
3.1 AESTHETICS

This section describes the aesthetics setting and regulatory framework and discusses the potential effects of the EIS Alternatives on views and visual character and in relation to light and glare.

3.1.1 Affected Environment

Views and Visual Character

Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus

The existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus is located in San Francisco in the outer Richmond District fronting Clement Street between 42nd and 46th Avenue. The Campus is located adjacent to the Point Lobos bluff overlooking the northwestern edge of the city and has views to the Pacific Ocean. The National Park Service Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) borders the Campus to the north, east, and west; and the western edge of the Richmond District is adjacent to the south. This portion of the GGNRA was previously known as the Fort Miley Military Reservation. The Campus sits at an elevation of 300 to 350 feet relative to mean sea level (msl), and is higher than the areas in its immediate vicinity: the land to the north and west of the site drops sharply downward toward the Pacific Ocean, while the terrain to the east slopes more gently through the Lincoln Park Golf Course. Stunning views of the Golden Gate Bridge and the Marin Headlands are available from northern areas of the Campus. The Richmond District is located beyond a moderate downward slope to the south of the Campus. The Campus is not located adjacent to any designated State scenic highways, but it is located near the route of San Francisco's 49-Mile Scenic Drive. Point Lobos Avenue and Geary Boulevard pass to the south of the Campus (though the Campus does not front these streets), and the route also comes close to the northeastern tip of the Campus as it passes the Palace of the Legion of Honor.

The SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus is characterized by the facility's visually prominent buildings, which range in height from one to five stories, and the natural features that surround them—mainly mature trees—located both within and adjacent to the developed areas of the Campus. Monterey pine and Monterey cypress are the most visible vegetation in the area, and are found in landscaped areas within the Campus as well as in the adjacent, natural GGNRA areas. These trees and other vegetation partially screen views to and from areas within the southern and southwestern portions of the Campus. However, in views from points outside of the Campus, especially from the south, the trees and vegetation do not always completely obscure the site's mostly developed and disturbed nature, as evidenced by the buildings, paved roadways, gravel lots and outdoor storage areas that are clearly visible to passersby.

The SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus's built environment is composed of a combination of architectural styles and building sizes, resulting in an overall visually eclectic physical campus layout. However, a series of 17 original buildings built in 1934 do provide a measure of visual continuity, especially in the northeastern quadrant of the Campus. Stylistically, the buildings have Art-Deco motifs used for emphases at doorways, spandrel panels, and as horizontal stringcourses at cornices near the rooflines (VA, 2009). The designs have an overall Mayan/Aztec/Mesoamerican-stylistic influence, which was a part of the Art Deco movement, with designs varying by building and location, but typically adhering to generally consistent motifs. Other areas of the Campus contain buildings constructed since the 1934 structures were established. Often, these newer buildings were built

in styles and at scales that are inconsistent with that of the original structures, resulting in the variety of structures that are seen today.

Field visits to the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus were conducted by AECOM staff in March 2011 and July 2012 for the purpose of observing and documenting the existing visual quality and character of the Campus. Also, field visits to the Marin Headlands and the San Francisco Presidio were conducted in July 2011 to observe the Campus from more distant locations where the Campus is visible.¹ Table 3.1-1, aerial images (Figure 3.1-1a and 3.1-1b),² written text, and photographs (Figures 3.1-2a through 3.1-7b) identify and describe specific locations near the Campus that provide a representative cross section of visual images that provide information about the existing aesthetic of the Campus and its immediate surroundings. These locations represent views that may be seen by a wide variety of observers in the area, ranging from motorists traveling in automobiles, to pedestrians walking along urban sidewalks and hikers walking along park trails. Other nearby public recreational locations was also considered for viewpoints, such as Ocean Beach and Golden Gate Park; however, distinguishable views of the Campus were not possible from these locations.

Table 3.1-1: Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus View Locations

View No.	View Description
View 1	Northwestward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from 42nd Street and Clement Street
View 2	Northward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from 43rd Street and Clement Street
View 3	Northward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from 44th Street and Clement Street
View 4	Northeastward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from 45th Street and Clement Street
View 5	Southeastward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from El Camino del Mar toward Helipad
View 6	Southward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from El Camino del Mar and Lands End Trail Connection
View 7	Southward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from El Camino del Mar, South of Putting Green
View 8	Southwestward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from El Camino del Mar, near Palace of Legion of Honor
View 9	Eastward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from GGNRA East Fort Miley, near Building 10
View 10	Northwestward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from GGNRA East Fort Miley, Near National Park Service Building
View 11	Southward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from Hawk Hill Parking Lot at Marin Headlands
View 12	Southwestward View of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from San Francisco Presidio

¹ The SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus is not visible from Golden Gate Park. Therefore, no view locations from Golden Gate Park were selected.

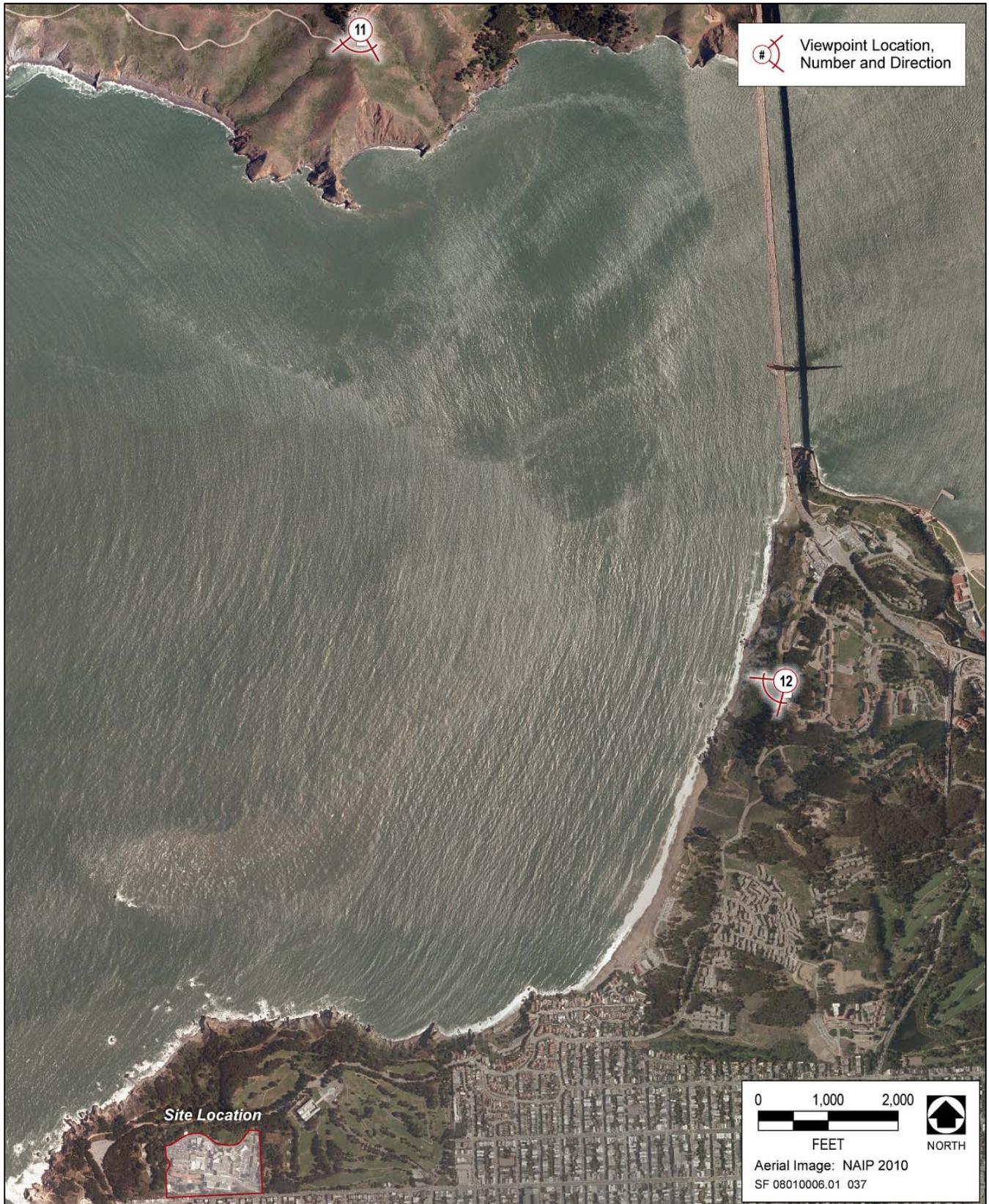
² Figure 3.1-1 illustrates locations near the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus. View 11 is located at the Hawk Hill lookout point parking area off of Conzelman Road in the Marin Headlands area of the GGNRA, while View 12 is located in the San Francisco Presidio, at the intersection of the Batteries & Bluffs Trail and the Coastal Trail, which are located east of Marshall Beach and west of Lincoln Boulevard.



Source: Google Earth, 2011

Figure 3.1-1a:

Photograph Viewpoints



Source: San Francisco County, 2009

Figure 3.1-1b:

Photograph Viewpoints



A: View 1—Northwestward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from 42nd Street and Clement Street



B: View 2—Northward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from 43rd Street and Clement Street

Figure 3.1-2:

Representative Photographs



A: View 3—Northward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from 44th Street and Clement Street



B: View 4—Northeastward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from 45th Street and Clement Street

Figure 3.1-3:

Representative Photographs



A: View 5—Southeastward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from El Camino del Mar toward Helipad



B: View 6—Southward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from El Camino del Mar and Lands End Trail Connection

Figure 3.1-4:

Representative Photographs



A: View 7—Southward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from El Camino del Mar, South of Putting Green



B: View 8—Southwestward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from El Camino del Mar, Near the Palace of the Legion of Honor

Figure 3.1-5:

Representative Photographs



A: View 9—Eastward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from GGNRA East Fort Miley, Near Building 10



B: View 10—Northwestward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from GGNRA East Fort Miley, Near National Park Service Building

Figure 3.1-6:

Representative Photographs



A: View 11—Southward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from Hawk Hill Parking Lot at Marin Headlands



B: View 12—Southwestward View of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from San Francisco Presidio

Figure 3.1-7:

Representative Photographs

View 1

The photo location at 42nd Street and Clement Street, shown in Figure 3.1-2a, offers a view of the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus main entrance as experienced by pedestrians and motorists traveling west along Clement Street. Distant views are not available from this location, given that existing Campus buildings, hilly topography, and vegetation block views of distant features.

View 2

The photo location at 43rd Street and Clement Street, shown in Figure 3.1-2b, provides a view of the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus from farther west along Clement Street than the view shown in the Figure 3.1-1a photo. This is also a view experienced by pedestrians and motorists traveling north along 43rd Street at its intersection with Clement Street. This is a view of a relatively open area of the Campus. Due to the densely developed nature of the existing Campus, it is not common to have an unimpeded view through the Campus from other locations around the site. Though seen at a distance, this view offers glimpses of some of the Campus's historic structures.

View 3

The view location photographed from 44th Street and Clement Street, as shown in Figure 3.1-3a, provides a close range view of Building 203, the main hospital building on the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus. This viewpoint clearly illustrates the hilly nature of the Campus, as well as the mature vegetation that exists.

View 4

The existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus's southwestern corner is visible from the intersection of 45th Street and Clement Street, as shown in Figure 3.1-3b. From this location, pedestrians and motorists can see the western portion of Building 203, as well as the rooftops of Buildings 15, 29 and 30, all at relatively close range. Existing mature vegetation obscures a fair amount of the facades of these buildings.

View 5

The photo presented in Figure 3.1-4a provides a view from the El Camino del Mar Trail, located near the helipad at the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus's northwestern corner. From this location, very few Campus features are visible, due to the considerable elevation difference between the Campus and the hiking trail. The Campus is currently not a visibly prominent feature for hikers walking along the trail.

View 6

The El Camino del Mar Trail and Lands End Trail parallel each other and are connected by a short trail located between them. A view from the intersection of the short trail and El Camino del Mar Trail is shown in Figure 3.1-4b. From this location, views toward the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus are largely obscured toward the Campus. The photo in this figure indicates that Building 6 would be mostly obscured from this vantage point, due to visually dominant thick vegetation.

View 7

The photo presented in Figure 3.1-5a provides a view from the El Camino del Mar Trail, south of the putting green on the Lincoln Park Golf Course. The trail is heavily vegetated, which limits views of the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus. From this location, only a partially obscured view of Buildings 2 and 3 is available due to existing thick vegetation.

View 8

The existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus's northeastern corner is visible as indicated in Figure 3.1-5b, from the El Camino del Mar Trail near the Palace of the Legion of Honor. From this location, the Campus is not a visibly prominent feature and passersby only have a partial view of Building 11.

View 9

The viewpoint visible in Figure 3.1-6a is located along a trail directly east of Building 10 on the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus. From this location, Building 10 is barely visible due to the presence of a considerable amount of vegetation that obscures it. This northern area of the Campus is a popular thoroughway for hikers making their way to Lincoln Park and connecting into surrounding trails.

View 10

The photo presented in Figure 3.1-6b indicates a view from GGNRA East Fort Miley, near the National Park Service Building. This is a location that can be accessed by hikers who visit the trails around the adjacent GGNRA lands. The existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus is moderately visible from this location, but is partially obscured by a grassy berm and mature vegetation that exists in the foreground.

View 11

The viewpoint presented in Figure 3.1-7a is located at the Hawk Hill lookout point parking area off of Conzelman Road in the Marin Headlands area of the GGNRA, north of the Golden Gate Bridge. The viewpoint is roughly equidistant from Rodeo Beach to the west and Fort Baker to the east, and is about 3 miles north of the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus across the Bay. This is a popular stop for visitors to the area, many of whom park their cars to enjoy expansive views of San Francisco's northern shoreline, points south, and the East Bay as well. Some of the largest structures on the Campus are visible from this location, but they are not dominant features of the view individually or collectively due to the relatively long distance from the viewer, because much of the Campus is obstructed by vegetation, and because the surrounding features of the view such as San Francisco's rocky shoreline and the Bay waters attract more of the viewer's attention.

View 12

The viewpoint presented in Figure 3.1-7b is located in the San Francisco Presidio, at the intersection of the Batteries to Bluffs Trail and the Coastal Trail, which are located east of Marshall Beach and west of Lincoln Boulevard. This viewpoint is located about 2 miles northeast of the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus and is representative of views toward the Campus from various points on the above-mentioned trails. Similarly, but to a lesser extent than in the case of View 11, some of the largest structures on the Campus are visible from this

location, but they are not dominant features of the view individually or collectively due to the relatively long distance from the viewer and because much of the Campus is obstructed by vegetation.

The rendering shown in Figure 3.1-8 provides an aerial perspective illustrating the existing massing that currently exists at the SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus, looking to the northeast.



Source: VA, 2012

Figure 3.1-8: Aerial perspective of Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus

Mission Bay Area

The Mission Bay area is a relatively flat area characterized primarily by human-made visual landmarks. The area north of China Basin Channel is characterized by an array of new development that includes mid- and high-rise (80 to 160 feet) residential buildings with ground-floor commercial spaces, offices in new and converted warehouse buildings along King Street, as well as the 45,000-seat AT&T Park sports stadium at King and Third Streets. The area supports a mix of uses with a mix of architectural styles in which contemporary residential buildings coexist with older brick warehouse structures.

The terminus of the Caltrain commuter rail system and the Muni Metro rail line is located at Fourth and Townsend Streets. Transportation infrastructure visually dominates the area between Fourth and Seventh Streets along Townsend Street. Caltrain and Muni tracks, railyard, trains, platforms, utility sheds, light posts and power lines characterize the visible features. In addition, various highways traverse the Mission Bay area. Interstates 80 and 280 and U.S. Highway 101 have a strong visual presence, especially in locations where the highways are elevated above grade. The area immediately east of the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF) Mission Bay Campus consists of various mixed-use buildings up to 10 stories high, some of which are occupied by biotechnology companies, while others are residential structures. The area immediately south of the UCSF Mission Bay Campus consists of low-rise warehouse and industrial buildings, and vacant or undeveloped land. The proposed Mission Bay South site is largely underutilized, consisting of vacant land and old warehouse or

industrial buildings ranging from one to three stories tall. These buildings are generally unadorned and utilitarian in character. Other visual features in the area include power lines and light posts, as well as signage for commercial establishments. Natural features in the vicinity include Potrero Hill, located to the southwest and elevated above Mission Bay, and San Francisco Bay, which serves as the major visual boundary to the east. However, due to the density of urban development in these areas, such as tall buildings, these natural features are seldom viewable from within the Mission Bay area except when seen from close range. To the south of the Mission Bay area is the Potrero Hill neighborhood, which consists of a mix of multifamily units, commercial buildings, and industrial facilities. The area south of 16th Street east of U.S. Highway 101, west of Interstate 280 and north of Cesar Chavez Street is characterized mostly by single-family residential structures, while the area east of Interstate 280 to the waterfront is characterized by a collection of large industrial and warehouse facilities, and large expansive surface parking lots.

A few scattered areas of public open space can be found in the Mission Bay area. The largest of these include Yerba Buena Gardens and the Potrero Hill Recreation Center, which, along with a few other smaller parks, provide a visual contrast to the many other densely urbanized locations found in the area.

Light and Glare

Existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus

The existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus is located in the northwestern corner of San Francisco, surrounded to the north, west, and east by GGNRA lands, and by the outer Richmond District residential neighborhood to the south. The undeveloped GGNRA lands do not contain substantial sources of nighttime light, and are in fact among the most minimally lit areas of the city. GGNRA lands are not a source of glare, given that the area is mostly undeveloped. The street lights and residential lights in the outer Richmond District produce a moderate amount of nighttime light, but the neighborhood is not a substantial source of light or glare.

The existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus is substantially developed with medical buildings, research buildings, parking structures and surface parking lots, all of which are equipped with exterior lighting fixtures. However, given that the majority of activity on the Campus takes place during daytime hours, nighttime lighting consists primarily of low-level security lights used around Campus buildings and parking facilities. In addition, field observations revealed that, because Campus facilities are generally set back from the property boundaries, existing low-level lighting is not substantially noticeable to viewers in the surrounding area.

The existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus is not a substantial source of glare. The windows of the existing buildings on the Campus may at times reflect the sun's rays, but these occurrences are minor and intermittent. In addition, building fenestration is intermixed with nonreflective building materials, minimizing the amount of glare caused by the buildings.

Mission Bay Area

The Mission Bay area contains a diversity of land uses, each contributing to the urban fabric of San Francisco. The northern portion of the Mission Bay area is visually dominated by groups of high-rise office and residential buildings which are internally lit and also have associated outdoor entry and security lighting. The northeastern portion of the Mission Bay area is anchored by AT&T Park, which is a substantial source of nighttime lighting on

the occasions when it hosts sporting or other events. In addition to these light sources, a number of other commercial, residential, and industrial buildings create sources of light. The area is also extensively lit by streetlights, motor vehicles, and transit traveling through the area on city streets and highways.

The majority of the Mission Bay area (south of AT&T Park) is also heavily urbanized and contains a large amount of lighting sources, including city streets and highways, as well as internally lit commercial, industrial, and research buildings and their associated entry and exterior security lighting. The primarily residential Potrero Hill neighborhood is a relatively minor source of nighttime lighting.

Tall high- and mid-rise buildings in the Mission Bay area are occasional sources of glare, during periods when their windows reflect the sun's rays. However, these occurrences are relatively minor and intermittent.

3.1.2 Regulatory Framework

There are no applicable federal standards relating to visual resources or aesthetics.

3.1.3 Environmental Consequences

Significance Criteria

A NEPA evaluation must consider the context and intensity of the environmental effects that would be caused by, or result from, the EIS Alternatives.

Thus, an alternative would be considered to result in an adverse impact related to aesthetics if it would:

- have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- 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.

Assessment Methods

This section provides a discussion of the visual impacts associated with the proposed alternatives and the area surrounding the proposed project sites.

A number of variables affect the degree of visibility, visual contrast, and ultimately project impacts: (1) scale and size of facilities, (2) viewer types and activities, (3) distance and viewing angle, and (4) influences of adjacent scenery or land uses. Viewer response and sensitivity vary depending on viewer attitudes and expectations. Viewer sensitivity is distinguished among project viewers in identified scenic corridors, and recreational, residential, office, and industrial areas. Recreational areas and scenic corridors are considered to have relatively high sensitivity, residential areas to have moderate sensitivity, and office and industrial areas to have low sensitivity.

As part of this analysis, various areas in San Francisco and within GGNRA lands were screened as potential view locations, based on whether the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus is visible from these locations and the degree to which viewers at those locations would be sensitive to proposed physical changes at the Campus during the proposed construction and operational periods. A set of locations that constitute a representative cross section of views experienced by a representative cross section of observers was chosen for the analysis. Views from these locations were photographed and are included in this EIS to illustrate existing conditions and to facilitate project impact determinations. Project design drawings and information about height and massing were relied upon, in conjunction with the photographs to identify if or when construction and operation of proposed structures would result in visual impacts.

Alternative 1: SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus Buildout Alternative

Near-Term Projects

Construction

Visual Character

Alternative 1 near-term projects would involve construction or retrofitting of patient care buildings, research buildings, business occupancy buildings, residential buildings, and parking structures. Construction activities would require the establishment of construction staging areas throughout the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus, as well as the presence of large construction vehicles. This would result in a temporary minor visual impact. However, conventional best management practices (BMPs) related to screening of construction staging areas would be implemented to limit the frequency and prominence of views of construction equipment and materials. Therefore, this would be a minor impact.

Light

Construction activity would take place during daytime hours, and therefore, no impact would result from the use of construction equipment lights. Some low-level security lighting would be required for construction staging areas, which would have a minor impact relative to the area's ambient light levels. However, the use of lighting equipment that is shielded and directed downward would be implemented as a BMP to minimize light spillover to neighboring residential areas or adjacent GGNRA lands. Therefore, this would be a minor impact.

Operation

Views and Visual Character

Alternative 1 near-term projects (Phase 1) would include the operation of four new research, administrative, hoptel, and emergency operations/parking buildings and one expanded medical building on the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus. The proposed structures would range in size from approximately 8,700 to 155,000 square feet, with heights ranging from one to five stories above grade. None of the proposed structures would exceed the height of Building 2, which is the tallest existing building on the Campus.

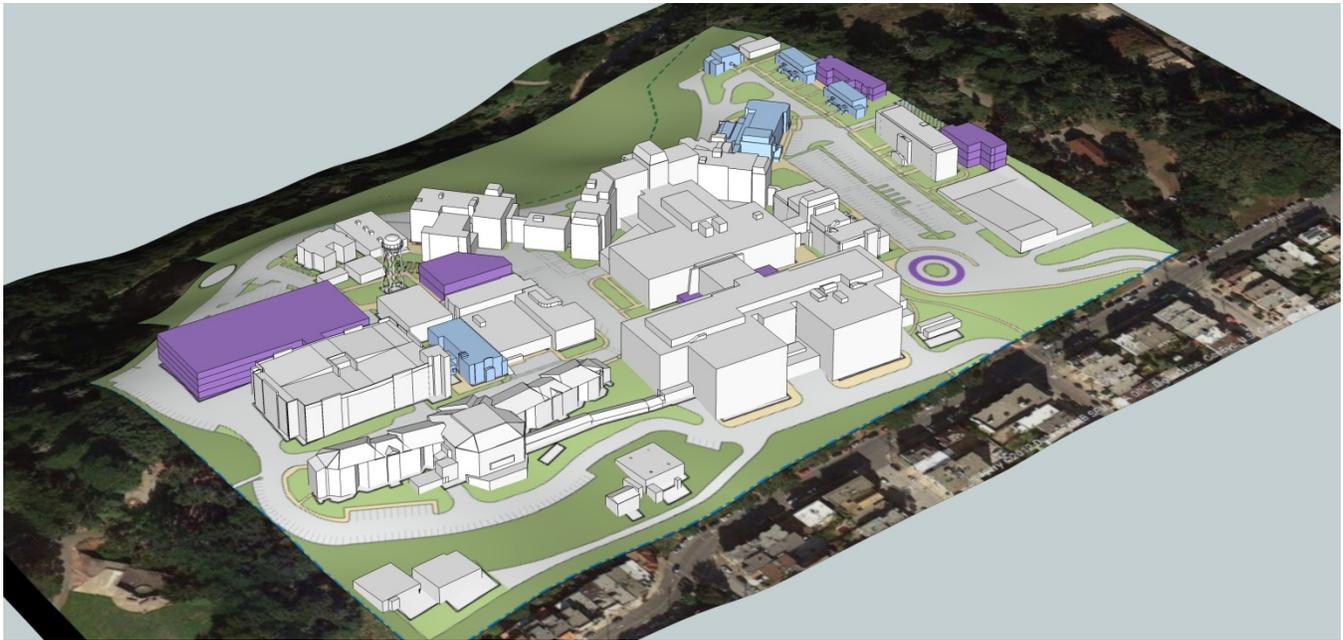
Some of the structures proposed for Phase 1 would be located in relatively central areas of the Campus, which is not as visible from outside the Campus boundaries as areas along the perimeter. By and large, buildings proposed in central portions of the Campus would not be visually dominant relative to existing buildings in that part of the Campus, given that several of the existing structures are larger than the proposed structures. In addition, views of these new buildings from outside the Campus would be mostly screened from view by existing buildings, and/or would be set back sufficiently from the Campus boundaries to render them visually subordinate to other visible features. Therefore, buildings proposed for the central areas of the Campus would have a minor visual impact on views and would minimally affect the visual character of the Campus.

Buildings proposed in the near term for the eastern portion of the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus would be intermittently visible in views from GGNRA East Fort Miley. East Fort Miley contains trails that allow access to hikers visiting GGNRA lands. Visitors can travel along a trail that parallels the Campus boundary, from which Campus buildings are intermittently visible through existing vegetation. From areas where views are unobstructed, hikers can clearly observe existing buildings located on the eastern edge of the Campus. Though noticeable from GGNRA lands, the proposed new buildings would not be inconsistent with the character or scale of existing buildings in this area of the Campus, and would be visible only intermittently through the heavy vegetation along the East Fort Miley and Campus boundary. New buildings proposed for the western portion of the Campus would not be visible from outside the Campus, because they would be obscured by existing buildings, dense vegetation, or other landforms. Furthermore, the proposed Patient Welcome Center drop-off area roundabout, even though visible from the adjacent residential streets, would be located in the same location as the current on-Campus bus drop-off area. These proposed development changes to the Campus would result in a minor impact.

The rendering shown in Figure 3.1-9 provides an aerial perspective illustrating the proposed facility massing for Phase 1 development combined with existing massing at the SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus. The view is to the northeast.

Light and Glare

Given that the majority of operations on the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus take place during daytime hours, nighttime lighting would primarily consist of shielded and downward-directed low-level security lights used around Campus buildings and parking facilities. Because Campus facilities are generally set back from the Campus boundaries, low-level lighting would not be substantially noticeable to users of the surrounding area, and the ambient light level would not change substantially, as long as security lighting is shielded and directed downward. Under Alternative 1, no substantial increase in glare would result from near-term projects on the Campus. The windows of the buildings on the Campus may at times reflect the sun's rays, but these occurrences would be minor and intermittent. Therefore, this would be a minor impact.



Source: VA, 2012

Figure 3.1-9: Aerial perspective of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus Buildout at the End of Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 (Phase 1) in Mid-2015

Long-Term Projects

Construction

Visual Character

Alternative 1 long-term projects would involve construction or retrofitting of various buildings during Phase 2. Construction activities would require the establishment of construction staging areas throughout the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus, as well as the presence of large construction vehicles.

Construction activities associated with Alternative 1, Phase 2 would result in a temporary minor visual impact, with construction equipment and associated activities apparent in some views from nearby GGNRA lands, but most likely barely perceptible in more distant views from the Marin Headlands (Hawk Hill) and the Presidio. Construction activity BMPs as described above would be implemented as part of Alternative 1 long-term projects. Therefore, this would be a minor impact.

Light

Construction activity associated with Alternative 1 long-term projects would take place during daytime hours; therefore, no impact would result from the use of construction equipment lights. Shielded, downward-directed, low-level security lighting would be used for construction staging areas, which would have a minor impact relative to the area's ambient light levels during the construction period. Therefore, this would be a temporary minor impact.

Operation

Views and Visual Character

Alternative 1 long-term projects (Phase 2) would involve operation of three new research and medical buildings and two expanded medical and administrative buildings on the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus. The proposed structures would range in size from approximately 5,300 to 120,000 square feet, with heights ranging from one to five stories. None of the proposed structures would exceed the height of Building 2, which is the tallest existing building on the Campus.

The massing of these buildings would be visible from various publicly accessible locations on GGNRA lands north and east of the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus, resulting in an alteration of the physical surroundings experienced by visitors to that area. This change would be most noticeable in locations such as those shown in Figure 3.1-4 (View 5) and Figure 3.1-5 (View 8), where proposed multistory buildings would be visible to hikers from the trail along El Camino del Mar. These observers are considered sensitive to changes in the area's visual character, because they pass through the area for recreational purposes, and enjoy the existing scenery of the area as part of the recreational experience. However, the project would result in a minor impact, because these locations are not focal or prime destinations for hikers; these are generally areas that people pass through on their way to more scenic GGNRA locations with more expansive views that include views of the Golden Gate Bridge and Marin Headlands. The proposed new buildings would be built with materials, colors, and massing that would be designed to fit with the context of the existing buildings on the SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus, thereby minimizing their visual effect. In addition, vegetation currently screens portions of these views and project implementation would result in the planting of trees along the perimeter of the Campus, which would further screen views of the proposed new buildings from the trail along El Camino del Mar as well as from more distant views such as those from the Marin Headlands and the Presidio. The effect of these proposed development changes to the Campus would be considered a minor impact.

The rendering shown in Figure 3.1-10 provides an aerial perspective illustrating the proposed facility massing for Alternative 1, Phase 2 development combined with existing massing at the SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus. The view is to the northeast.

Light and Glare

Given that most of the activity on the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus takes place during daytime hours, exterior lighting consists primarily of low-level security lights used around Campus buildings and parking facilities. Because Campus buildings would continue to generally be set back from the Campus boundaries, low-level lighting would not be substantially noticeable to users of the surrounding area. Furthermore, buildings proposed at locations near the Campus perimeter would not generally be occupied on a 24-hour continual basis as occurs in the Campus's existing hospital buildings, from which interior lighting is emitted during nighttime hours. Therefore, interior building lighting systems would not generally be in operation beyond normal business hours and would not be substantial sources of light or glare. The Campus would not cause a substantial source of glare. The windows of the proposed buildings on the Campus may at times reflect the sun's rays, but these occurrences would be minor and intermittent. Therefore, this would be a minor impact.



Source: VA, 2012

Figure 3.1-10:

**Aerial Perspective of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus Buildout
at the End of Alternative 1 (Phase 2) in 2023**

Alternative 2: SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus Plus Mission Bay Campus Alternative

Near-Term Projects

Alternative 2 near-term projects (both construction and operation) would be the same as Alternative 1 near-term projects (see Tables 2-1 and 2-2 and Figures 2-1 and 2-2). Therefore, the impacts of Alternative 2 near-term projects would be the same as the impacts of Alternative 1 near-term projects. These impacts would be minor.

Long-Term Projects

Alternative 2 long-term projects (both construction and operation) located at the SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus would be the same as Alternative 1 long-term projects, except that the ambulatory care center would be located at the potential new SFVAMC Mission Bay Campus under Alternative 2 (see Tables 2-1 and 2-2 and Figures 2-1 and 2-2). Therefore, the impacts of Alternative 2 long-term projects at the SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus would be the same as or less than the impacts of Alternative 1 long-term projects.

The impact discussion below focuses primarily on the impacts at the potential new SFVAMC Mission Bay Campus from construction and operation of the ambulatory care center, research building, and associated parking structures proposed as part of Alternative 2, Phase 2.

Construction

Visual Character

In addition to construction or retrofitting of medical, research, and administrative buildings on the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus, Alternative 2 long-term projects would involve construction of medical and research building space as well as parking structures in the Mission Bay area. This would necessitate extensive construction activity, requiring the establishment of construction staging areas and the presence of large construction vehicles on the existing Campus as well as the potential new SFVAMC Mission Bay Campus.

Conventional BMPs related to screening of construction staging areas would be implemented at both campus sites to limit the frequency and prominence of views of construction equipment and materials. Therefore, this would be a temporary minor impact.

Light

Alternative 2 long-term projects would involve construction activity during daytime hours, and therefore, no impact would result from the use of construction equipment lights. Some low-level security lighting would be required for construction staging areas, which would have a minor impact relative to the area's ambient light levels. However, the use of lighting equipment that is shielded and directed downward would be implemented as a BMP as part of Alternative 2 to minimize light spillover to neighboring areas. Therefore, this would be a temporary minor impact.

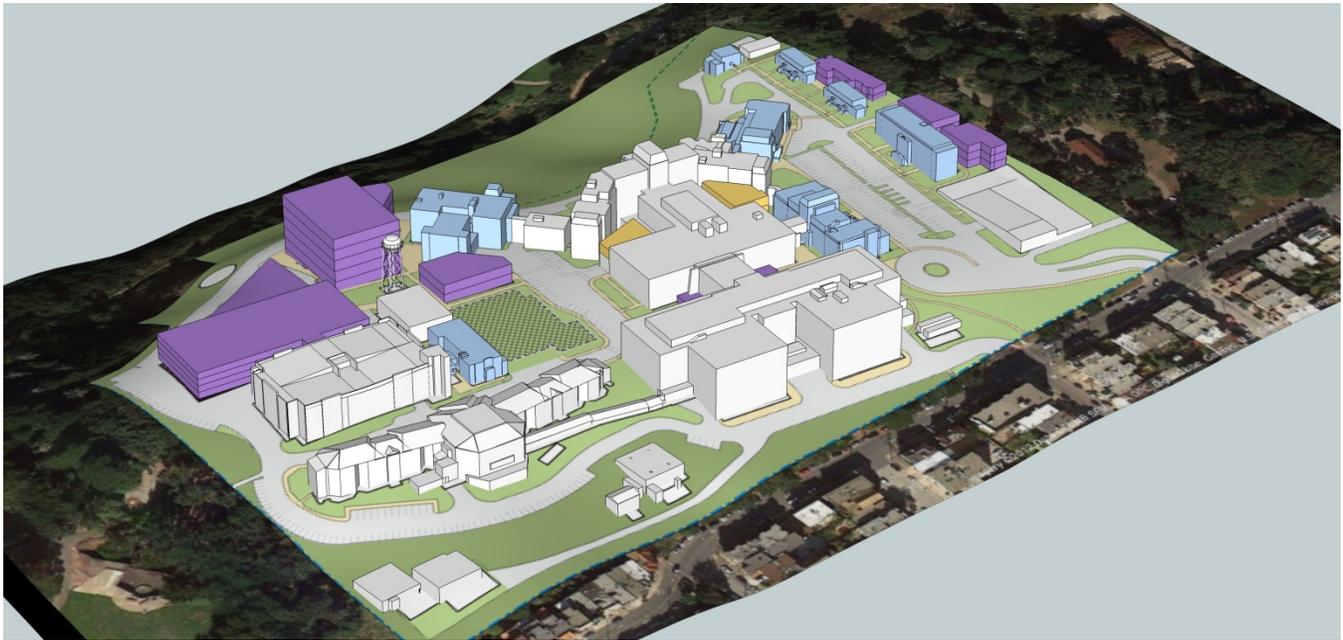
Operation

Views and Visual Character

Changes to views of the existing SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus and alterations to its existing visual character resulting from implementation of Alternative 2 long-term projects would not differ substantially from those described above for Alternative 1 long-term projects. This is due to the fact that the ambulatory care center is the only building that would not be located at the existing Campus under Alternative 2, and under Alternative 1 this building was proposed for the center of the Campus and would not be visible from adjacent land uses. As under Alternative 1, under Alternative 2 the impact of these proposed development changes to the existing Campus on views and visual character would be minor.

The rendering shown in Figure 3.1-11 provides an aerial perspective illustrating the proposed facility massing for Alternative 2, Phase 2 development combined with existing massing at the SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus. The view is to the northeast.

It is unknown specifically where in the Mission Bay area the proposed new 620,000 gross square feet of medical, research, and parking space under Alternative 2 would be located. A project-level environmental review would be conducted in the future when more specific project details are available. It is anticipated that project elements would be designed to fit within the visual context of the Mission Bay area while complying with local codes and regulations. Therefore, visual impacts related to the potential new SFVAMC Mission Bay Campus would be minor.



Source: VA, 2012

Figure 3.1-11: Aerial Perspective of SFVAMC Fort Miley Campus Buildout at the End of Alternative 2 (Phase 2) in 2023

Light and Glare

The Mission Bay area is urbanized and contains a large amount of lighting sources, including city streets and highways, as well as internally lit commercial, industrial, and research buildings and their associated outdoor entry and security lighting. Buildings in the Mission Bay area are occasional sources of glare, during periods when their windows reflect the sun's rays. However, these occurrences are relatively minor and intermittent. Therefore, this would be a minor impact.

Alternative 3: No Action Alternative

Construction

Under Alternative 3, no new buildings would be constructed and no existing buildings would be retrofitted. Therefore, no construction-related impacts related to visual character or light and glare would occur.

Operation

Under Alternative 3, the LRDP would not be implemented. Therefore, no operational impacts related to visual character or light and glare would occur.

3.1.4 References

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). 2009 (May). *San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center Seismic Upgrade of Buildings 9, 10 & 13 and Building 22 Construction Environmental Assessment*.

———. 2012. *San Francisco Veterans Affairs Medical Center Fort Miley Campus Long Range Development Plan*. San Francisco, CA.

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