

3.13 AESTHETICS

This section addresses the visual quality issues related to the alternative project sites, including the regulatory setting. The existing visual character of the region and the alternative project sites are discussed, along with the sensitive visual receptors and sensitive aesthetic resources known to be present.

3.13.1 SETTING – LA CENTER INTERCHANGE SITE

REGIONAL CONTEXT

The La Center Interchange Site is located adjacent to Interstate 5 (I-5) at the La Center Road/NW 319th Street Interchange between NW 31st Avenue and NW 41st Avenue. The site is bisected centrally by NW 319th Street. The nearest urban populations are La Center, approximately 2 miles to the northeast, Ridgefield, approximately 3 miles to the southwest, and Woodland, approximately 4 miles to the northwest.

VIEWS AND VIEWSHEDS

The La Center Interchange Site has been used for residential and grazing purposes and is dominated by views of open pasture. Vegetation includes trees and shrubs found primarily along drainage areas along the northwestern edge of the site, and in the southeast corner. Three residences are located on the site, one to the north of NW 319th Street and two to the south. The southern portion of the site is currently used seasonally as livestock grazing and residential purposes. The north side of the La Center Interchange Site is vacant and is not currently in use. Although landform can be an important element of scenic quality, topography is not a significant feature on the site since it is generally flat. The southern half of the site has rolling topography; the northern half of the property has a slope from south to north with a plateau in the center. Generally, the topography ranges from 166 to 265 feet above mean sea level (amsl).

The immediate vicinity surrounding the La Center Interchange Site is dominated by rural residential development, agricultural/pasture and forested open space areas, and some small commercial establishments. Along the northern border is an unnamed seasonal creek surrounded by a thick riparian area. The zoning surrounding the project is agricultural and rural residential. To the east of the site (west of I-5) is a vinyl siding business and a small drive-through espresso stand. To the east is I-5, and beyond that are agricultural and residential uses, and a gasoline service station. An expanse of trees and shrubs borders the site to the south.

The surrounding viewshed consists of two viewing corridors (**Figure 3.13-1**). **Viewshed A (Figure 3.13-2)** is the view along the I-5. **Viewshed B (Figure 3.13-3)** is the view from the residential areas west of the La Center Interchange Site within viewing proximity. There are no identified designated scenic vistas for this area.

Figure 3.13-1

Figure 3.13-2

Figure 3.13-3

Criteria for Analysis

The visual experience within each viewshed is comprised of the following constituent elements:

1. **Clarity in Line of Sight**—the overall visibility of the object within the viewshed, influenced by such factors as trees, buildings, topography or any other potential visual obstruction within the viewshed.
2. **Duration of Visibility**—the amount of time the object is exposed to viewers within the viewshed. For example, a passing commuter will experience a shorter period of viewing time than a resident within the viewshed.
3. **Proximity of the Viewer**—the effects of foreshortening due to the distance of the viewer from the object will influence the dominance of the object in the perspective of the viewer within the viewshed.
4. **Number of Viewers**—the number of viewers anticipated to experience the visual character of the object in forward-oriented view (i.e., not through a rear-view mirror). A densely populated residential district, or a busy highway within the viewshed of the object would present more viewers than unpopulated areas.

Description of Viewsheds

Viewsheds and vistas are described by expressing the strength of the viewing experience, framed within the analytical criteria listed above. While the viewing experience is personal and subjective in nature, the application of the above criteria allows for an objective, baseline assessment of the visual environment and subsequent visual impacts.

Viewshed A (the I-5 corridor) is primarily a commuter viewshed, experienced mainly by travelers along I-5. Northbound travelers on I-5 cannot see the site until they are directly east of it as trees along the southern edge obscure views; dense trees on the southern edge of the site are visible in the bottom photograph of **Figure 3.13-2**. These views of the site are short and dominated by agricultural land and a few single-family residences. Southbound travelers on I-5 also experience views of trees, which screen and obscure the site from the north until the travelers are almost east of it, and agricultural land and residences are visible; examples of screening from the north are visible in the top photograph of **Figure 3.13-2**. Duration of these views directly east of the site is short and not within the forward line of sight for drivers.

Viewshed B is primarily a viewshed experienced by residents on the hill to the west of the La Center Interchange Site. **Figure 3.13-3** shows the view of the La Center Interchange Site from residential areas to the west. The riparian corridor is visible in the foreground and the La Center Interchange Site is visible in the background. Approximately a dozen residences are located to the west, which may have views of the site from their property. The riparian corridor provides partial screening of views of the site.

SHADOW, LIGHT AND GLARE

No significant lighting, shadow, or glare exists near the La Center Interchange Site. The dominant residential and agricultural uses on and around the site lend few sources of light or glare during both daytime and nighttime. No buildings of significant size exist that would cast large amounts of shadows on surrounding properties.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Clark County consists of a mixture of urban areas, rural farmlands, parks, and forests. Urban areas in the County are rapidly expanding. The County continues to expand Urban Growth Areas (UGA) to accommodate the growing population while preserving open and natural space. While most residences are single-family, the growth of urban areas has meant more demand for multi-family and mixed-use development. Generally rural areas, such as the La Center Interchange Site, are characterized by forests, farming, scenic views of rivers and forests, and rural residential communities. Rural residential communities have historic roots in commercial forestry, farming, and mining. These communities also attract residents and visitors for the scenic views and outdoor activities (Clark County, 2004a). The La Center Interchange Site is designated in the Clark County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan (GMP) as Agricultural and Industrial Urban Reserve as described in more detail in **Section 3.9**, Land Use. Agricultural lands have the capacity to be commercially viable for agriculture or resource production. Urban Reserve areas are outside of UGAs and are intended for future urban development.

The La Center Interchange Site is bounded by I-5 on the east, rural residential areas on the north and west, and forested lands on the south. Residential areas consist of big lots with large houses. Among residences are parcels characterized by pasture or agricultural uses. Commercial and industrial development has not spread from the City of La Center to the nearby interchange, although there are three small businesses operating near the site.

REGULATORY SETTING

Once the Federal government acquires the land in trust for the Tribe, the property will not be subject to State or local land use regulations. Only Tribal land use regulations are applicable on trust lands. However, the Tribal Government desires to work cooperatively with local and State authorities. Therefore, in accordance with Section 10.0 of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) (DEIS Vol. I, **Appendix C**) and Section 3(G) of the Tribe's Environment, Public Health and Safety (EPHS) Ordinance (**Appendix U** of the FEIS), the Tribe has agreed to develop the trust lands, and any structures and uses on the property, in a manner consistent with certain specified Clark County codes and ordinances including certain provisions that affect visual resources or aesthetics. The details of the MOU with the County and EPHS Ordinance are discussed further in **Section 1.0**, Purpose and Need. Following is a brief outline of the applicable local regulations were the land not taken into trust, but developed privately or publicly.

Clark County Comprehensive Growth Management Plan 2003-2023

The following goals and policies for aesthetics and visual resources are contained within the Community Design Element of the Clark County Comprehensive GMP 2003-2023.

Goal: Natural features of Clark County should be incorporated into design and development.

Policy 10.1.3 Natural land features should be recognized and integrated into the placement of buildings and in site planning. Streams, hillsides and unique vegetation should be considered strong design determinants and incorporated into the overall plan.

Policy 10.1.4 The siting of buildings should take advantage of river, mountain, lake and agricultural/pastoral views.

Policy 10.1.5 Retention of existing mature vegetation should be encouraged and included as a design element in the site plan. Every effort should be made to preserve existing trees over 8 inches in diameter.

Policy 10.1.6 Where new development adjoins agricultural or rural land or public open space, a soft transitional edge should be provided on site to create a gradual transition between the open space and new development.

3.13.2 SETTING – RIDGEFIELD INTERCHANGE SITE

IEWS AND VIEWSHEDS

A private residence and used auto parts dealer are located in the center of the Ridgefield Interchange Site. The site is dominated by a rolling topography of open pastures. To the south is a mixed deciduous/coniferous tree community. The site is zoned Urban Holding-40 and Business Park, as described in more detail in **Section 3.9**, Land Use.

The areas immediately surrounding the site are commercial, residential, light-industrial/business, and agricultural. To the north, properties are zoned industrial, commercial, single-family residential, and agricultural. To the east, properties are zoned primarily commercial and agricultural. To the south are industrial park and single-family residential zones. Properties to the west in the City of Ridgefield are also zoned industrial.

The surrounding viewshed consists of two viewing corridors (**Figure 3.13-4**). **Viewshed C** is the line of sight from the areas on NE 10th Avenue east of the Ridgefield Interchange Site (**Figure 3.13-5**).

Figure 3.13-4

Figure 3.13-5

Viewshed D is the line-of-sight along I-5. There are no identified designated scenic vistas for this area.

Criteria for Analysis

The elements that define the visual experience of the viewsheds are the same as those for the La Center Interchange Site above.

Description of Viewsheds

Viewshed C (NE 10th Avenue) is experienced at close proximity by north and southbound travelers along NE 10th Avenue and by residential areas (**Figure 3.13-5**). Views of commuters from NE 264th Street and from residences to the south are obscured by dense trees. Views from the north are partially obscured by hills. Residences located to the north and east have direct views of the Ridgefield Interchange Site. Travelers directly east view the site, although these views are of short duration and not within the forward line of sight for drivers. Additionally, there are a few residences to the south that may experience views of the site. Riparian areas on the southern portion of the site partially obscure some views from the south.

Viewshed D (the I-5 corridor) is a commuter viewshed. Both the north and south views of the Ridgefield Interchange Site are screened by commercial developments and vegetation. From this viewshed the site is not visible.

SHADOW, LIGHT AND GLARE

No significant lighting, shadow, or glare exists on or near the Ridgefield Interchange Site. The dominant residential and agricultural uses on and around the site lend few sources of light or glare during both daytime and nighttime. Commercial uses near the site are smaller developments and include two gas stations and a restaurant which project minimal lighting. No buildings of significant size exist that would cast large amounts of shadow on surrounding properties.

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

The community character of unincorporated areas near the Ridgefield Interchange Site is similar to that of the site itself. The Ridgefield Interchange Site is located between the urban areas of Ridgefield and more rural, agricultural communities. As the site is located in the UGA of the City of Ridgefield, it is anticipated to become a part of the growing City of Ridgefield in the future. The City has a small town atmosphere with scenic resources, including Ridgefield National Wildlife Refuge. The general area around the site is planned for industrial, business, and commercial uses, which will serve as employment for the growing population. Most of the housing is single-family residential with some multi-family units to the west of the site.

REGULATORY SETTING

The Clark County Comprehensive GMP is the planning document used for development in unincorporated areas. Applicable goals and policies for aesthetics and visual resources are the same as those listed for the La Center Interchange Site above. However, if the site were annexed, the Ridgefield Urban Area Comprehensive Plan (UACP) would be the applicable planning document for the property. Applicable goals and policies from the Ridgefield UACP are listed below.

Goal 5: Industrial Growth – To ensure that there are abundant employment opportunities for existing and future Ridgefield residents.

Policy 5.1 Planning efforts shall recognize and capitalize on Ridgefield’s locational advantages, so that Ridgefield becomes a regional commercial and industrial employment center and not a ‘bedroom community’ for Vancouver and the Portland metropolitan area.

Policy 5.5 b Master Planned Business Park (MPBP) sites shall be separated from major arterial streets and residential areas by a landscaped buffer strip of sufficient width, design, and materials to provide safe separation between vehicles and pedestrians and to provide an aesthetically pleasing business park street character. MPBP sites shall provide privately maintained landscaped areas. Outdoor storage of materials shall be prohibited on MPBP sites.

Goal 6: Commercial Development – Encourage the revitalization of Downtown Ridgefield and appropriately planned commercial development at the I-5 Junction.

Policy 6.5 All new Commercial development, other than Commercial development within the Downtown Mixed Use zoning district, requires a landscape buffer between abutting residential development and zoning districts and abutting public streets.