

4.1 AESTHETICS

This section includes a description of the existing visual setting of the project site and an analysis of the effects the proposed project would have on aesthetics in the project vicinity. Aesthetics in the context of this report refers to the visual and design quality of a physical setting.

A. Regulatory Framework

City policies and guidelines of particular relevance to aesthetics include those in the General Plan and the standards used by the Site Plan and Architectural Review Committee (SPARC).

1. Petaluma General Plan

Applicable policies and programs included in the Community Character Element of the existing and proposed Petaluma General Plan are listed in Table 4.1-1.

2. Petaluma Glare Ordinance

The City's Zoning Ordinance includes Section 22-304, Glare. This section of the City's Zoning Ordinance limits direct glare from on-site lighting sources as measured at the property line. No direct glare at the property line is allowed, unless to light parking lots. For parking lots, the lighting must be shielded down towards the ground and shall not exceed three foot candles in illumination at ground level. In the case of indirect glare, i.e. glare caused by diffuse reflection from a surface such as a wall, illumination shall not exceed 0.3-foot candle (maximum) or 0.1-foot candle (average).

3. Site Plan and Architectural Review Committee

The City of Petaluma has empowered SPARC to provide final site plan and architectural approval to those projects subject to its review, as defined by the City's Zoning Ordinance 26-401. SPARC is comprised of five members, including one Council representative, one Planning Commission representative

TABLE 4.1-1 **PETALUMA GENERAL PLAN POLICIES AND PROGRAMS —
 AESTHETICS**

Policy/Program Number	Policy
Existing General Plan	
<i>Community Character Element</i>	
Policy 2	Within the context that growth will occur, every effort shall be made to preserve and enhance the views of surrounding lands, hills, and ridges.
Policy 9	The amount of paving and the apparent width of streets shall be reduced physically and visually.
Policy 11	A city-wide pattern of healthy street trees shall be sought.
Program 9.2	Encourage use of street furniture, lighting, bicycle racks, transit facilities, and landscaped areas within new development to enhance pedestrian, transit and bicycle circulation.
Program 10	Establish deeper building setbacks and/or require special landscaping along all arterials.
Program 11	Require and construct landscaped medians in major arterials.
Policy 18	The City shall make every effort to preserve landmark trees and major groves.
Policy 19	Require SPARC review of those infill construction projects in residential and commercial areas where compatibility with surrounding buildings and neighborhoods may be at issue.
Policy 20	The clustering of commercial enterprises shall be encouraged. Additional strip commercials shall be discouraged along arterial streets including Lakeville, Bodega, East Washington, Petaluma Boulevard, and Old Redwood Highway.
Policy 24	Encourage interaction and involvement among neighbors through careful project design. Residential project design should foster the sense of security and belonging that comes from knowing and interacting with one's neighbors.
Program 22	Create neighborhood gateways by using entrance pillars, landscape features, or special walls.
Proposed General Plan	
<i>Community Design, Character, and Sustainable Building Element</i>	
Policy 3-P-5	Strengthen the visual and aesthetic character of major arterial corridors.

Policy/Program Number	Policy
Policy 3-P-5(A)	<p>Improve key arterial corridors through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Intensification via infilling, orientation of facades toward the street, appropriate building height, and interior parking lot configuration on the parcel; ◆ Sidewalk improvements including trees, lighting fixtures, planters, curbs, shading devices, public and commercial-related seating, and paving materials; ◆ Streetscape improvements including use of planted medians, parking configuration, signage, and paving materials; ◆ Creating strong streetscape elements where deemed appropriate (for example, intensely planted tree corridors could draw attention to the street itself as a green passage).
Policy 3-P-8	<p>Support creation of a street tree planting program in existing suburban residential areas and industrial areas undergoing revitalization.</p> <p>Petaluma contains a sizable amount of residential stock dating from after the 1950s. Streetscape improvements will enliven the character of such areas as South East, Payran-McKinley, and Washington Core, which currently have relatively barren streetscapes with few trees and dominant driveway frontages.</p>
Policy 3-P-18	<p>Facilitate development patterns that provide an urban edge along East Washington Street, providing visual continuity and cohesiveness.</p>
Policy 3-P-18 (A)	<p>Undertake streetscape improvements to slow traffic speeds, widen sidewalks and promote a pedestrian orientation. Add trees that provide shade and sense of enclosure.</p>
Policy 3-P-18 (D)	<p>Ensure that development at the old Kenilworth Jr. High school site and any future redevelopment of the Fairgrounds property maintains a public, pedestrian, and active face along East Washington Street, and provides civic and ceremonial spaces with links to the Library and other uses.</p>

and three other members appointed by the Council.¹ The General Standards for Review used by SPARC in its decision making are described in Table 4.1-2.

B. Existing Conditions

This section discusses the existing visual quality of the project area and its immediate surroundings.

1. Project Site's Visual Character

The project site is located at the southwest corner of the Highway 101 and East Washington Street interchange, adjacent to the Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds. The site is enclosed by Highway 101 to the east and the Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds and Kenilworth Drive to the west. The northern boundary is East Washington Street.

The baseline date that provides the basis for the site's existing conditions is May, 2005. The project site was most recently used as a junior high school, with a bus facility at the southern portion of the site. The school buildings were located on the northern portion of the site, with a significant amount of open sport fields on the rest of the site. A school bus yard is located on the south corner of the site. As stated in the project description, the school facilities have already been demolished, but the bus maintenance facility remains and would be demolished as part of this project. A hedgerow of redwood trees abuts the project site's eastern and northern boundaries along Highway 101 and East Washington Street, respectively. Currently, the site does not constitute a significant scenic vista due to its existing location and character.

Due to existing urban development surrounding the project site and the flat topography of the area, the project site is generally only visible from immedi-

¹ City of Petaluma, 1982, *Site Plan and Architectural Review Procedures and Guidelines*, page 2.

TABLE 4.1-2 **SPARC'S GENERAL STANDARDS FOR REVIEW**

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- a. Controls should be exercised to achieve a satisfactory quality of design in the individual building and its site, appropriateness of the building to its intended use and the harmony of the development with its surroundings. Satisfactory design quality and harmony will involve among other things:
 - i. The appropriate use of quality materials and harmony and proportion of the overall design.
 - ii. The architectural style which should be appropriate for the project in question, and compatible with the overall character of the neighborhood.
 - iii. The siting of *the structure on the property* as compared to the siting of other structures in the immediate neighborhood.
 - iv. The size, location, design, color, number, lighting, and materials of all signs and outdoor advertising structures.
 - v. The bulk, height and color of the proposed structure as compared to the bulk, height and color of other structures in the immediate neighborhood.
 - b. Landscaping to approved city standards shall be required on the site and shall be in keeping with the character or design of the site. Existing trees shall be preserved wherever possible, and shall not be removed unless approved by the Committee.
 - c. Ingress, egress, internal traffic circulation, off-street parking facilities and pedestrian ways shall be so designed as to promote safety and convenience, and shall conform to approved city standards.
 - d. It is recognized that good design character may require participation by a recognized professional designer, such as an architect, landscape architect or other practicing urban designer and the reviewing body shall have the authority to require that an applicant hire such a professional, when deemed necessary to achieve good design character.
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Source: City of Petaluma, Site Plan and Architectural Review Procedures and Guidelines, March 1982, page 2.

ately adjacent streets and properties. Figure 4.1-1 shows views of the project site from different viewpoints, as well as views from the project site. Figure 4.1-1 also provides a map showing the locations from where the photos were taken. The project site is secluded from view from both Highway 101 and the residential neighborhoods to the east of the site as a result of hedgerows of mature redwoods and eucalyptus trees. Although there are some gaps in the eucalyptus hedgerow along the eastern side of Highway 101, it still provides a strong visual barrier for the residential neighborhood to the east, as shown in Figure 4.1-1. The redwoods on the western side of the highway provide less

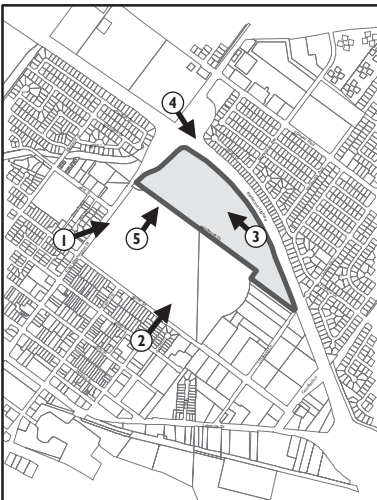
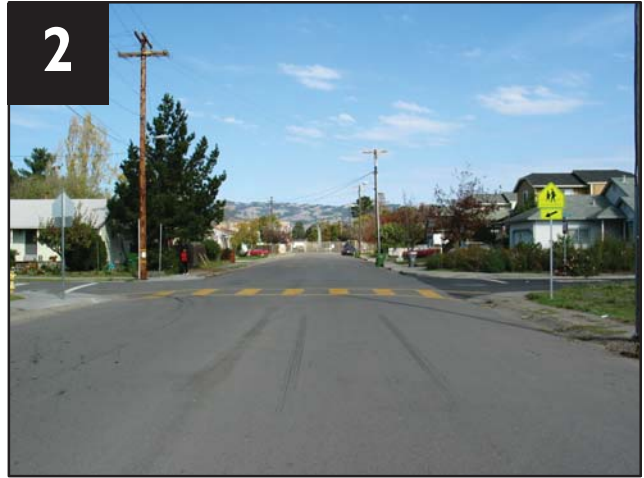


FIGURE 4.1-1
VIEWS OF PROJECT SITE

of a barrier for drivers of the vehicles traveling along Highway 101 since there are larger gaps in the vegetation.

The only clear views of the project site are from the north from the East Washington Street overpass over Highway 101, and from the pedestrian overpass in the middle of the site. Except from the overpasses, views of the site from East Washington Street are somewhat obscured by the existing swim center and Fairgrounds structures, fencing and trees, as shown in picture 1 of Figure 4.1-1. Similarly, from the west, views of the site are also obscured by the Fairgrounds' facilities and fencing, though the site can be viewed from the west across the large parking lot between the swim center and Fairgrounds, as seen in pictures 2 and 5 of Figure 4.1-1. To the south, the existing light industrial facilities and machinery obstruct views of the project site from Lindberg Lane.

2. Form and Appearance of the Surrounding Area

The character of the areas surrounding the project site varies, and for purposes of this discussion, the description is separated into four categories:

a. East of the Project Site

To the east, backing onto Highway 101, there is a residential neighborhood consisting of smaller, single-family detached homes. Directly adjacent to Highway 101 are the backyards of the homes along Stuart Drive. Currently, the two sides of Highway 101 are physically connected by a pedestrian overcrossing, but divided visually by a hedgerow of redwoods along the western side of Highway 101 and eucalyptus trees along the eastern side of Highway 101.

Further northeast, there is the Washington Square Commercial Center, made of single story buildings, at the intersection of East Washington Street and South McDowell Boulevard. Washington Square is adjacent to McDowell Elementary School, a park, an office complex, and a cluster of multi-family housing comprised of two- and three-story buildings. In the opposite corner, north of East Washington Street, is another commercial center called Peta-

luma Plaza. This second commercial center, comprised of one-story buildings, is directly adjacent to Highway 101 and bounded by both multi- and single-family housing and Lucchesi Park.

The site's northern boundary, East Washington Street, is designated a gateway for the City of Petaluma. Adjacent to the project site, and heading west towards Downtown Petaluma, East Washington Street is comprised of strip commercial activity, with several public uses intermixed. These buildings are typically one- and two-stories in height. As it approaches the Downtown, East Washington Street is bounded by various uses that include manufacturing, office space, fast food restaurants and retail, also one- and two-stories in height.

b. West of the Project Site

To the west of the site lies the Sonoma-Marin Fairgrounds. Most of the Fairgrounds area is defined by open land and a few small-scale, one-story structures. The most prominent structure is the Petaluma Speedway, which has bleachers that are about 30 feet tall. Also west of the site lies the existing swim center and skate park. Beyond the Fairgrounds is a residential neighborhood consisting of mostly single story buildings, along with commercial uses along Lakeville Street and light industrial uses along Jefferson Street.

c. South of the Project Site

There is a concentration of light industrial uses to the south of the project site, extending from Lindberg Lane to the intersection of Highway 101 and Lakeville Street. Some uses include trucking companies, RV parking, construction companies and shipping companies, such as DHL. A small number of commercial uses are also found further south of the site. Most of these buildings are less than 25 feet in height.

3. Off-site Scenic Vistas

Given the flat topography of the general area around the project site within an existing urbanized environment, only limited opportunities for scenic vis-

tas are possible. Towards the east, views of the hills are possible, as seen in picture 5 of Figure 4.1-1. To the north, there are no views possible in this direction given the tall hedgerow of trees, as seen in picture 3 of Figure 4.1-1. Towards the west, views of the Petaluma Speedway, open space on the Fairgrounds and distant hills are possible. To the south, views of the hills are possible.

4. Scenic Resources and Highways

There are no officially-designated State scenic highways near the project site at this time.²

5. Lighting and Glare

There is currently some limited outdoor lighting on the project site, mostly concentrated on the southern portion of the project site, where the bus storage facility lies. In the past, there was additional lighting on the northern portion of the project site, where the former Kenilworth Junior High buildings stood. The lighting was limited to external walkways for security purposes. There is, though, occasional lighting spillage from adjacent uses. The Fairground's facilities and parking areas have standard lighting on the exterior of the facilities and external circulation routes for security purposes. There are no significant glare sources on or near the project site.

C. *Standards of Significance*

The implementation of the proposed project would have a significant impact on visual and aesthetic quality if it would:

- ◆ Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- ◆ Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

² California Department of Transportation, http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm, accessed on March 23, 2006.

- ◆ Substantially degrade the view from a scenic highway, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings and historic buildings.
- ◆ Expose people on- or off-site to substantial light or glare.

D. Impact Discussion

This section discusses the impacts of the proposed project on the visual and aesthetic qualities of the surrounding area. For the following analysis, both the existing and proposed General Plans were reviewed to determine whether there would be different conclusions under either Plan. Unless otherwise stated below, the following impact analysis and its conclusions would apply under the implementation of either General Plan scenario.

1. Project Impacts

The concept for the proposed project is to construct a retail center, mixed-use retail and residential area, and residential area consisting of townhomes and row-houses. One retail free-standing pad building would be built where the mixed-use buildings meet Kenilworth Drive. Two additional freestanding retail/restaurant pad buildings would be built at the corner of East Washington and Kenilworth Drive. The retail buildings would be one-story, painted cement plaster-clad buildings with varied paint colors, accent details and roofing materials. These features, in addition to varied setbacks from the parking lot, would discourage what could otherwise be a uniform, long façade. Landscaping in front of the buildings would also help break up the visual appearance of the façades.

The mixed-use portion of the project would be comprised of four free-standing buildings containing two ground floor retail spaces with four two-story residential units above. Residential parking would be located on the ground floor at the back of the buildings. Within each structure, the façade materials and colors, rooflines and windows would be varied, and the entrances would be articulated, to create visual interest for the façades. Retail and residential building entrances would have metal awnings. As the transi-

tion between the retail and residential portions of the site, the mixed-use area would have building materials that complement those used in the other two areas of the site.

As presently conceived, the residential portion of the project would consist of attached townhome and row-house units containing between four and seven units. Again, to avoid visual monotony, the rooflines of each building would be varied and entrances would be articulated. Front entrances would be stepped up from the paseos and landscaping would be incorporated into the front of each unit. Garage entrances would be from back alleys. Again, the façades would use a varied color palette.

a. Visual Character

The proposed development of the East Washington Place project would change the character of the 37-acre site from school district use to commercial and residential development, with surface parking. Although the proposed development would alter the site's existing physical character, the City has anticipated the eventual development of the site by zoning it for residential and light industrial uses.

The proposed project would result in filling in the urban character of the area with development that is generally compatible with surrounding uses. Neighboring commercial centers of Washington Square and Petaluma Plaza on East Washington Street make the conversion of the northern side of the site into a commercial area a logical one, while providing for housing would result in a more attractive alternative use of the portion of the parcel currently designated for Industrial use.

The proposed project would be subject to design review to assure that the final development complies with the City's zoning ordinance and design guidelines. The design review of the proposed project would be carried out by the City's SPARC. The Committee's procedures and guidelines would assure minimal degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

CalTrans is expecting to do improvements to the East Washington Street overpass in the near term and widen Highway 101 in the long-term. These projects might result in removal of trees in the hedgerow adjacent to the property, which would cause the proposed project to be more visually accessible than it is currently. As this would not be a result of the proposed project, it is not considered a project-related impact. However, this potential non-project related impact would be diminished by the project's proposed landscaping throughout the boundary of the site as method to adequately screen the development within.

Given that the site is surrounded by existing urban uses and has historically been used for urban uses, and that development of the site for more intensive urban uses was anticipated and would be subject to design review, the project would *not significantly degrade* the visual appearance of the site or surrounding area.

b. Scenic Vista

i. *Views to the Project Site*

As stated earlier, the project site is only visible from immediately adjacent streets and properties, and from the East Washington Street overpass over Highway 101, and the existing development pattern does not result in the project site being considered a scenic vista. As a result, modifying the visual character of the project site *would not result in a significant impact* to a scenic vista of the project site.

ii. *Views from the Project Site*

The proposed development would not exceed 50 feet in height for the commercial uses and 45 feet in height for residential uses. These heights would not result in the project exceeding the height of the existing rows of trees on either side of Highway 101. As a result, the project would not create a higher visual barrier than currently exists along Highway 101 to where the opportunities for views of the distant hills exist. Thus there would be *no impact* to views from Highway 101 to the distant hills.

As discussed before, there are no scenic views across the project site to the north and as a result there would be *no impact* to views in that direction from the project.

Although there are views of the hills in the other directions, which might be considered as scenic vistas, the proposed project would have *no significant impact* on these views since they would be maintained at various points throughout the site. Given the placement of the parking spaces on the northwest portion of the site, views to the west would be maintained as they exist from a significant portion of the site. Limited obstruction would result from the two- and three-story residential buildings towards the views to the south hills. Similarly, views of the east hills would be minimally obstructed, less so on the southern portion of the site. However, as mentioned above these views are not expansive and unrestricted due to the existing built urban environment and trees. For these reasons, impacts to scenic vistas would be *less than significant*.

c. Scenic Highways

As mentioned previously, there are no scenic highways in the vicinity of the project site. As such, the East Washington Place project would have *no impact* on scenic resources visible from a State scenic highway.

d. Light or Glare

The proposed East Washington Place project would result in development that creates new sources of light and associated glare, especially associated with the lighting for the retail parking lots, as well as the walkways and parking areas for the residential development. The proposed General Development Standards for the project require any operation or activity producing glare to be performed within a completely enclosed building and that direct and indirect illumination from light sources on the project site shall not cause illumination in excess of one foot candle when measured at the lot line. Exposed sources of light are also required to be shielded and flickering or intense

sources of light shall be controlled so as not to cause a nuisance across lot lines.

The proposed General Development Standards would allow potentially higher levels of lighting at the property line than the performance standards written into the City's Zoning Ordinance under its Glare section (Section 22-304), since the proposed standard would allow up to 1 foot candle of light at the property line, while the City's existing ordinance does not allow direct glare, other than parking lot illumination, at the property line. As a result, the project may *significantly* increase lighting and glare levels beyond those permitted in the City's Zoning Ordinance.

2. Cumulative Impacts

A list-based approach has been used for this cumulative analysis. The analysis considers the development projects listed in Appendix C (Cumulative Projects) and whether this project would have significant cumulative impacts on Petaluma's visual environment in combination with the cumulative projects.

The development of the project site, when combined with other foreseeable projects in the city, would not contribute to an overall shift in the visual character of the existing surrounding area. Growth within the Petaluma General Plan area would allow for some cumulative visual change in the community by allowing for growth and new development. However, the General Plan includes policies to ensure new development is well designed, attractive and pedestrian-oriented. In addition, the SPARC reviews development proposals for their visual quality and compatibility with nearby developments. These measures would ensure that cumulative development, including the proposed project, does not have a significant cumulative impact.

E. Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Impact AES-1: The allowable lighting levels proposed for the project would exceed the City's allowable lighting levels at the property line. As a result,

the project could significantly increase lighting levels on adjacent properties in excess of what would otherwise be allowed.

Mitigation Measure AES-1: The project applicant will modify the proposed General Development Standards for the proposed project to comply with the lighting requirements of Section 22-304 of the Petaluma Zoning Ordinance, specifically by not allowing direct glare from non-parking lot lighting at the property line.

Significance After Mitigation: *Less than significant.*

CITY OF PETALUMA
EAST WASHINGTON PLACE EIR
AESTHETICS