

1 **4.11 AESTHETICS**

2 Redevelopment would result in substantial benefits to the aesthetic environment, as well as less  
3 than significant, potentially significant, and one significant impact to aesthetic resources. With  
4 implementation of measures recommended in this section, the potentially significant impacts  
5 would be mitigated to a level that is less than significant. Even with implementation of all  
6 feasible mitigation, however, one residual impact—related to the loss of cultural resources  
7 contributing to the aesthetic character of the area—would remain significant; that impact is  
8 considered unavoidable. The physical loss of cultural resources and mitigation proposed for  
9 such loss is further disclosed and discussed in Section 4.6: Cultural Resources.

10 **4.11.1 Study Area**

11 The study area for analysis of aesthetics encompasses important views from the redevelopment  
12 project area, as well as areas with views of the project area. From the project area, this includes  
13 views toward the Bay and the Bay Bridge; toward the project area, it includes relatively short-  
14 term views from I-880, I-80 (the Bay Bridge), planned trail and open space areas, and long-term  
15 views from residences located along Wood Street.

16 **4.11.2 Regulatory Setting**

17 **Federal**

18 There are no federal regulations regarding visual resources relevant to the proposed  
19 redevelopment program.

20 **State**

21 **California State Scenic Highways Program.** Sections 260 through 283 of the California Street  
22 and Highways Code describe the California Scenic Highways Program. This program is  
23 intended to not only encourage and recognize beauty in the design of specific facilities, but to  
24 also protect the appearance of the “complete highway,” or the scenic corridor, defined as both  
25 the roadway itself plus the land generally adjacent to the highway right-of-way. The Code states  
26 that standards for protection of official scenic highways shall require local agencies to take such  
27 actions as may be necessary to protect the scenic corridor, including but not limited to the  
28 following:

- 29 • regulate land use and development density;
- 30 • require detailed land and site planning;
- 31 • control outdoor advertising; and
- 32 • pay careful attention to and control earthmoving and landscaping as well as the  
33 design and appearance of structures and equipment.

1 While the Code identifies many highway segments as part of the program, they are only  
2 designated an “official scenic highway” by the California Department of Transportation once  
3 they meet the state scenic highway standards established by Caltrans, including the concept of  
4 the complete highway. Once a highway is officially designated, Caltrans places and maintains  
5 signage indicating the official status of the roadway.

6 The State Scenic Highway System includes I-80/I-580 from I-280 in San Francisco to State  
7 Route 61 in Oakland, including the Bay Bridge immediately north of the redevelopment project  
8 area. Only the I-580 portion from the MacArthur maze to SR-61, however, is a state-designated  
9 Scenic Highway.

10 **San Francisco Bay Plan.** That portion of the study area within 100 feet of the Bay shoreline is  
11 subject to the policies of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission. The McAteer-  
12 Petris Act directs BCDC to exert its land use authority (among other authorities) within its  
13 jurisdiction, and BCDC does so in part through preparation and implementation of the *San*  
14 *Francisco Bay Plan* (BCDC 1968, as amended through 2001). See Section 4.1: Consistency  
15 with Plans and Policies, for discussion of Bay Plan policies. The Bay Plan addresses visual  
16 access to the Bay, among other issues. The Bay Plan makes the following findings regarding  
17 aesthetics:

18 *....the appearance of the Bay and people’s enjoyment of it as a scenic resource*  
19 *contribute to the enjoyment of daily life in the Bay Area....Probably the most*  
20 *widely enjoyed “use” of the Bay is simply viewing it....As a world renowned*  
21 *scenic resource, the Bay is viewed and appreciated from many locations....*  
22 (BCDC 1968, as amended through 2001)

23 **Local**

24 The *Scenic Highways* Element of the Oakland Comprehensive Plan (the precursor of the  
25 General Plan, City of Oakland 1974) designates as a scenic route I-80/I-580 across the Bay  
26 Bridge and eastward for its entire length through Oakland. The *Scenic Highways* Element  
27 recognizes the visual setting from I-80/I-580 toward the redevelopment area is industrial in  
28 nature, and does not identify the redevelopment project area as a “problem area” along the  
29 route (City of Oakland 1974). The element contains goals and policies specific to the MacArthur  
30 Freeway scenic route. See Section 4.1: Consistency with Plans and Policies, for discussion of  
31 these policies.

32 The *Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation* (OSCAR) Element of the Oakland General  
33 Plan (City of Oakland 1996) recognizes the Oakland shoreline as possessing diverse values,  
34 including its value as an aesthetic resource, and as a gateway to other aesthetic resources,  
35 such as the Bay. The OSCAR includes specific goals and objectives regarding increased visual  
36 access to and from the shoreline. In addition, the OSCAR includes specific policies whose  
37 implementation is intended to achieve the shoreline aesthetic/visual access goals and

1 objectives. See Section 4.1: Consistency with Plans and Policies, for discussion of these  
2 policies.

### 3 4.11.3 Regional Setting

4 The region under consideration is bounded by the nearby Oakland Hills to the east, and the San  
5 Francisco peninsula to the more distant west. Figure 4.11-1 illustrates regional viewsheds and  
6 visual landmarks. To the north are the Bay and Bay shoreline, and to the south are Alameda  
7 Island and the Bay. The visual character of this region is varied, and represents three visually  
8 distinct zones, generally trending east to west: the uplands, flatlands, and the Bay. Within the  
9 uplands, the relatively steep hills provide a mix of natural and developed views that block  
10 longer-range views to the east. Between the hills and the Bay, the flatlands exhibit a highly  
11 urbanized mixed-use visual setting, including the downtown Oakland business district, and  
12 Alameda Island. The Bay provides an industrial maritime shoreline, with the Bay waters, Bay  
13 Bridge, and Yerba Buena Island to the west, and the urbanized San Francisco skyline to the far  
14 west.

### 15 4.11.4 Local Setting

16 Figures 4.11-2 and 4.11-3 establish the visual setting of the study area, which is topographically  
17 flat to very gently sloping, and highly industrialized. The visual setting of the project area is  
18 described in the *Preliminary Report to City Council* (HEG 2000), and was verified in 2001 by a  
19 windshield survey of the area. Across the survey area, nighttime security lighting was observed  
20 at developed sites; no solar collectors were observed.

21 The OARB sub-district is a complex of one- to four-story warehouses and  
22 administration/business buildings, industrial maritime and rail facilities, and undeveloped land.  
23 The area immediately south of the Bay Bridge (Gateway) peninsula, the visual eastbound  
24 gateway to the City, is a vacant parcel occasionally used to store construction or other  
25 materials. The site is usually partially covered with debris from the Bay, deposited during high  
26 tides. While the OARB sub-district is the most varied within the study area, it is typical of  
27 transportation/industrial development and is visually unremarkable. The OARB sub-district is  
28 visible from a number of viewing locations:

- 29 • From I-80, east-bound travelers experience short-term foreground views of the proposed  
30 Gateway Park area, mid-ground views of the Outer Harbor, and background views of the  
31 Oakland central business district (CBD) and hills.
- 32 • From the elevated portions of West Grand Avenue, and I-880, west/north-bound motorists  
33 have short-term, mid-ground views of the vacant Subaru site and Baldwin railyard.
- 34 • From elevated I-880, east/south-bound motorists have short-term, mid-ground views of the  
35 entire OARB.

- 1 Insert
- 2 Figure 4.11-1 Viewsheds and Aesthetic Resources
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- 1 Insert
- 2 Figure 4.11-2 Photographic Key for Figures 4.11-3a to 4.11-3d
- 3

- 1 Insert
- 2 Figure 4.11-3a Typical Views, 16<sup>th</sup>/Wood Sub-District
- 3

- 1 Insert
- 2 Figure 4.11-3b Typical Views, 16<sup>th</sup>/Wood Sub-District
- 3

- 1 Insert
- 2 Figure 4.11-3c Typical Views, OARB Sub-District
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- 1 Insert
- 2 Figure 4.11-3d Typical Views, OARB Sub-District
- 3

## OARB Area Redevelopment EIR

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1 • From the Outer Harbor, boaters have short-term foreground views of the undeveloped future  
2 Gateway Park area, and industrial marine terminals.

3 • From upper Maritime Street, motorists have short-term foreground views of OARB buildings,  
4 such as the main administration building (Building No. 1), and of large World War II-era  
5 warehouses fronting the street.

6 From the OARB sub-district, views are toward the Bay, the Bay Bridge, and elevated I-880.

7 The Maritime sub-district is highly industrialized, and includes primarily marine terminals (ship  
8 berths, wharves, large waterside cranes, cargo storage, rail facilities, cargo-moving equipment  
9 operation and storage, and a few buildings) and tugboat facilities on the Oakland Inner, Middle,  
10 and Outer harbors. Large-scale construction of portions of the Port of Oakland's Vision 2000  
11 Maritime Development Program is currently occurring along the western Inner Harbor and the  
12 Middle Harbor shorelines. There are no natural features, and views toward the area are  
13 industrial in nature. The exception to this is Port View Park, an approximately 4.5-acre linear  
14 park located along the southern shoreline of the Outer Harbor marine terminals peninsula. The  
15 Maritime sub-district is visible from a number of viewing locations:

16 • From Inner Harbor, boaters and ferry passengers have short-term foreground views of  
17 industrial marine terminals. Planned ultimate uses at northwest Alameda Island<sup>1</sup> would have  
18 long-term mid-ground views of the same terminals.

19 • From Middle Harbor, boaters have short-term foreground views of Port View Park, and will  
20 have views of Middle Harbor Shoreline Park (under construction).

21 • From Outer Harbor, boaters have short-term foreground views of industrial marine terminals.

22 • East-bound travelers on the elevated portion of the Bay Bridge have brief mid-ground views  
23 of the industrialized Outer Harbor marine terminals. This brief view is particularly dramatic at  
24 night, when large cargo cranes may be brightly lit. This portion of I-880 is included in the  
25 State Scenic Highway Program, but is not yet designated by Caltrans as an official scenic  
26 highway.

27 • Elevated portions of I-880 north of this redevelopment sub-district provide distant views of  
28 the industrial maritime area to motorists traveling south on I-880. I-880 is not included in the  
29 State Scenic Highway Program.

30 • Surface streets within the redevelopment area (Middle Harbor Road, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, lower  
31 Maritime Street) provide short-term foreground views toward the land-side portions of the  
32 industrial marine terminals: truck entry gates, stacked cargo containers, and railroad tracks.

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<sup>1</sup> The western part of Alameda Island is the former Naval Air Station (NAS) Alameda, which is permanently closed as a military facility. The City of Alameda intends to redevelop NAS Alameda, and has completed environmental review documentation under the California Environmental Quality Act for transfer of the property. The City is currently undergoing a General Plan amendment and further CEQA review for actual community reuse of former NAS Alameda (City of Alameda 2001).

1 From the shoreline of the Maritime sub-district are spectacular views toward the west and  
2 northwest of the Bay, the Bay Bridge, Yerba Buena Island, and the San Francisco skyline. To  
3 the south, the currently undeveloped former NAS Alameda site is visible in the mid-ground.

4 The central and southern portions of the 16<sup>th</sup>/Wood sub-district predominately comprise two  
5 former industrial sites: the Southern Pacific Railroad (SPRR, now Union Pacific [UP]) railroad  
6 station and yard, and the Phoenix Ironworks. These sites are now vacant, except for the  
7 commanding SPRR (Amtrak) station building, and with the exception of that building, the area is  
8 visually non-descript. The northern portion of this sub-district includes one- and two-story  
9 industrial buildings, lots used to store equipment and discarded items, and freight  
10 storage/handling facilities. The area is visually blighted. The I-880 frontage road and elevated I-  
11 880 freeway form the western boundary of this sub-district. The 16<sup>th</sup>/Wood sub-district is visible  
12 from a number of viewing locations:

- 13 • Motorists on the I-880 frontage road, and north-bound on I-880 have short-term foreground  
14 and mid-ground views of the entire sub-district.
- 15 • In the southern portion of the sub-district, residences are located directly east of and across  
16 Wood Street from the former Phoenix Ironworks site. These residences have long-term  
17 foreground views of this currently vacant parcel.
- 18 • The central and northern portions of the sub-district are bounded to the east by other light  
19 industrial uses, except between 18<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> streets, where Raimondi Park faces the  
20 redevelopment area across Wood Street.

21 Because of its flat topography, views from the 16<sup>th</sup>/Wood sub-district are limited by the adjacent  
22 elevated I-880 freeway and nearby structures.

#### 23 **4.11.5 Impact Analysis Methodology**

24 Due to the conceptual-level nature of planned redevelopment, it is not currently possible to  
25 determine exactly how the project area will appear after build-out, and the analysis of aesthetic  
26 impacts of redevelopment is necessarily consistent with a conceptual level of detail as well.  
27 Moreover, even when detailed descriptive information is available, assessment of visual impacts  
28 is subjective: what one person may find aesthetically appealing, another may find offensive.  
29 Therefore, the focus of this analysis is potential change in visual environment based on  
30 proposed land use classifications and densities that could lead to obvious blockage of views of  
31 scenic resources, as well as obvious improvement or loss of quality of the visual environment.  
32 The analysis takes into consideration the sensitivity of viewers; sensitivity takes into account  
33 viewer expectation as well as the distance to views and the duration of those views. High  
34 sensitivity is typically associated with viewers who experience long-term foreground views of the  
35 redevelopment project area, such as nearby residents. Moderate sensitivity is typically  
36 associated with viewers with shorter-term foreground views or mid-ground views, such as  
37 recreationalists, or travelers along gateway or nearby elevated routes.



**OARB Sub-District, Gateway Development Area**

The proposed land use classification for the majority of this development area is Business Mix. Business Mix is intended to be a flexible classification, and allows a wide variety of business and related commercial and industrial uses. It also allows for a variety of densities, with a maximum allowable floor to area ratio (FAR) of 4.0.

Park & Urban Open Space is proposed for the Gateway Park area, immediately south of the Bay Bridge touchdown. In addition, Parks & Urban Open Space is proposed for a 100-foot-wide strip along the waterfront of this development area.

As envisioned in the Reuse Plan (OBRA 2001), the Gateway peninsula would be developed as a gateway-style park, providing short-term foreground views of a green and park-like entry to the City for those entering Oakland from the Bay Bridge. This more natural setting would contrast with the industrial Port of Oakland in the mid-ground, and with mid-ground and background views of the business-oriented remainder of the OARB and the Oakland CBD. The waterfront area would allow for a greenbelt and public open space that would physically and visually link the Gateway Park to the remainder of the development area. In addition, the public open space would set development back from the waterfront, allowing a gradual visual transition from land-side development to the Bay. Longer-term unobstructed views for recreationalists using the park would be of the Bay, the Gateway development area, and the industrial Port of Oakland maritime area in the foreground and mid-ground.

Immediately east of the proposed park would be the area of greatest development density, either multistory office buildings, or optionally, a hotel. This area, located between I-80 and the Outer Harbor, would also be a part of the gateway entry to the City, providing short-term foreground views of a modern city for those entering Oakland from the Bay Bridge. Multi-story development in this area could result in blockage of short-term mid-ground views of the Oakland Outer Harbor and Port industrial maritime operations.

Farther east and generally inland, the Gateway development area is slated for lower-intensity buildings. Farther inland, east of West Grand Avenue, building densities are expected to be even lower, with warehousing/distribution, or other primarily single-story structures. Short-term background views toward inland visual landmarks—the Oakland Hills and the CBD—would remain visible from elevated West Grand Avenue.

**OARB Sub-District, Port Development Area**

The proposed land use classification for this development area is General Industrial/Transportation. This classification allows heavy industrial uses, including manufacturing, railyards, maritime operations, and other uses that may result in off-site negative externalities. As envisioned in the Reuse Plan, the existing Knight Railyard would be expanded immediately west of and adjacent to the elevated I-880 to create a new intermodal railway terminal, and the Port of Oakland would create yard area for marine terminals in the remainder of this development area. These operations are generally at-grade, or low-rise, with large,

1 mobile and semi-mobile equipment. Short-term, fore-ground and mid-ground views for south-  
2 bound travelers in I-880 would be of industrial transportation facilities. Current short-term views  
3 toward the Outer Harbor for these travelers would remain the same, except as mobile  
4 equipment may occasionally and temporarily block views.

5 **Maritime Sub-District**

6 The proposed land use classification for this entire sub-district is General  
7 Industrial/Transportation, and would comprise ongoing Port of Oakland industrial maritime  
8 operations. These operations generally are at-grade, or low-rise, with large mobile yard  
9 equipment and waterfront cranes. Ongoing modernization of maritime facilities would result in  
10 facilities of the same nature as the existing ones, and no new or highly altered facilities are  
11 known to be planned at this time. Short-term, mid-ground views for south-bound travelers in I-  
12 880 would be of industrial transportation facilities. Current short-term views toward the Outer  
13 Harbor for these travelers would remain the same, except that a few additional or reconfigured  
14 waterfront cranes may be installed. Should this occur, these cranes would be in keeping with  
15 the current industrial visual setting of the Outer Harbor waterfront.

16 **16<sup>th</sup>/Wood Sub-District**

17 This sub-district is currently classified Business Mix, and is expected to remain in that  
18 classification. The conceptual Central Station development has the potential to alter a site that is  
19 currently vacant, except for an abandoned and visually derelict historic train station, to a mixed-  
20 use, live/work setting. Additionally, a 1-acre park is proposed. The densities assumed for that  
21 portion of this sub-district would require an overall site FAR of approximately 1.5 to 2.0, well  
22 below the maximum allowable FAR of 4.0. Nevertheless, multi-story buildings would be required  
23 to achieve such densities. With appropriate design, these buildings should provide pleasant and  
24 modern foreground views to nearby residences. The remainder of this sub-district could be  
25 developed in accordance with Business Mix, and in the absence of a concept for the area, this  
26 analysis assumes it would be developed as light industrial: relatively low-density one- to two-  
27 story buildings. The buildings would be located on currently vacant property, and should provide  
28 pleasant long-term foreground views for nearby residences.

29 **Benefits**

30 Redevelopment of the project area would alleviate existing visual blight, especially within the  
31 16<sup>th</sup>/Wood and OARB sub-districts. It would accomplish this by developing currently vacant  
32 neglected parcels for modern land uses, and by replacing outdated and/or visually derelict  
33 buildings with new and attractive buildings and landscaping appropriate to the use. In addition,  
34 redevelopment would create a visually appealing gateway to the City from what is currently a  
35 neglected vacant parcel and an outdated military base. Therefore, the redevelopment is  
36 expected to improve, not degrade, the existing visual character or quality of the site and its  
37 surroundings.

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1       **Impacts**

2       **Impact 4.11-1:**           Short-term mid-ground views of moderately sensitive viewers of the  
3                                    Bay may be blocked by redevelopment.

4       **Significance:**            Less than significant

5       **Mitigation:**             Mitigation is not warranted.

6       Some short-term views of east-bound travelers on I-80 toward the Outer Harbor would be  
7       blocked for a few seconds by redevelopment in the Gateway development area. These views  
8       are toward the industrialized portion of the Bay, and do not constitute important views or scenic  
9       vistas.



11       **Impact 4.11-2:**           Redevelopment would remove buildings contributing to a historic  
12                                    district, including visually striking warehouse structures visible from I-  
13       80, a locally designated scenic route, and a portion of the state scenic  
14       highway system.

15       **Significance:**            Significant

16       **Mitigation:**             Measure 4.6-12, described in Section 4.6: Cultural Resources

17       **Residual Significance:** Significant and unavoidable

18       Redevelopment would eliminate visual evidence of a specific period in the history of West  
19       Oakland military transportation, including all structures contributing to the OARB Historic  
20       District. The most visually striking of these contributing buildings are what is termed the “800  
21       series” warehouses, seven large rectangular buildings, each encompassing approximately  
22       235,000 square feet. These buildings are visually prominent from local roadways, are large in  
23       scale, and have distinctive architectural elements, including rooflines with double eaves and  
24       clerestory windows. They are located between existing Maritime Street and the Knight Railyard,  
25       and straddle the boundary between the Gateway and Port development areas. The 800 series  
26       warehouses are not clearly visible from I-580, a state scenic highway. They are, however, briefly  
27       visible to eastbound travelers on the Bay Bridge (I-80), a local scenic route, and from local  
28       arterials, such as Maritime Street. Loss of their distinctive form, representative of a period of  
29       West Oakland's history, is considered a significant visual impact. Mitigation Measure 4.6-12,  
30       intended primarily to mitigate cultural resources impacts, would also partially rectify the loss of  
31       visual character; however, the residual impact is considered significant and the impact  
32       unavoidable.







1 Modern security lighting is available that directs light toward a specific site, and substantially  
2 reduces spillage of light onto adjacent properties. The City and the Port shall require the use of  
3 such directional lighting as a condition of approval for redevelopment projects throughout the  
4 project area. In no case shall the City nor the Port allow the use of stadium-style lighting, which  
5 directs light outward across a broad area.



7 **Mitigation 4.11-2:** At or near the boundary of the proposed Gateway Park, new lighting shall  
8 be shielded to prevent light spillage into natural areas.

9 This measure applies to Impact 4.11-3 and Impact 4.12-2.

10 In natural areas that may provide habitat, light scatter shall be further reduced or eliminated  
11 through the use of shields, which physically prohibit the scatter of light. With the advise of  
12 resource agencies, the City shall require such shields at specific locations, such as the Gateway  
13 Park.



15 **Mitigation 4.11-3:** New active or passive solar systems within or adjacent to the project area  
16 shall be set back from the property line a minimum of 25 feet.

17 This measure applies to Impact 4.11-4.

18 Through design review, the City shall ensure that proposed solar systems are not located in a  
19 manner that would unduly restrict design of future development. Such conflicts are to be  
20 resolved in design review. If the proposed solar system cannot be designed to accommodate  
21 adjacent actions, it shall be disallowed.



23 **Mitigation 4.11-4:** New construction within the Gateway development area adjacent to a parcel  
24 containing permitted or existing active or passive solar systems shall demonstrate through  
25 design review that the proposed structures shall not substantially affect operation of existing  
26 solar systems.

27 This measure applies to Impact 4.11-4.

28 Through design review, the City shall ensure that the effectiveness an operation of existing or  
29 permitted active or passive solar systems shall not be substantially impaired. The design of the  
30 subsequent proposed structures shall be modified so as not to have such an adverse effect.



