of policies and programs that could result in the retention of these historic buildings, reducing potential changes to the existing visual environment in these areas. Furthermore, the New General Plan includes protection for historic districts. In the Mezes and Stambaugh Heller Historic Districts maximum heights and densities would be reduced from 6 to 4 stories and 40 to 30 dwelling units/acre; and the land use designation is changed from High to Medium-High density residential.

While the New General Plan would allow for increased residential development within the North Fair Oaks neighborhood, the North Fair Oaks neighborhood is located within the City’s unincorporated area and would remain under the purview of the San Mateo County General Plan. The allowable development under the New General Plan for the North Fair Oaks neighborhood, would only become official should the area (or portions thereof) be annexed to the City and therefore subject to the policies and programs in the New General Plan. Annexation of portions of the North Fair Oaks Neighborhood could occur on a parcel by parcel basis, but there are currently no plans to annex this area.

Adoption of the New General Plan would not, however, substantially change what is allowable under the current General Plan. Residential development would be limited to
30 to 40 dwelling units per acre, consistent with the 20 to 40 dwelling units per acre allowed under the 1990 General Plan. The allowable building heights immediately adjacent to Downtown would also not exceed what is currently allowed, and could result in a slight reduction to allowable building heights by establishing a maximum building height of four stories as compared to the maximum building height of 75 feet (equivalent to about six stories) under the 1990 General Plan. On the southern edge of the Centennial neighborhood, the New General Plan would contrast with the 1990 General Plan in that it would allow mixed-use developments (instead of single use commercial), slightly increase the FAR (from 0.75 to 1.0), and reduce building heights from the currently allowable six stories to four stories.

The following New General Plan policies and implementation programs specific to Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods emphasize compatibility, context sensitivity and connectivity for future development in these areas.

- Policies BE-4.1 through BE-4.3, BE-5.1 through BE-5.4, BE-6.1 through BE-6.3, BE 7.1 through BE-7.4 and Program BE-5 encourage high-quality infill development that creates harmony and compatibility with nearby structures of historic value and provide context sensitivity in the historic influence of the high density neighborhoods. These policies also encourage the reuse and rehabilitation of historic or high quality buildings, require new development to be sensitive to the existing historic context, and strengthen connections between the historic neighborhoods and nearby schools and community facilities. Lastly, the policies ensure new development is consistent with the established character of individual Post-War Neighborhoods and foster pedestrian connections.

- Policies BE-1.1, BE-1.4, BE-BE-1.5, BE-1.6, BE-1.8, and BE-2.3 would also seek to improve the visual environment through each neighborhood's individual character’s enhancement, while maintaining a cohesive aesthetic environment by requiring new development design compatibility and requiring design interfaces between each neighborhood. These policies would also encourage the creation of interconnected block patterns to enhance visual connectivity and development district plans for each neighborhood to better define the aesthetic character.

- Program BE-12 would also require the preparation of design guidelines that identify the City’s expectations for planning, designing, and reviewing development proposals for neighborhoods. Refer to Appendix A for a detailed list of all New General Plan policies and implementation programs.

With adherence to and implementation of the New General Plan policies and implementation programs, impacts to the existing visual character of the Downtown-adjacent neighborhoods would be less than significant. Individual developments within the plan area will be required to undergo project-specific environmental review. If project-level significant visual impacts within these residential neighborhoods are identified, specific mitigation measures will be required under CEQA.
Impact 4.1-3: Development allowed by the New General Plan could alter the existing physical scale and form of the Downtown urban built environment, which could change the visual character of Downtown. Implementing the standards and design guidelines for Downtown set forth in the New General Plan, could minimize the potential to adversely impact the visual character. (Less than Significant)

Adoption of the New General Plan would allow intensification of the Downtown urban core. The New General Plan does not impose any residential development limits on new projects in the Downtown area, but sets forth a maximum carrying capacity of 2,500 additional residential units. In terms of non-residential development, the New General Plan does not establish project-specific FARs, but would allow up to 586,000 square feet of additional non-residential space. Under the New General Plan, both residential and non-residential development in the Downtown would be held to a maximum height limit ranging from three to 12 stories. The Downtown would be primarily held to a maximum of eight stories, with 12 story (136 foot) buildings allowed in the central portion of Downtown and three-story height limits located along the outer edges of Downtown. These standards would largely be realized through implementation of the “Mixed Use – Downtown” land use designation.

If new developments were to utilize the maximum allowable height standards allowed by the New General Plan, particularly in the central portion of Downtown where buildings of up to 12 stories would be allowed, this would change the Downtown’s physical scale compared to the existing development. While existing irregular building heights combined with several landmark buildings contribute to a unique sense of place in Downtown, the allowable development presented as part of the New General Plan could result in a consolidation and intensification of the area’s urban character through taller buildings and intensified residential development mixed into existing commercial and around government buildings, which could present a more unified building height and increased building mass throughout Downtown.

It should be noted that in some areas of Downtown the maximum permitted heights have been reduced from what is currently allowed under existing City standards. In some areas this reduction is slight, such as a reduction from 100 feet to 92 feet in areas surrounding the center of Downtown. In other instances, particularly at the edges of the Mixed Use – Downtown land use designation, the reduction is greater as the New General Plan would reduce the maximum allowable building heights from 100 feet to 36 feet, or three-stories (i.e. along Brewster Avenue).

Per New General Plan Policy BE-18.1, the City would be required to adopt and implement a new Downtown Precise Plan, which would provide specific design guidelines and standards to govern future development and the aesthetic character within Downtown.\(^\text{10}\)

\(^\text{10}\) The Downtown Precise Plan was originally adopted by City Council in 2007. However, a property owner filed a lawsuit claiming that the Plan’s EIR did not adequately address certain issues, such as future taller buildings casting shadows on other properties. The court agreed, finding several aspects of the EIR to be
The New General Plan also indicates that development within Downtown would be subject to the density and intensity regulations set forth in the future Downtown Precise Plan. The City is currently in the process of developing the Downtown Precise Plan. As of April 2010, the Downtown Precise Plan is nearly complete and the environmental review process is underway.

The Downtown Precise Plan would include building height and disposition regulations that would govern development within Downtown upon adoption. The height regulations ensure that adequate density and intensity could be achieved to support the vitality of Downtown, while ensuring compatibility with adjacent low-rise residential neighborhoods, public open spaces, and historic resources. The Downtown Precise Plan establishes height zones, with maximum building heights of 12 stories (136 feet) concentrated in the center of Downtown, consistent with the New General Plan standards. The 12-story building height zones would be bordered primarily by three-story building height zones, so as to provide visual buffers from the streetscape.

The New General Plan also imposes additional policies and implementation programs that may shape the character and appearance of new development in Downtown. Refer to Appendix A for a detailed list of the New General Plan policies and implementation programs. Policies BE-14.10, BE-16.2, BE-18.2, BE-18.9, BC-11.3 and Program BC-42 include promoting Downtown as the City’s center for culture and arts, implementing a streetscape plan to create a stronger entrance into Downtown, allowing for a range of building types and heights to establish a vibrant City Center, creating a network of public spaces, and implementing a public art program into new development and existing sites.

With implementation of Policy BE-18.1, which would require the adoption and implementation of the Downtown Precise Plan, and the additional standards and design guidelines set forth in the New General Plan, impacts to the existing visual character would be reduced to a less than significant level. The building height zones that would be required as part of the Downtown Precise Plan, and thus the New General Plan, would incorporate self-mitigating design standards for future increased building heights in the center of Downtown.

No additional mitigation is required. Individual developments within Downtown will be required to undergo project-specific environmental review. If project-level significant impacts are identified, specific mitigation measures will be required under CEQA.

legally inadequate. In the best interest of the community, City Council decided to prepare a new Downtown Precise Plan and EIR that address the court’s issues.
Impact 4.1-4: Development allowed by the New General Plan could increase the height and bulk of development along the major transportation corridors beyond what currently exists, which could alter the visual character of these corridors. Implementing the transitional design measures and treatments for the major transportation corridors, identified by the New General Plan could minimize the potential to adversely impact the visual character. (Less than Significant)

While the 1990 General Plan and zoning designations for these corridors already permit development of a similar scale as would be allowed by the New General Plan, the New General Plan introduces new development standards specific to the corridor that will alter the existing visual character of the areas.

The New General Plan targets several existing corridors for “reinvention” through the introduction of mixed-use infill development, improved transit service, and enhanced pedestrian amenities. The New General Plan includes new development standards specific to corridors, where new development could be at a density of 40–60 dwelling units per acre for residential development, 1.0 FAR for commercial development, and up to six stories in height depending on the proposed use. Implementation of these new development standards as allowed by the New General Plan could visually transform portions of corridors like El Camino Real, Woodside Road, Middlefield Road, Broadway, and Veterans Boulevard to more urbanized, multiple use neighborhoods lined by taller buildings and more diverse uses than what is currently built.

The New General Plan includes transitional design measures for the major transportation corridors, with the greatest density and intensity focused within and immediately adjacent to Downtown and lower density and building height maximums near the exterior of the plan area. This transitional design approach would allow for a cohesive visual environment, focused at the center of the plan area (Downtown). For example, the El Camino Real corridor would allow for building height maximums of six stories immediately adjacent to Downtown and four-story building maximums to the east of Downtown near the exterior of the plan area where these areas interface with lower scale development. The Woodside Road and Middlefield Road corridors would apply the same transitional design measures, with development of up to four stories near Downtown and three stories east and south of Downtown. In regards to the Broadway and Veterans Boulevard corridors, adoption of the New General Plan would allow a reduction in allowable building heights from eight to nine stories under the 1990 General Plan, to a maximum of five to six stories.

Adoption of the New General Plan would also allow specific corner treatments, such as sidewalk bulbouts, at major transportation corridor intersection corners, so as to create a visual transition between the streetscape and buildings. The sidewalk bulbouts would provide a visual buffer zone and would establish a building setback from the streetscape to reduce the visual encroachment of adjacent buildings.

Changes to the existing street configurations (i.e. existing street pattern) would not be introduced under the New General Plan; thus, the form and orientation of the major
transportation corridors would be maintained. While some improvements to the transportation networks within the plan area are allowed under the New General Plan, including the development of a streetcar network, grade separations where the roadway grade would be maintained and the train track would move up or down at the existing Caltrain trackway, and pedestrian enhancements, these modifications would substantially improve the existing visual environment of the corridors.

New General Plan policies and implementation programs could provide additional direction on the resultant visual appearance of corridor areas. Refer to Appendix A for a detailed list of the New General Plan policies and implementation programs. Specifically, Policies BE-11.1 through BE-11.11, BE-12.1, BE-12.2, BE-12.4, BE-12.5, BE-13.1 through BE-13.5, BE-14.1, BE-14.2, BE-14.7, BE-14.10, BE-15.1, BE-15.3, BE-16.1, and BE-16.2 would plan for and accommodate a diversity of building and development types, while ensuring new developments are compatible with the existing building scale. These policies would also improve the public streetscapes along the major transportation corridors, such as providing sidewalks and landscaping, and would ensure that buildings along the major transportation corridors are sensitive to adjacent neighborhoods. Further, these policies would enhance the visual appearance of major transportation corridors, including El Camino Real, Woodside Road, and Middlefield Road, by providing landscaping and public spaces, and would require quality infill development between existing buildings.

Additionally, the New General Plan programs develop design guidelines and streetscape plan improvements for the major corridors, including El Camino Real, Middlefield Road, Woodside Road, Veterans Boulevard, and Broadway, which could emphasize building and streetscape design. Programs BE-19, BE-20, BE-25, BE-26, and BC-4 develop an urban beautification program, focusing on park improvements and public art, and continuing to install public visual amenities, such as streetlights, benches, and landscaping to provide visually appealing environments for drivers and pedestrians on major corridors.

The New General Plan also addresses the visual connection between buildings and streetscapes, by providing high quality streetscapes, creating direct visual relationships between residential development and the streets, requiring development along U.S. 101 to create a positive visual environment as viewed from the freeway, requiring new development to incorporate landscaping, minimizing the visibility of parking, screening commercial and industrial service facilities from public view through implementation of Policies BE-1.7, BE-2.6, and BE-3.1 through BE-3.7, and BE-17.2.

With adherence to and implementation of the New General Plan policies and implementation programs, impacts related to the aesthetic environment would be less than significant for the corridors. Individual developments within the plan area will be required to undergo project-specific environmental review. If project-level significant visual impacts within these residential neighborhoods are identified, specific mitigation measures will be required under CEQA.
**Impact 4.1-5:** Development allowed by the New General Plan could increase the height and bulk of development in the Mixed-Use Waterfront Neighborhood, which would alter the existing visual character. Implementing the policies and programs in the New General Plan in combination with City development review procedures that would guide new development in the area could minimize the potential to adversely impact the visual character. *(Less than Significant)*

The New General Plan land use map includes a new Mixed-Use Waterfront Neighborhood (Waterfront Neighborhood) land use designation that allows for development of up to 40 units per acre with a maximum commercial intensity FAR of 0.4 within the waterfront neighborhood. While the New General Plan includes density and FAR limitations, there are no proposed maximum height standards for this designation. Generally speaking, a development or a block in a designation where maximum allowable density is 40 units per acre could result in a variety of building heights, depending on the size of the project site, building footprint, and incorporation of open space.\(^\text{11}\)

For example, a development of up to 40 dwelling units per acre could result in high-rise buildings of approximately 15 to 20 stories in height if the development were to incorporate substantial open space areas and/or parkland surrounding a limited building footprint. This type of development could generally take the form of intermittent, tall structures surrounded by open space or adjacent low-level structures. This could result in a significant change to the existing visual environment of the waterfront neighborhoods, as the high-rise buildings could contrast with the form of the existing one- and two-story buildings. However, incorporation of open space or lower level buildings surrounding these hypothetical high-rise buildings could have the potential to create enhanced visual unity between the new urban development and/or redevelopment and surrounding open waterways and tidal lands.

Conversely, a development of up to 40 dwelling units per acre could also take the form of shorter, dense development with four- to six-story buildings immediately adjacent to one another with less open space.\(^\text{12}\) Incorporation of this type of development within the waterfront neighborhood could establish a dense urban visual environment, with clusters of buildings and reduced building setbacks. While the height of the buildings under this type of development might not substantially differ from the existing visual environment given the presence of two-story buildings and utilitarian structures within the Port area, this type of allowed development could increase the overall density of the waterfront neighborhood and create a more solid, urban environment. However, there are two existing residential developments located within the waterfront neighborhood with a similar density and visual character as would be allowed under the New General Plan.

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\(^{11}\) Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. Visualizing Density, Higher Density Catalog Images, 9.1-134.5 Units per Acre. 2002.

Thus, this type of development could be compatible with the existing built visual environment.

In regards to non-residential development, the Mixed Use – Waterfront Neighborhood allows for a maximum FAR of 0.4. The visual expression of non-residential development under this standard could also vary depending on the size of the individual project site and proposed building footprint. For example, a 1 acre site would allow for a building volume of 0.4 acres, or about 17,500 square feet, on one or more floors. With a proposed building footprint of 0.2 acres, the proposed building could have a maximum height of 2 stories. On this same site, a building with a proposed building footprint of 0.4 acres would only be allowed to have a one-story building. Developments on larger sites could incorporate taller buildings, depending on the building footprint size relative to the total project site size. Thus, the increased intensity of allowable development within this area could have the potential to alter the existing visual character through the introduction of increased building heights and through alteration of the physical form of the waterfront skyline.

The area proposed for the Waterfront Neighborhood encompasses approximately 28 acres. Based on review of the San Mateo County parcel maps, the existing parcels within the Mixed Use – Waterfront Neighborhood range from 1 acre to eight acres in size. Given the existing parcel sizes, it is assumed that development using the maximum allowable density and FAR could range from about one to eight stories in height, with the possibility of taller building heights if parcels were assembled into larger sizes. Additionally, future individual development projects within the waterfront neighborhood could apply for parcel adjustments, where multiple parcels could be consolidated and therefore result in a larger project site areas. Such parcel consolidation and the potential for the resultant increase in developable site could also result in taller buildings, particularly if the proposed building footprint would be small in comparison to the overall project site. While the expression of the density and intensity maximums would depend on the specific lot sizes for future development projects, implementation of the Mixed Use – Waterfront Neighborhood land use designation could result in overall increased density and intensity coupled with increased building heights, which could contrast with the overall existing visual character of low-level urban structures, utilitarian facilities, and natural landscapes.

In regards to the visual character of the waterfront neighborhood, the New General Plan includes several policies and implementation programs that provide direction for the quality of the visual character of new development in the area. The policies would require visual connectivity between the potentially dense urban environment and the surrounding natural landscape. Specifically, Policies BE-10.1, BE-10.2, BE-10.3, BE-10.5, BE-10.6, and BE-10.8 establish design guidelines to relate waterfront development to the Bay; require Waterfront Neighborhoods to provide public access (and thus visual connections) to water edges, open space, and trails; allow for a diversity of housing types while maintaining consistency with the City’s historic development types; consider potential impacts

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associated with climate change and sea level rise, and require developments to include design elements to create a positive visual character as viewed from U.S. 101.

Per the development standards set forth in the New General Plan, heights for individual development projects within this designation would be evaluated through site plan review and would be required to relate to property size, terrain, surrounding uses, and existing character, and would be required to orient developments towards the water, tiering heights farther away from the water’s edge.

In addition to the policies and implementation programs within the New General Plan, the City would apply its standard operating procedures for the review of new development within the plan area, and thus the waterfront neighborhood. The City would require that all new development and redevelopment projects in the plan area comply with City procedures and ensure that applicable New General Plan policies and implementation programs and City standards and regulations are applied. The Planning, Housing and Economic Development Department would require project proponents to incorporate mitigation measures into the project plans or subsequent CEQA required environmental documents to maintain visual compatibility with the surrounding environment. Potential measures could include building orientation, building materials, and the tiering of building heights.

With adherence to and implementation of the New General Plan policies and implementation programs in combination with the City procedures for review of new development, impacts to the Mixed-Use Waterfront visual character would be less than significant. Individual developments within the plan area will be required to undergo project-specific environmental review. If project-level significant visual impacts within these residential neighborhoods are identified, specific mitigation measures will be required under CEQA.

**Impact 4.1-6: Development allowed by the New General Plan could increase buildings heights in Downtown which could introduce new shadow effects. (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

Increased maximum permitted building heights in parts of Downtown could increase shadows on neighboring properties within and adjacent to the Downtown area.

Currently, maximum permitted building heights in the Downtown area range from a low of 36 feet (about 3 stories) to a high of 100 feet (about 9 stories). The vast majority of Downtown currently has a maximum permitted height of 75 feet (about 6 stories) or 100 feet. The New General Plan increases some areas from 100 feet to 136 feet (or 12 stories), and increases other areas from 75 feet to 92 feet (or 8 stories). The Plan, however, also reduces maximum permitted heights in many areas. Some areas are reduced slightly, from 100 feet to 92 feet (or 8 stories) and others are reduced greatly, from 100 feet to 35 feet (or 3 stories), particularly near public open spaces and historic resources.

Thus, adoption of the New General Plan and application of the Mixed Use – Downtown land use designation would not only increase the allowable building heights in some areas above the existing built skyline, but would also increase the allowable building heights as
set by existing City standards. While there are a limited number of eight- and ten-story buildings currently in central Downtown, the Mixed Use – Downtown land use designation could result in new development of up to 12-story buildings on currently undeveloped parcels or through the redevelopment of existing lower level buildings. These changes could increase shade and shadowing effects within the area.

Under the City’s planning regimen, development within Downtown would be subject to the density and intensity regulations set forth in the future Downtown Precise Plan, as well as to the building policies and standards of the New General Plan. The City is still in the process of developing the Downtown Precise Plan. As part of this process, the City has conducted extensive and detailed studies regarding the potential shadow impacts that may result from the expected increases in building heights from implementation of the New General Plan and Downtown Precise Plan, and the building standards and regulations proposed for the Downtown Precise Plan have been developed to address and mitigate these potential shadow impacts. Under the standards proposed for the Downtown Precise Plan, the 12-story building height zones would be bordered by three-story building height zones in the center of Downtown which includes significant historic resources, so as to provide visual buffers from the streetscape and reduce potential shadow effects to sensitive public open space areas. Elsewhere, the 12-story building height zones transition to 10- and 8-story zones which in turn step down to 4- and 3-story heights at the plan’s edges to promote a graduated skyline while allowing for solar access. In addition, the public parks, plazas, and open space areas within Downtown, including the Courthouse Square, Theater Way, City Hall Park, Library Plaza, Hamilton Green, Depot Circle, Little River Park, Redwood Creek, and City Center Plaza are identified as shadow sensitive public open space areas. For Downtown development that would be immediately adjacent to low density residential developments, a relational height limit of a 1 to 1 height setback ratio would be required (i.e. for every vertical foot increase in building height, a horizontal setback of 1 foot would be required, creating a 45 degree slope). Special corner treatment requirements would also be applied at major intersections, including corner towers to emphasize the corner of a building through a slender massing. Building disposition types would also be applied to ensure that building masses are sculpted with courtyards and slender, widely spaced towers in a manner consistent with the existing urban context and to maximize access to natural light. The established height zones and building disposition requirements under the Downtown Precise Plan have been developed to reduce shadow impacts to the designated shadow sensitive public open spaces, and the height standards would incorporate “stepdown” heights for portions of buildings surrounding the shadow sensitive areas so as to reduce substantial shadowing to adjacent public open spaces.

While the proposed Downtown Precise Plan contains policies and standards developed to avoid and reduce shadow-related impacts in the Downtown area, the City does not expect to consider and approve the Downtown Precise Plan until after the New General Plan has been approved. In order to adequately and effectively mitigate the potential Downtown shadow impacts that could result from approval of the New General Plan prior to the approval and implementation of the Downtown Precise Plan, the following mitigation measures should be adopted by the City and implemented in connection with the adoption and implementation of the New General Plan. These measures would incorporate the...
building height and disposition standards developed to mitigate shadow impacts as part of the Downtown Precise Plan, and incorporate them into the New General Plan. By doing this, the City can ensure that the shadow impacts that may result from implementation of the New General Plan are adequately addressed prior to adoption of the Downtown Precise Plan, and also ensure consistency with the Downtown Precise Plan with respect to the building height and disposition standards and regulations established by the New General Plan.

**Mitigation Measure 4.1-1:** The City shall incorporate a new policy into the New General Plan to address potential shadow impacts within the Mixed-Use Downtown area in order to mitigate shadowing impacts to adjacent shadow sensitive land uses, as described in the policy. The new policy shall be substantially as follows:

- All new development and redevelopment within Downtown Mixed-Use shall complete a shade and shadow study unless and until implementing zoning incorporates mitigation to address impacts as defined below, unless the City’s Zoning Administrator determines, based on the scale and scope of the proposed project and the criteria set forth herein, that no shade and shadow study is necessary. Significant impacts shall be mitigated to the extent feasible. The following impacts will normally be considered significant:
  
  a. Introduction of landscape that would now or in the future cast substantial shadows on existing solar collectors.
  
  b. Casting of shadows covering more than 50% of Courthouse Square, Theatre Way, City Hall Park, Library Plaza, Hamilton Green, Depot Circle, Little River Park, Redwood Creek, or City Center Plaza 12:00pm on the Spring Equinox.
  
  c. Casting of shadows that cause a solar-sensitive character-defining feature (e.g. the stained-glass dome of the historic San Mateo County Courthouse building) of any historic resource to be more than 50% in shadow at 12:00pm on the Spring Equinox.
  
  d. Casting of shadows from parcels with a higher maximum permitted height onto adjacent parcels with a lower maximum permitted height that cause solar-sensitive portions of the parcel with the lower maximum permitted height to be more than 50% in shadow at 12:00pm on the Spring Equinox.
  
  e. Casting of shadows from parcels within the Mixed Use Downtown area onto adjacent Low, Medium, Medium-High and High density residential parcels that cause solar sensitive portions of such residential parcels (e.g. private and common yards and balconies) to be more than 50% in shadow at 12:00pm on the Spring Equinox.

**Significance After Mitigation:** Implementing Mitigation Measure 4.1-1 would reduce shadow impacts in the Mixed Use Downtown area resulting from implementation of the New General Plan to a less than significant level because each future development
project in the Downtown area would be subject to an evaluation of its potential shadow impacts and would not be approved unless consistent with the New General Plan policies applicable to Downtown development (or alternately within the requirements of the Downtown Precise Plan which would conform to the above policies when adopted), including the above-described shadow policies.

**Impact 4.1-7: Development allowed by the New General Plan could increase building heights along the major transportation corridors and Mixed-Use Waterfront Neighborhood. The increased building heights could have the potential to introduce new shadow effects that could substantially alter the existing visual character of the areas. (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

Implementation of the New General Plan could change the existing scale of development along major transportation corridor areas, which could introduce shadowing effects within and adjacent to these areas. The transitional design measures that would be implemented through adoption of the New General Plan focus the greatest density and intensity of development within and immediately adjacent to Downtown. Under the New General Plan, the El Camino Real corridor would transition from six stories immediately adjacent to Downtown to four stories near the outer boundaries of the plan area. The Woodside Road and Middlefield Road corridors would transition from up to four stories near Downtown to three stories east and south of Downtown. A maximum of five to six stories would be allowed along the Broadway and Veterans Boulevard corridors.

The increased building heights within the Mixed-Use Waterfront Neighborhood could introduce shade and shadow effects to the existing adjacent residential developments, public open space areas, waterways, and tidal lands. The potential shading of the adjacent natural environment, including sensitive tidal lands, could result in alterations to existing ecosystems as the natural sun lighting of the areas could be limited. Although the New General Plan would require developments within the waterfront neighborhood to tier building heights farther away from the water’s edge, which could reduce potential shadowing impacts to the adjacent natural environment, the increased building heights that would be permitted under the New General Plan could introduce new shadows not currently occurring in the existing natural environment. Similarly, adjacent public open space areas, including public access areas along the waterways and trails providing connections to the access areas, could also be subject to increased shadowing associated with the potential increase in building height.

In addition to the new policies and implementation programs in the New General Plan, the City would apply its standard development and environmental review procedures for the review of new development within the plan area, including the major transportation corridors and waterfront neighborhood. The City would require that all new development and redevelopment projects in the plan area comply with City procedures and ensure that applicable New General Plan policies and implementation programs and City standards and regulations are applied. The City Planning, Housing and Economic Development Department would require project proponents to incorporate mitigation measures into the
project plans to minimize shadowing effects upon surrounding areas. Potential measures could include adjustments to building orientation, use of designated building materials, and the tiering of building heights.

While the New General Plan policies and City standard development and environmental review procedures could reduce shadowing effects on shadow-sensitive land uses within and adjacent to the major transportation corridors and waterfront neighborhood, it is not certain that the existing policies and procedures would adequately mitigate these impacts, so in the absence of additional mitigation measures, these potential shadow impacts must be considered significant. Accordingly, the following mitigation measures should be adopted by the City and implemented in connection with its implementation of the New General Plan.

**Mitigation Measure 4.1-2:** The City shall incorporate a new policy into the New General Plan to mitigate potential shadow impacts within and around the City’s major transportation corridors on adjacent shadow-sensitive land uses, as described in the policy. The new policy shall be as follows:

- All new development and redevelopment within Mixed Use – Corridor and Mixed Use – Neighborhood land use designations shall complete a shade and shadow study unless and until implementing zoning incorporates mitigation to address impacts as defined below, unless the City’s Zoning Administrator determines, based on the scale and scope of the proposed project and the criteria set forth herein, that no shade and shadow study is necessary. Significant impacts shall be mitigated to the extent feasible. The following impacts will normally be considered significant:
  
  a. Introduction of landscape that would now or in the future cast substantial shadows on existing solar collectors.
  
  b. Casting of shadows that substantially impair the beneficial use of shadow-sensitive public open space.
  
  c. Casting of shadows that materially impair the historic significance of an historic resource.
  
  d. Casting of shadows from parcels within a major transportation corridor onto adjacent Low, Medium, Medium-High, and High Density residential parcels that substantially impair the beneficial use of the Low Density or Medium Density residential parcels.

**Mitigation Measure 4.1-3:** The City shall incorporate a new policy into the New General Plan to mitigate potential shadow impacts within and around the Waterfront Neighborhood areas on adjacent shadow sensitive land uses, as defined within the policy. The new policy shall be as follows:

- All new development and redevelopment within Mixed Use – Waterfront land use designations shall complete a shade and shadow study unless and until implementing zoning incorporates mitigation to address impacts as defined below, unless the City’s Zoning Administrator determines, based on the scale
and scope of the proposed project and the criteria set forth herein, that no shade and shadow study is necessary. Significant impacts shall be mitigated to the extent feasible. The following impacts will normally be considered significant:

a. Introduction of landscape that would now or in the future cast substantial shadows on existing solar collectors.

b. Casting of shadows that substantially impair the beneficial use of shadow-sensitive public open space.

c. Casting of shadows from parcels within the major transportation corridor onto adjacent residential parcels that substantially impair the beneficial use of the residential parcels.

d. Casting of shadows from parcels within the Waterfront Neighborhood onto existing adjacent residential development that substantially impair the beneficial use of these residential parcels.

e. Casting of shadows that substantially impair the viability of a sensitive natural habitat.

**Significance After Mitigation:** Implementing Mitigation Measures 4.1-2 and 4.1-3 would reduce shadow impacts along and around major transportation corridors and the Waterfront Neighborhood areas resulting from implementation of the New General Plan to a less than significant level because each future development project in the Mixed Use – Corridor, Mixed Use – Neighborhood, and Mixed Use Waterfront land use designations would be subject to an evaluation of its potential shadow impacts and would not be approved unless consistent with the New General Plan policies applicable to development in the these areas, including the above-described shadow policies which would also apply to any future implementation zoning.

**Impact 4.1-8:** Development allowed by the New General Plan could increase building heights in Public Facilities, Schools, and Neighborhood Commercial areas adjacent to Low Density and Medium Density residential areas, and introduce new shadow effects in shadow-sensitive areas that could substantially alter the existing visual character of those areas. *(Less than Significant with Mitigation)*

Development allowed under the New General Plan could lead to increases in the existing scale of development in Public Facilities, Schools, Neighborhood Commercial areas, and other non-residential areas adjacent to existing residential neighborhoods. This potential increase in scale of non-residential development next to existing residential development could introduce shadowing effects within the residential neighborhoods.

To address this potential impact, the City would review all new development and redevelopment proposals to ensure compliance with and conformance to all applicable City policies, implementation programs, regulations and standards. Pursuant to these requirements, the City Planning Department would require project proponents to
incorporate mitigation measures into the project plans to minimize shadowing effects upon surrounding areas. Potential measures could include adjustments to building orientation, requiring the use of specific building materials, and the tiering of building heights.

While the currently-proposed New General Plan policies and City development and environmental review procedures could reduce shadowing effects within the Public Facilities, Schools, and Neighborhood Commercial areas, it is not certain that the existing policies and procedures would adequately mitigate these impacts, so in the absence of additional mitigation measures, these potential shadow impacts must be considered significant. Accordingly, the following mitigation measures should be adopted by the City and implemented in connection with its implementation of the New General Plan.

**Mitigation Measure 4.1-4:** The City shall incorporate a new policy into the New General Plan to address potential shadow impacts within Public Facilities, Schools, and Neighborhood Commercial areas, when adjacent to Low or Medium Density Residential areas, in order to mitigate shadowing impacts to adjacent shadow sensitive land uses, as defined within the policy. The new policy shall be as follows:

- All new development and redevelopment within Public Facilities, Schools, and Neighborhood Commercial areas shall complete a shade and shadow study unless and until implementing zoning incorporates mitigation to address impacts as defined below, unless the City’s Zoning Administrator determines, based on the scale and scope of the proposed project and the criteria set forth herein, that no shade and shadow study is necessary. Significant impacts shall be mitigated to the extent feasible. The following impacts will normally be considered significant:
  
  a. Introduction of landscape that would now or in the future cast substantial shadows on existing solar collectors.
  
  b. Casting of shadows that substantially impair the beneficial use of shadow-sensitive public open space.
  
  c. Casting of shadows from parcels within the Public Facilities, Schools, and Neighborhood Commercial areas onto adjacent Low Density or Medium Density residential parcels that substantially impair the beneficial use of the Low Density or Medium Density residential parcels.

**Significance After Mitigation:** Implementing Mitigation Measure 4.1-4 would reduce shadow impacts within shadow-sensitive residential areas adjacent to Public Facilities, Schools, and Neighborhood Commercial areas resulting from implementation of the New General Plan to a less than significant level because each future development project in the Public Facilities, Schools, and Neighborhood Commercial areas would be subject to an evaluation of its potential shadow impacts and would not be approved unless consistent with the New General Plan policies applicable to development in the Public Facilities, Schools, and Neighborhood Commercial areas, including the above-described shadow policies.
Impact 4.1-9: The increased density and intensity of urban development allowed in the plan area could introduce new sources of light and glare, specifically within Downtown, the Bayfront, and surrounding neighborhoods. (Less than Significant with Mitigation)

Adoption of the New General Plan could allow new development at a greater density and intensity within certain neighborhoods, corridors, and centers. This allowable development could include nighttime exterior illumination features, including storefront lighting, street lights, pedestrian oriented lighting, exterior residential safety lighting, and lighting for signs. The increased density and associated increase in lighting could impact the night sky, although the impact would not necessarily be apparent because of the already urbanized character of the affected area. The new sources of lighting associated with the residential development could also be subject to the standards of the Title 24 lighting zones. Further, the additional sources of daytime glare associated with the increased density and intensity could be similar to the existing daytime glare currently produced within the plan area. While the increase in density could create additional glare from the exterior of new building walls, windows, or increased vehicular traffic, such sources of glare currently exist within the plan area.

In addition to adhering to Title 24 requirements within the plan area as a matter of law, the New General Plan incorporates policies and implementation programs to reduce light and glare impacts associated with the project. Policies BE-13.1 and NR-4.5 and Programs BE-18 and NR-20 include measures to focus streetscape lighting at the pedestrian level, providing appropriate lighting throughout the streetscapes, conserve energy by promoting efficient and cost effective lighting to reduce glare and light pollution, and create a program to educate the public about the inefficient use from over-illumination would reduce significant impacts related to light and glare within the plan area. While the New General Plan policies and implementation programs promote efficient lighting, the policies and implementation programs do not explicitly require new development to be in compliance with the Title 24 Lighting Zone requirements. The following mitigation measure would ensure compliance with these zones.

Mitigation Measure 4.1-5: The City shall incorporate a new policy and implementation program in the New General Plan to require all new development and redevelopment in the plan area to be in compliance with Title 24 Lighting Zone (LZ-3) requirements. The policy and implementation program shall encourage the use of low mounted, downward casting exterior lighting for all new development in the plan area so as to reduce light trespass onto adjacent properties. Further, the policy and implementation program shall also require new developments to submit lighting and photometric site plans for City review and approval prior to the issuance of individual building permits.

Significance After Mitigation: With implementation of the Title 24 lighting zone requirements, policies and implementation programs from the New General Plan, and project mitigation, program-level impacts to light and glare could be reduced to a less than significant level. Individual development projects would be required to undergo project-
specific environmental review. If project-level significant impacts are identified, specific mitigation measures would be required under CEQA.
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