

## J. VISUAL RESOURCES

This section evaluates the effects of the Draft Specific Plan on visual resources, including urban design and landscape elements of the Lower Arsenal, scenic views from the Lower Arsenal, and views of the Lower Arsenal from points outside the project site. The analysis also considers the consistency of the Draft Specific Plan with applicable visual resources-related policies. Photos are included to illustrate the site's visual qualities.

The Lower Arsenal is a historic landscape that developed in both planned and organic ways starting in the 1850s. The site thus comprises a linked collection of historic buildings, spaces, and neighborhoods. The historic qualities of the site are inextricably linked to the site's visual qualities. Refer to Section IV.K, Cultural and Paleontological Resources, for a detailed analysis of the Draft Specific Plan's effects on historic resources, including historic buildings and landscapes. The analysis in this section focuses on the visual qualities of historic resources on the site – specifically scenic views, visual relationships between built components of the site, and visual character.

### 1. Setting

The following section describes the visual quality of each of the zones in the Specific Plan Area, important views and viewsheds in the site, visual character of surrounding areas, and external views of the Lower Arsenal. Refer to Section IV.A, Land Use and Planning Policy, for a description of the physical characteristics of the project site.

**a. Visual Quality of the Project Site.** Visually, the project site is distinct from other areas of Benicia, including Downtown. While Downtown Benicia is characterized by a fine-grained urban fabric organized around a generally north/south and east/west-oriented gridiron, many of the streets and pathways that organize the Specific Plan Area are curvilinear, and follow the hilly topography of the site. Nevertheless, many of the buildings and open spaces within the Plan Area – particularly those on and around Jefferson Ridge – are highly formalized, and use a classical vocabulary that emphasizes symmetry, repetition, and rectilinear shapes. Elsewhere on the site – along Grant Street, for instance – design motifs are slightly less formal, and buildings are more industrial and utilitarian in nature. Informal visual qualities are also present in the functions of buildings; the artist's spaces south of Grant Street are characterized by eclectic artwork and signage, and reflect the transformation of industrial-use buildings into combined working/living spaces.



*Jefferson Street is lined with trees and an orderly row of buildings.*

The Draft Specific Plan divides the project site into four areas for planning purposes. While these zones were not defined solely on the basis of aesthetic characteristics, each has a generally distinct visual character. The following section summarizes the visual characteristics of each of the four zones.

(1) **Jefferson Ridge/Officers' Row Zone.** As noted above, Jefferson Ridge is perhaps the most visually formal district in the Specific Plan Area. Jefferson Street is lined with trees and an orderly row of stately buildings, including the Clocktower, Commanding Officer's Quarters, the Lieutenant's Quarters, and the Duplex Officers' Quarters. These buildings use a classical design vocabulary that emphasizes symmetry, rectilinear masses, formal entryways (particularly at the Lieutenant's Quarters), flanking open space, and simple, unadorned facades. This zone also occupies the highest point in the Specific Plan Area, and the airy, expansive views of the district (combined with the large areas of undeveloped open space) contribute to its formal and hierarchical visual character. Open space occupies the area immediately south of Jefferson Street and is characterized by irregularly-spaced trees with a grassy understory. The large cork oak trees in the southeastern part of the zone, which are thought to have been planted shortly after establishment of the Arsenal, contribute to the area's visual character. The Interstate 780 (I-780) freeway is visible from segments of Jefferson Street (including in between the Lieutenant's Quarters and Commanding Officer's Quarters) and diminishes the historic visual quality of the zone.

(2) **Adams Street Zone.** The visual quality of Adams Street is characterized by the steep embankment rising up to Jefferson Street on the north side of the street and a row of light industrial and commercial buildings on the south side of the street. The street is straight and open, and, in combination with a lack of mature vegetation on the south side of the street, appears more exposed than some of the other roadways in the Specific Plan Area, including Jefferson Street and Grant Street (discussed below). The western entry to Adams Street (and Polk Street) is occupied by the 1942 Administration Building, which features Spanish Mediterranean Revival design motifs, including white, stucco-clad facades, and tiled roofs. The building, with its large, open parking area in the front, creates a formal gateway to the Adams Street Zone that contrasts with some of the more modest, utilitarian buildings on the street. Another notable building on Adams Street is the Guard House, a simple, unadorned one-story structure whose adjacent open space contains expansive views of Carquinez Strait.

(3) **Grant Street Zone.** The Grant Street Zone is the most visually eclectic of the four zones, with a diverse group of buildings and architectural styles, a patchwork of closely-spaced buildings next to the street, long stretches of fencing, an overpass, and a large and visible area of undeveloped open space. The buildings range from the Spanish Mediterranean Revival



*The visual quality of Adams Street is characterized by a steep embankment rising up from the northern side of the street.*



*The buildings directly fronting Grant Street create a comfortable environment for pedestrians.*

Administration Building on the western end of the street, to the 1872 Barracks, with its colonnaded veranda, to the 1870 office building on the eastern end, along with more modern, small-scale buildings. Unlike Adams Street, Grant Street has a strong sense of physical enclosure due to the proximity of buildings to the street and curves at the street’s western and eastern ends. However, the overpass above Polk Street also provides expansive views to the south. Of all the streets in the project site, Grant Street is the one that is most visually comfortable for pedestrians.

**(4) South of Grant Zone.** The South of Grant Zone represents the culmination of the trend in the Specific Plan Area from the formal, classically-inspired environment of the uplands around Jefferson Ridge to the utilitarian, industrial, and larger-scale visual environment of the flatlands. Building footprints in the zone are consistently larger than in other parts of the Specific Plan Area, and many structures are set on high plinths to facilitate loading and unloading onto rail cars; these features diminish pedestrian comfort and provide the area with a more workaday visual quality. The Polk Street underpass provides the only access into the zone and provides a memorable visual gateway into the area.



*The South of Grant Zone is characterized by large-footprint buildings and a utilitarian, industrial character.*

In terms of architecture, the zone is characterized by the long, two-story rectilinear buildings that line Jackson and Tyler Streets, and the massive 1876 Blacksmith’s Shop, which features immense round-headed windows along the upper story of the structure, a running architrave in raised brick, and bull’s eyes windows in triangular pediments on the gable ends. Low-slung storage units and expansive parking areas are located in the westernmost portion of the zone. The South of Grant Zone, compared to the other zones, contains very little vegetation, which contributes to the industrial look of the area. The industrial and utilitarian look is tempered by colorful signage in the area, and the artists’ lofts, where many of the work/live spaces have been personalized with plants, art, and outdoor furniture.

**b. Views and Viewsheds in the Project Site.**

Although the Specific Plan Area consists of distinct zones, these zones share a visual relationship that is reinforced by view corridors between buildings and features in the area. In addition, the entire site, which is built on a hillside sloping down to the Carquinez Strait shoreline, contains water and territorial views that connect the site to surrounding areas. These views are an important component of the historical quality of the Arsenal – because the Arsenal location was originally chosen in part due to its strategic location overlooking the Carquinez Strait – and add to the existing visual quality of the site.



*Jefferson Ridge contains expansive views of the Carquinez Strait and the Martinez Hills.*

Scenic views are available throughout the project site, although Jefferson Ridge contains some of the most expansive views of the Carquinez Strait and surrounding landmasses. Mount Diablo can be seen from select parcels where there are few buildings obstructing views to the southeast. Adams Street and Grant Street contain views of the Strait, but views are constrained in some places by the presence of structures and vegetation. The Simpkins Auto Center building on Adams Street, for instance, is oriented parallel to the street and thus partially obstructs views to the south. Views are also available in the South of Grant Zone, including views of Jefferson Ridge.

The Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan identifies eight view corridors and sight lines in the Specific Plan Area (see Figure III-6, which also shows sight lines added by the Draft Specific Plan). These view locations are not the only points in the project site where significant views are found, but identify the key visual relationships between historic buildings and significant landscape features in the site. These view corridors and sight lines are described below:

**(1) View Corridors.** View corridors within the Plan Area are listed below.

- *Panorama of Waterfront and Bridge from the Clocktower Building.* The clocktower is located on one of the highest points of the site, resulting in extensive views to the north, east, south, and west. Views encompass the Carquinez Strait, surrounding hillsides, Mount Diablo, and the I-680 bridge.
- *Shop Buildings and Martinez Hills.* This view corridor, located around the intersection of Jefferson Street and Park Road provides expansive views to the south, including the Blacksmith Shop and adjacent shop buildings, and the hillsides behind Martinez in the background.
- *Shop Buildings, Waterfront, and Hills Beyond.* This view corridor is visible from a point just to the south of the Administration Building, and consists of the Blacksmith Shop and adjacent shop buildings, portions of the Carquinez Strait shoreline, Port of Benicia land, and hillsides on the south side of the Strait.
- *Commanding Officer's Quarters, Clocktower Building, and Promontory.* The northeasterly bend at Grant Street provides exceptional views of Carquinez Strait to the southeast, but also contains a view corridor that encompasses two significant buildings on Jefferson Ridge: the Commanding Officer's Quarters and the Clocktower Building. Other views of Jefferson Ridge are available in downslope locations.

**(2) Sight Lines.** Key sight lines between buildings are listed below:

- *Clocktower Building and Commanding Officer's Building.* Views east from the Commanding Officer's Quarters are partially obscured by vegetation.
- *Duplex Officers' Quarters and Guard House.* This sight line also connects Jefferson Ridge to the Carquinez Strait.
- *Administration Building and Entry to Lower Arsenal.* The Administration Building indicates that one is entering the Specific Plan Area.
- *Commanding Officer's Quarters and Office Building.* This sight line provides a critical link between two significant historic buildings.

- *Eastern Terminus of Jackson Street and the Clocktower Building.* The Clocktower Building can be seen from the extreme southeastern corner of the project site – one of the lowest points in the Specific Plan Area.
- c. **Visual Quality of Areas Around the Project Site.** Following is a brief discussion of the visual character of areas surrounding the project site.
  - *North.* Areas to the north of the Specific Plan Area are characterized by industrial land used for deposition of construction material and the storage of vehicles and machinery. The elevated I-780 freeway is visible from northern portions of the project site, beyond which are rolling, undeveloped hillsides.
  - *East.* Silos and other industrial facilities associated with the Port of Benicia are located to the east of the project site. These areas are characterized by large expanses of flat land, with parking areas, docks, and a moderate amount of activity.
  - *South.* Port of Benicia land also borders the site to the south. Port land to the south contains large parking lots, and clustered low-slung buildings, providing unobstructed views from the South of Grant Zone and uphill zones with views to the south.
  - *West.* Residential neighborhoods consisting mainly of single-family houses (but also townhomes and condominiums) are located to the west of the site. Beyond these neighborhoods is Downtown Benicia. These neighborhoods are characterized by older, bungalow-style architecture, tree-lined streets, and a moderate level of pedestrian activity.

d. **Views of the Project Site.** Portions of the Lower Arsenal are located on hillsides adjacent to Carquinez Strait. Because the project site is in a topographically prominent location, it is visible from numerous locations in and around Benicia. Most notably, the site is visible from the Interstate 680 (I-680) bridge from Benicia to Martinez and the elevated I-780 freeway to the north of the site. From these locations, the project site appears as an informally-organized collection of buildings interspersed with mature vegetation. The pattern of urban development in the Lower Arsenal stands in sharp contrast to that in the residential neighborhoods to the west of the site, where streets are organized in a grid and building footprints are relatively narrow and spaced close together.

Farther afield, the project site is visible from select high points in the Carquinez Strait Regional Shoreline open space area (and other hillside areas south and west of Martinez). From these vantage points, the Lower Arsenal appears as a sparsely-developed hillside settlement, and is dominated by ships unloading at the Port, and the steep hillsides north of Downtown Benicia in the foreground.

## 2. Applicable Policies

The policy documents that are applicable to visual quality within and around the project site are the Circulation, Visual Character and Open Space and Conservation of Resources Elements of the City of Benicia General Plan and the Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan. Applicable policies from these documents are presented below.

a. **City of Benicia General Plan.** The Land Use and Growth Management, Circulation, Visual Character, and Open Space and Conservation elements of the General Plan contain goals, policies, and programs that are applicable to visual resources on the project site. In regard to the Arsenal District, the General Plan notes that “the specimen trees and ornamental landscaping surrounding

officers' quarters on the ridgetop have special significance, along with the mature street trees which line Jefferson Street and the ornamental specimen trees which mark Military Cemetery. Additionally, the embankment above Adams Street and Washington Streets was historically planted with cork oak trees to form the original passage that provided a formal entrance to the Clocktower."

The General Plan designates I-780 between Glen Cove Road and the Benicia Martinez Bridge, and I-680 between Morrow Lane and the Benicia-Martinez Bridge as scenic routes. Designated scenic viewpoints in the vicinity of the Specific Plan Area are on I-780 between 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Street and along Park Road above Jefferson Street. Views from these two viewpoints extend into the project site.

Specific General Plan Goals and Policies related to visual resources are listed below.

#### Land Use and Growth Management

- *Growth Management Policy 2.2.1:* Protect and maintain agricultural and rural land uses, hillsides, two-lane curving roads, watersheds, riparian corridors and upland grasslands.

#### Circulation

- *Circulation Goal 2.23:* Ensure adequate parking while maintaining aesthetic features.
  - *Circulation Program 2.23.2.* Reduce the visibility of parking lots.
- *Goal 2.26.* Ensure that scenic and environmental amenities of I-680 and I-780 are not compromised.

#### Visual Character

- *Visual Character Goal 3.9.* Protect and enhance scenic roadways and highways.
  - *Visual Character Policy 3.9.1.* Preserve vistas along I-780 and I-680.
- *Visual Character Goal 3.10.* Enhance the streetscape along Military East and West.
  - *Visual Character Policy 3.12.1.* Encourage additional attractive, quality development in industrial areas.

#### Open Space and Conservation

- *Regional and Subregional Open Space and Trails Goal 3.15.* Provide buffers throughout the community.
  - *Regional and Subregional Open Space and Trails Policy 3.15.1.* Preserve and protect, through a variety of methods, a pattern of open space buffers and greenbelts throughout the Planning Area.
  - *Regional and Subregional Open Space and Trails Policy 3.15.2.* Preserve public views of public open space and maintain existing vistas (including the Northern Area Vistas) wherever possible.
    - *Regional and Subregional Open Space and Trails Program 3.15.D.* Where applicable, require that new developments include view corridors that allow viewing open space from public roadways and public use areas.
  - *Regional and Subregional Open Space and Trails Policy 3.15.5.* Encourage the landscaping of existing open spaces, and landscape new open spaces with native plants.
- *Regional and Subregional Open Space and Trails Policy 3.15.6.* Restore and maintain natural landscapes in a natural manner.
- *Regional and Subregional Open Space and Trails Goal 3.16.* Preserve key land forms which separate Benicia physically and visually from adjacent communities.

**b. Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan.** The Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan is intended to promote the protection of historic resources in the Arsenal and to encourage new development that is compatible with historic places and buildings in the Arsenal. Because the historic qualities of the

Arsenal are integral to the visual character of the Specific Plan Area, many of the policies in the Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan relate to aesthetic resources in the project site. The policies listed below are ones that are applicable to the key elements of the visual analysis, including views, viewsheds, and overall visual character. The Draft Specific Plan's consistency with other policies in the Historic Conservation Plan – specifically those that relate to historic architecture – is discussed in Section IV.K, Cultural and Paleontological Resources.

#### **View Corridors and Sight Lines**

In general, the following policies regarding view preservation will apply:

1. Maintain designated sight lines to landmark buildings.
2. Where view corridors are indicated, it is important to maintain a direct sight line to all landmark structures and important natural features which fall within the view angle mapped in Figure 6. New development within a designated view corridor is permitted but should be of a scale that will not overpower or dominate views of landmarks.
3. Visual impact studies, such as computer simulation, photo montage or on-site story poles may be required under the design review procedures to document the impacts of proposed development on views or view corridors.

#### **Subdistrict 2: The Ridge/Officers' Row**

##### *Future Development*

1. Retain designated major views and view corridors noted in Figure 6 [of the Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan; see Figure III-6 of this EIR], especially to landmark buildings and water or waterfront areas, and comply with the view preservation policies of Chapter Four.
2. Retain significant tree plantings on private sites and along streets, as shown in Figure 5 [of the Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan]. Permit removal of large trees only if a property is unduly constrained from development by their retention, and they are replaced at a higher ratio elsewhere on site.
3. Maintain the general topography which defines this subarea as a ridge, especially the embankment north of Adams Street and the promontory land form of the Clocktower site.
4. Avoid development, grading, or parking on steep slopes which would necessitate the use of tall retaining walls to create level building sites.
5. Require landscaped setbacks from the street for buildings, parking and loading areas consistent with the pattern of historic buildings on Jefferson Street.
7. Encourage the replacement, redesign or visual screening at the northwest corner of Jefferson and Park Streets.
8. Enhance the unified identity of the subdistrict and its image as a former residential officers' enclave.

#### **Site and Landscape Treatment**

1. Locate parking lots to the side or rear of the buildings – wherever they will be least visible and obtrusive.
5. Maintain existing street trees. Provide infill plantings along the north side of Jefferson Street with the same species where trees are missing. Street trees along the south side should be chosen and planted so that the views will remain open.
7. Use dense tree plantings to screen parking areas where appropriate, i.e., where views to historic buildings or water won't be obscured.
8. Encourage limited night lighting of facades for historic buildings along the ridge top, for example, of public buildings while in use, and up-lighting of mature trees to add drama and highlight the district's presence on the horizon.

#### **Building Design**

- *Policy 1: Siting and Setbacks.* Site relationships should respect the prevailing patterns along streets and take into account major view corridors.

- *Guideline 1.3.* Provide adequate distance between structures to avoid the impression of overcrowding and to allow for views to and from landmark buildings and/or the water. A minimum building separation shall be provided equal to the height, measured at its perimeter walls, of the existing historic building or the proposed structure, whichever is greater.

#### **Parking and Service Areas**

- *Guideline 1.3.* Parking lots or access drives should be located to avoid steep slopes and minimize grading and paving.
- *Policy 2: Landscaping.* Promote a unified design concept in distinct subareas through the appropriate selection of plant material and the maintenance of mature landscaping.
  - *Guideline 2.2.* Mature trees, especially those which have historic associations with the building or the city's development, shall be retained unless diseased, hazardous or located such that development of the property is unduly constrained. When necessary to remove a mature tree, it shall be replaced with a minimum of two 24 inch box specimens planted on site.
- *Policy 3: Fences, Walls and Pedestrian Paths.* Retain the sense of visual openness and promote pedestrian circulation within and between subdistricts by the judicious use of walls and fences and placement of pedestrian paths.

#### **Subdistrict 3: The Plateau/Headquarters**

##### *Future Development*

1. Maintain views of landmark quality buildings from adjacent streets, and maintain sightlines between the former Barracks, and Headquarters Buildings (Nos. 45 and 47) as noted in Figure 6, and comply with the preservation policies of Chapter 4.
2. Setbacks along Grant and Polk Streets may be waived due to site and topographic constraints.

#### **Subdistrict 4: The Flats/Waterfront**

##### *Future Development*

1. Maintain views of landmark buildings and the water from above as noted in Figure 6, and comply with the view preservation policies of Chapter 4.

### **3. Draft Specific Plan Policies**

The following goals, policies, and actions in the Draft Specific Plan are applicable to visual resources. In addition, the Draft Specific Plan incorporates the view corridors and sight lines established in the Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan and designates eight additional sight lines (see Figure III-6): 1) between the Office Building and the square between the Commanding Officer's Quarters and the Lieutenant's Quarters; 2) between the Commanding Officer's Quarters and the Lieutenant's Quarters; 3) between the Lieutenants' Officer's Quarters and the Guard House; 4) between the Photo Lab and the Duplex Officers' Quarters; 5) between the Photo Lab and the Office Building; 6) between the Grant Street overpass and Adams Street; 7) between the Blacksmith Shop and Grant Street; and 8) from the Blacksmith Shop along Tyler Street.

- *Land Use Goal 1:* Restore the Lower Arsenal Mixed-Use Specific Plan Area into a unified historic district through major restoration and rehabilitation of historic buildings, landscaping, open spaces, and the careful placement and integration of new structures.
  - *Land Use Action 1.1.3.* Develop a visual gateway to the Historic Conservation District with a set of prominent architectural features, including possible monuments, public art, entry signage, high-quality landscaping, and other appropriate gateway design components, and reflective of its military heritage.

- *Land Use Action 1.1.5.* Limit signage illumination and night lighting of facades for historic buildings along Jefferson Ridge (light public buildings only while in use) and allow limited up-lighting of mature trees to add drama and highlight the ridge's presence on the horizon.
- *Land Use Action 1.1.7.* Consider defining the northern edge of the Officer's Square by the addition of an architecturally distinguished building, located to screen the square from the sights and sounds of Interstates 680 and 780 and to provide additional building space for the potential destination campus.
- *Land Use Action 1.1.8.* Across Jefferson Street to the south of the Officer's Square, consider two additional new buildings with a publicly accessible viewing terrace to overlook the heritage cork oaks and buildings of the Lower Arsenal. A strong central axis of this composition should establish a new site line between the Guard House and a new building along the northern edge of the Square.
- *Land Use Action 1.3.3.* Mitigate potentially conflicting land uses within the Adams Street Mixed Use Zone through regulation and creation of internal courtyards within new buildings, designed to internalize light industrial activities that are potentially disruptive, noisy, or visually intrusive to surrounding uses.
- *Land Use Action 1.3.4.* Require courtyards within buildings along Adams Street to have a north-south orientation to perpetuate view corridors between Jefferson Ridge and the Lower Arsenal.
- *Land Use Action 1.3.5.* Minimize industrial impacts, such as noise and visual clutter associated with light industry, by internalizing uses within "safe haven" courtyards to minimize conflicting uses with planned artist spaces, office, or residential uses.
- *Land Use Action 1.4.3.* Review form and massing along Grant Street to create a uniform building fabric that promotes visual and physical connections between the Jefferson Ridge and the Lower Arsenal.
- *Land Use Action 1.6.2.* Maintain specimen trees, mature trees and ornamental landscaping, including lawn, shrubs, street trees, large oak and eucalyptus, and other appropriate plantings that surround key historic structures and act as canopies or boundary edges to historic landscapes.
- *Land Use Action 1.6.3.* Permit removal of large trees only if a property is unduly constrained from development by their retention, and they are replaced at a higher ratio elsewhere on site.
- *Land Use Action 1.6.4.* Establish a formal program to recognize the heritage trees. Develop special permit requirements for removal or alteration.
- *Land Use Action 1.6.5.* Require landscaped setbacks from the street for buildings where appropriate to maintain the historical setting. Parking and loading areas should be designed to minimize visual intrusion.
- *Historic Preservation Action 4.2.1.* Protect (the) historic context which includes open space, landscape features, and urban design elements surrounding historic structures that contribute to the National Register of Historic Places designation.
  - *Historic Preservation Action 4.2.2.* Maintain the character of existing site improvements and support infrastructure, such as retaining walls, timber guardrails, and street features that are appropriate to the scale and design of nearby buildings.
- *Historic Preservation Action Policy 4.3.* Utilize optimal design and development standards to fully embrace and protect the cultural and historic significance of the Specific Plan area.
  - *Historic Preservation Action 4.3.1.* Require the use of scaled and limited night-lighting to supplement street lighting and to highlight and complement the historic and architectural features of historic structures.
  - *Historic Preservation Action 4.3.3.* Require sign types, lighting, and designs compatible with the historical features of buildings and that enhance the character of the district as a whole, including illumination standards that mitigate visual disturbance.
- *Historic Preservation Policy 4.4.* Ensure compatibility between new development and the traditional historic and architectural components of the Arsenal Historic District.
  - *Historic Preservation e Action 4.4.1.* Discourage designs in new structures that call undue attention to themselves in favor of those that reflect architectural qualities that tie the buildings of the district together.
  - *Historic Preservation Action 4.4.2.* Encourage site improvements that are consistent with the historic character of surroundings structures and will serve to unify the area into a visually more cohesive district.
  - *Historic Preservation Action 4.4.3.* Ensure that all new development is compatible in scale, character, and materials with the historical resources of the Plan Area.

- *Historic Preservation Action 4.4.4.* Create compatibility in street design, public improvements, and utility infrastructure with the built environment of the Arsenal Historic District.
- *Historic Preservation Action 4.4.5.* Provide design review for industrial equipment installations, operating mechanical equipment, pipelines, tanks, and other industrial infrastructure that are visually prominent to ensure that the visual and operating components do not compromise the National Register of Historic Places designation. Encourage and require vaults where feasible.
- *Historic Preservation 4.5.* Maintain strict viewshed requirements to perpetuate the outstanding visual qualities of the area. Preserve key views of historic structures and the Carquinez Strait.
  - *Historic Preservation Action 4.5.1.* Minimize new development within view corridors, where possible, and review under strict design requirements to ensure that structures and improvements are built of a scale and design that do not dominate, overpower, or interfere with views of landmarks.
  - *Historic Preservation Action 4.5.2.* Consider visual impact studies, such as computer simulation, photo montage, on-site story poles, and rear streetscape frontage perspectives, to document the impacts of proposed development or alteration of existing structures on views or view corridors.
  - *Historic Preservation Action 4.5.3.* Maintain strong visual connections to the waterfront from island points within the Arsenal to maintain connections to the Arsenal's waterfront history, and to compensate for lack of public access to the waterfront and port activities.
- *Parks and Open Space Policy 7.1.* Renovate the Specific Plan area through the careful preservation, development, and use of parks and open space designed to complement historic landmarks and points of interest.
  - *Parks and Open Space Action 7.1.6.* Explore the creation of public open space east of the Clocktower to provide good access to the commanding views along the Carquinez Strait.

#### 4. Impacts and Mitigation Measures

This section analyzes impacts related to visual resources that could result from implementation of the Draft Specific Plan. The subsection begins with the criteria of significance, which establish the thresholds for determining whether an impact is significant. The latter part of this section presents the impacts associated with the proposed project. Mitigation measures are recommended, as appropriate.

**a. Criteria of Significance.** Implementation of the proposed project would have a significant effect on visual resources if it would:

- Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

**b. Less-than-Significant Visual Resources Impacts.** Implementation of the proposed project would result in the less-than-significant impacts described below.

(1) **Visual Character.** In the long-term, the Draft Specific Plan would change the visual character of the Lower Arsenal by encouraging the development of certain infill parcels, preserving important groves of trees and open space, modifying the circulation pattern to encourage the use of alternate forms of transportation, and encouraging the continued rehabilitation of existing buildings. In many ways, the Draft Specific Plan would retain the positive visual qualities of the Lower Arsenal through the implementation of stringent design guidelines and the protection of key historic resources; therefore, the Draft Specific Plan would improve the visual character of the Lower Arsenal. This improvement of visual character would not adversely affect the visual quality of

neighborhoods around the Lower Arsenal, including the quiet residential neighborhoods to the west of the site.

The following discussion summarizes the changes to the visual character of each development zone that would result from implementation of the Draft Specific Plan.

**Jefferson Ridge/Officers' Row Zone.** Key visual changes to this zone that would result from the project include the construction of a building along the northern edge of Officers' Square that would block views of the freeway, the construction of a new building that defines the edge of Jefferson Ridge open space, and the development of visually-formal buildings on infill sites. Important open spaces in the area – Officers' Square, Clocktower Green, the historic cork oaks north of Adams Street and open space to the west – would all be preserved and formalized as part of the project. Officers' Square would be framed by two new building – one to the north and one to the south. The building on the north, as noted above, would block views of I-780 and could improve the visual quality of the area; the building on the south would be aligned with the one on the north, maintaining the formal building organization of the area.



*Construction of a new building along the northern edge of Officers' Square would block views of the freeway and could improve the visual character of the area.*

All structures in the Jefferson Ridge/Officers' Row Zone would be subject to a design code that would ensure that new buildings have the following features: 1) setbacks that are similar to existing historic buildings; 2) symmetrical or architecturally-composed facades, to reflect the style of existing buildings and preserve visual character from multiple perspectives; and 3) a moderate building height of not more than 3½ stories, or 45 feet, consistent with the height of existing historic buildings. Buildings would also be designed in accordance with a "Ridge Building Type," to ensure that they are similar in proportion, size, and scale to mansions on the ridge. In addition, on-site parking would be provided within a district-wide parking solution, which would preserve the historic visual character of the area. By protecting important historic features of the zone and ensuring that new development is visually consistent with existing structures, the Draft Specific Plan would benefit the visual character of the zone.

**Adams Street Zone.** With implementation of the Draft Specific Plan, parcels south of Adams Street would be redeveloped with modest industrial-style buildings that would "showcase" the zone's two noteworthy historic buildings: the Administration Building and the Guard House. New buildings would be moderate in height (35 feet high within 100 feet of the build-to-line or 45 feet if 100 feet or more from the build-to-line), would have gable-ends facing Adams Street, and would be built with interior courtyards (to internalize potentially conflicting land uses and protect views to the south). Buildings would be designed in accordance with the guidelines for the "Mixed-Use Courtyard" or "Industrial" building types, with rationally-composed facades, vertically- or horizontally-

proportioned windows, and no- or low-slope roofs. New buildings would generally not draw attention to themselves, and would not compromise the visual character of the zone.

**Grant Street Zone.** As noted in the setting section, the Grant Street Zone is a visually eclectic district – with a mix of buildings and a curved street – that is also visually comfortable for pedestrians. The Draft Specific Plan would protect this character through the promotion of fine-grained infill development and a reconfigured intersection at Polk Street/Grant Street to enhance wayfinding (which would itself improve visual character). The most prominent new development in the zone would be the currently-proposed live-work development at 1025 Grant Street, which would include live-work space in an L-shaped building across from the Barracks. The 1025 Grant Street conceptual design drawings indicate that the proposed building features a scale and massing that is compatible with the Barracks and other historic buildings in the vicinity. Other visual changes to the site include the development of infill sites north and south of Grant Street in the eastern portion of the zone, possible development of a small plaza at the intersection of Polk Street and Grant Street, and the realigned intersection.

The Draft Specific Plan sets design guidelines for two different areas in the Grant Street Zone. In the first area (Area A, around the Barracks), buildings would be permitted to rise to a height of 38 feet (which would lend visual focus to the area while ensuring that new buildings do not tower over the Barracks); a porch would be required along new buildings facing the Barracks building, which itself has a porch along its eastern frontage; and all surface parking would require screening via a wall or vegetation. An open courtyard would also be provided between the Barracks and new construction to the east. Taken as a whole, these provisions of the Draft Specific Plan would preserve the existing visual character in the vicinity of the Barracks.

In Area B (which encompasses much of the Grant Street frontage in the zone), the design code would allow for the construction of new buildings close to the street that are generally lower in scale (with a maximum height of 25 feet) than the buildings in Area A. Therefore, new buildings would generally be compatible with existing structures along Grant Street, and would preserve the protected, pedestrian character of the zone.

**South of Grant Zone.** The Draft Specific Plan would protect the existing industrial character of the South of Grant Zone by preserving buildings with large footprints – so that they can continue to be occupied by manufacturing and processing uses, or adaptively reused by entities that require large, flexible spaces. Key visual changes in the area include the creation of a public plaza north of the Blacksmith's Shop and the redevelopment of the storage area in the western portion of the zone to a regular grid of streets and blocks. These changes to the zone would enhance the visual setting of the Blacksmith's shop through the provision of formal open space around the structure, and would enable the development of industrial-type space that is crucial to the visual character of the zone. New buildings in the zone would be designed in accordance with the Lower Arsenal Mixed-Use and Industrial Building Type guidelines, which require the incorporation of industrial design motifs (including flat or low-slope roofs, rationally composed facades, and wood or metal doors). These guidelines would also preserve the industrial character of the zone.

**(2) Light and Glare.** A significant light or glare impact would result from the provision of excessive street or building lights, or the construction of buildings with facades that contain large areas of highly-reflective materials. None of the vision plans, design guidelines, architectural

standards, or policies in the Draft Specific Plan suggests that large amounts of artificial lighting or highly-reflective glazing would be permitted in the Lower Arsenal.

Action 1.1.5 (limiting signage illumination and night lighting along Jefferson Ridge), Action 4.3.1 (requiring the use of scaled and limited night lighting), and Action 4.3.3 (requiring lighting that is compatible with historic structures and imposition of illumination standards that mitigate visual disturbance) would ensure that artificial lighting in the Specific Plan Area is minimized and that it is designed in a way that respects the integrity of historic buildings.

The architectural standards in the Draft Specific Plan would require the construction of buildings that are compatible with existing historic and industrial structures in the Lower Arsenal. Highly reflective, mirror-like glazing would not be permitted. Although metal siding (which could be reflective when first installed) could be used on buildings south of Adams Street, significant glare impacts would be reduced through the natural oxidation process. Therefore, the Draft Specific Plan would not result in significant light and glare impacts.

**c. Significant Visual Resources Impacts.** The Draft Specific Plan is highly protective of visual resources in the Lower Arsenal, including the character of historic districts and visual connections between notable buildings. However, new buildings may partially obstruct views in designated viewsheds. This section includes a discussion of the impacts of the Draft Specific Plan on scenic vistas.

**(1) Views of the Project Site.** As discussed in the setting section, the Lower Arsenal is visible from numerous viewpoints in and around Benicia, including along I-680 and I-780 and hillside areas south and west of Martinez. The Draft Specific Plan would largely preserve the existing development pattern of the project site, including its network of streets (some of which follow the hilly topography of the area) and the generally low scale of buildings. New construction would occur on infill sites, many historic structures would be surrounded by open space on at least one side, new buildings would not be taller than 40 feet, and important open spaces (e.g., Officers' Square, the grove of heritage cork oak trees) would be preserved. After implementation of the Draft Specific Plan, the project would continue to be visually distinct from Downtown Benicia. Therefore, the Draft Specific Plan would not result in significant impacts to views of the project site.

**(2) Sight Lines and View Corridors.** The Draft Specific Plan would protect key sight lines (between key landmarks) and view corridors through four primary ways: 1) the incorporation of the view corridors, sight lines, and panoramic viewsheds of the Arsenal Historic Conservation Plan into the Draft Specific Plan (and the addition of seven new sight lines); 2) requiring the provision of a minimum 20-foot-wide north-south view corridor in all new Adams Street developments; 3) limiting building height to a maximum of 45 feet in the Jefferson Ridge and Adams Street zones, 38 feet in the Grant Street Zone; and 40 feet in the South of Grant Zone; 4) the preservation of key open spaces between historic buildings and along north/south axis (particularly Officer's Square, Cork Oak Ridge Park, the courtyard adjacent to the Barracks, and Blacksmith's Shop Walk) and 5) the implementation of policies and actions that would protect viewsheds.

Draft Specific Plan policies and actions that would protect scenic views include:

- *Action 1.1.8* (establishing a new sight line between the Guard House and the top of Officers' Square).
- *Action 1.3.4* (requiring Adams Street buildings to have a north/south orientation to protect views)

- *Action 1.4.3* (requiring review of massing along Grant street to protect views)
- *Policy 4.5* (protection of viewsheds)
  - *Action 4.5.1* (minimize new development within view corridors and review development proposals to ensure they do not interfere with views)
  - *Action 4.5.2* ( consider visual impact studies to identify impacts on view corridors)
  - *Action 4.5.3* (maintain visual connections to the waterfront)

These policies and actions would require consideration of impacts to views when individual development projects are proposed. However, certain views may still be partially impeded with Draft Specific Plan development.

**Impact VIS-1: Development projects built as part of the Draft Specific Plan could block scenic views. (S)**

Although many scenic views in the project site would be permanently preserved, others may be partially blocked by new development (even with the implementation of Draft Specific Plan policies and actions). View corridors that could be endangered include: 1) the view corridor from the Administration Building, which could be partially blocked by development in the South of Grant Zone; and 2) the view corridor from Jefferson Street and Park Road, which could be partially blocked by development south of Grant Street.

Implementation of the following mitigation measure would reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level:

**Mitigation Measure VIS-1:** The following changes shall be made to Action 4.5.2 of the Draft Specific Plan:

Action 4.5.2. ~~Require Consider~~ visual impact studies, such as computer simulation, photo montage, on-site story poles, and rear streetscape frontage perspectives of all proposed development projects that are located within view corridors as identified on the “Historic Guidelines Overlay Plan” figure in the Draft Specific Plan, to These studies shall document the impacts of proposed development or alteration of existing structures on views or view corridors. If these studies show that new development would diminish view corridors, the project design shall be altered so that views are not diminished. (LTS)