4.6 Aesthetics

This section provides an analysis of potential impacts on aesthetics.

4.6.1 Study Area

The study area for aesthetics includes the natural environment, the built environment, and the visual quality within those environments on the Project site and adjacent land uses with views of and through the Project site. These are included to provide an analysis of the Project's context and placement within an existing semi-rural/urban transition/agricultural developed setting and to qualitatively describe the potential visual impacts related to the Project.

4.6.2 Relevant Plans, Policies, and Regulations

This section summarizes state and local regulations related to aesthetics that are applicable to the Project. There are no federal regulations related to aesthetics that are applicable to the Project.

Relevant policies and regulations related to aesthetics are summarized in the Land and Shoreline Use Section 4.5 Land and Shoreline Use and Table 4-23.

Table 4-23. Applicable Regulations and Policies for Aesthetics

Law and Regulation	Description
State	
State Environmental Policy Act	SEPA helps state and local agencies in Washington identify possible environmental impacts that could result from a proposed action, alternatives to the proposed action, and potential impact minimization and mitigation measures. Information learned through the SEPA review process can be used to change a proposal to reduce likely impacts and inform permitting decisions at the state and local levels. SEPA requires that land and shoreline use, recreation, and aesthetic environmental components be addressed.
Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA)	Under the GMA (RCW 36.70A), regions, counties, and large cities must create and regularly update comprehensive plans to identify where growth would occur and to plan for housing, transportation, water, sewer, and other necessary facilities. Both the County and City are required to plan for growth under the GMA by preparing and periodically updating countywide planning policies that coordinate planning between the county and the cities. Pierce County's strategy for growth, transportation and economic development are captured in the GMA-mandatory multicounty planning policy (MPP) document produced by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Vision 2050 (October 2020). Vision 2050 contains information and policies that Pierce County Regional Council (PCRC) uses to guide the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies. Both Vision 2050 and the Countywide Planning Policies apply to the Project site. The PCRC includes a body of elected officials set up to coordinate growth management planning efforts county-wide. The City of Puyallup is classified as a Core City, a type of regional geography within Vision 2050, used for planning and growth distribution purposes. A Core City refers to a city that contains

Law and Regulation	Description
	one or more regionally designated centers and is connected to the high-capacity transit network (Vision 2050).
Washington State Shoreline Management Act (SMA)	The SMA provides for the management of water bodies or watercourses identified as "shorelines of the state." Areas under jurisdiction of the SMA include all marine waters along the Pacific Ocean and Puget Sound; streams and rivers with an annual mean flow of more than 20 cubic feet per second, lakes greater than 20 acres in size, shorelines adjacent to these water bodies (typically within 200 feet of the water body) and associated wetland. Comprehensive shoreline master programs are tailored to the local jurisdiction, containing maps and legal descriptions of the delineated streams, rivers, lakes shorelines and wetlands.
Local	
Pierce County Comprehensive Plan	The Pierce County Comprehensive Plan (Pierce County 2021d) includes goals and policies related to aesthetics within their Parks and Recreation, Land Use elements and the Alderton McMillin Community Plan. A consistency analysis of aesthetic goals and policies that relate to the Project are included in Table 4-22.
Pierce County Code (PCC)	PCC 18J Countywide Design Standards and Guidelines sets forth requirements for site clearing (18J15.020) landscape buffers (PCC 18J.040; exterior illumination (PCC 18J.15.085); surface parking lot landscaping (18J.15.090); mechanical equipment and outdoor screening standards (18J.15.155); and stormwater facility standards (18J.15.170) to minimize visual impact from development and to implement the goals and policies related to aesthetics in the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan.
City of Puyallup Comprehensive Plan	The City of Puyallup Comprehensive Plan (City of Puyallup 2015a) includes goals and policies related to aesthetics within their Land Use, Community Character elements and PROS Plan. A consistency analysis of aesthetic goals and policies that relate to the Project are included in Table 4-22.
Puyallup Municipal Code (PMC)	PMC 20.58 (landscaping requirements) and PMC 20.26.300 (Nonresidential design review standards) set forth requirements to minimize visual impacts for development in accordance with the City of Puyallup Comprehensive Plan goals and policies related to aesthetics.

4.6.3 Affected Environment

This section summarizes the environmental setting related to existing and planned aesthetic resources within the study area.

The Project is in the UGA of the City of Puyallup in unincorporated Pierce County. The 188-acre Project site is situated east of Shaw Road East and East Main Avenue, north of East Pioneer and 88th Street East, and west of the Puyallup River within Sections 25 and 26, Township 20N, Range 4E in the Willamette Meridian baseline. The Project site includes lands that are currently used for agriculture, with a few associated houses.

Mount Rainier is identified as a scenic view within the Alderton-McMillin Community Plan, as is the vegetation along hillsides and ridgelines (Pierce County 2007). Design Review Goals of the Community Plan speak to the aesthetic values of the community including striving for development that is visually attractive, compatible with the rural and agricultural identity of the community, harmonious with the atmosphere and residential character of the area and respectful of the natural environment (Title 18J.100.010 PCC). Many comments received on the Draft EIS Scoping Notice noted that the agricultural land use of the area (current and historic) has allowed the rural community character to remain an aesthetic asset.

PCC 18J.100.010 Goals

The goals of design review within the Alderton-McMillin Community Plan area are:

A. To strive for development that is visually attractive, compatible with the rural and agricultural identity of the community, harmonious with the atmosphere and residential character of the area and respectful of the natural environment;

B. To utilize existing site characteristics such as clusters of trees, vegetative screening and topography to separate potentially conflicting land uses and soften the appearance of new development;

C. To encourage the enhancement and preservation of land or buildings of unique or outstanding scenic or historical significance;

D. To encourage well designed buildings and sites;

E. To size new buildings to the human scale; and

F. To implement LID design standards where feasible.

The Project site has historically been used for farming and other agricultural uses (e.g., the Van Lierop bulb farm.) The Project site is within the Alderton-McMillan community plan boundaries. There is a historic industrial development that is located in a small area south of the Project site separated by 80th Street East and the County's Foothills trail/linear park.

To characterize the existing visual character of the study area for aesthetics, five KOPs were identified. In selecting potential KOPs, two components were considered: the existing landscape and viewer groups.

The existing landscape comprises of vegetation, water features, color, landform, and other characteristics that combine to form the landscape scenery.

The term "viewer groups" refers to the group of individuals who might be affected by the installation of the Project due to sensitivities to changes in the existing landscape. Below is a description of the existing viewer groups in the study area for aesthetics. These include viewers from recreational areas and residential areas.

Residential Areas: Single-family residences are included in the immediate Project vicinity, directly east of the southern portion of the Project site, between 80th Street East and the Puyallup River. The residential properties are single-family residences on a range of lot sizes.

Recreational Areas: Recreationists using Van Lierop Park and the Foothills Trail, and East Puyallup Trailhead and Trail have views of open farm fields to the north and Mount Rainier to the south of the park. Recreationists using the Puyallup Riverwalk Trail have views of the Puyallup River and associated vegetation to the east. Recreationalists using the Van Lierop Park have a view of Mount Rainier through the park's sightline view corridor.

Figure 4-45 illustrates the KOP locations selected to support the EIS analysis and provide representative views of the Project site. These KOPs were selected based on the existing land uses that border the Project alignment and are qualitatively described below.

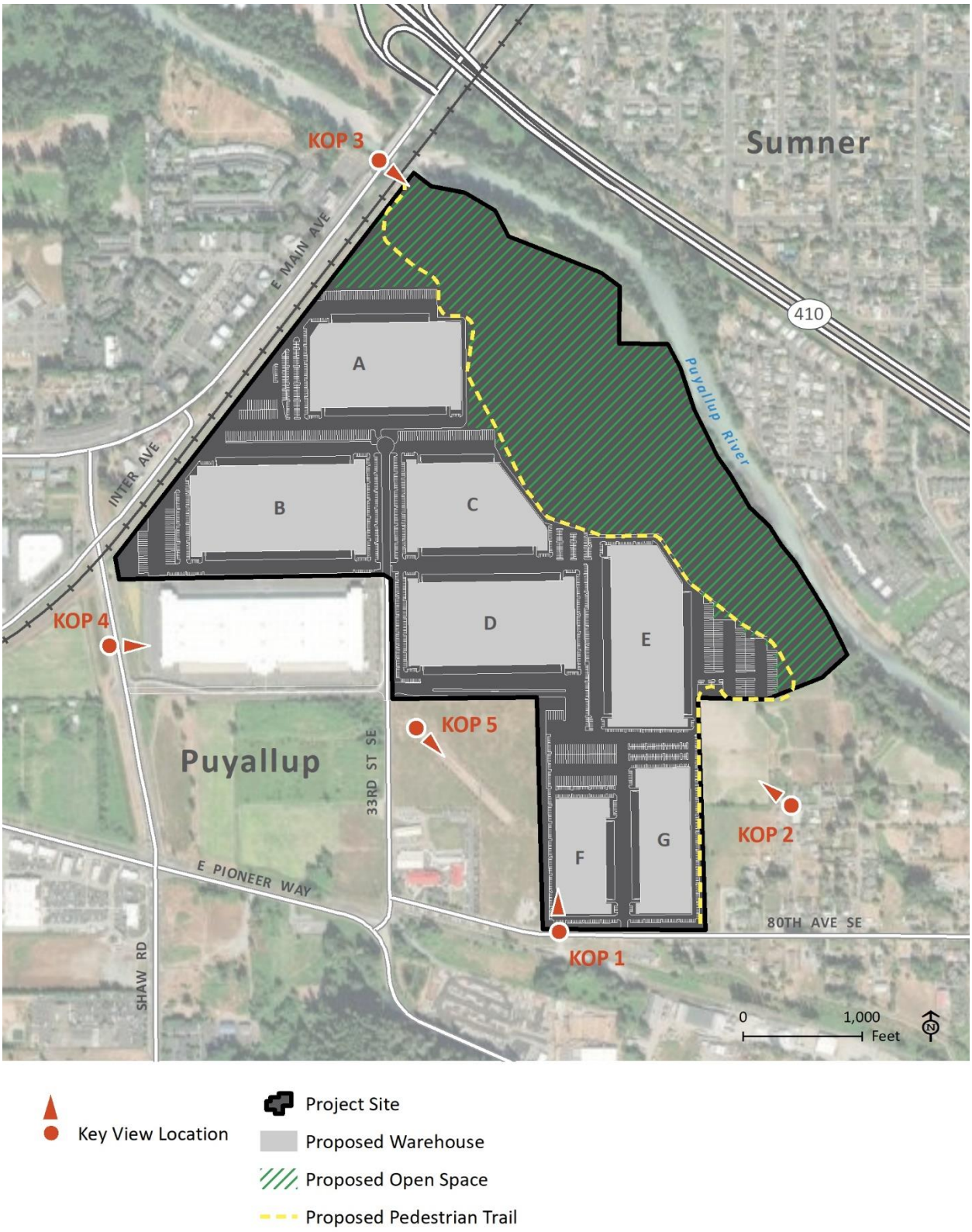

Figure 4-45. Key Observation Points

KOP 1 provides a view of the Project site, looking north from the Meeker Trailhead of the Foothills trail network and is characterized by open and expansive views of agricultural lands (see Figure 4-46). Generally, views from Van Lierop Park are open. Although Van Lierop Park is typically not used for recreational activities during nighttime hours, it should be noted that few sources of nighttime lighting are present, including surrounding single-family residences and vehicles passing on nearby roads. Viewer groups for KOP 1 include those using Van Lierop Park for recreation. KOP 1 shows the generally flat topography of the rural valley and subsequently the Project site and adjacent parcels. Trees in the background generally line the Puyallup River. This KOP also provides representative views of the Project site from vehicles travelling along 80th Street East and from recreationists using the Foothills Trail.

Figure 4-46. KOP 1: View of the Existing Project Site from Van Lierop Park Looking North toward the Project Site

Source: Digital Image, May 2019, "Street View," GoogleMaps. Available: google.com. Accessed: April 6, 2021.

KOP 2 provides a view from the nearest single-family residential area adjacent to the Project site on 141st Avenue East and 78th Street East looking northwest toward the Project site (see Figure 4-47). The hills that surround the City provide a natural topographical feature to the citizens residing both in and around the City as well as people traveling the surrounding streets. Additionally, the natural topography includes ridgelines, woodlands, rolling hillsides, and knolls visible from the rural valley. Viewer groups for KOP 2 include the single-family residences adjacent to the Project site. From public roadways, views of the Project site are glancing and typically obstructed by single-family residences and associated structures (sheds/outbuildings) and fencing.

Figure 4-47. KOP 2: View from 141st Avenue East and 78th Street East Looking Northwest toward the Project Site

Source: Digital Image, May 2019, "Street View," GoogleMaps. Available: google.com. Accessed: April 6, 2021.

KOP 3 provides a view from northwest of the Project site on East Main Avenue and 5th Avenue Northeast looking southeast toward the Project site (see Figure 4-48). There are multiple visual encroachments from north of the Project site in the immediate foreground, including the rail corridor berm and overhead power lines. Visual elements, such as ridgelines, woodlands, Mount Rainier, and commercial and transportation infrastructure, make up the areas north and northwest of the Project site. Viewer groups for KOP 3 include members of the public using roadways and sidewalks and surrounding businesses. As the Riverwalk Trail terminus is approximately 0.15 mile northeast, this KOP also provides representative views of the Project site for recreationists.

Figure 4-48. KOP 3: View from North of the Project site on East Main Avenue Looking Southeast towards the Project Site

Source: Digital Image, May 2019, "Street View," GoogleMaps. Available: google.com. Accessed: August 30, 2021.

KOP 4 provides a view from the western portion of the Project site at Shaw Road East (see Figure 4-49). Views from this portion of the Project site are a mix of open agriculture fields, the Viking warehouse building, power poles and power lines, and the rail line. Visual elements, such as open fields, ridgelines, and woodlands, make up the views. Viewer groups for KOP 4 include travelers (drivers, pedestrians, or cyclists) along Shaw Road East and those who use or are employed at the neighboring Viking warehouse.

Figure 4-49. KOP 4: View from Shaw Road East Looking East toward the Project Site

Source: Digital Image, May 2019, "Street View," GoogleMaps. Available: google.com. Accessed: April 6, 2021.

KOP 5 provides a view from the Van Lierop Park's sightline view corridor (see Figure 4-50). Views from the view corridor of Van Lierop Park include Van Lierop Park in the foreground, trees, and a direct view corridor of Mount Rainier in the background. Viewer groups for KOP 5 include recreationalists at Van Lierop Park.

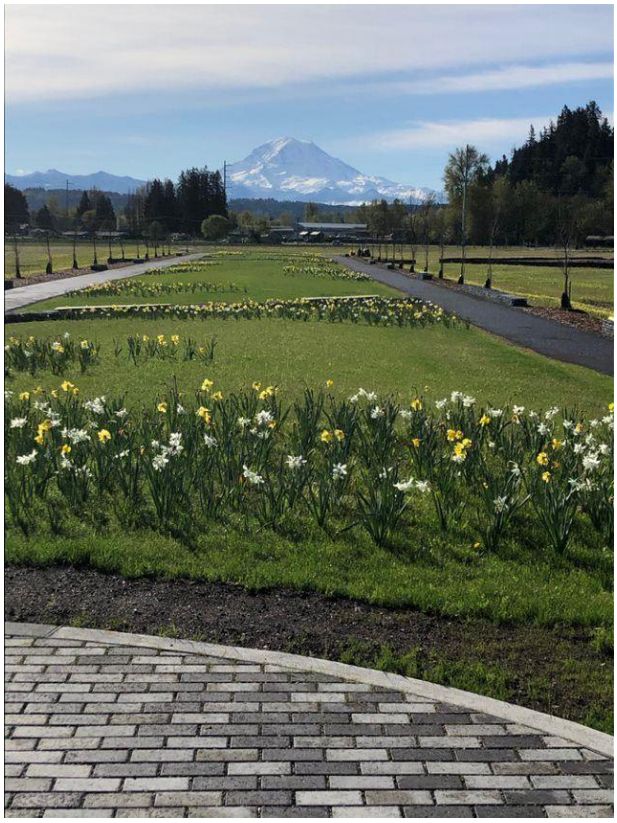

Figure 4-50. KOP 4. View from Van Lierop Park Looking Southeast toward the Project Site

4.6.4 Impacts

This section describes the potential for environmental impacts related to aesthetics as a result of Project implementation. It describes the thresholds used to determine whether an impact would be significant, as well as measures to mitigate potentially significant impacts, where appropriate.

Methodology

Aesthetic experiences can be highly subjective; therefore, Project-related impacts are evaluated based on the extent of the modifications to existing physical conditions on the Project site as a result of the Project. Given the Project's context and placement within an existing rural developed setting, this analysis follows a qualitative approach to assess the potential visual impacts related to the Project. This analysis was performed by defining the Project location and setting; identifying and characterizing the existing visual resources and key viewers; and assessing resource change and viewer response.

Impacts Analysis

No Action Alternative

Under the No Action Alternative, the existing aesthetic quality of the Project site would be preserved until future development is proposed. No substantial new infrastructure would be introduced into the aesthetic environment until future development is proposed and no significant contrast would be created.

Proposed Project

Construction Impacts

Mitigated Significant Impact. The Project is in a semi-rural/urban transition/agricultural developed area within the UGA of the City in unincorporated Pierce County on land that is currently an open area used for agriculture and occupied single-family residences. From the Project site, residents and city park and trail users can experience the aesthetic resources of Mount Rainer to the southeast, trees lining the Puyallup River at the eastern portion of the Project site and surrounding vegetated hills.

Long-established open areas where agricultural activities are conducted provide the community with a visual familiarity and identification of the built environment around them. During construction, increased activity and the presence of construction equipment would result in visual impacts in the Project site, a disruption and displacement of the community's sense of place during this time. These impacts could occur during the anticipated 5 years of construction. To mitigate these impacts, mitigation measure AES-1 would be required:

- ***AES-1. Comply with Construction Lighting Requirements.*** The Contractor should ensure that construction activities that need lighting near residential areas would be avoided to the extent practicable. If lighting is required, the Contractor would be required to comply with Title 18J.15.220(C)(3) PCC temporary lighting in a manner that directs light toward the construction area and would install temporary shields as necessary so that light does not spill over into residential areas.

Operations Impacts

Mitigated Significant Impact. The Project would permanently convert the area from a visual environment that is generally characterized presently by rural development and agricultural uses (see KOP 1 to KOP 5, see Figure 4-45) to an industrial warehousing park. This is a significant environmental impact. As provided in Table 4-22, the evaluation indicates that the Project would be inconsistent with County policies related to visibility (Pierce County Comprehensive Plan, Policy LU-47.5) and compatibility with residential character and agricultural identity of the community (Pierce County Alderton-McMillin Community Plan, Goal AM D-1). The natural environment, the built environment, and the visual quality within those environments in the Project site would impact viewer groups, including recreationists, nearby residents, and the traveling public. The Project would result in a new contrast in the aesthetic environment, causing the aesthetic value of the environment to change.

KOP 1

As KOP 1 shows, views from south of the Project site looking north are open. The Project would introduce new facilities into a visual environment that is generally characterized by rural development and agricultural uses. The generally flat topography of the rural valley and the trees that line the Puyallup River would be obstructed by Project operation. Further, the Project would introduce lighting to a previously unlit area. Structure heights, exterior building materials, and landscaping requirements would be determined during the permitting process.

The Project would create a permanent change to the aesthetic resources south of the Project site. The natural environment, the built environment, and the visual quality within those environments in the Project site would impact viewer groups, including recreationists using Foothills Trail and Van Lierop Park and the traveling public on nearby roads.

KOP 2

As KOP 2 shows, there can be a number of existing visual encroachments looking toward the Project site from the single-family residential area to the southeast of the Project site. From public roadways, views of the Project site are glancing and typically obstructed by single-family residences and associated structures (sheds/outbuildings and fencing).

The Project would create a permanent change to the aesthetic resources southeast of the Project site. The natural environment, the built environment, and the visual quality within those environments in the Project site would impact viewer groups, including nearby residents and the traveling public.

KOP 3

As KOP 3 shows, there can be a number of existing visual encroachments looking southeast from north of the Project site. However, the Project could obstruct the viewshed of Mount Rainier from viewer groups to the north and northwest of the Project site, including those on the nearby Riverwalk Trail and members of the public using roadways, sidewalks, and surrounding businesses. Additionally, the natural topography such as major ridgelines, woodlands, rolling hillsides, and knolls that are visible from the Project site would be obstructed by Project operation. Structure heights, exterior building materials, and landscaping requirements would be determined during the permitting process.

The Project would create a permanent change to the aesthetic resources north and northwest of the Project site. The natural environment, the built environment, and the visual quality within those environments in the Project site would impact viewer groups, including members of the public using roadways and sidewalks and surrounding businesses.

KOP 4

As KOP 4 shows, views from west of the Project site looking east are open at the Project site, and there is a warehouse on the neighboring property. The Project would introduce new facilities into a visual environment that is generally characterized by rural development and agricultural uses. The generally flat topography of the rural valley, open fields, ridgelines, woodlands, and trees that line the Puyallup River would be obstructed by Project operation. Further, the Project would introduce lighting to a previously unlit area. Structure heights, exterior building materials, and landscaping requirements would be determined during the permitting process.

The Project would create a permanent change to the aesthetic resources in the Project site. The natural environment, the built environment, and the visual quality within those environments in the Project site would impact viewer groups, those who use Shaw Road East, and those who use the neighboring properties.

KOP 5

As KOP 5 shows, views from Van Lierop Park southeast include Mount Rainier (see Figure 4-51). The Project would introduce new facilities into a visual environment that is characterized by a view corridor of Mount Rainier. The view corridor of Mount Rainier would be obstructed by Project operation, most notably Building F. Maintaining the view corridor was the primary focus of the site layout of Van Lierop Park. Further, the Project would introduce lighting to a previously unlit area. Structure heights, site plan design, exterior building materials, and landscaping requirements would be determined during the permitting process.

The Project would create a permanent change to the aesthetic resources in the Project site. The natural environment, the built environment, and the visual quality within those environments in the Project site would impact users of Van Lierop Park. Mitigation measure REC-1 would eliminate the potential for impacts to the park view corridor associated with Van Lierop Park. Mitigation measures AES-2 and AES-3 would further reduce visual impacts to park users and the surrounding community.

- ***AES-2: Comply with Screening, Landscape and Buffering Requirements.*** The Applicant should use landscaping buffering to promote compatibility between land uses and to reduce the visual impacts of development on users of the site and abutting uses, including the proposed trail. The Project should comply with local building code regulations, including Title 18J.10.055(6) PCC, which requires landscape plans that include the locations and types of landscape buffers and maintenance measures. The landscape buffering should also comply with Title 18J.15.040 PCC, a Level 3 Landscape Buffers requirement, and provide a substantial mix of evergreen and other landscaping elements, including berms and sound walls that buffer the visual and auditory impacts. Consistent with the site design of the Viking Project (Phase 1 of the Knutson Farms industrial warehouse complex), the site plan shall be revised to include a minimum 15-foot-wide landscape strip to be provided along the entire length of blank wall facades of buildings to reduce the visual impacts to surrounding park land and residential land uses. A mixture of medium to large evergreen conifer and deciduous trees and shrubs (evergreen and/or deciduous shrub mix) shall be planted for all buildings along the entire length of all visible façades on buildings. Pierce County policies supporting this mitigation measure include LU-47.8, LU-47.9, and AM D-1. City policies supporting this mitigation measure include LU-22.3, CC-1.1, CC-1.2, and CC-1.3. Implementation of this mitigation would lessen the visual impact of large, undifferentiated façade area impacts related to the warehouse structures, thereby breaking up the visual environment with additional green infrastructure and tree canopy.

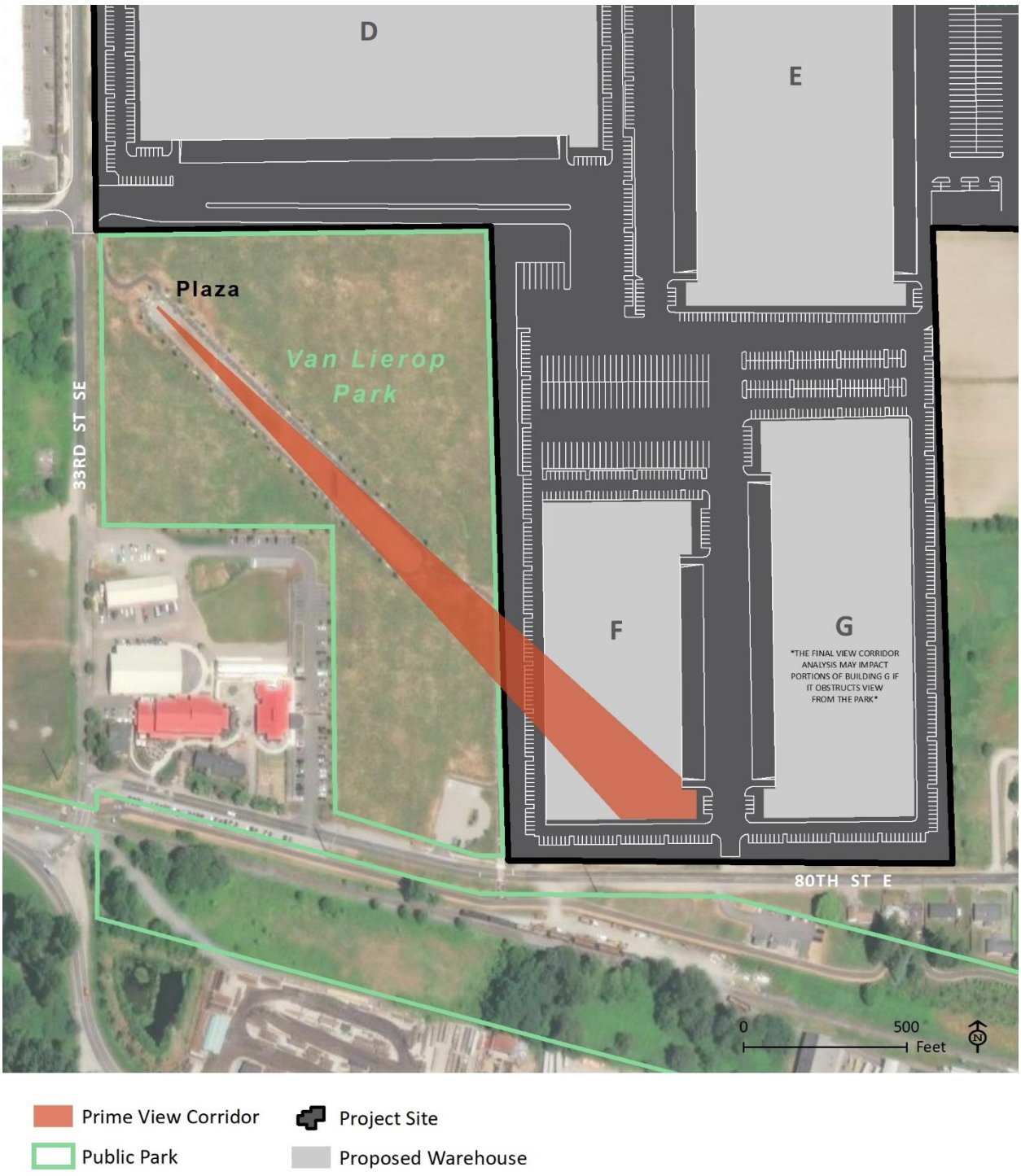

Figure 4-51. Van Lierop Park View Corridor of Mount Rainier with Proposed Project

The Applicant should provide a 30-foot Level 3 (full evergreen sight obscuring) buffer area around all areas abutting public park space; the buffer should be graded and constructed with a 3:1 slope with a retaining wall interior to the Project site, with a sight-obscuring 12--foot-tall masonry sound wall on the interior side of the buffer area/top of sloped buffer area (see Figure 4-52 as an example). The 12-foot sound wall is required by mitigation N-3. The landscaping should be irrigated and a proper drainage system installed to ensure that water does not collect in open space, parks, or residential areas adjacent to the berm. Landscaping and berming should be tapered to grade level and landscaping limited to low-growing shrubs and ground cover within the prime view corridor area related to KOP 5 and in areas intended to connect the Park trail to the proposed east-west on site trail connection. The Project Applicant and Pierce County should seek input from the City of Puyallup Parks Department and Development and Permitting Services Department as the site plan is revised to meet this mitigation measure. Pierce County policies supporting this mitigation measure include LU-47.8, LU-47.9, AM D-1, and PR-5.7. City policy CC-1.3 supports this mitigation measure.

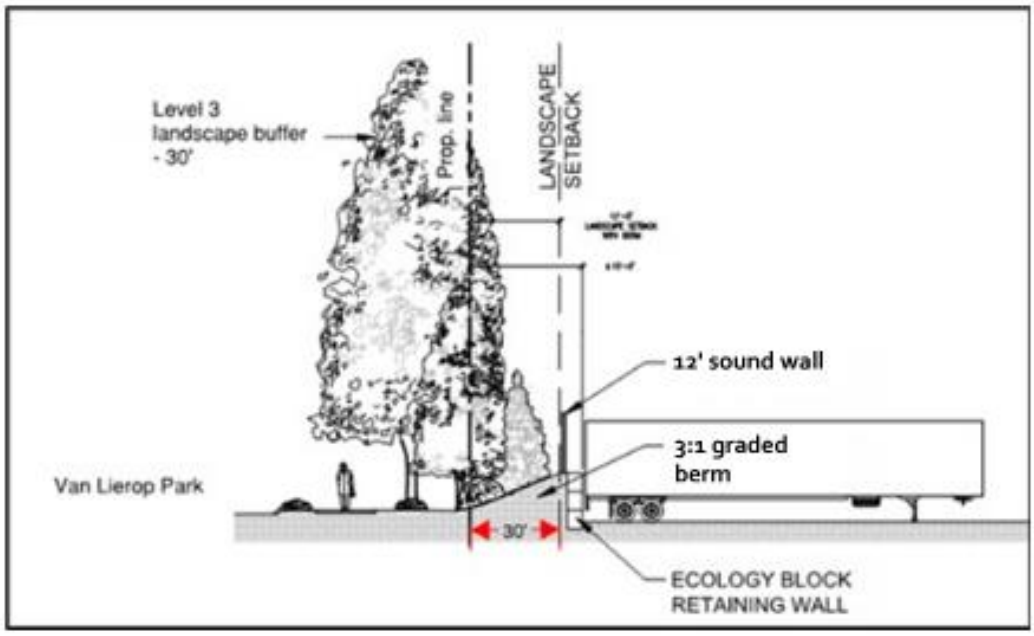

Figure 4-52. Proposed Buffer Area from Other Approved Development Plans Sets (Sourced from publicly available documents from CoP DPS).

- ***AES-3: Comply with Operation Lighting Requirements.*** The Applicant should comply with Title 18J.15.085 PCC, which requires installation of lighting that would not spill over onto nearby properties, promotes compatibility between land uses by reducing light impacts on users of the site and surrounding areas, and avoids and minimize glares and light trespass beyond the illuminated area. Additionally, the Applicant should minimize the impacts of light on neighboring properties in accordance with recommendations from the International Dark Sky Association Best Practices for Enhanced Exterior Lighting Standards (Pierce County Ordinance No. 2019-101), which include installing full cut-off light boxes, adjusting light direction, and providing

additional screens with supplemental light shields. The Applicant should provide a post-construction photo metric analysis to the permitting agency and the City of Puyallup Parks Department to ensure implementation of energy efficient lighting such as light emitting diode (LED) lighting and a no-light-spill standard on adjacent residential, critical areas, and park land. City of Puyallup Comprehensive Plan Policy NE-13.2 also supports this mitigation measure.

Alternative 1 – Rail Transport

Construction Impacts

Mitigated Significant Impact. The construction impacts associated with Alternative 1 would be the same as those described for the proposed Project in that it would introduce the presence of construction equipment and activity from an area in which the visual environment is generally characterized presently by rural development and agricultural uses. Additional impacts for Alternative 1 would be associated with the construction across 80th Street and closer to the Foothills Trailhead parking. This would impact the experience of the Foothills Trail users as the aesthetic quality of their use of the trail would be interrupted with construction activity and construction equipment. This aesthetic interruption associated with the construction of Alternative 1 could occur during the anticipated 5 years of construction. A mitigated significant impact is anticipated. Mitigation measure AES-1 would reduce impacts to the extent feasible.

Operations Impacts

Mitigated Significant Impact. The aesthetic impacts associated with Alternative 1 would be the same as those described for the proposed Project in that it would permanently convert the area from a visual environment that is generally characterized presently by rural development and agricultural uses to an industrial warehousing park. Alternative 1 would compound the aesthetic environmental impacts with the addition of rail lines and rail cars in the built environment. Operation would include rail movement to and from the site and the BNSF mainline/Meeker Southern interchange extensions would be adjacent to existing rail lines. Alternative 1 would introduce a more intense level of contrast in the aesthetic environment, causing the aesthetic value of the environment to change. Impacts would be considered Mitigated Significant Impact. Mitigation measure REC-1 would eliminate the potential for impacts to the park view corridor associated with Van Lierop Park. Mitigation measures AES-2 and AES-3 would reduce impacts to the extent feasible.

Alternative 2 – Reduced Intensity Alternative

Alternative 2 considers the potential impacts that would result if the mitigation measures that reduce the site footprint of the facility (AES-2, LU-1, REC-1, and SW-4) as outlined in this Draft EIS for the proposed Project) were adopted by the Applicant. As noted below, Alternative 2 would still require Project implementation mitigation measures to reduce aesthetics impacts.

Construction Impacts

Mitigated Significant Impact. The aesthetic-related construction impacts associated with Alternative 2 would be similar to those described for the proposed Project in that it would be introducing the presence of construction equipment and activity from an area which the visual environment is generally characterized presently by rural development and agricultural uses. Alternative 2 would provide a

reduced footprint and construction could be at a smaller scale. During this time, viewer groups adjacent to the Project site would still be subjected to disruption and displacement of agricultural activities and low intensity uses resulting in visual impacts on residential and city parks. A mitigated significant impact is anticipated. Mitigation measure AES-1 would reduce impacts to the extent feasible.

Operations Impacts

Mitigated Significant Impact. Similar to the proposed Project, Alternative 2 would result in a new contrast in the aesthetic environment, causing the aesthetic value of the environment to change permanently. Alternative 2 would reduce the building footprints of Building F and allow for the aesthetic visual to Mount Rainier from Van Lierop Park to be maintained. However, Alternative 2 would still be inconsistent with County policies around compatibility with residential character and agricultural identity of the community (Pierce County Alderton-McMillin Community Plan, Goal AM D-1). A mitigated significant impact is anticipated. Mitigation measure AES-3 would reduce impacts to the extent feasible.