Chapter 3. Aesthetics

Aesthetic resources, or visual resources, are the natural and cultural features that could be seen and that contribute to the public’s enjoyment of the environment. Visual resource impacts or impacts on the aesthetics of the natural and cultural environment are generally defined in terms of a project’s physical characteristics and potential visibility, and the extent that the project would change the visual character and quality of the environment where it is located. This chapter discusses the existing visual character of the Program Area and analyzes the potential for the two CWP alternatives to affect the existing visual character and visual quality as seen from the surrounding area.

Concepts and terminology used in this analysis are summarized in Section 3.1. As defined primarily by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) (1988) and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) (1980), these concepts are used throughout this chapter to describe existing conditions in representative views toward the WWTP Site and relevant portions of the Program Area and, in concert with CEQA significance criteria, identify potential effects on aesthetic resources.

This chapter also describes the regulatory environment relevant to protection of aesthetic resources, identifying policies and regulations taken into consideration in the evaluation of potential visual effects. Finally, mitigation measures that would reduce potential effects on visual resources are described.

3.1 Concepts and Terminology Used in this Chapter

Identifying visual resources and conditions involves three steps:

1. Objective identification of the visual features (visual resources) of the landscape
2. Assessment of the character and quality of those resources relative to overall regional visual character
3. Determination of the importance to people, or sensitivity, of views of visual resources in the landscape

The aesthetic value of an area is a measure of its visual character and quality, combined with the viewer response to the area (FHWA, 1988). Scenic quality could best be described as the overall impression that an individual viewer retains after driving through, walking through, or flying over an area (BLM, 1980). Viewer response is a combination of viewer exposure and viewer sensitivity. Viewer exposure is a function of the number of viewers, number of views seen, distance of the viewers, and viewing duration. Viewer sensitivity relates to the extent of the public’s concern for a particular viewshed. These concepts and terms are described in detail in the following sections and are incorporated into this chapter’s discussions of existing conditions and potential effects on aesthetic resources.

3.1.1 Visual Character

Natural and artificial landscape features contribute to the visual character of an area or view. Visual character is influenced by geologic, hydrologic, botanical, wildlife, recreational, and urban features. Urban features include those associated with landscape settlements and development, including roads, utilities, structures, earthworks, and the results of other human activities. The perception of visual character could vary significantly seasonally, even hourly, as weather, light, shadow, and elements that compose the viewshed change. The basic components used to describe visual character for most visual assessments are the elements of form, line, color, and texture of the landscape features (U.S. Forest Service, 1995; FHWA, 1988). The appearance of the landscape is described in terms of the dominance of each of these components.
3.1.2 Visual Quality

Visual quality is evaluated using the well-established approach to visual analysis adopted by FHWA, which employs the following concepts (FHWA, 1988; Jones et al., 1975):

- Vividness is the visual power or memorability of landscape components as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns.
- Intactness is the visual integrity of the natural and human-built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements; this factor can be present in well-kept urban and rural landscapes and in natural settings.
- Unity is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole; it frequently attests to the careful design of individual components in the landscape.

Visual quality is evaluated based on the relative degree of vividness, intactness, and unity, as modified by its visual sensitivity. High-quality views are highly vivid, relatively intact, and exhibit a high degree of visual unity. Low-quality views lack vividness, are not visually intact, and possess a low degree of visual unity.

3.1.3 Visual Exposure and Sensitivity

The measure of the quality of a view must be tempered by the overall sensitivity of the viewer. Viewer sensitivity or concern is based on the visibility of resources in the landscape, proximity of viewers to the visual resource, elevation of viewers relative to the visual resource, frequency and duration of views, number of viewers, and type and expectations of individuals and viewer groups.

The importance of a view is related in part to the position of the viewer to the resource; therefore, visibility and visual dominance of landscape elements depend on their placement within the viewshed. A viewshed is defined as all of the surface area visible from a particular location (e.g., an overlook) or sequence of locations (e.g., a roadway or trail) (FHWA, 1988).

To identify the importance of views of a resource, a viewshed must be broken into distance zones of foreground, middleground, and background. Generally, the closer a resource is to the viewer, the more dominant it is and the greater its importance to the viewer. Although distance zones in a viewshed may vary between different geographic regions or types of terrain, the standard foreground zone is 0.25 to 0.5 mile from the viewer, the middleground zone from the foreground zone to 3 to 5 miles from the viewer, and the background zone from the middleground to infinity (Jones et al., 1975).

Visual sensitivity depends on the number and type of viewers and the frequency and duration of views. Visual sensitivity is also modified by viewer activity, awareness, and visual expectations in relation to the number of viewers and viewing duration. For example, visual sensitivity is generally higher for views seen by people who are driving for pleasure; people engaging in recreational activities such as hiking, biking or camping; and homeowners. Sensitivity tends to be lower for views seen by people driving to and from work or as part of their work (U.S. Forest Service, 1995; FHWA, 1988; U.S. Soil Conservation Service, 1978). Commuters and non-recreational travelers generally have fleeting views and tend to focus on commute traffic, not on surrounding scenery; therefore, they are generally considered to have low visual sensitivity.

Residential viewers typically have extended viewing periods and are concerned about changes in the views from their homes; therefore, they are generally considered to have high visual sensitivity. Viewers using recreation trails and areas, scenic highways, and scenic overlooks are also typically assumed to have high visual sensitivity.

Judgments of visual quality and viewer response must be made based in a regional frame of reference (U.S. Soil Conservation Service, 1978). The same landform or visual resource appearing in different geographic areas could have a different degree of visual quality or sensitivity in each setting. For example, a small hill may be a significant visual element within a relatively flat landscape but have very little significance in mountainous terrain.
3.2 Existing Setting

The Program Area (see Figure 2-2) is located generally within the boundary of the City of San Mateo; the majority of aboveground Program facilities are proposed to occur within the WWTP Site. Figure 3-1 shows the aesthetic resources in the vicinity of the WWTP Site and Dale Avenue Pump Station. It also shows the location of Key Observation Points (KOP) used in this analysis. Figures 3-2 through 3-10 show existing views from those KOPs, which are referenced throughout this section. KOPs associated with views throughout the remainder of the Program Area were not identified because CWP facilities in these areas are expected to be located within existing pump station structures or underground.

3.2.1 Regional Setting

The City of San Mateo extends from San Francisco Bay to the foothills of the mountains that extend up and down the San Francisco Peninsula (see Figure 1-1). Although predominantly urbanized, with a balance of commercial and residential uses, public parklands, and undeveloped private lands dispersed throughout the City provide open space, wildlife habitat, recreational opportunities and, in some locations, relatively expansive views toward both the Bay and portions of the City. The low-elevation areas along the Bay shoreline are characterized visually by a variety of developments and uses adjacent to, and in some locations extending into, parklands and relatively undeveloped areas, some of which are public, others of which are privately owned. Commercial, industrial, office park, and multifamily uses in the east, near the western end of the San Mateo Bridge, yield to more single-family homes and neighborhood-scale commercial centers. The San Francisco Bay Trail (Bay Trail) extends along the entirety of the City’s shoreline, as do large electrical transmission towers and roadways of varying service levels.

3.2.2 Existing Visual Character, Visual Quality, and Visual Sensitivity

The WWTP Site is located near the shoreline, east of the mouth of Marina Lagoon (see Figure 2-5). The WWTP Site consists of four primary properties, along with the immediately surrounding roadways (Detroit Drive and Joinville Park Road). The properties and their existing visual character are described as follows:

- The existing WWTP property. This parcel contains the existing WWTP facilities and is primarily industrial in appearance with numerous concrete and metal structures. The existing egg-shaped digesters, approximately 62 feet high, are the most visible structures. The property is surrounded by a concrete wall and vegetation consisting primarily of eucalyptus trees.

- The City-owned Detroit Drive site across from the existing WWTP. This undeveloped parcel consists primarily of non-native vegetation, a 0.14-acre emergent wetland in a low-lying area, and a former parking lot in the northwest section. The parcel contains deposits of excavated soils from City projects and various discarded items such as a sofa and pipeline sections.

- Three privately owned parcels (referred to as the Bayfront parcels) northeast of the existing WWTP. These parcels are paved and are currently being used by a trucking business, with multiple trucks and associated equipment present. A commercial-style building is located on the south end of the parcels.

- A City-owned Dale Avenue parcel west of the existing WWTP. This parcel is currently unused and consists primarily of non-native vegetation and deposits of excavated soils, bricks and rock from City projects.

J. Hart Clinton Drive and the Bay Trail separate the WWTP Site from the shoreline, which is on the northern side of the City in this particular portion of the Bay. Along the shoreline northwest of the WWTP Site is the City’s Seal Point Park, which includes a dog park and an elevated viewpoint overlooking the Bay. Northeast of the WWTP Site is the Bay Marsh, Mariner’s Point Golf Center, and the 3rd Avenue Kiteboarding Upper Launch Site. East of the WWTP Site are multifamily residential buildings along Marina Lagoon and Bayside/Joinville Park, which includes the John Lee Memorial Dog Park and Tidelands Park. The area south of the WWTP Site, beyond the Bayside STEM Academy and Bayside Performing Arts Center, is almost entirely
residential. Directly west of the WWTP Site is a storage facility, with primarily single-family residences to the west and south of the storage facility.

Dale Avenue Pump Station is located between the WWTP and US-101, in an area that consists primarily of single-family residences.

3.2.2.1 Views toward the WWTP Site and Dale Avenue Pump Station

The WWTP Site is visible from a number of locations. Views from KOPs (see Figure 3-1) described here demonstrate the existing visual character and quality associated with the WWTP Site and are representative of the range of viewer exposure and sensitivity. With the exception of KOP 8, all viewpoints are within 0.5 mile of the WWTP Site and are, therefore, considered foreground views. At just over 0.5 mile from the WWTP Site, KOP 8 provides a middleground view of the site. KOP 9 provides a view of the Dale Avenue Pump Station.

KOP 1—View from San Francisco Bay Trail adjacent to J. Hart Clinton Drive

KOP 1 is located along the Bay Trail just north of J. Hart Clinton Drive, and approximately 0.1 mile northeast of the existing WWTP. This location is approximately halfway across the slough and is intended to represent views of people using the Bay Trail and approximate views of westbound drivers along J. Hart Clinton Drive, an acknowledged gateway to San Mateo from Foster City and the western end of the San Mateo Bridge (see General Plan Urban Design policies described in Section 3.3.1). Figure 3-1 shows the location of KOP 1, and Figure 3-2 shows the existing view from this location.

The view from KOP 1 is a close-in view of the northern portion of the WWTP Site. The existing, approximately 62-foot-tall digesters are visible in the left portion of the view beyond J. Hart Clinton Drive, and the Detroit Drive parcel, proposed for development under all potential WWTP layouts, occupies the center and right portion of the view. The view of what lies beyond the roadway is characterized visually by the co-dominant presence of the digesters and the vegetation within the Detroit Drive property that partially obscure them. The vegetation, most of which is located along the southern side of J. Hart Clinton Drive, has a naturalistic presence in the view; it does not appear as part of any formal approach to landscaping. This results in the appearance of the existing WWTP being set amid a somewhat natural setting. The general outline of the larger trees and digesters, which are similar in scale, places a form in the foreground that relates to the distant mountain skyline visible from this location.

The visual quality of this view is moderate. Although the co-dominant vegetation contributes a moderately high degree of vividness, the view’s integrity and visual coherence are moderately low; natural-appearing vegetation infringes visually on the industrial-appearing treatment tanks and both of these features infringe on the distant skyline. Overall visual sensitivity would be moderate, reflecting the relatively high sensitivity and view duration of viewers along the Bay Trail (who would have unobstructed views of both the WWTP Site and the Bay and would be more likely to favor the bay view) and the relatively low sensitivity and view duration of drivers along J. Hart Clinton Drive.

KOP 2—View from Bayside/Joinville Park

KOP 2 is located within a seating area approximately 0.2 mile east of the existing WWTP, along the public pedestrian and bicycle bridge in Bayside/Joinville Park that links the eastern and western portions of the park. This location is intended to represent views of park users, which include pedestrians, cyclists, and those fishing the waters (a fish cleaning station is located at the western end of the bridge). This viewpoint also approximates the views of the residences accessed via Anchor Road just east of KOP 2. Figure 3-1 shows the location of KOP 2, and Figure 3-3 shows the existing view from this location.

The view from KOP 2 includes the northern portion of the existing WWTP, including the approximately 62-foot-tall digesters, the Bayfront parcels, and the Detroit Drive parcel. Marina Lagoon is the dominant feature of this view, which is characterized by the horizontal band of industrial and infrastructural development apparent in the mid-section of the view; the existing WWTP, trucks and structures on the Bayfront parcels and the Detroit Drive parcel, the J. Hart Clinton Drive bridge, and electrical transmission...
towers appear in sequence across the entirety of the view, above the water in the immediate foreground and below the distant mountain skyline. Vegetation obscures or partially blocks some of these features but does not obfuscate the general nature of development.

The visual quality of this view is moderate. The delineation between the water/shoreline, the developed area, and the distant skyline provide a moderate degree of intactness; the view’s natural features are particularly vivid. Because this view represents that of park users and approximates that of nearby residents, with both groups having high duration views of the WWTP Site, visual sensitivity is high.

**KOP 3—View from Bayside/Joinville Park near Clipper Street**

KOP 3 is located near a bench along a footpath in Bayside/Joinville Park, adjacent to the Marina Lagoon shoreline and a residential development approximately 0.1 mile southeast of the existing WWTP. This location is intended to represent and approximate views of recreational and residential viewers southeast of the WWTP Site. Figure 3-1 shows the location of KOP 3, and Figure 3-4 shows the existing view from this location.

The view from KOP 3 demonstrates the limited visibility of the existing WWTP from this general area. Mature trees obscure facilities in the left portion of the view, and the low, white building in the center of the view indicates the southern edge of the trucking facilities on the Bayfront parcels. This view is characterized visually by the number of the park’s components that are identifiable and at times disparate in terms of form, line, color, and texture: the footpath, vegetation, benches and fence along the field’s edge; the light poles; the vegetated grounds on the opposite side of the lagoon; and the fenced dog park visible to the east of the existing WWTP and in front of the trucking facility. Existing vegetation buffers these features from the development beyond: the barely discernible WWTP facilities in the left portion of the view beyond a chain-link fence, the trucking business facilities in the center of the view, and the electrical transmission towers in the right portion of the view.

The visual quality of this view is moderate, which reflects the duration of exposure and visual sensitivity of park users and nearby residents. Visible features indicate a formal park setting, but the individual components, in concert with the industrial and infrastructural uses apparent just beyond the park’s boundaries, comprise an overall view with a moderately low degree of visual coherence and compositional harmony. This reflects the contrast evident in the view’s visual character.

**KOP 4 – View from Bayside/Joinville Park Picnic Area**

KOP 4 is located at the edge of the picnic area northwest of the Bayside/Joinville Park ballfield (and north and east of the Bayside STEM Academy campus), approximately 0.05 mile south of the existing WWTP. This location is intended to represent views of recreational viewers southeast of the WWTP Site, particularly those with relatively static views toward the WWTP from the park’s picnic area. Figure 3-1 shows the location of KOP 4, and Figure 3-5 shows the existing view from this location.

The view from KOP 4 demonstrates the limited visibility of the existing WWTP from the picnic area. Mature trees of varying sizes, in concert with the property fence above which they appear to extend, mostly screen the nearby WWTP facilities in this view; only portions of WWTP structures are visible. This view is characterized by the visual enclosure that the vegetation and topography afford the picnic site, which likely orients views in the opposite direction, shown in Figure 3-5, and toward the center of Bayside/Joinville Park. The trees contribute strong vertical elements to the view, along with a source of varying color and texture. They mostly obscure the WWTP tanks in the right side of the view, which are bright blue and are the view’s other source of vivid color. The mound along the northern portion of the picnic area contributes a slight curvilinear component.

The visual quality of this view is moderate, which takes into account duration of exposure and visual sensitivity of park users. The trees along the picnic site’s northern border screen enough of the WWTP so that, while structures are visible, their presence does not dominate the view. Furthermore, the vegetation appears as a distinct portion of the view, functioning as a discrete buffer between a recreational area and an
industrial facility. Because of this, there is a moderate degree of visual coherence and compositional harmony in this view from an area where visual sensitivity is high.

**KOP 5—View from Residential Neighborhood West of Existing WWTP**

KOP 5 is located along Dale Avenue, east of Shoreview Avenue, approximately 0.1 mile west of the existing WWTP. This location is intended to represent views from the residential neighborhood immediately west of the WWTP Site. Figure 3-1 shows the location of KOP 5, and Figure 3-6 shows the existing view from this location.

The existing WWTP is visible from within this residential neighborhood. The digesters are visible along the left portion of the view, beyond a house and the storage facility just west of the WWTP Site. Slight portions of the existing WWTP are visible beyond the Dale Avenue parcel in the right half of the view. Aside from a fence and gate indicating its northwest corner, the majority of the Dale Avenue parcel is blocked from view in this area by vegetation and houses along the east side of Shoreview Avenue. The view is characterized visually by the single-family residential scale of development in the immediate foreground and its noticeable, industrial-appearing backdrop.

The visual quality of this view is moderate. The vegetation contributes a somewhat natural-appearing vividness, and there is a clear delineation between the view’s dominant visual feature, the single-family residences, and the existing uses visible beyond, further demarcated by the distribution tower and line extending across the view. This provides the view with a moderate degree of visual integrity, which is only slightly offset by the somewhat disharmony brought about by the visual proximity of the existing WWTP and adjacent parcel to a residential neighborhood, where visual sensitivity is high.

**KOP 6—View from San Francisco Bay Trail within Seal Point Park**

KOP 6 is located along the segment of the Bay Trail that passes through Seal Point Park, approximately 0.25 mile north of the existing WWTP. This viewpoint is located at a Bay overlook with a bench, adjacent to the Seal Point Dog Park. This location is intended to represent views toward the WWTP Site by people using the Bay Trail and approximate views from the eastern edge of the dog park. Figure 3-1 shows the location of KOP 6, and Figure 3-7 shows the existing view from this location.

Given its proximity to the WWTP Site, the view from KOP 6 maximizes the presence of the areas proposed for development to the north (Detroit Drive site) and east (Bayfront parcels) of the existing WWTP, which is visible in the right side of the view. The Bay and shoreline characterize this view in that they clearly mark the presence of relatively undeveloped land in the vicinity of the WWTP Site. However, the clear presence of the WWTP, only partially obscured by vegetation in this view, as well as the Bay Trail bridge adjacent to J. Hart Clinton Drive and the overhead transmission lines, reinforce the presence of industrial-appearing buildings and other infrastructure in the area. The view is characterized by the co-dominance of natural and built features.

The visual quality of this view is moderate. There is a moderately high degree of vividness provided by the Bay, shoreline vegetation and mature trees visible within or just north of the WWTP Site, and visual sensitivity is assumed to be high given the interest of park users and potentially high-duration views. However, the visual integrity of the view is compromised by the visible transmission lines and the overall view lacks compositional harmony because of the proximity of the existing WWTP.

**KOP 7—View from Seal Point Park Overlook**

KOP 7 affords an elevated, more expansive view from Seal Point Park. It is located at an overlook above the Bay Trail and dog park, approximately 0.3 mile north of the existing WWTP. The overlook is oriented toward the north, in an opposite direction from the WWTP Site. Visitors at the overlook would nonetheless have views toward the WWTP Site and vicinity. The inclusion of this view in this analysis allows for consideration of broader views toward the WWTP Site from within Seal Point Park. Figure 3-1 shows the location of KOP 7, and Figure 3-8 shows the existing view from this location.
This view is characterized by a confluence of uses. The park, including a trail leading downhill toward the dog park, is the lone feature visible in the immediate foreground. This area appears in front of the electrical transmission lines exiting the Bay and J. Hart Clinton Drive, which together comprise a strong linear element. Beyond this line, a variety of uses and forms is evident, from the storage facility just west of the WWTP Site to the WWTP itself, the more distant office buildings, and the distant mountain skyline.

Despite the relative expansiveness of this view, its quality is moderately low. The Bay and distant skyline are the view’s most vivid natural features, and both appear encroached upon by the transmission towers and electrical conductors from this vantage point. There is little intactness to the view due to the varying lines and forms described above. Subsequently, there is a low degree of visual coherence.

**KOP 8—View from San Francisco Bay Trail at Mariner’s Point**

KOP 8 is located along the Bay Trail at Mariner’s Point, adjacent to Mariner’s Point Golf Center, approximately 0.6 mile from the WWTP. This location is intended to represent or approximate middle-ground views of recreationists, including users of the Bay Trail, golfers, and people at the Bay (kiteboarding is active in this area) toward the WWTP Site. Figure 3-1 shows the location of KOP 8, and Figure 3-9 shows the existing view from this location.

The view from KOP 8 is characterized visually by the separation of developed area and mostly undeveloped area. A band of linear features (roads, associated infrastructure, and transmission facilities) extends across the view, separating the Bay Marsh visible in the foreground from the development that is evident, but difficult to discern, beyond the WWTP Site. The dominant presence of the wetlands in the foreground underscores the fact that the project area is within a larger shoreline area. The existing WWTP is visible in the left-center of the view, beyond and to the left of the eastern-most transmission towers.

The visual quality of this view is moderate. Despite the natural setting of the immediate foreground, the Bay Marsh presents a moderate degree of vividness, and the entire mountain skyline is encroached upon by the transmission corridor that runs along the shore. Despite that, the concentration of visible development within the view’s middle-ground provides a moderately high degree of visual integrity. Visual sensitivity at this location is high because of presumed viewers’ recreational activities.

**KOP 9—Views toward the Dale Avenue Pump Station**

KOP 9 is located at the Dale Avenue Pump Station gate off of South Norfolk Street and shows current conditions at the pump station, which exists within a residential neighborhood. The site is not publicly accessible but is visible from sidewalks and streets on both ends of the site. Structures appear at a scale consistent with surrounding residences. Setbacks and landscaping screen the majority of the facility in views from surrounding streets. This viewpoint is included to serve as a baseline for the portions of this chapter’s programmatic impact analysis that evaluates a new or expanded Dale Avenue Pump Station and potential other expanded or new pump stations in the Program Area. Figure 3-1 shows the location of KOP 9, and Figure 3-10 shows the existing view from this location.

### 3.3 Regulatory Framework

This section lists laws, ordinances, and regulations regarding aesthetics and visual resources that are directly applicable to the CWP and project(s). All such regulations are based on local guidelines; there are no applicable federal regulations regarding aesthetics or visual resources, and there are no officially designated state scenic highways or county-designated scenic routes in the vicinity of the project area.

Applicable local regulations include relevant sections of the General Plan (City of San Mateo, 2010), the *Shoreline Park Specific Plan* (City of San Mateo, 1971; revised in 1970 and 1990), and the *San Mateo City Charter and Municipal Code*, including the Zoning Ordinance (City of San Mateo, 2015).
3.3.1 General Plan – Policies and Guidance

Policies and guidance related to aesthetics and visual resources are found in the following sections of the General Plan:

- Section II, Land Use
- Section V, Urban Design
- Section VI, Conservation, Open Space, Parks and Recreation

These policies and guidance are discussed in the following sections.

3.3.1.1 General Plan – Section II, Land Use

Applicable land use (LU) and Shoreview Area-specific (PA) policies are cited below as they appear in the General Plan (City of San Mateo, 2010).

**Policy LU 1.5: Building Height.** Maintain maximum building height limits contained in Appendix C [of the General Plan], and as specified in Policy LU 6A.2, closely matched with the Land Use categories and Building Intensity standards.

Requests for height changes consistent with the height ranges for specific land uses as designated in Appendix C [of the General Plan], entitled “Building Height”, may be considered by the City Council only when accompanied by a request for change in land use designation. Such requests may be approved only if the following findings are made:

- The building has high design quality, which is enhanced by additional building height.
- Increased building heights are visually related to surrounding building heights and promote the creation of a coherent City image.
- Increased building heights will still provide for a variety of building heights in the vicinity of the project and the surrounding areas.
- Increased building heights are compatible with surrounding land uses, and will not create adverse shadow or visual impacts on surrounding residential uses.
- The City’s infrastructure is adequate to accommodate the proposed development.

Maximum height limits are intended to permit development which will not overburden the City’s infrastructure or circulation system, which is consistent with the plan's intensity/density standards and is compatible with surrounding land uses, and which will preserve, to the extent feasible, the City’s existing character. Height limits range from 25 feet to 90 feet and are contained in Appendices B and C.

**Policy LU 4.5: Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion.** Provide adequate wastewater treatment for the projected 2030 service area population, employment and development. Require that any future expansion of the Waste Water Treatment Plant (WWTP) be designed to be compatible with the adjacent parks, school, and low-density residential areas by screening views of the WWTP with extensive and tall landscaping and reducing the height of all new structures to the maximum practically feasible. Any future expansion of the WWTP shall take into account the possible rise in sea level.

**PA 4.6: J. Hart Clinton Drive/Detroit Drive Vicinity.**

1. Development of private parcels having frontage on Marina Lagoon should retain public access, providing a connection between Shoreline Park and Bayside/Joinville Park.

2. Properties bounded by Detroit Drive should be developed with low-scale, low occupancy commercial uses as delineated on the Building Height and Intensity Plans. The Shoreline Park Specific Plan allows mini-warehouse or light industry with ancillary offices and precludes hotel
and restaurant uses. Building design should be of high quality, reflective of the prominence of
the site from J. Hart Clinton Drive and the future development of Shoreline Park.

Land adjacent to Detroit Drive is highly visible from J. Hart Clinton Drive, Shoreline Park and Marina
Lagoon. To be compatible with the surrounding areas, development will be required to be
sensitively designed with ample landscaping to enhance the project appearance from J. Hart Clinton
Drive, and limited to low occupancy uses due to the adjacent sewage treatment plant.

**PA 4.7: Wastewater Treatment Plant.** Maintain the WWTP as designated in Policy LU 4.5.

In addition, Building Height Plan Figure LU-4 identifies current height limits for parcels within the WWTP
Site. Height limits are 65 feet for the existing WWTP parcel, 45 feet for the Bayfront and Detroit Drive
parcels, 32 feet for the Dale Avenue parcel, and 24 feet at the Dale Avenue Pump Station.

### 3.3.1.2 General Plan – Section V, Urban Design

Urban design refers to the physical form and development of a city from the individual neighborhood to the
overall cityscape. The Urban Design Element includes goals and policies related to the physical elements that
make up the City and its natural setting and that make up the City’s visual qualities. This element also
provides a link to the *Shoreline Park Specific Plan* (City of San Mateo, 1979) and identifies a segment of
J. Hart Clinton Drive near the WWTP Site as a City “gateway.” Applicable policies are cited below as they
appear in the General Plan:

**UD 1.2: Preservation of Natural Focal Points.** Preserve and enhance views of and access to the
foothills and the Bay through the design of new development consistent with the *Shoreline Park
Specific Plan*.

By featuring the natural amenities of the foothills and Bay, San Mateo’s identity can be
strengthened. Where possible development should orient views and access to take advantage of
these natural features.

**UD 1.3: Gateways.** Develop gateways by creating strong architectural or landscape features
exhibiting the character of San Mateo at the following locations: entrances to the Downtown, the
north and south ends of El Camino Real (State Route 92), US-101 and 3rd Avenue, US-101 and
Hillsdale Boulevard, and Mariner’s Island Boulevard and J. Hart Clinton Drive at the border of
Foster City.

By developing gateway features, the entries to the City will be identified. Gateways may be
constructed in a variety of ways: a prominent landscape or architectural feature, a notable open
area or possibly an arch to pass through. All gateways should have some common element or
feature to give San Mateo a unique and consistent image.

### 3.3.1.3 General Plan – Section VI, Conservation, Open Space, Parks and Recreation

The Conservation, Open Space, and Parks and Recreation (C/OS) Element sets forth the City’s goals and
policies regarding the development, management, and preservation of natural, cultural, and recreational
resources within the City. The C/OS Element identifies Marina Lagoon, the Bay shoreline, and the City’s
creeks and channels as areas of scenic and cultural value. The segment of the Bay Trail that passes along San
Mateo’s shoreline is identified as a scenic pedestrian trail. Although there are no state- or county-designated
scenic highways or roads within the WWTP Site, J. Hart Clinton Drive is identified in the C/OS Element as
similar to other county-designated scenic roads in the City, because it offers “views of creeks, hillsides, the
Bay, and San Francisco and East Bay skylines among other sights. Visual liabilities include inconsistent
vegetation and poorly screened development” (City of San Mateo, 2010). Within the Program Area,
Alameda de las Pulgas, Crystal Springs Road, Polhemus Road, and SR-92 are county-designated scenic
roadways. No officially designated scenic highways are located within San Mateo.
Applicable C/OS policies are cited below as they appear in the General Plan.

**C/OS 2.1: Aesthetic and Habitat Values: Public Creeks.** Preserve and enhance the aesthetic and habitat values of San Mateo, Laurel, and Beresford creeks and other City-owned channels in all activities affecting these creeks.

**C/OS 2.2: Aesthetic and Habitat Values: Private Creeks.** Preserve and enhance the aesthetic and habitat values of privately-owned sections of all other creeks and channels, as shown in Figure C/OS-2, whenever cost-effective or whenever these values outweigh economic considerations.

San Mateo, Laurel, and Beresford creeks have been identified as having significant natural values. Policy 2.1 directs that aesthetic and habitat considerations be a part of all activities affecting these creeks; revegetation, erosion control, and adequate setbacks are among the possible actions. Further, while other City-owned channels have not been considered as providing much scenic or wildlife opportunities, significant potential exists; Policy 2.1 directs that these values be a part of channel management. Other creeks that cross through private property are worthy of protection and enhancement; implementation of such measures is promoted by Policy 2.2 with consideration of cost in the development process.

**C/OS 9.1: Development Requirements.** Require new developments to protect and enhance the character of scenic roadways and trails designated on Figure C/OS-4, including but not limited to treatment of signs and screening, land uses, and preservation of view corridors.

New development or redevelopment on parcels adjacent to scenic roadways or trails is an opportunity for design which protects the existing scenic qualities of the roadway or improves on those qualities. Policy 9.1 directs that developments avoid or mitigate adverse visual impacts which might be created particularly by grading, signage, and heights above the ridgeline.

### 3.3.2 The Shoreline Park Specific Plan

The *Shoreline Park Specific Plan* (City of San Mateo, 1979) provides a conceptual guide for the future of the City’s shoreline. The WWTP Site is located within the plan’s Area 3: Seal Cove. Allowed land uses in the *Shoreline Park Specific Plan* are discussed in Chapter 11.

### 3.3.3 City of San Mateo Zoning Ordinance

The Zoning Ordinance (Title 27 in the *City of San Mateo City Charter and Municipal Code* [Municipal Code] [City of San Mateo, 2015]), provides standards for the physical development of the City. Section 27.08.030 of the Zoning Ordinance establishes the City’s SPAR process. The SPAR process is required for, among other development, any building; new parking lot; fence greater than 6 feet high; or an extension, alteration, or addition of or to an existing building or parking lot. In making its review, the Zoning Administrator, Development Review Board, and Planning Commission are guided by the standards adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council.

As specified in the Zoning Ordinance, the application shall be approved if the Zoning Administrator or Commission finds all of the following to exist:

1. The structures, site plan, and landscaping are in scale and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood;
2. The development will not be detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the City;
3. The development will not impair the desirability of investment or occupation in the vicinity, and otherwise is in the best interests of the public health, safety, or welfare;
4. The development meets all applicable standards as adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council, conforms with the General Plan, and will correct any violations of the Zoning Ordinance, building code, or other municipal codes that exist on the site;

5. The development will not adversely affect matters regarding police protection, crime prevention, and security.

All buildings, structures, landscaping, and other establishments shall be constructed in accordance with the approved drawings. The City Council shall review and make the final determination on all buildings exceeding 55 feet in height or where required by express General Plan provisions.

Chapter 27.59 of the Zoning Ordinance describes requirements for and restrictions on land use and development in the Shoreline District, which encompasses the Shoreline Park Specific Plan area. The Shoreline Zoning District is further described in Chapter 11.

Chapter 27.74 of the Zoning Ordinance describes the requirements for special use permits. The zoning code identifies permitted uses for each land use type in the City. In addition, the Zoning Ordinance recognizes that other uses may be necessary or desirable in a given district and may influence neighboring uses or public facilities. For the protection of the community, these uses need to be carefully regulated with respect to location or operation. Such uses are classified as “special uses.” Chapter 11 includes additional information about permitted uses and uses allowed under special use permits.

Chapter 27.06 of the Zoning Ordinance notes that “[e]very project which is fully or partially funded by the City and which is subject to Planning Commission review under 27.06.040” requires final approval by the City Council (city of San Mateo, 2015). These approvals include special use permits, SPAR, and Site Development Permits.

3.3.4 City of San Mateo Development Permit

Chapter 23.40 of the Municipal Code was adopted in part to preserve the natural scenic character of the City and maximize visually pleasant relationships with adjacent sites during development activities, including grading and removal of major vegetation. Based on the quantity of gradient, a site development permit is required for site development on private property and may also be used for review of public projects that require a planning application and public review. A permit would include requirements such as slope setback.

3.4 Assessment Methods and Thresholds of Significance

Based on existing conditions within the Program Area and WWTP Site, and on proposed activities summarized in this chapter and detailed in Chapter 2, potential impacts on aesthetic and visual resources were identified and compared to CEQA criteria for thresholds of significance. These criteria state that impacts on aesthetic resources may occur if the CWP would result in the following:

- A substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista
- Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historical buildings within a state scenic highway
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare

Potential impacts and corresponding mitigation measures developed to reduce any identified impacts are identified in the following sections.

3.5 Environmental Impacts

Potential impacts are evaluated for each of the two Program alternatives (In-System Storage Program and Full Conveyance Program) and two projects evaluated at a project level of detail (New Headworks Project
and Primary Clarifier Project). As previously discussed, the analysis of environmental impacts is primarily concerned with the introduction of permanent, potentially visible features into the existing environment.

The analysis is based on the assumptions that none of the proposed WWTP projects would be taller than the tallest structures within the existing WWTP (the digesters are 62 feet tall) and that all new development would adhere to height limits that apply to various locations. Similarly, no new or expanded aboveground pump station structures would be taller than structures at the existing Dale Avenue Pump Station (see Figure 3-10).

Table 3-1 summarizes the impacts identified and their impact after mitigation, where applicable.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>In-System Storage Program</th>
<th>Full Conveyance Program</th>
<th>New Headworks Project</th>
<th>Primary Clarifier Project</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Impact 3-1 The CWP would have a potentially substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact 3-2. The CWP would not damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway.</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>No impact</td>
<td>No impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact 3-3. The CWP would have the potential to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact 3-4. The CWP would have the potential to create a new source of substantial light or glare.</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
<td>Less than significant impact with mitigation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Impact 3-1. The CWP would have a potentially substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.**

**In-System Storage Program**

The In-System Storage Program would include modification of existing and construction of new WWTP facilities at the WWTP Site, as described in Chapter 2. New aboveground facilities described in Sections 2.2.2.1 through 2.2.2.3 may include a headworks, primary clarifier, secondary treatment tanks, tertiary filtration facilities, pump and mechanical buildings, chemical storage buildings, odor control equipment, and administrative offices. These facilities would be constructed within the WWTP Site, likely on the Detroit Drive parcel. Modification of existing facilities includes repair and rehabilitation of equipment such as pumps and blowers, as described in Section 2.2.2.4. Most of these projects would be completed inside existing structures. In addition, existing facilities such as primary and secondary clarifiers no longer required following construction of new facilities may be demolished and removed to provide room for other new structures. Some existing facilities may be re-purposed for other uses, such as converting the existing aeration basins to equalization storage.

There are no officially designated scenic vistas toward the WWTP Site. However, there are viewpoint locations that provide expansive, relatively long-distance (vista) views, within which the WWTP Site is visible. The views from KOP 2, KOP 7 and KOP 8 represent such views, and the WWTP Site is visible to varying degrees in each. These KOPs are discussed individually below.
**KOP 2**

KOP 2 provides a vista from Bayside/Joinville Park within which the WWTP Site is visible. In-System Storage Program alterations and additions at or adjacent to the existing WWTP would be apparent in this vista. Because the In-System Storage Program could include any number of industrial-appearing structures similar to existing WWTP structures, none of which would be taller than the tallest existing WWTP structure, the change in view from KOP 2 would not be substantially adverse. New structures could partially encroach on views toward segments of the distant skyline. This would reduce the integrity of the existing view but not substantially so; views of Marina Lagoon would remain unobstructed.

**KOP 7**

KOP 7 provides a vista from the Seal Point Park overlook, within which the WWTP Site is visible. In-system storage alterations and additions at or adjacent to the existing WWTP would be apparent in this vista. In addition, General Plan Policy UD 1.2 directs the preservation and enhancement of views of and access to the foothills and the Bay through the design of new development consistent with the *Shoreline Park Specific Plan* (City of San Mateo, 1979). However, because of the elevated viewing location, any construction of new or modified WWTP facilities would be visually absorbed into the surrounding built environment. In addition, new or modified facilities constructed as part of the In-System Storage Program would be industrial-appearing structures similar to existing WWTP structures, none of which would be taller than the tallest existing WWTP structure. The change in view from KOP 7 would not be substantially adverse.

**KOP 8**

KOP 8 provides a vista from the Bay Trail along Mariner’s Point within which the WWTP Site is visible. In-System Storage Program alterations and additions at or adjacent to the existing WWTP would be apparent in this vista. In addition, General Plan Policy UD 1.2 directs the preservation and enhancement of views of and access to the foothills and the Bay through the design of new development consistent with the *Shoreline Park Specific Plan* (City of San Mateo, 1979). The Conservation, Open Space, and Parks and Recreation chapter of the General Plan identifies the Bay Trail as a scenic pedestrian trail. However, because of the distance, any construction of new or modified WWTP facilities would be visually absorbed into the surrounding built environment. In addition, new or modified facilities constructed as part of the Full Conveyance Program would be industrial-appearing structures similar to existing WWTP structures, none of which would be taller than the tallest existing WWTP structure. The change in view from KOP 8 would not be substantially adverse. Although effects of the In-System Storage Program on scenic vistas would be expected to be less than significant, implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-1 Obtain design review approval would further reduce impacts on scenic vistas in the proximity of the WWTP Site. Mitigation Measure 3-1 includes landscaping that partially screens the new facilities and design of new facilities that is consistent with City policies and objectives for this type of use within the shoreline area.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-1, impacts on scenic vistas resulting from the In-System Storage Program would be less than significant.

**Full Conveyance Program**

The Full Conveyance Program would include modification of existing and construction of new WWTP facilities at the WWTP Site, as described for the In-System Storage Program. The Full Conveyance Program alternative would include the same or similar WWTP facilities as the In-System Storage Program alternative, with potential minor differences in the size or location within the WWTP Site. The views from KOP 2, KOP 7, and KOP 8 represent expansive, relatively long-distance (vista) views of the WWTP Site for the Full Conveyance Program. The effect of the Full Conveyance Program on scenic vistas would, therefore, appear very similar to the effects described for KOP 2, KOP 7, and KOP 8 under the In-System Storage Program alternative.

Although effects of the Full Conveyance Program on scenic vistas would be expected to be less than significant, implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-1 Obtain design review approval would further reduce
impacts on scenic vistas in the proximity of the WWTP Site. **Mitigation Measure 3.1** includes landscaping that partially screens the new facilities and design of new facilities that is consistent with City policies and objectives for this type of use within the shoreline area.

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure 3-1**, impacts on scenic vistas resulting from the Full Conveyance Program would be less than significant.

**New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project**

The New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would be located on the WWTP Site. These projects are described in Section 2.2.2.2. The new headworks would consist of a structure to house screening, grit removal, flow measurement, screenings compaction and handling, and flow splitter structure to divert flows to the next step of treatment. The new headworks could be partially or completely enclosed. It may be a two-story facility, with the treatment and flow splitting functions located on the top level, and the screening and grit management units on the lower level. The primary clarifier would include construction of new primary sedimentation tanks and associated equipment. The primary clarifiers may be similar in construction to the existing primary clarifiers (see Figure 2-11) and could have a rectangular or circular footprint. The primary clarifiers would be covered.

Both projects would be included in the Full Conveyance Program and the In-System Storage Program. The views from KOP 2, KOP 7, and KOP 8 represent expansive, relatively long-distance (vista) views of the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project. The effects of these projects on scenic vistas would, therefore, appear very similar to the effects previously described for KOP 2, KOP 7, and KOP 8 under the In-System Storage Program alternative, but would represent only a portion of the effects on scenic vistas that would be associated with either Program alternative. Structures associated with the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would similarly appear absorbed into their industrial-appearing surroundings in vista views from the surrounding area.

Although effects of the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project on scenic vistas would be expected to be less than significant, implementation of **Mitigation Measure 3-1 Obtain design review approval** would further reduce any impacts on scenic vistas in the proximity of the WWTP Site.

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure 3-1**, impacts on scenic vistas resulting from the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would be less than significant.

**Impact 3-2. The CWP would potentially damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway.**

The impact analysis below considers effects on scenic resources within state scenic highways as well as county-designated scenic roadways. While not officially designated as a scenic roadway, J. Hart Clinton Drive is identified in the Conservation, Open Space and Parks and Recreation chapter of the General Plan as being similar to other county-designated scenic roads in the City, because it offers views of creeks, hillsides, the Bay, and San Francisco and East Bay skylines. Furthermore, both General Plan Policy PA 4.6 and the Shoreline Park Specific Plan (City of San Mateo, 1979) identify J. Hart Clinton Drive as a scenic, if undesignated, route within the City, and a segment of the road near the project area functions as a gateway to the City. Effects on views from J. Hart Clinton Drive are addressed in the analysis related to Impact 3-3, which assesses potential impacts on existing visual character and quality.

**In-System Storage Program**

There are no officially designated state scenic highways in the City of San Mateo. In addition, although county-designated roads have been identified within the Program Area, these roadways are generally located in the western half of the Program Area; the WWTP Site and the aboveground structures would not be visible from these roadways. The only projects to be implemented within the vicinity of county-designated scenic roadways as part of the In-System Storage Program are new or replacement pipeline projects. No new permanent aboveground structures would be constructed within view of county-designated scenic roadways.
Therefore, no impacts on state scenic highways or county-designated scenic roadways would occur from implementation of the In-System Storage Program. No mitigation is required.

**Full Conveyance Program**

There are no officially designated state scenic highways in San Mateo. In addition, although county-designated roads have been identified within the Program Area, they are generally located in the western half of the Program Area; the WWTP Site and the aboveground structures would not be visible from these roadways. The only projects to be implemented within the vicinity of county-designated scenic roadways as part of the Full Conveyance Program are new or replacement pipeline projects. No new permanent aboveground structures would be constructed within view of county-designated scenic roadways.

Therefore, no impacts on state scenic highways or county-designated scenic roadways would occur from implementation of the Full Conveyance Program. No mitigation is required.

**New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project**

There are no officially designated state scenic highways in San Mateo. In addition, although county-designated roads have been identified within the Program Area, they are generally located in the western half of the Program Area; the WWTP Site, where the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would be located, would not be visible from these roadways.

Therefore, no impacts on state scenic highways or county-designated scenic roadways would occur from implementation of the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project. No mitigation is required.

**Impact 3-3. The CWP would have the potential to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.**

**In-System Storage Program**

Nearly all aboveground permanent structures that would be constructed as part of the In-System Storage Program would be located at the WWTP Site. The only permanent aboveground structures that would be expected to be constructed outside the WWTP Site are minor appurtenances such as access hatches and vents associated with in-system equalization basins and pump station modifications. As discussed previously, views toward the WWTP Site are characterized by the industrial appearance of the existing WWTP, which is partially to completely obscured by vegetation on adjacent properties. General Plan Policy LU 4.5, General Plan Policy LU 4.5, the Shoreline Park Specific Plan (City of San Mateo, 1979), and the Zoning Ordinance collectively require screening of views of the WWTP Site with extensive and tall landscaping, minimum feasible heights of new structures, sensitively designed and landscaped new buildings if visible from J. Hart Clinton Drive, and architectural review through the City’s SPAR process.

In broader and more distant views toward the WWTP Site, the WWTP appears to be mostly in an area of development that is visible alongside several other uses including linear infrastructure (roads and a substantial transmission line corridor), residential development, parks, and natural-appearing shoreline features. Views toward the WWTP Site are generally of moderate visual quality. The construction of WWTP facilities as part of the In-System Storage Program would increase the presence of the WWTP in these views, intensifying the industrial character of views and potentially somewhat degrading the visual quality of the site.

This effect would be more pronounced from the closer KOPs where views toward the WWTP Site and potential expansion sites are at least partially unobstructed. Effects on visual character in specific KOPs are described below.

**KOP 1**

In the view from KOP 1, up to the entire area visible in front of and to the right of the existing WWTP could be occupied by new facilities that could firmly establish the visual character in the view as industrial in appearance. Visibility of a substantial portion of the distant mountain skyline could be partially to
completely obstructed by the new structures, which would expand the WWTP footprint into the Detroit Drive Parcel, which is more proximate to KOP 1 than the existing facilities. Visual quality would be somewhat reduced as a result of this expansion and increased visibility of WWTP facilities, primarily because the proportion of natural features in the close-in views would decrease compared with the presence of built facilities.

**KOP 2**
In the view from KOP 2, some or all of the area between the existing WWTP in the left edge of the view and the J. Hart Clinton Drive bridge over Marina Lagoon in the right edge of the view would be occupied by new structures. The visual character in the view could be firmly established as industrial in appearance. The distant mountain skyline, already partially blocked by existing vegetation, would likely be completely obscured when the complete In-System Storage Program is constructed.

**KOP 3 and KOP 4**
The views from KOP 3 and KOP 4 demonstrate the degree to which views of proposed changes to the WWTP Site would be limited from points south of the existing WWTP, including Bayside/Joinville Park, Bayside STEM Academy, and Bayside Performing Arts Center. Mature trees and existing structures block most views toward the WWTP Site. In the view from KOP 3, the southern edge of the Bayfront parcels is visible, and structures placed in this area as part of the In-System Storage Program would be visible but would be similar to the existing visual character and quality of the view. In the view from KOP 4, WWTP buildings within its southern edge are mostly screened by mature trees of varying size and color. With the In-System Storage Program, most new structures would be constructed on Detroit Drive parcel north of the existing WWTP and may not be visible from KOP 3 or KOP 4.

**KOP 5**
No permanent aboveground structures, other than minor appurtenances such as trails or access to underground storage basins, would be constructed on the Dale Avenue parcel. New facilities constructed on the existing WWTP parcel could be visible above the tree line. However, most facilities would be lower in height than the existing digesters (62 feet) and visible to the left of this KOP. New facilities on the Detroit Drive or Bayfront parcels are unlikely to be visible from KOP 5.

**KOP 6**
In the view from KOP 6, the area visible in front of and to the left of the existing WWTP, extending to the area near the west end of the J. Hart Clinton Drive bridge over Marina Lagoon, would appear partially or completely occupied by new structures. The In-System Storage Program could firmly establish the visual character in the view as industrial in appearance. Visual quality would be somewhat reduced, primarily because the proportion of natural features in the close-in views would decrease compared with the presence of built facilities.

**KOP 7**
In this more distant view from Seal Point Park, the visual character is defined more by the foreground presence of natural open space or park lands, beyond which the WWTP Site is visible. The WWTP Site would be visible from this location, assuming existing vegetation would not impede views. Given the broader context, the transmission corridor and mountain backdrop, and the development of varying scales visible throughout San Mateo and Foster City, the construction or modification of new WWTP facilities would be noticeable but would only reiterate the existing visual character within the WWTP Site. The existing visual quality from KOP 7 ranges from moderately low to moderate. New WWTP facilities would be limited to the area immediately in front of the currently visible WWTP structure and would not substantially affect the quality of the view beyond increasing the presence of the WWTP among the relatively wide range of structures visible.
**KOP 8**
In this more distant view from Mariner’s Point, the visual character is defined more by the foreground presence of natural open space or park lands, beyond which the WWTP Site is visible. The WWTP Site would be visible from this location, assuming existing vegetation would not impede views. Given the broader context, the transmission corridor and mountain backdrop, and the Bay marsh and prominent linear presence of J. Hart Clinton Drive, the construction or modification of new WWTP facilities would be noticeable but would only reiterate the existing visual character within the WWTP Site. The existing visual quality from KOP 8 ranges from moderately low to moderate, and the degree to which the WWTP facilities would expand would not substantially affect the quality of the view beyond increasing the presence of the WWTP among the relatively wide range of structures visible.

**KOP 9**
New aboveground structures, if any, that could be constructed as part of pump station projects for the In-System Storage Program would be similar in appearance to and no larger than the existing structures at the Dale Avenue Pump Station and would not be expected to affect local visual character.

Implementation of **Mitigation Measure 3-1 Obtain design review approval**, **Mitigation Measure 3-3a Design lighting to minimize impacts on adjacent areas**, and **Mitigation Measure 3-3b Provide glare-reducing structure surface painting and treatment** would reduce the potential impact of the In-System Storage Program on visual character and quality at the WWTP Site to less-than-significant levels. The mitigation measure would provide at least partial screening by landscaping, consistent with current screening of the WWTP, and context-appropriate design of any new facilities.

With implementation of **Mitigation Measure 3-1**, **Mitigation Measure 3-3a**, and **Mitigation Measure 3-3b**, impacts on visual character or quality resulting from the In-System Storage Program would be less than significant.

**Full Conveyance Program**

*KOP 1 through KOP 8*
The Full Conveyance Program would include modification of existing and construction of new WWTP facilities at the WWTP Site as described in Chapter 2. The Full Conveyance Program alternative would include the same or similar WWTP facilities as the In-System Storage Program alternative, with potential minor differences in the size or location within the WWTP Site. For example, the new headworks for the Full Conveyance Program may require up to approximately 25 percent more capacity, resulting in a structure with up to an approximately 10 percent larger footprint compared to the In-System Storage Program. A similar difference could occur with the new primary clarifier. Depending on the size of the facilities for the Full Conveyance Program and the location of its additional equalization storage within the WWTP Site, the WWTP with the Full Conveyance Program could have a different layout than the In-System Storage Program.

The effect of the Full Conveyance Program on visual character and quality would, therefore, appear very similar to the effects previously described for KOP 1 through KOP 8 for the In-System Storage Program alternative. In particular, for KOP 1, KOP 2, and KOP 6, the Full Conveyance Program could firmly establish the visual character in the views as industrial in appearance. Visual quality would be somewhat reduced, primarily because the proportion of natural features in the close-in views would decrease compared with the presence of built facilities.

*KOP 9*
The Full Conveyance Program would include a new pump station at the Dale Avenue Pump Station site, visible in KOP 9. The new pump station would include aboveground structures similar in size and appearance to those currently visible on the pump station site. Development at the Dale Avenue Pump Station of this scope and scale would have a less-than-significant effect on existing visual character and quality of the site. Likewise, new aboveground structures, if any, that could be constructed as part of other pump station
projects in the Program Area would be similar in appearance to and no larger than the existing structures at the Dale Avenue Pump Station and would not be expected to affect local visual character.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-1 Obtain design review approval, Mitigation Measure 3-3a Design lighting to minimize impacts on adjacent areas, and Mitigation Measure 3-3b Provide glare-reducing structure surface painting and treatment would reduce the potential impact of the Full Conveyance Program on visual character and quality at the WWTP Site to less-than-significant levels. The mitigation measure would provide at least partial screening by landscaping, consistent with current screening of the WWTP, and context-appropriate design of any new facilities.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-1, Mitigation Measure 3-3a, and Mitigation Measure 3-3b, impacts on visual character or quality resulting from the Full Conveyance Program would be less than significant.

**New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project**

**KOP 1 through KOP 8**

The New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would be constructed in the WWTP Site, likely on the Detroit Drive parcel. These facilities would be expected to be lower in height than the highest structures currently on the WWTP Site (62 feet). Because these projects would be constructed as part of either the In-System Storage Program or the Full Conveyance Program, they would contribute to the change in visual character previously described for both Program alternatives but to a lesser degree than full CWP buildout. Construction of the New Headworks Project and the Primary Clarifier Project would further establish the visual character in views as industrial in appearance. Visual quality would be somewhat reduced, primarily because the proportion of natural features in the close-in views would decrease compared with the presence of built facilities. These changes would be most noticeable in KOP 1 and KOP 6, where the projects would likely be constructed between the viewer and the existing digesters visible in both views. The New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would not be expected to be visible from KOP 3 or KOP 4.

**KOP 9**

The New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project do not include any construction or alteration at the Dale Avenue Pump Station site. Neither project would change the visual character at this location.

The New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would be subject to the design standards applied to either Program alternative. Therefore, Mitigation Measure 3-1 Obtain design review approval, Mitigation Measure 3-3a Design lighting to minimize impacts on adjacent areas, and Mitigation Measure 3-3b Provide glare-reducing structure surface painting and treatment would be implemented for the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project and would reduce the potential impact of these projects on visual character and quality at the WWTP Site to less-than-significant levels. The mitigation measure would provide at least partial screening by landscaping, consistent with current screening of the WWTP, and context-appropriate design of any new facilities.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-1, Mitigation Measure 3-3a, and Mitigation Measure 3-3b, impacts on visual character or quality resulting from the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would be less than significant.

**Impact 3-4. The CWP would have the potential to create a new source of substantial light or glare.**

**In-System Storage Program**

Construction of the In-System Storage Program may on occasion require nighttime work at the WWTP Site to accommodate necessary partial shutdowns of the existing WWTP. Although nighttime work would be short term, it would require lighting that creates negative effects in nearby residential areas.

Implementation of the In-System Storage Program would place new structures on the Detroit Drive parcel where none currently exist. Operational and safety requirements would likely require that night lighting be
installed on new buildings and facilities. This could result in increased ambient night light at the WWTP Site. In addition, the industrial-appearing structures to be constructed as part of the In-System Storage Program could create new sources of daytime glare in views from nearby residences or recreational areas, as well as from nearby roads.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-3a Design lighting to minimize impacts on adjacent areas would require that any new source of light associated with the In-System Storage Program—during both the construction and operational phases—is oriented so that it is contained to the facility and that “spillover” into adjacent parcels is minimized. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-3b Provide glare-reducing structure surface painting and treatment would require that materials used for construction of all In-system Program facilities would not, to the extent feasible, provide new sources of substantial glare.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-3a and Mitigation Measure 3-3b, impacts caused by new sources of light or glare resulting from implementation of the In-System Storage Program would be less than significant.

**Full Conveyance Program**

Construction of the Full Conveyance Program may on occasion require nighttime work at the WWTP Site to accommodate necessary partial shutdowns of the existing WWTP. Although nighttime work would be short-term, it would require lighting that create negative effects in nearby residential areas.

Implementation of the Full Conveyance Program would place new structures on the Detroit Drive parcel where none currently exist. Operational and safety requirements would likely require that night lighting be installed on new buildings and facilities. This could result in increased ambient night light at the WWTP Site. In addition, construction of the new pump station at the Dale Avenue Pump Station site would include permanent aboveground structures that may include night lighting for operational and safety requirements.

The industrial-appearing structures to be constructed as part of the Full Conveyance Program could create new sources of daytime glare in views from nearby residences or recreational areas, as well as from nearby roads.

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-3a Design lighting to minimize impacts on adjacent areas would require that any new source of light associated with the Full Conveyance Program during the construction and operational phases is oriented so that it is contained by the facility and that “spillover” into adjacent parcels is minimized. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-3b Provide glare-reducing structure surface painting and treatment would require that materials used for construction of all Full Conveyance Program facilities would not, to the extent feasible, provide new sources of substantial glare.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-3a and Mitigation Measure 3-3b, impacts caused by new sources of light or glare resulting from implementation of the Full Conveyance Program would be less than significant.

**New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project**

Construction of the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project may on occasion require nighttime work at the WWTP Site to accommodate necessary partial shutdowns of the existing WWTP. Although nighttime work would be short term, it would require lighting that create negative effects in nearby residential areas.

Operational and safety requirements would likely require that night lighting be installed on the New Headworks and Primary Clarifier. This could result in increased ambient night light at the WWTP Site.

The New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project could include light-colored and reflective surfaces such as concrete and metal that could create new sources of daytime glare in views from nearby residences or recreational areas, as well as from nearby roads.
Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-3a Design lighting to minimize impacts on adjacent areas would require that any new source of light associated with the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project during the construction and operational phases is oriented so that it is contained by the facility and that “spillover” into adjacent parcels is minimized. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-3b Provide glare-reducing structure surface painting and treatment would require that materials used for construction of the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would not, to the extent feasible, provide new sources of substantial glare.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure 3-3a and Mitigation Measure 3-3b, impacts caused by new sources of light or glare resulting from implementation of the New Headworks Project and Primary Clarifier Project would be less than significant.

3.6 Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures, identified in the previous section, would, if fully implemented, reduce any identified potential impacts on aesthetic and visual resources to a less-than-significant level.

Mitigation Measure 3-1. Obtain design review approval.

Projects at the WWTP, the new Dale Avenue Pump Station, and the in-system storage basin, and other projects that meet the requirements of Title 27.08.030 of the Zoning Ordinance, shall undergo the City’s SPAR process. It is expected that the design review would be done on a project-by-project basis. All projects reviewed through the SPAR process shall be constructed in accordance with approved drawings and, as applicable, special use permit conditions. Design and landscaping for projects at the WWTP Site shall be done consistent with an architectural basis of design to provide coherent materials use and finishes, design features, and landscaping that support an overall design theme and identity. The City Council would review and make the final determination on all buildings exceeding 55 feet in height or as required by the General Plan.

SPAR approval shall be provided by the Planning Commission and City Council. Findings by the Planning Commission and City Council shall include, among others, the following:

- The structures, site plan, and landscaping are in scale and harmonious with the character of the neighborhood.
- The development will not be detrimental to the harmonious and orderly growth of the City.
- The development will not impair the desirability of investment or occupation in the vicinity, and otherwise is in the best interests of the public health, safety, or welfare.
- The development meets all applicable standards as adopted by the Planning Commission and City Council, conforms to the General Plan, and will correct any violations of the Zoning Ordinance, building code, or other municipal codes that exist on the site.
- The development will not adversely affect matters regarding police protection, crime prevention, and security.

Mitigation Measure 3-3a. Design lighting to minimize impacts on adjacent areas.

Construction Lighting. Prior to site mobilization, the construction manager shall confirm that lighting for construction of WWTP facilities is used in a manner that minimizes potential night lighting impacts, as follows:

a) All lighting shall be of minimum necessary brightness consistent with worker safety.

b) All fixed position lighting shall be shielded, hooded, and directed downward to minimize backscatter to the night sky and prevent light trespass (direct lighting extending outside the boundaries of the construction area).
c) Where feasible and safe, lighting shall be turned off when not in use, and motion detectors shall be used.

d) A lighting complaint resolution form shall be maintained by construction management to record all lighting complaints received and to document the resolution of that complaint.

e) All construction related lighting shall be completely shielded or screened so it is not visible to residents east and south of the WWTP with direct views of the site.

Project Operation Lighting. Prior to the start of operation of each new facility, the construction contractor shall design and install new permanent lighting for the facility such that: light bulbs and reflectors are not visible from public viewing areas; lighting does not cause reflected glare; and illumination of the project, the vicinity, and the nighttime sky is minimized. To meet these requirements, the City or its design contractor shall confirm the following:

a) Lighting shall be designed so exterior light fixtures are hooded, with lights directed downward or toward the area to be illuminated and so that backscatter to the nighttime sky is minimized. The design of the lighting shall be such that the luminescence or light source is shielded to prevent light trespass outside the facility boundary.

b) All lighting shall be of minimum necessary brightness consistent with worker safety.

c) Where feasible and safe, lighting shall be kept off when not in use.

d) A lighting complaint resolution form shall be used by WWTP operations to record all lighting complaints received and document the resolution of those complaints. All records of lighting complaints shall be kept in the onsite compliance file.

Mitigation Measure 3-3b. Provide glare-reducing structure surface painting and treatment.

New or altered structures visible to the public shall be painted or treated such that their colors minimize visual intrusion and contrast by blending with the landscape; their surfaces do not create glare; and they are consistent with local laws, ordinances, regulations, and standards.

Prior to the start of construction that would be visible to the public, the construction contractor shall submit a structure surface painting and treatment plan into the City’s SPAR process, as specified in Title 27.08.030 of the City’s Zoning Ordinance (City of San Mateo, 2015), and to specifications established during the SPAR process. The treatment plan shall include all information required by the SPAR process, including the following:

a) Specification of the treatment proposed for use on individual project structures, including structures treated during manufacture.

b) A list of each major project structure specifying the color(s) and finish proposed for each (colors must be identified by name and by vendor brand or a universal designation).

c) A procedure to maintain proper painting and treatment for the life of the project.

3.7 References


KOP 1 — View to the southwest from the Bay Trail alongside J. Hart Clinton Drive. The existing WWTP is visible in the left of the view.
KOP 2 – View to the northwest from the pedestrian and bicycle bridge in Bayside/Joinville Park. The existing WWTP is visible in the left of the view.

FIGURE 3-3
KOP 02
Programmatic Environmental Impact Report
City of San Mateo Clean Water Program
KOP 3 – View to the northwest from within Joinville Park, near a residential neighborhood.
KOP 4 - View to the northwest from KOP 4, located alongside the picnic area within Joinville Park. WWTP structures are mostly screened in views from this location.

FIGURE 3-5
KOP 04
Programmatic Environmental Impact Report
City of San Mateo Clean Water Program
FIGURE 3-6
KOP 05
Programmatic Environmental Impact Report
City of San Mateo Clean Water Program

KOP 5 – View to the east from Dale Avenue, just west of the Dale Avenue parcel. An existing WWTP digester is visible along the left edge of the view.
FIGURE 3-7
KOP 06
Programmatic Environmental Impact Report
City of San Mateo Clean Water Program

KOP 6 – View to the south east from the Bay Trail within Seal Point Park, near Seal Point Dog Park. The existing WWTP is visible in the right of the view.
FIGURE 3-8
KOP 07
Programmatic Environmental Impact Report
City of San Mateo Clean Water Program

KOP 7 – View to the southeast from the elevated bay overlook within Seal Point Park. The existing WWTP is visible in the right of the view.
KOP 8 — View to the southwest from the Bay Trail along Mariners Point. The existing WWTP is in the center of the view.

FIGURE 3-9
KOP 08
Programmatic Environmental Impact Report
City of San Mateo Clean Water Program
FIGURE 3-10
KOP 09
Programmatic Environmental Impact Report
City of San Mateo Clean Water Program

KOP 9 - View of Dale Avenue Pump Station from its eastern boundary.