3.1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources

3.1.1 Introduction

This section includes an evaluation of the potential for the project to adversely impact aesthetic and visual resources in the project area. This section provides an overview of the environmental and regulatory setting that applies to aesthetic and visual resources within the project area and includes a discussion of project impacts and appropriate mitigation measures, where necessary. The aesthetic and visual resources setting and impact analysis are based on field observations, aerial and ground-level photographs, and visual simulations.

3.1.2 Scoping Comments

Comments related to aesthetic or visual impacts were received during the public scoping process. These comments and the location where they are addressed in the aesthetics and visual resources analysis are provided in Table 3.1-1.

Table 3.1-1 Aesthetics and Visual Resources Scoping Comments

Agency/Entity	Comment	Location in Aesthetics and Visual Resources Section that Comment is Addressed
Garril Page	Ross' essence and character are defined by the high canopy of its majestic heritage trees. The proposed Frederick Allen Park (FAP) Riparian Corridor as proposed is barren, stark, denuded of natural beauty, and very inhospitable. The proposed man-made shade structures are not in keeping with any aspect of the town and appear to be poor substitutes for the trees that would be removed. The shade structures provide relatively little shade for humans, none for fish in the basin, and are not appropriate, welcoming, nor attractive to gaze upon.	Section 3.1.6, Impact 3.1-2
Garril Page	Tree loss creates emphasizes the proximity of Sir Francis Drakes traffic. This becomes visual pollution for Ross Common. The intrusion will be particularly notable within the proposed FAP Riparian Corridor.	Section 3.1.6, Impact 3.1-2
Julie McMillan	If Frederick Allen Park is used as a flood plain, many trees will be removed, will be bad aesthetically and expensive to add replacement trees	Section 3.1.6, Impact 3.1-2
Charles Goodman	The County must address the removal of over 200 mature trees and how it plans to replace the Park Setting, Privacy, and Habitat Coverage in a timely manner.	Section 3.1.6, Impact 3.1-2

3.1.3 Aesthetic and Visual Concepts

Baseline aesthetic conditions are defined within the context of visual quality and visual sensitivity. For the purpose of this EIR, visual quality and visual sensitivity were defined consistent with the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects ((Federal Highway Administration, 2015). While the project is not a highway project, the FHWA guidance was used to evaluate overall baseline visual quality in the project area because Marin County has not developed their own guidance for evaluating visual quality and the FHWA guidance was developed to address visual impacts in urban environments, similar to the visual environment of the proposed project.

Visual Quality

The baseline visual quality of a scene is used to evaluate the degree of visual change and impact. A viewer observing an existing scene has a range of available responses that are inherent to all human beings. The FHWA guidelines recognize three types of visual perception that are used in defining visual quality:

- **Harmony.** When viewing the components of a scene's natural environment, viewers inherently evaluate the natural harmony of the existing scene, determining if the composition is harmonious or inharmonious.
- **Cultural Order.** When viewing the components of the cultural environment, viewers evaluate the scene's cultural order, determining if the composition is orderly or disorderly.
- **Coherence.** When viewing the project environment, viewers evaluate the coherence of the project components, determining if the project's composition is coherent or incoherent.

Viewers have a concept of what constitutes natural harmony, cultural order, and project coherence. The greater degree to which the visual resources of the project meet the viewer's preference concept of natural harmony, cultural order, and project coherence, the higher value the viewer places on those visual resources. The existing visual quality was evaluated as low, moderate, or high, using the criteria of natural harmony, cultural order, and project coherence.

Visual Sensitivity

Visual sensitivity is how concerned viewers are about visual quality. Several factors influence visual sensitivity, including viewer quantity, viewer activity, and distance between project activities and viewers. Viewer sensitivity is higher in areas that are resting points and areas with higher numbers of viewers (e.g., Frederick Allen Park and Bike Route 20) than viewer sensitivity in areas that are viewed less frequently (e.g., Corte Madera Creek along Unit 4).

Factors that influence visual sensitivity include:

- **Degree to which change is apparent in the landscape:** Certain landscapes are naturally more able to undergo changes without the changes being noticeable. A dense forest may, for example, mask aesthetic changes that take place deep in the forest.

- **Proximity:** The further away a scene or object is from a viewer, the less exposure that viewer has-or conversely, the closer the viewer is to an object or scene, the more exposure the viewer has. Changes in the view are more perceptible and more sensitive at closer distances. Proximity is measured in the following distance zones (Litton, 1968):
  - **Foreground:** Up to 0.5 mile from the viewer
  - **Middleground:** Extends from the foreground zone to approximately 3 to 5 miles from the viewer
  - **Background:** Extends from the middleground zone to the limit of visibility
- **Viewer attention:** Activities that are within the viewer's focus are more apparent than those that are outside of or at the edge of a viewer's focus.
- **Extent:** Refers to the number of people that will be viewing the scene or object. Fewer viewers means less exposure; many viewers means greater exposure. Areas with greater numbers of viewers will be more sensitive to change than areas with fewer viewers.
- **Duration**: Measures how long viewers view the scene or object. The narrower the view and the faster one travels, the shorter the duration. The wider the view and the more one lingers, the longer the duration and the more viewer exposure. The shorter the duration of view, the less sensitive the viewer is to change.

3.1.4 Environmental Setting

Regional Setting

The project is in central Marin County, which is part of the larger San Francisco Bay Area (Bay Area). The San Francisco Bay region is in the Coast Ranges Physiographic Province, which spans 400 miles in California from Humboldt County to Santa Barbara County. The Bay Area is characterized as having a Mediterranean climate, with Coast Redwood forest and chaparral and woodlands. The Bay Area is highly developed; however, substantial tracts of open space contribute to the visual character of the region.

Marin County has a unique visual environment with a diversity of landscapes that includes views of open space, ocean vistas and beaches, San Francisco Bay shoreline, hills and ridgelines, agricultural lands, stands of forests, and other natural features. The majority of the undeveloped land is found in the northern and western areas of the county. Nearly half of the county's land is protected by park or open-space status. In the southern portion of the county, long-distance views are often dominated by Mount Tamalpais.

Urban development in Marin County is essentially concentrated along the U.S. Highway 101 corridor in the eastern third of the county from Novato in the north, San Rafael in the central portion, and Sausalito/Marin City in the south, punctuated by the Golden Gate Bridge at its southern tip. Aside from the larger cities of San Rafael and Novato, urban development in Marin County is centered on well-established villages and towns in the many valleys on the northern and eastern flanks of Mount Tamalpais. The project area is located in unincorporated

Kentfield and the Town of Ross and within the City-Centered Corridor, along Highway 101, as identified in the Marin Countywide Plan. The corridor is primarily designated for urban development and for protection of environmental resources. The surrounding ridgetops and upper slopes of the watershed are generally wooded and undeveloped whereas the valley floor, where the project is located, is densely developed. The communities surrounding the project site have maintained a small town feel that blends with the surrounding natural and agricultural landscapes. Most of the smaller municipalities in Marin County have adopted land-use controls that encourage residential development near town centers, which lends to walkable neighborhoods, maintaining a pedestrian-scale community. As noted below, the Town of Ross has a particular visual character maintained by its own building-design requirements. County and local ordinances have also protected nearby ridgelines and scenic vistas.

Project Setting

Visual Character

The viewshed of the project area within Corte Madera Creek and Frederick Allen Park is limited to those areas immediately adjacent to Corte Madera Creek and within Frederick Allen Park. The Corte Madera Creek channel is set below grade. Residential development and dense vegetation and trees along College of Marin campus border the creek and block views of the subsurface flood control channel from areas northeast of the creek, with the exception of views from areas immediately adjacent to the creek and at creek overpasses. Bike Route 20 and residential development, Frederick Allen Park, commercial development, and a parking lot border Corte Madera Creek and the project area. Views of the project area from areas west of the creek are limited to Bike Route 20, areas within Frederick Allen Park, and the parking lot at the Town of Ross Post Office due to the density of surrounding residential and commercial development.

The viewshed of the areas surrounding the project area within the Town of Ross and Kentfield is framed by Southern Heights Ridge on the north and east, which physically and visually separates Ross Valley from San Rafael, while Mount Tamalpais forms the visually-defining ridge on the south and west of Ross Valley. Much of the land area on the Mount Tamalpais ridgeline is preserved as open space, as Marin County Open Space lands and the Marin Municipal Water District (MMWD) watershed lands. Ridgeland and upland greenbelt areas are located within the Town of Ross and Kentfield boundaries, and the Bald Hill Open Space Preserve and Baltimore Canyon Open Space Preserve are west of the Town of Ross and Kentfield areas, respectively. Corte Madera Creek parallels Sir Francis Drake Boulevard, and the creek flows south within the project area towards Corte Madera and the San Francisco Bay.

Representative photographs of the project area were taken to characterize the visual setting of Corte Madera Creek and the immediate surroundings. Representative photo locations are provided on Figure 3.1-1. Representative photos of the project area are shown on Figure 3.1-2 through Figure 3.1-10. Photos were taken on July 28, 2020, between 10 am and 12 pm. All photographs presented in this section have an approximately 40-degree horizontal angle of view, which is roughly equivalent to a 35-millimeter film camera with a 50-millimeter lens. This

configuration is intended to represent an approximate human field of vision and viewing scale. Photographs were taken at eye level.

Town of Ross (Units 4 and 3)

The Town of Ross is between the Town of San Anselmo to the north and the Kentfield to the south and is framed by generally continuous ridgelines to the north and south. The Town of Ross is a quiet residential community with tree-lined, shady streets with wooded ravines, open grassy areas, and long avenues of large shade trees. The Town's development pattern is similar to that of the other Ross Valley communities, with development on the valley floor and residential development extending up the adjacent hillsides.

Within Unit 4, Corte Madera Creek has natural channel characteristics with vegetated banks and a gravel streambed although many human-made features and disturbances are present. Structural elements include concrete bridge abutments and piers at Lagunitas Road Bridge. Bank-retaining structures, including rock gabions, railroad ties, sand concrete bags, and concrete current deflectors are present on the right bank upstream of Lagunitas Road Bridge and the left bank downstream of Lagunitas Road Bridge. Unit 4 has a relatively undisturbed appearance (compared to Units 3 and 2) characterized by predominantly native riparian vegetation and native material streambed. Trees form a dense canopy that couple with abundant understory vegetation to produce a calm and visually pleasing environment in the creek. The scenic integrity of this section of the creek is somewhat disrupted by the presence of Lagunitas Road Bridge, resident-constructed floodwalls and gabion structures, the Ross Town Hall upstream of the Lagunitas Road Bridge, and residences along the left bank between the bridge and fish ladder. Sylvan Lane runs parallel to the creek on the right bank upstream of Lagunitas Road Bridge. Sylvan Lane is quiet, narrow, wooded, and aesthetically pleasing.

Downstream of Lagunitas Road Bridge, bank stabilization and retaining structures are visible on the left bank below the upper bank terrace. The bank-retaining structures are visible from public areas, including public parking lots and Bike Route 20 on the top of the right bank. The bank retaining structures are not visible from the residences above the retaining structures.

Despite the presence of human modifications in Unit 4 of the creek, Unit 4 is regarded as having moderate visual quality due to moderate harmony, orderliness, and coherence along the natural creek channel. Views of the creek are easily accessible from Lagunitas Road Bridge, the Post Office, Ross Town Hall, Bike Route 20, and Frederick Allen Park along the right bank. Representative photographs were taken from areas within Unit 4 to demonstrate the visual conditions in the area. A representative photograph of Unit 4 is provided in Figure 3.1-2.

Upper Unit 3 within the Town of Ross is characterized by a trapezoidal concrete-lined drainage channel, extending downstream from the southern end of the Town of Ross Post Office parking lot adjacent to the existing fish ladder to the Kentfield Hospital. The concrete channel has vertical walls and a V-shaped channel bottom. The channel consists of long straight sections, several subtle bends, and three tight curves. Views of the creek in Unit 3 are dominated by the concrete-lined flood control channel and steel fencing that runs atop the walls of the channel.

These views are somewhat softened by vegetation growing along the tops of the channel walls that is quite dense in some locations, especially where the creek borders Frederick Allen Park. The visual quality of Unit 3, specifically north and south of Frederick Allen Park where nearby buildings and residences are visible and the vegetation along the creek and Bike Route 20 is dense, is low-moderate, and of lower visual quality compared to the more natural condition of Unit 4 upstream. Views along Unit 3 are less coherent than Unit 4 because there are intermittent views of vegetation along the fence line and views of the concrete floodwall. Unit 3 is less harmonious than Unit 4 because of the concrete elements of the floodwall and fencing, nearby residences, and adjacent vegetation that are inconsistent with a natural creek environment. Frederick Allen Park is located downstream of the Ross Post Office, adjacent to the creek. Bike Route 20, a bicycle-pedestrian path, travels through the park and along the right bank of the creek through Unit 3. The visual quality of Frederick Allen Park is considered moderate due to the dense vegetation that blocks views of adjacent residences, business, and other development. Vegetation and trees within Frederick Allen Park also soften views of the concrete channel, and the overall views have less human intrusion and are not as modified as the surrounding areas in Unit 3. Representative photographs of upper Unit 3 are provided in Figure 3.1-3 through Figure 3.1-6.

Kentfield Area (Units 3 and 2)

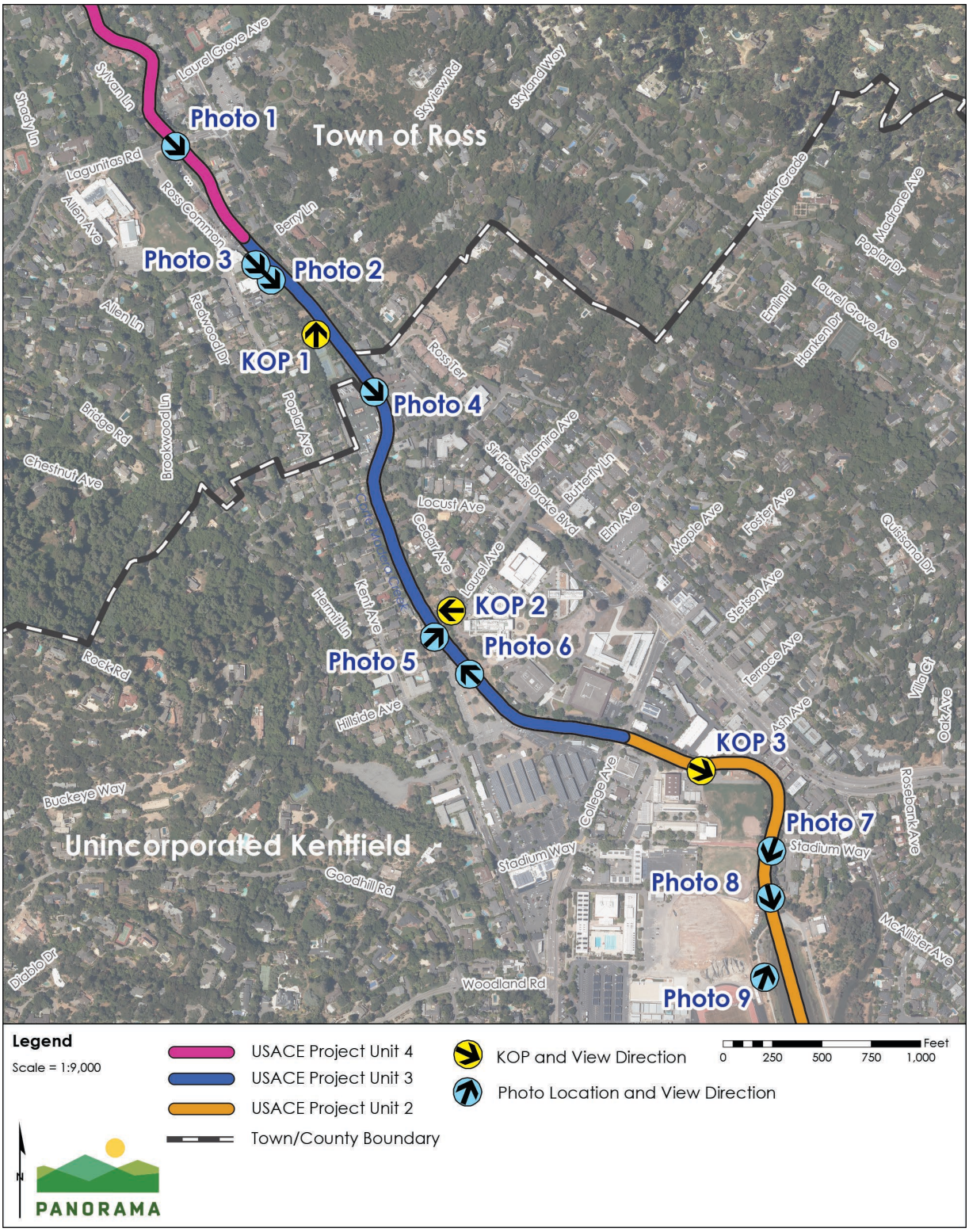
The community of Kentfield borders the Town of Ross to the south. In general, this area shares the same visual and aesthetic characteristics as the Town of Ross and neighboring municipalities. Kentfield shares a similar development pattern as the Town of Ross, with commercial and residential on the valley floor framed by County-designated ridgelines on the north and south.

Lower Unit 3 and Unit 2 within the Kentfield area share similar characteristics as upper Unit 3 within the Town of Ross. Unit 3 extends from Kentfield Hospital downstream to just south of Stadium Avenue. Bike Route 20 continues through Kentfield adjacent to the right bank of the creek, eventually crossing to the left bank at the Stadium Avenue Bridge. An informal unnamed path (unnamed path #1) runs adjacent to the left bank of the creek, between Kentfield Hospital and Laurel Avenue in Unit 3, on the left bank between College Avenue and Stadium Way (unnamed path #2), and south of Stadium Way on the right bank (unnamed path #3) in Unit 2. The overall appearance of the creek in Units 3 and 2 is characterized as highly modified, with low visual quality and low scenic integrity. Representative photographs of lower Unit 3 and Unit 2 are provided in Figure 3.1-7 through Figure 3.1-10.

Scenic Vistas

The ridgelines encompassing the project area provide ample opportunity for scenic vistas from publicly accessible viewpoints into the Town of Ross and Kentfield. Though the development on the valley floor is visually obvious from the viewpoints on both ridges, the visual texture is softened by the relatively even cover of street trees and open space throughout the valley. This allows the visual appearance of the valley floor to gradually transition and blend in with the undeveloped ridgelines with no sharp or abrupt visual contrast. The appearance from publicly accessible viewpoints is visually consistent and lacking sharp visual contrast.

Figure 3.1-1 Representative Photograph and Key Observation Point Location Map



Sources: (Tele Atlas North America, Inc. 2019, GHD 2020, USGS 2012, Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy 2018)

Figure 3.1-2 Photograph 1: View of Unit 4 from Lagunitas Road Bridge, Looking Southeast

Figure 3.1-3 Photograph 2: View of Unit 3, Frederick Allen Park, Looking Southeast

Figure 3.1-4 Photograph 3: View of Unit 3, Frederick Allen Park, Looking Southeast from Marin County Bicycle Route 20

Figure 3.1-5 Photograph 4: View of Upper Unit 3 Fish Pools from Kentfield Hospital Bridge, Looking Southeast

Figure 3.1-6 Photograph 5: View of Unit 3 From Marin County Bicycle Route 20, Looking Northeast at Proposed Pumping Station Location

Figure 3.1-7 Photograph 6: View of Lower Unit 3 from Science-Math-Nursing Building Bridge, Looking Northwest

Figure 3.1-8 Photograph 7: View of Unit 2 from Marin County Bicycle Route 20 near Stadium Way Bridge, Looking South

Figure 3.1-9 Photograph 8: View of Unit 2 from Bike Route 20, Looking South from Left Bank

Figure 3.1-10 Photograph 9: View of Unit 2 from Unnamed Path Adjacent to College of Marin Athletic Fields, Looking Northwest from Right Bank

The General Plans for Ross and Kentfield do not identify designated scenic vistas; however, the Ross General Plan provides polices addressing the protection of scenic vistas. Broad, publicly accessible views of the surrounding mountains and landscape from within the Town of Ross and Kentfield on the valley floor are limited due to intervening development and street trees, which draws the eye downward to street level or blocks middle-ground or background views. There are no designated scenic vistas within the project area.

Scenic Highways and Roadways

No designated State Scenic Highways or County roadways are located within Marin County; however, roadways throughout Marin offer views of the County's and the region's scenic resources. Two segments of Highway 101 in Marin County are eligible for inclusion on the list of State Scenic Highways: the segment opposite San Francisco/State Route 1 in Marin City, approximately 5 miles southeast of the project, and the segment near State Route 37/Ignacio in Novato, approximately 8 miles from the project. Highway 1 in Marin County is also eligible for inclusion on the list of State Scenic Highways and is approximately 4.5 miles from the project area. The project area is not visible from any eligible state scenic highway.

3.1.5 Regulatory Setting

The following laws, statutes, regulations, codes, and policies would apply to the project.

Federal Regulations

No federal laws or regulations for aesthetics and visual resources are applicable to the project.

State Regulations

State Scenic Highway Program

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the Legislature in 1963 to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from change that would diminish the aesthetic value of lands adjacent to highways. State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Section 260 et seq. A highway may be designated as "scenic" based on the expanse of the natural landscape that can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of that landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler's enjoyment of the view. A Scenic Corridor is described as the land generally adjacent to and visible from such a highway and is usually limited by topography and/or jurisdictional boundaries. In addition to State Highways, County roads are also eligible for scenic designation.

Title 24 Outdoor Lighting Standards – Nighttime Sky

The California legislature passed a bill in 2001 requiring the California Energy Commission to adopt energy efficiency standards for outdoor lighting for both the public and private sectors. The California Energy Commission adopted changes to Title 24, parts 1 and 6, Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which included changes to the requirements for outdoor lighting for residential and non-residential development. The standards regulate lighting characteristics, such as maximum power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls to turn lighting on and off, which could affect nighttime views (California Energy Commission, 2015).

Regional and Local Regulations

Marin County Municipal Code

The following policies and codes of the Marin County Municipal Code related to aesthetics are applicable to the project (Marin County, 2020)

Chapter 22.27 Native Tree Protection and Preservation

Section 22.27.030 Prohibition on Removal of Protected Trees. Protected Trees shall not be removed except in compliance with Section 22.62.040 (Exemptions), and as provided for in Chapter 22.62 (Tree Removal Permits). (Ord. No. 3577, 2012)

Chapter 22.62 Tree Removal Permits

22.62.010 Purpose of Chapter. The purpose of this chapter is to establish regulations for the preservation and protection of native trees in the unincorporated areas of Marin County by limiting tree removal in a manner which allows for reasonable use and enjoyment of such property and to establish a procedure for processing Tree Removal Permits.

Section 22.62.040 Exemptions. The removal of any protected or heritage tree on a lot is exempt from the requirements of this Chapter if it meets at least one of the following criteria for removal:

A. The general health of the tree is so poor due to disease, damage, or age that efforts to ensure its long-term health and survival are unlikely to be successful;
B. The tree is infected by a pathogen or attacked by insects that threaten surrounding trees as determined by an arborist report or other qualified professional;
C. The tree is a potential public health and safety hazard due to the risk of its falling and its structural instability cannot be remedied;
D. The tree is a public nuisance by causing damage to improvements, such as building foundations, retaining walls, roadways/driveways, patios, sidewalks and decks, or interfering with the operation, repair, or maintenance of public utilities;
E. The tree has been identified by a Fire Inspector as a fire hazard;
F. The tree was planted for a commercial tree enterprise, such as Christmas tree farms or orchards;
G. Prohibiting the removal of the tree will conflict with CC&R's which existed at the time this Chapter was adopted;
H. The tree is located on land which is zoned for agriculture (A, ARP, APZ, C-ARP or C-APZ) and that is being used for commercial agricultural purposes. (This criterion is provided to recognize the agricultural property owner's need to manage these large properties and continue their efforts to be good stewards of the land.);
I. The tree removal is by a public agency to provide for the routine management and maintenance of public land or to construct a fuel break;

J. The tree removal is on a developed lot and: 1) does not exceed two protected trees within a one-year timeframe; 2) does not entail the removal of any heritage trees; and 3) does not entail the removal of any protected or heritage trees within a Stream Conservation Area or a Wetland Conservation Area.

It is recommended that a property owner obtain a report from a licensed arborist or verify the status of the tree with photographs to document the applicability of the criteria listed above to a tree which is considered for removal in compliance with this section. (Ord. No. 3577, 2012)

Marin Countywide Plan

The following goals and policies in the Marin Countywide Plan are relevant to the project. Multiple Implementation Programs support each of these policies; they are described fully in the Countywide Plan (County of Marin, 2007).

Biological Resources

Goal BIO-4: Riparian Conservation.

Policy BIO-4.7: Protect Riparian Vegetation. Retain riparian vegetation for stabilization of streambanks and floodplains, moderating water temperatures, trapping and filtering sediments and other water pollutants, providing wildlife habitat, and aesthetic reasons.

Implementation Policy BIO-4.f, Identify Potential Impacts to Riparian Systems. At the time of a development application, evaluate potential impacts on riparian vegetation and aquatic habitat, and incorporate measures to protect riparian systems into the project design and construction. Retain and minimize disturbance to woody and herbaceous riparian vegetation in Stream Conservation Areas and adjacent areas. (Tree growth may be cleared from the stream channel where removal is essential to protect against property damage or prevent safety hazards.)

Community Design

Goal DES-4: Protection of Scenic Resources. Minimize visual impacts of development and preserve vistas of important natural features.

Policy DES-4.1: Preserve Visual Quality. Protect scenic quality and views of the natural environment — including ridgelines and upland greenbelts, hillsides, water, and trees — from adverse impacts related to development.

Implementing Program DES-4.a, Protect Key Public Views. Work with community groups to identify, map, and protect important view corridors. Establish design standards for development in these areas as part of the design review requirements and individual community plans (see DES-3.b).

Implementing Program DES-4.b, Minimize Visual Impacts of Public Facilities. Amend applicable codes and procedures to require appropriate placement,

design, setbacks, and native landscaping of public facilities (including soundwalls, medians, retaining walls, power lines, and water tanks) to reduce visual impacts, and encourage local agencies to adopt similar standards.

Town of Ross Municipal Code

The following policies and codes of the Town of Ross Municipal Code related to aesthetics are applicable to the project (Town of Ross, 2020).

Chapter 12.24 Planting, Alteration, Removal, or Maintenance of Trees

Purpose (5) To promote and Maintain the aesthetic values of the community in general for the benefit of those who currently reside in Ross and as a legacy to future residents. (Ord. 659 (part), 2015; Ord. 568 (part), 2002).

Section 12.24.080 Tree Alteration or Removal Permits and Appeal. (4) Replacement tree. Unless otherwise specified by the Public Works Director or Town Council, replacement trees shall be required at the following ratios:

(a) A tree in good or excellent condition and structure shall be replaced on a one-to-one trunk diameter basis. (Example: 1 21″ dbh tree in good or excellent condition must be replaced with new trees totaling 21″ trunk diameter);

(b) A tree in fair or marginal condition or structure shall be replaced on a three-to-one trunk diameter basis. (Example: a 21″ dbh tree in fair or marginal condition must be replaced with new trees totaling 7″ trunk diameter);

(c) A tree in poor condition or creating a hazard to a building and/or structure, shall be replaced with 2 inches replacement trunk diameter.

Inches of replacement tree may be translated into standard nursery planting sizes using the following formulas:

24″ box replacement tree = 2 inch replacement trunk diameter

36″ box replacement tree = 3 inch replacement trunk diameter

48″ box replacement tree = 4 inch replacement trunk diameter

If native species are removed, replacement trees shall be of a species native to those lands that now constitute the Town of Ross, or a non-native species approved by town staff based on specific site circumstances. Replacement trees should have the same mature size as the trees that have been removed, unless town staff recommends otherwise based on specific site circumstances. If there is a conflict between arborists regarding the condition or structure of a tree, the town arborist's decision shall control. The Town Council or Public Works Director may reduce the number of replacement trees or the tree replacement ratio, as applicable, if the reduction will not negatively impact the environmental functions and value of the urban forest or the aesthetic values of the community.

The applicant shall complete tree replacement within sixty (60) days of tree removal, unless the Town has approved a longer time. Failure to plant required tree replacement may subject the property owner to Administrative Penalties under Chapter 9.70 until the replacement trees are planted.

Town of Ross General Plan

The following policies of the Ross General Plan related to aesthetics are applicable to the project (Town of Ross, 2007).

Goal 1. An Abundance of Green and Healthy Natural Systems

1.1 Protection of Environmental Resources. Protect environmental resources, such as hillsides, ridgelines, creeks, drainage ways, trees and tree groves, threatened and endangered species habitat, riparian vegetation, cultural places, and other resources. These resources are unique in the planning area because of their scarcity, scientific value, aesthetic quality and cultural significance.

Goal 3. Design with Nature, Neighborhood and Community

3.5 View Protection. Preserve views and access to views of hillsides, ridgelines, Mt. Tamalpais and Bald Hill from the public right-of-way and public property. Ensure that the design look and feel along major thoroughfares maintains the "greenness" of the Town.

Kentfield/Greenbrae Community Plan

The following goals of the Kentfield/Greenbrae Community Plan related to aesthetics are applicable to the project (Kentfield/Greenbrae Community Planning Group and Marin County Planning Department, 1987).

Goal 10: To the greatest extent possible, preserve the natural beauty and view corridors of the planning area. Protect and enhance environmental resources in accord with policies of the Marin Countywide Plan.

3.1.6 Impact Assessment Methodology

Significance Criteria

Consistent with State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G (Environmental Checklist) and Marin County Environmental Review Guidelines, the project would have a significant impact if it would:

a. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
b. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
c. In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible

vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, the project would conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality; or

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

Given the nature of the project setting within a park and along a creek, impacts are analyzed in this section relative to the following additional threshold:

e. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views (public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point) of the site and its surroundings

Approach to Impact Analysis

The following analysis discusses the potential significant impacts of the project related to changes in the visual character or other aesthetic impacts in the project area. This section includes an analysis of potential short-term (construction) and long-term (operation) impacts of the project. Impact evaluations are assessed based on the existing conditions described earlier in this section. Mitigation measures are identified, as necessary, to reduce significant impacts.

Impacts to visual quality were assessed based on a combination of the existing visual quality, the visual sensitivity as described in Section 3.1.3 and the degree of degradative visual change that the project would cause as illustrated in Table 3.1-2 below. The degree of visual change was assessed using the baseline photos of the project area from public vantage points and visual simulations of the project from the same vantage point after project implementation. The baseline visual conditions and simulated visual conditions were compared to evaluate the degree of visual change that would result from the project. Visual changes and associated impacts are measured by three factors, described below:

- **Visual contrast** would be significant if it is strong as a result of regraded landforms, alteration or elimination of ridgelines, and changes introduced by a project element that result in landscape colors, textures, and scale of visual elements that are inconsistent with project surroundings.
- **View obstruction** would be considered significant if the project component would obstruct foreground (0 to 0.5 mile) or middle-ground (0.5 to 3 miles) views of the "viewed area" seen from sensitive viewpoints. The viewed area is the area of landscape within the field of vision. The sensitive viewpoint is that from which a view of notable visual quality may be observed.
- **Degraded visual quality** would be considered significant if a project element severely alters or displaces specific scenic resources such as vivid landform features, aesthetic water bodies, mature stands of native/cultural trees (e.g., historic hedgerows), or historic structures.

Visual impacts would be considered to be significant overall based on the level of visual sensitivity and degree of visual change. Construction impacts on visual quality are assessed as those impacts that occur during the construction period. Operation and maintenance impacts

are assessed as those impacts that persist after construction and into the operation and maintenance period for the project.

Table 3.1-2 Approach to Determining Significance of Visual Impacts

Visual Sensitivity	Visual Change: Low	Low to Moderate	Moderate	Moderately High	High
Low	Not Significant	Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant
Low to Moderate	Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant
Moderate	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Potentially Significant	Adverse, Potentially Significant
Moderate to High	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Potentially Significant	Adverse, Potentially Significant	Significant
High	Adverse, Not Significant	Adverse, Potentially Significant	Adverse, Potentially Significant	Significant	Significant

Not Significant. Impacts may or may not be perceptible but are considered minor in the context of existing landscape characteristics and view opportunity.

Adverse, Not Significant. Impacts are perceived as negative but do not exceed environmental thresholds.

Adverse, Potentially Significant. Impacts are perceived as negative and may exceed environmental thresholds depending on project and site-specific circumstances. Mitigation may be required to reduce impacts to less than significant.

Significant. Impacts with feasible mitigation may be reduced to less than significant levels or avoided all together. Without mitigation or avoidance measures, significant impacts would exceed environmental thresholds. If feasible mitigation does not avoid or reduce the degree of visual change to a level that would be less than significant, the impacts is significant and unavoidable.

3.1.7 Impact Discussion

Impacts Avoided

Due to the nature of the project, there would be no impacts related to the following criteria; therefore, no impact discussion is provided for the reasons described below:

1. **Criterion (b):** Implementation of the project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway because there are no designated

or eligible state scenic highways within the project viewshed. No impacts would occur.

2. **Criterion (d):** Implementation of the project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area because no temporary or permanent lighting is proposed. No impacts would occur.

Impacts Analyzed

	Significance Determination
	Construction: Less than Significant
Impact 3.1-1: The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.	**Operation and Maintenance: Less than Significant**

Construction

There are no designated scenic vistas within the Town of Ross or Kentfield. The Town of Ross and Kentfield are located on the valley floor, and scenic vistas on the valley floor are limited, given the intervening development, street trees, and vegetation. Because of the low profile of Corte Madera Creek, as well as the dense vegetation within the project area, construction of the project would not be visible from publicly accessible areas outside of Bike Route 20, informal unnamed paths, A.E. Kent Middle School, College of Marin campus, pedestrian and vehicle bridges, and public roads abutting or crossing the creek. While motorists could view project construction from bridges and public roads abutting or crossing the creek, views would be short-lived (a few seconds) given the speed of travel. Cyclists and pedestrians would be the primary viewers of project construction from the public areas listed above.

Scenic vistas are available from publicly accessible viewpoints along the ridgelines surrounding the valley floor. Corte Madera Creek is generally screened from view by trees from these viewpoints. Due to the distance from the ridgelines and the even cover of street trees and open space, specific details within the project area do not stand out. Project construction would include soil disturbing activities, including removal of the concrete channel within Frederick Allen Park and lower Unit 2, grading in Unit 4, tree removal, and excavation of larger fish pools. Construction of the project would involve removal of up to approximately 369 trees from along the creek, including up to 144 trees within Frederick Allen Park. The loss of these trees would have local visual effects in the short term as discussed in Impact 3.1-3; however, the tree removal would not substantially impact views from scenic vistas because the project area would not be discernible from the surrounding valley floor due to the distance of the project area from scenic viewpoints. The tree removal would occur along the creek but would not be a significant change in the tree cover in the context of the entire valley floor. The project would also not block views of any scenic vista because the project features are located below grade or are low lying. Because the project construction would not be visually discernible from any scenic vista and would not block views of any scenic vista, the impact would be less than significant.

Operation and Maintenance

Once constructed, the project area would include an earthen widened channel and realigned pathway through Frederick Allen Park, new floodwalls, new fish pools, new stormwater pump station, and concrete removal and creek habitat enhancement. As described above, the changes to the area resulting from the project components would not be discernible from scenic vistas due to the distance of the project from the ridgelines and the limited extent of the new project components in the context of the larger valley floor. The project would not have a substantial adverse effect on views from any scenic vista because the project features would be indistinguishable from the background visual conditions at the distance of the project from potential scenic vistas. The project features are also low profile or below grade and would not block views of any scenic vista from the valley floor. Because the project would not be visually discernible from any scenic vista and would not block views of any scenic vista, the impact on scenic vistas during project operation would be less than significant.

Mitigation: None required.

	Significance Determination
Impact 3.1-2: The project would not conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality	**Construction: Less than Significant**
	Operation and Maintenance: Less than Significant

A discussion of the project's potential conflicts with adopted aesthetics or visual policies or standards is provided below. Because the project is located within an urban area designated in the Marin Countywide Plan, this analysis therefore focuses only on conflicts with applicable zoning and does not address visual quality consistent with CEQA Guidelines Appendix G. Visual quality is addressed separately in Impact 3.1-3, below.

Federal and State Regulations

There are no federal visual policies or standards related to aesthetics or visual resources applicable to the project. The project would not involve temporary or permanent nighttime lighting that would conflict with the Title 24 standards for outdoor lighting. The project would not conflict with federal or state visual policies or standards because none are applicable to the project.

Marin Municipal Code

Chapter 22.27, Native Tree Protection and Preservation, of the Marin Municipal Code prohibits tree removal except in compliance with Section 22.62.040 which requires tree removal permits prior to tree removal. Tree removal associated with the project would be exempt from the requirements Chapter 22.62, Tree Removal, because tree removal would be by a public agency to provide for routine management and maintenance of public land. Therefore, the project would not conflict with the Marin Municipal Code and there would be no impact.

Marin Countywide Plan

Marin Countywide Plan Policy BIO-4.7 calls for the protection of riparian vegetation, in part for aesthetics reasons. One of the objectives of the project is to improve fish passage, natural creek processes, and fish and riparian habitat adjacent to the creek. While construction of the project would involve the removal of trees and vegetation within Frederick Allen Park, the existing vegetation is separated from the creek by a 10-foot-tall concrete floodwall. The project would connect vegetation to the natural creek hydrology and increase riparian vegetation within Unit 4 and Frederick Allen Park (upper Unit 3). The project would increase vegetation interaction with the creek, resulting in long-term benefits to water quality in the creek and habitat. The project would have a beneficial impact on riparian habitat and would not conflict with Policy BIO-4.7.

The project would not conflict with Marin Countywide Plan Policy DES-4.1: Preserve Visual Quality. As described in Impact 3.1-1, the project would not impact scenic vistas or views of the natural environment. The project includes landscaping and tree planting that is compatible with the natural environment and would create a natural riparian corridor and saltwater marsh areas along portions of Corte Madera Creek. The tree planting would help screen the new concrete retaining walls over time and would be consistent with the policy. The proposed floodwall elements in Units 3 and 2 would result in low degree of visual contrast with the existing floodwall and would not obstruct the view of substantially degrade the visual quality of the area. The degree of visual change from the new floodwall would be low. Because the project would implement landscaping consistent with County design standards and would employ design features that are compatible with the existing visual context, the impact would be less than significant.

Town of Ross General Plan

The intent of Goal 1 of the Town of Ross General Plan is to protect environmental resources, including creeks trees and riparian vegetation, in part for their visual quality. As discussed above, the project would involve riparian vegetation planting to achieve the project objective of improvement to natural creek processes and fish and riparian habitat adjacent to the creek. Any trees removed within the Town of Ross would be replaced in compliance with Town of Ross requirements for tree replacement and the portion of the project in Unit 4 would have increased trees due planting of willows along the stream. The project would not conflict with Goal 1 of the Town of Ross General Plan because the project would benefit environmental resources and involve planting with trees that are native to the riparian environment; therefore, there would be no impact.

As discussed above and in Impact 3.1-1, the project would not impact scenic vistas or views, including views of hillsides, ridgelines, Mt. Tamalpais, and Bald Hill. No project components are proposed along major throughfares. The project would not conflict with Goal 3 of the Town of Ross General Plan; therefore, there would be no impact.

Town of Ross Municipal Code
Chapter 12.24 of the Municipal Code provides ratios for replacing trees that have been removed. The project would adhere to the mitigation ratios and tree replacement standards in the Town of Ross Municipal Code, and the District would obtain a tree removal permit from the Town of Ross to ensure there would be no conflict. Because the District would provide tree planting and replacement at the ratio required by the Town of Ross and obtain a tree removal permit from the Town of Ross, the impact from conflict with Town of Ross Municipal Code would be less than significant.

Kentfield/Greenbrae Community Plan
The intent of Goal 10 of the Kentfield/Greenbrae Community Plan is to preserve the natural beauty and view corridors of the planning area. As discussed previously, the project would not affect scenic views or vistas. The Kentfield/Greenbrae Community Plan would apply to portions of the project in lower Unit 3 and Unit 2. The project would not degrade the natural beauty or view corridors in the Kentfield community because the project is not located within the viewshed of any view corridors. The project would therefore not conflict with the Kentfield/Greenbrae Community Plan and there would be no impact.

Mitigation: None required.

	Significance Determination
Impact 3.1-3: The project would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings	**Construction: Less than Significant**
	Operation and Maintenance: Significant and Unavoidable

Overview
Visibility
Public views of the project area are available from Frederick Allen Park, Bike Route 20, the informal unnamed paths adjacent to the creek opposite Bike Route 20, College of Marin Campus, and public roads abutting or crossing the creek. The analysis of project impacts on visual quality from public vantage points in Frederick Allen Park and along Bike Route 20 approximates the impacts on visual quality at adjacent private properties; however, impacts on private views are not required to be considered under CEQA.

Because of the low profile of the project, intervening buildings, and dense vegetation within the project area (adjacent to the creek and between residences and buildings that parallel the creek as well as along Sir Francis Drake Boulevard and Poplar/Kent Avenue), it was determined that the project would generally not be visible from public areas outside of Bike Route 20, informal unnamed paths, A.E. Kent Middle School, College of Marin campus, pedestrian and private vehicle bridges, and public roads abutting or crossing the creek.

Visual Quality
Key observation points (KOPs) were selected from areas where the project components would be visible in order to evaluate project changes on visual quality. Visual simulations were

prepared for each of three selected KOPs in order to document the existing conditions and changes in visual character and quality that would occur as a result of the project. The selected KOP locations are shown on Figure 3.1-1. The visual-simulation locations were selected to provide a comprehensive view of the project elements and visual change. The visual simulation location within Frederick Allen Park was specifically selected because it is a location where the Bike Route 20 location would not be modified by the project, which provides for easy comparison between existing and post-project conditions. The visual simulation location at the southern limits of the proposed Frederick Allen Park grading also provides a comprehensive view of the changes within the park, end to end. The location of the visual simulation for the stormwater pump station provides an open, unimpeded view of the stormwater pump station infrastructure. The visual simulation of the taller floodwall is provided from an area where there is less vegetation screening on the Bike Route 20 pathway to allow for a more open view of the taller floodwall. The simulations provide a worst-case visual impact by showing the maximum amount of tree removal, and in the case of the new floodwall, we have also included a simulation showing the condition if a 15-foot vegetation setback from the existing floodwall is not required by the USACE in the Section 408 process.

As discussed under Section 3.1.4 Environmental Setting, Unit 4 is regarded as having moderate visual quality due to the natural channel characteristics of the creek and the vegetated banks; however, many human-made features and disturbances are present. The visual quality of Unit 3 within the Town of Ross is considered lower than the more natural condition of Unit 4 upstream. The overall appearance of the creek in Units 3 and 2 is characterized as highly modified, with low visual quality and scenic integrity. Frederick Allen Park within Unit 3 maintains a moderate visual quality due to the dense vegetation that blocks views of surrounding development and reduces and screens views of the concrete channel.

Viewer Sensitivity

Bike Route 20 is used by bicyclists and pedestrians as a recreational path and used by commuters traveling through the Town of Ross and Marin County. Viewer sensitivity of bicyclists and pedestrians varies along the length of Bike Route 20 within the project area.

Viewer sensitivity along Bike Route 20 within Unit 3 Frederick Allen Park is considered high, due the high number of viewers and the resting areas (e.g. benches) which allow for longer duration of views and more viewer exposure. Comments received during EIR scoping discuss the visual sensitivity of Frederick Allen Park and the importance of the tree canopy to the visual quality of the park. Additionally, bicyclists and pedestrians would be in close proximity to the changes proposed in Frederick Allen Park.

Viewer sensitivity along Bike Route 20 within Unit 3 Granton Park floodwall and Unit 2 floodwall areas is considered moderate. The existing floodwalls would minimize the degree to which modifications would be apparent in the visual setting and viewer attention would vacillate between the left bank, the creek, and the right bank. Viewer duration would be approximately six to eight minutes as viewers move along the pathway opposite the floodwall. Views of the floodwall would be interrupted by vegetation along the pathway that

intermittently screens views of the concrete channel and floodwall. Similar to Unit 3 and Unit 2, viewer sensitivity along Bike Route 20 within the Unit 2 concrete channel removal area is considered moderate.

Laurel Avenue is within the project area adjacent to the proposed stormwater pump station and is used by motorist, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Viewer sensitivity within the Unit 3 stormwater pump station area is considered low to moderate due to the lower number of viewers and short duration of views from individuals driving on Laurel Avenue.

Lagunitas Road is within the project area and is used by motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians. Viewer sensitivity along Lagunitas Road in the vicinity of Unit 4 is low because motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrian would be focused on the road, and not toward Unit 4 and the viewer exposure from Lagunitas Road toward Unit 4 is less than 100 feet and the view duration of the project area would last a few seconds as motorists, bicyclists and pedestrians cross Laguntias Road bridge.

Construction

Construction-related activities would temporarily influence the character of the project area as viewed from the Bike Route 20, informal unnamed paths, A. E. Kent Middle School, College of Marin campus, pedestrian and private vehicle bridges, and adjacent public roads. Graded surfaces, excavations, stockpiled soils, construction equipment and materials, and construction trucks and vehicles accessing the project area would be visible within portions of the project area during the seven-month construction period. The project would require the removal of a minimum of 167 trees and a maximum of approximately 369 trees from along the creek. While construction activities would result in a moderately high degree of visual change due to the removal of trees, alteration and grading in Frederick Allen Park, and presence of construction equipment materials. The public would be kept out of the construction area and a large segment of Bike Route 20 along the majority of Unit 3 and through Frederick Allen Park would be closed during the construction period for safety as discussed in Section 3.14 Transportation. Views of construction would be limited to views of floodwall installation in Unit 2 and a portion of lower Unit 3 where visual quality is low under existing circumstances. Viewer sensitivity during construction would be low to moderate because viewers would be less sensitive to the visual change from the presence of construction equipment and vehicles due to the limited views of construction work and temporary nature of project construction in lower Unit 3 and Unit 2. Construction of the floodwall in lower Unit 3 and Unit 2 would move along the floodwall installation area and construction would only occur in each area for a couple of weeks. The lower Unit 2 construction would last up to six weeks Because the majority of the construction area would be off limits to the public and out of view and the visible construction activities in lower Unit 3 and Unit 2 would be very short in duration, the impact on visual character and quality during the construction period is less than significant.

Operation and Maintenance

Unit 4 Channel Improvements and Fish Ladder Removal (Town of Ross)

The proposed work within Unit 4 would consist of removal of the existing fish ladder, removal of 21 trees, grading within channel and banks, and channel stabilization measures including planted rock, vegetation, erosion-control fabric, and engineered streambed material.

The visual character of Unit 4 would not substantially change. Viewers would view a slightly lower and wider channel, particularly at the connection to Unit 3. The lowering of the channel would be very gradual and likely indiscernible as the channel approaches Lagunitas Road Bridge resulting in weak visual contrast. The channel bed would remain earthen, as it currently is. The removal of 21 trees from Unit 4 would not be obvious to viewers given the highly vegetated setting of Unit 4, and the larger trees along the streambanks and adjacent to Lagunitas Road that generally screen the channel would remain and the degree of visual change would be low. Publicly accessible views of Unit 4 are from the Lagunitas Road Bridge, and from the parking lot just south of the United States Postal Service building, west of the creek. Views from Lagunitas Road toward Unit 4 would last for seconds for motorists and bicyclists and less than a minute for pedestrians where the road crosses the creek. Motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians would be traveling perpendicular to the creek and would have to adjust their views to the north or south to view the creek corridor where the roadway crosses the creek. The project modifications in Unit 4 would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site or surroundings. Potential views into Unit 4 from adjacent public spaces would be short in duration; therefore, the viewer sensitivity would be low to moderate and the visual change would be low because all of the proposed project elements, including streambank stabilization measures and natural channel conditions, are currently visible within the Unit 4 viewshed. Once construction is complete, the publicly accessible views of Unit 4 would be similar to the existing visual setting. Because the viewer sensitivity is low to moderate and degree of visual change would be low, the resulting impact on visual character and quality would be less than significant.

Unit 3 Frederick Allen Park

An existing view of Frederick Allen Park from the tennis courts looking north is provided in Figure 3.1-11. The project elements within Frederick Allen Park include removal of the concrete channel, construction of concrete floodwalls, and excavation and grading within the channel and park to provide creek corridor widening and natural floodplain benches and banks connecting to Frederick Allen Park. The improvements also include a pedestrian path within the park. 10-foot-tall retaining walls would be installed on the left and right bank at the connection to Unit 4. An 80-foot-long floodwall, approximately 2 feet above ground, would be constructed along the western edge of Frederick Allen Park, and an approximately 240-foot-long 2-foot-tall floodwall would be constructed on the left bank of the creek. Existing shrubs

and vegetation, including a minimum of 113 trees and a maximum of approximately 144 trees[1] would be removed from within the park to accommodate the new park design. A minimum of 89 trees and up to 125 trees would be planted within Frederick Allen Park depending on the final project design and USACE authorization[1]. The project also includes planting of other shrubs and vegetation as indicated on the planting plan in Appendix B. The District would also install temporary shade structures as required by Mitigation Measure 3.12-3: Temporary Shade Structures (see Section 3.12 Recreation) to provide temporary shade along Bike Route 20 after tree planting and until a tree canopy has re-established. A visual simulation of the park one year after construction (Figure 3.1-12) illustrates the proposed modifications to the park, following new landscape planting and prior to the new vegetation maturing, when the park grading and new retaining walls and structures would be most visible. Visual simulations of the vegetation approximately 10 and 20 years after landscaping (Figure 3.1-13 and Figure 3.1-14) show the expected visual conditions after vegetation establishment. The visual simulations on Figure 3.1-12 through Figure 3.1-14 reflect the minimum number of trees that would be planted within the park with a 15-foot setback from the new floodwalls.

A key visual element in the existing Frederick Allen Park viewshed is the dense vegetation and large trees that form a canopy within the park and screen views of surrounding commercial and residential structures and the concrete channel. The tree canopy is a defining feature of the park and the vegetation and tree canopy contribute to the harmony, order, and coherence of the park.

The visual character of the park, as viewed from Bike Route 20, would change in the years immediately following construction from a pathway, highly vegetated on both sides with dense tree canopy cover, to a pathway with adjacent exposed areas of dirt in between the newly planted landscaping, the new exposed earthen channel, exposed retaining walls, and minimal tree cover and shade as shown in Figure 3.1-12. The area of tree removal would be replaced with native vegetation including shrubs, grasses, and riparian trees as shown in Appendix B; however, it would take approximately 10 to 20 years for the trees to mature and provide coverage comparable to existing conditions, as shown on Figure 3.1-13 and Figure 3.1-14. The surrounding structures would become more visible while the trees are establishing due to the reduction in tree canopy cover. Views of architectural elements, including homes and commercial buildings and new retaining walls, would be a deviation from the dense vegetation in the existing park setting and would result in a moderate to high degree of visual change. The moderate to high degree of visual change coupled with the high visual sensitivity would result

[1] As discussed in Chapter 2, Project Description, the higher estimate of tree removal reflects a 15-foot separation between the proposed short floodwall and trees. The exact number of trees required for removal cannot be determined until the District has obtained USACE Section 408 authorization. The USACE guidelines for landscape plantings and vegetation management at levees and floodwalls requires a 15-foot separation between floodwalls and trees. It is uncertain whether USACE will consider the 2-foot-tall floodwall a structure that requires a 15-foot separation from trees.

in a significant impact on visual quality immediately following vegetation establishment and until the tree canopy and vegetation have re-established in the park. The proposed shade structures are not expected to be a substantial contributing element to the significant visual impact because the shade structure design would be selected in coordination with the Town of Ross to blend in harmoniously with the park environment. The District would implement **Mitigation Measure 3.1-3: Large Tree Planting**, which requires the District to integrate large box trees into the planting plan and design for Frederick Allen Park to the extent feasible. While planting larger trees in the park would minimize impacts to visual quality immediately following construction, the large box trees would not provide the same canopy cover and visual screening as the existing fully grown trees that would be removed. The impact to visual quality would remain significant and unavoidable in the years immediately following project implementation because the available mitigation (larger tree planting) would provide less dense canopy cover and associated screening of concrete walls and surrounding buildings than the existing tree canopy and vegetation.

After a period of approximately 10 years, a new tree canopy would become established, and the visual character of the park would be similar to the existing conditions where trees shade the pathway and screen views of the surrounding buildings and structures as shown in Figure 3.1-13. After 20 years, the trees would mature and an extensive tree canopy would cover the park, as shown in Figure 3.1-14. The improvements to the park, including tree planting, additional seating, educational signage, and access to the creek would provide views of a natural creek corridor and would provide greater wildlife viewing opportunities due to the wildlife that would be attracted to the area. After a tree canopy has re-established in the park, the project would result in a more harmonious and coherent scene due to the integration of natural vegetation and consistency with the upstream Unit 4 natural channel. The resulting visual impact after tree canopy establishment would be beneficial. The visual contrast of the project retaining and floodwalls with the surrounding area would be lessened by the project landscaping and vegetation. While the impacts of the project on the existing visual character and quality at Frederick Allen Park would be significant and unavoidable immediately following construction and for a period of approximately 10 years, impacts would become less than significant and beneficial after the landscaping matures and provides cover and visual screening from the surrounding residential and commercial areas.

Unit 3 Granton Park Floodwall and Stormwater Pump Station

The project elements within the lower reach of Unit 3 include construction of floodwalls, a pump station at Laurel Avenue, removal of up to 94 trees (86 for floodwall segments #2 and #3 and eight for the pump station) and up to 16 fish pools within the channel.

The visual character of the stormwater pump station location is most apparent from the end of Laurel Avenue and slightly visible from Bike Route 20. Views of the stormwater pump station location from Bike Route 20 are obscured by existing vegetation growing along the fence at the top of the right bank floodwall. The existing visual setting at the stormwater pump station includes slightly disturbed vegetation adjacent to a paved roadway and residential development and college buildings and infrastructure (Figure 3.1-15). The pump station would

generally be visible from Laurel Avenue and the surrounding area and would generally not be visible from Bike Route 20 because it would be located behind the newly constructed floodwall and the infrastructure would be low profile and mostly below grade. Figure 3.1-16 provides a visual simulation of the proposed pump station. The majority of the pump station would be underground, and the height of the above-ground components would be approximately 7 feet, with the dimensions of the concrete pad being 6 feet wide and 13 feet long. The pump station would have a weak visual contrast because the location is in a disturbed area surrounded by a paved roadway and existing development, resulting in low degree of visual change. The project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of Unit 3 because of the low visual quality of the area and the weak visual contrast of the pump station. The low degree of visual change coupled with low to moderate visual sensitivity would result in a less than significant impact on visual quality.

The visual character of Unit 3, as viewed from Bike Route 20, would not substantially change. Approximately 1,075 feet of the left bank of the creek would change from an existing floodwall to a taller floodwall extending approximately 2 to 4 feet above the existing concrete wall. The floodwall could also be set back from the existing channel wall by approximately 10 feet at the edge of the District property. If the floodwall is constructed as an extension of the existing channel wall, no trees would need to be removed as a part of the project. However, it is within the jurisdiction of USACE to require tree removal within 15 feet of the existing floodwall based on their guidance for landscape management along floodwalls. USACE could require tree removal within 15 feet of the existing floodwall at any time even if the project were not implemented, and tree removal could be required by USACE during project construction. Figure 3.1-17 shows an existing view of Unit 2, which is similar in visual quality to the lower reach of Unit 3. Figure 3.1-18 provides a visual simulation of the floodwall proposed in Unit 2, above the existing floodwall with vegetation removed from within 15 feet of the floodwall, and Figure 3.1-19 provides a visual simulation of the floodwall with the existing vegetation retained. With construction of the floodwall, the open area and disturbed vegetation on the left bank would no longer be visible. Views of the creek and the right bank of the creek would be maintained. Tree removal would not be obvious to viewers given the height of the new floodwall, which would block trees if they were retained behind the floodwall. While some trees would be visible behind the floodwall in the tree-retention option, the visual character and quality would not be substantially different from the view without trees. Because the existing setting of Unit 3 is of low visual quality, the slightly taller floodwall would have a weak visual contrast and the new floodwall in Unit 3 would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of Unit 3. The low degree of visual change coupled with the low to moderate visual sensitivity would result in a be less than significant.

Unit 2 Floodwall

The Unit 2 floodwall includes installation of a new floodwall approximately 2 to 4 feet tall and potential removal of up to 71 trees. As noted above, the floodwall may be attached to the existing floodwall or set back from the floodwall by approximately 10 feet. If the floodwall is attached to the existing floodwall, trees may not need to be removed; however, the USACE could enforce a 15-foot setback from the existing floodwall in accordance with their guidance.

The visual character of Unit 2, as viewed from Bike Route 20, would not substantially change. A 2- to 4-foot-tall floodwall would be visible at the top of the existing floodwall for a length of approximately 945 feet of the left bank of the creek. Figure 3.1-17 shows an existing view of Unit 2, and Figure 3.1-18 provides a visual simulation of the floodwall proposed in Unit 2, above the existing floodwall with removal of trees within 15 feet of the floodwall. Figure 3.1-19 provides a visual simulation of the floodwall with trees retained to illustrate the range of potential project conditions. With construction of the floodwall, the open area and disturbed vegetation on the left bank would no longer be visible. Views of the creek and the right bank of the creek would be maintained. As described under Unit 3, tree removal may be required by USACE along the floodwall. Tree removal would not be obvious to viewers given the height of the new floodwall, which would block trees if they were retained behind the floodwall. The visual quality of Unit 2 with trees removed would not be substantially different from the view with trees retained. Because the existing setting of Unit 2 is of low visual quality, the taller floodwall with or without tree removal would result in a weak visual contrast and would not substantially degrade the existing visual character of Unit 2. The low degree of visual change coupled with the low to moderate visual sensitivity would result in a less than significant impact.

Unit 2 Lower College of Marin Concrete Channel Removal

The visual character of the lower reach of Unit 2, as viewed from Bike Route 20 and the informal/unnamed path on the right bank below Stadium Way, would change from a concrete channel to a natural creek with tidal and wetland habitat and would include potential removal of up to 39 trees (see Figure 3.1-20 and Figure 3.1-21). The existing visual quality in the lower College of Marin concrete channel removal area is low. Removal of the concrete and creation of natural habitat with native vegetation would result in a beneficial impact and would reduce visual contrast with the lower reaches of Corte Madera Creek, where it widens and eventually flows into the San Francisco Bay. The transition of the concrete channel to natural creek would be an apparent beneficial visual change, reducing visual contrast with the surrounding natural creek channel. The visual impact from removing the concrete and creating salt marsh habitat would be beneficial and the low degree of visual change coupled with the low to moderate visual sensitivity would result in a less than significant impact.

Mitigation: Implement Mitigation Measure 3.1-3.

Mitigation Measure 3.1-3: Large Tree Planting. The District will integrate large box trees into the final planting plan and design for Frederick Allen Park to the extent ecologically appropriate for the proposed species. The final planting plan will be provided to the Town of Ross for review and comment no less than 90 days prior to landscaping.

Significance after Mitigation: The mitigation would reduce the visual impact immediately following landscaping by providing increased screening of concrete structures and surrounding buildings; however, the impact would remain significant and unavoidable until the tree canopy is re-established and the trees and vegetation screen the retaining walls and adjacent structures.

Figure 3.1-11 KOP 1: Existing View of Frederick Allen Park, Unit 3

Figure 3.1-12 KOP 1: Visual Simulation of Frederick Allen Park, One Year After Construction

Figure 3.1-13 KOP 1: Simulation of Frederick Allen Park, 10 Years After Construction

Figure 3.1-14 KOP 1: Simulation of Frederick Allen Park, 20 Years After Construction

Figure 3.1-15 KOP 2: Existing View of Pump Station Location, Unit 3

Figure 3.1-16 KOP 2: Visual Simulation of Pump Station, Unit 3

Figure 3.1-17 KOP 3: Existing View of Floodwall Location, Unit 2

Figure 3.1-18 KOP 3: Visual Simulation of Floodwall with Trees Removed, Unit 2

Figure 3.1-19 KOP 3: Visual Simulation of Floodwall with Trees Retained, Unit 2

Figure 3.1-20 Existing View of Lower College of Marin Concrete Channel Removal, Unit 2

Figure 3.1-21 Visual Simulation of Lower College of Marin Concrete Channel Removal, Unit 2

3.1.8 References

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