

## 27.0 VISUAL QUALITY AND SCENIC CHARACTER

Preservation of the visual quality and scenic character of the site has been integral to the planning process for the Nordic site.

Early discussions with Belfast residents highlighted the degree to which the Little River Community Trail, the lower reservoir, dam, and some of the existing Belfast Water District buildings were valued. They have long been a part of the visual experience at this southern gateway to Belfast. Nordic plans to retain the existing red brick Belfast Water District office building, dam, and associated structures for the project, and repurpose the office building for public/visitor use, helping to maintain the scenic character of the area.

Preservation of the view across the reservoir and along the Little River Community Trail has been accomplished by maintaining a 250-foot Shoreland Zone that will be transferred back to the City of Belfast for continued community use. The views along this trail have been further protected by providing an additional 100 feet of buffer to the nearest building from the edge of the Shoreland Zone. Development has been placed at the central core of the site to the extent possible, to preserve existing views to the extent possible from all directions.

The proposed development will require an increased power supply (from 12kVa to 35 kVa) from Central Maine Power. The feed will match that of the existing and come from the north via the U.S. Route 1 / Northport Avenue corridor to the project entrance, wherein it will be placed underground and routed to the primary substation between Buildings 1 and 2 for distribution. Utility requirements will necessitate replacement of the existing (approximately 30-foot high) poles on the north side of the road with taller (approximately 35 feet) poles to achieve proper separation of the high-voltage supply line. The replacement of the poles and relatively small (17%) increase in height will not create an unreasonable adverse visual impact to a public viewing area.

Building design will further minimize the development's visual impact through the planned installation of green roofs and building facades designed to blend naturally with the surrounding landscape. In general, there are two categories of structures proposed for the site, process and personnel-oriented, both of which will be designed to blend within the site's natural context.

Process-related building forms will generally be shaped by the functions within. They will include Buildings 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 8, and will have simple massing with flat or low sloping roof areas. Mechanical penthouses and roof top equipment will be set back from the building perimeter to minimize their exposure to view. Predominant materials will be insulated metal panels with patterns of neutral colors that will respond to the site's natural surroundings.

Personnel-oriented buildings are for primarily occupied buildings including Buildings 7 and 9, and will be designed using more detailed massing, materials and fenestration in contrast to the process buildings. Exterior materials options may include more natural and organic textures, such as composite wood-like panels, masonry, glass, and decorative metal tiles. In some instances, small areas of insulated metal panels may be desired on secondary exposures.

A full visual impact analysis (VIA) was conducted in accordance with Maine Department of Environmental Protection (MEDEP) Chapter 315 *Assessing and Mitigating Impacts to Existing Scenic and Aesthetic Uses* to better understand the potential impact this development will have on the visual quality and scenic character of the surrounding area. In accordance with Chapter 315, two defined "public viewing areas" exist within 2,000 feet of the project site boundary, (1) the McLellan-Poor Preserve consisting of lands and trails on the south side of Belfast Water District Reservoir #1 in Northport, and (2) the Little River Community Trail to consist of land retained by the City of Belfast

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coinciding with the Shoreland Zone (250 feet from shoreline) on the north side of the reservoir. Other vantage points will include public rights-of-way such as Rt. 1 / Northport Road and Perkins Road, which afford views into the site but are not defined as “public viewing areas” and are not required to meet applicable scenic quality regulations. The proposed development is designed in accordance with all requirements of the City of Belfast Code of Ordinances. No requests for waiver or variance are being sought, including building space and bulk.

As presented in a Visual Assessment Report prepared by SMRT, Inc. (SMRT) (**Appendix 27-A**), there will be no unreasonable adverse impact to public viewing areas as they are adequately buffered by existing and maturing vegetation and, because they are under public ownership in perpetuity, the vegetation will remain and only increase in buffering effectiveness. Additionally, in accordance with city ordinance requirements, there is an added 40 feet of undisturbed vegetation immediately inside the project boundary. New perimeter plantings are proposed to augment and enhance this 40-foot zone and the cut/fill slopes leading to it around the developed areas. These plantings are oriented more towards providing screening to the Perkins and Rt. 1 views, even though they are not statutorily defined as “public viewing areas”.

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**APPENDIX 27-A**

Visual Assessment Report