

VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT
City of Albany
Rapp Road Landfill Eastern Expansion

City of Albany
Albany County, New York

Prepared for:

City of Albany
Department of General Services
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 A. Aesthetic Resource Photos

I. INTRO/PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The City of Albany Department of General Services is applying for an expansion permit for the existing City of Albany Rapp Road Landfill (Landfill) to meet the solid waste disposal needs of the City and the communities that make up the Albany New York Solid Waste Energy Recovery System (ANSWERS). The Landfill is located on City owned property west of Rapp Road between the New York State Thruway to the south and the Conrail railroad tracks to the north.

The preferred development scenario, known as Alternative 3, involves the expansion of the landfill with an overfill of approximately 23 acres on the existing landfill and a lateral expansion of approximately 15 acres onto adjacent City owned property to the northeast of the existing landfill. Three other alternatives for the landfill expansion have also been considered and are evaluated in this visual assessment. It is important to note that the existing landfill permit allows an additional 50-60 foot height beyond what is currently visible. The overfill would be approximately 10 feet on top of the already permitted level. Figure 1 illustrates the location of the four alternatives considered.

Alternative 1 involved the expansion of the landfill northward onto the Fox Run Trailer Park property which was previously acquired by the City of Albany. This expansion scenario included approximately 24 acres of new landfill footprint and an overfill of the existing landfill area south of the trailer park. Alternative 1 was met with concern by the Albany Pine Bush Preserve Commission and The Nature Conservancy because it further fragmented the connection between the western and eastern sections of the Pine Bush and was originally intended to be dedicated to the Pine Bush.

Alternative 2, located on the western side of the landfill, proposed an expansion footprint of approximately 24 acres of new landfill area and an overfill of previous landfill. This expansion scenario would be located on City owned lands however it would have removed 24 acres that had been dedicated to the Pine Bush and could result in a significant environmental impact.

Alternative 4 proposed an overfill of the previous landfill area and a new expansion of approximately 10 acres however the Pine Bush Commission raised concerns regarding the precedent of “undedicating” the land and the value of the land as Pine Bush habitat.

The objective of this Visual Impact Assessment is to identify the potential effects that each Alternative expansion of the Rapp Road Landfill may have on the surrounding residents, businesses, the Interstate system and aesthetic resources within a one mile radius. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Policy DEP-00-2, *Assessing and Mitigating Visual Impacts*, was used as a guideline in the completion of this evaluation.

The visual impact assessment considers the potential impacts associated with full build out of the Rapp Road Landfill with a final height of 470 feet above mean sea level (AMSL). As of August 2006, the highest elevation of the landfill was 400' AMSL. The existing permit currently in effect allows a maximum landfill height of 460' AMSL. The landfill itself is one of the tallest features in the surrounding landscape, which is generally flat. As a result, some of the most striking views of the Pine Bush Preserve and the Helderberg Escarpment are from the top of the closed landfill, which is currently unavailable for public use. Views toward the landfill from surrounding lands are limited by the presence of forest and other vegetation. While NYS DEC Policy DEP-00-2 generally contemplates that a five mile radius of the impact area be analyzed, given the flat topography of the area, the surrounding dense vegetation and the presence of the existing landfill form, it appeared that an evaluation of a one mile radius would address any potential visual concerns. The following factors aided in this determination: views to the expansion will appear as an elongation of the existing landfill components; minimal reference objects exist in the foreground to gauge the increased landfill size; limited or disrupted views are available within a relatively short distance; and the appearance of the proposed expansion would be consistent with the appearance of the existing landfill components at the Rapp Road facility since at completion the new final elevation would only be 10 feet higher than the existing approved elevation.

II. DEFINITIONS

NYSDEC Policy DEP-00-2 lists several definitions which are used in determining if a project will have a visual impact.

Aesthetic impact: “Aesthetic impact occurs when there is a detrimental effect on the perceived beauty of a place or structure. Mere visibility, even startling visibility of a project proposal, should not be a threshold for decision making. Instead a project, by virtue of its visibility, must clearly interfere with or reduce the public’s enjoyment and/or appreciation of the appearance of an inventoried resource (eg. Cooling tower plume blocks view from a State Park overlook).” Significant aesthetic impacts are those that may cause a diminishment of the public enjoyment of an inventoried resource, proposed large facilities by themselves should not be a trigger for a declaration of significance.

Aesthetically significant place: “A formally designated place visited by recreationists and others for the express purpose of enjoying its beauty. For example, millions of people visit Niagara Falls... by these measurements one can make the case that Niagara Falls (a designated State Park) is an aesthetic resource of national significance... A place visited primarily by people whose place of origin is local is generally of local significance.”

Visual impact: “Visual impact occurs when the mitigating effects of perspective do not reduce the visibility of an object to insignificant levels. Beauty plays no role in this concept. A visual impact may also

be considered in the context of contrast. For instance, all other things being equal, a blue object seen against an orange background has greater visual impact than a blue object seen against the same colored blue background. Again, beauty plays no role in this concept.”

III. VISUAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT PROCEDURES

The methodology used to complete the visual impact assessment is described below and is consistent with DEP-00-2. The cap height is defined as the actual finished height of the landfill (470 feet AMSL) for all alternatives considered.

Methodology

The initial task in the visual impact assessment is to define the “study area” surrounding the Landfill and to eliminate areas from which topography would completely obstruct the viewer’s ability to see the facility. To accomplish this, a preliminary viewshed analysis map was developed to identify the maximum theoretical limits of the viewshed. In this context, the viewshed uses only the existing topography, without obstructions from vegetation, to allow the maximum number of theoretical views into the site. Preliminary maps were prepared using a one-mile search radius, the current ground elevation at the site (396’ AMSL), a maximum landfill height of 470 feet AMSL and overlay digital base mapping (7.5-minute topographic quadrangles) obtained from the United States Geologic Survey (USGS). It is important to note that the maximum landfill height of 470 feet is representative of the currently permitted height (50-60 feet higher than what presently exists) plus the proposed expansion (approximately 10 feet on the already approved height).

To initiate computer modeling of the viewshed, digital USGS quadrangles, Digital Raster Graphics (DRG), and their corresponding Digital Elevation Models (DEM) in a ten-meter grid, were downloaded into AutoCAD R2006 with AutoCAD Raster Design. The location and top elevations of the landfill were also loaded into the application. The application then tested each point located at a point of intersection on the ten-meter grid throughout the one-mile study radius. The analysis calculated if there were topographic obstructions, greater than the finished height of the proposed cap, between the site and the test points. The DEM data was supplemented with sampled existing ground elevation data established via conventional survey methods.

The resulting mathematical digital cross-sections identified areas where the landfill would be potentially visible based solely on topography, without vegetation, to present a worst case scenario. The computer program indicated the areas of potential visibility on the preliminary viewshed analysis map as cross hatching. All areas in orange on the map indicate that topography obstructed any views of the site and were subsequently dismissed from further analysis. The areas shaded in blue indicated that there was a potential for visibility from that location and that field verification would be required.

Potential Aesthetic Resources

The next task involved identifying all known potential aesthetic resources. The National Register of Historic Places website was accessed and one historic district is located within the study area. Additional resources were identified through review of local maps, the City website and field visits to develop a comprehensive list of potential aesthetic resources which may be affected by the proposed expansion of the Rapp Road Landfill.

Field Investigation (Balloon Test)

Balloon tests were performed on August 9, 2006 to evaluate the views of the landfill from the adjacent Interstate Highway System and local roads within the one mile study area radius. The balloon test methodology is consistent with the NYSDEC guidelines as a means of determining visibility. The test involved flying a six foot diameter helium filled weather balloon at the final as-built condition height, and 5 three foot diameter balloons at 3 different locations within the landfill to aid in orienting the expansion during the photosimulation process. The balloons were tethered to wooden ground stakes and placed at two of the proposed corners: one at the tie in with the existing landfill and one at the proposed location of highest point of the landfill to represent the highest degree of potential exposure to the business owners, land owners and motorists within the study area.

With the balloons in place, potential aesthetic resources and areas that had a potential for visibility, based on the preliminary viewshed analysis and subsequent field visit, were visited to identify the locations and extent of all areas where the balloons could be visible. In areas where the balloon was not readily visible handheld GPS units were used during the field investigation to insure the field team was looking toward the balloon. During the field investigation, only the public right-of-way and public places (parks, schools, etc.) were physically visited. Potential views from private properties were interpolated based on public right-of-way conditions and the preliminary viewshed analysis.

Based on the comments received from NYS DEC during the completeness review additional photosims focusing exclusively on the Albany Pine Bush Preserve were requested. The balloon height was determined by acquiring new survey data for the current top of landfill elevation and adjusting the balloon height accordingly to ensure consistency in the development of the photosims with a finished elevation of 470'. A balloon test was conducted on February 25, 2008, using the preferred Alternative 3 only, and photos were taken from the trails identified by the Albany Pine Bush Commission representative as being of concern with regard to potential visibility.

Creation of Photosims

Photographs were taken with a Canon PowerShot A530 digital camera to document the actual visibility of the balloons within the viewshed, as well as to define the general visual character of the area. The photographs were downloaded directly from the camera.

A three-dimensional topographical model was created by first scanning a portion of the relevant USGS 7.5 minute quadrangle (plan view), at a scale of one to one in metric format. The scanned portion of the USGS quadrangle was then imported into AutoCAD R2006 and the contour lines and proposed project site were digitized and assigned the corresponding elevations. The digitized plan was then scaled up by a factor of 3.2808 (the metric conversion) to create a drawing at a scale of one to one in SAE format.

A three-dimensional model of the proposed landfill expansion, with a maximum height of 470 feet AMSL, was then created using manufacturer's product data within the 3D Studio VIZ R4 program. The AutoCAD R2006 model and the proposed expansion model were then merged in 3D Studio VIZ to create a single three-dimensional model. The sunlight tool in 3D Studio VIZ was activated and the location, date, and time of day were entered to accurately portray shadows within the model. "Cameras" were created (using the Camera Tool in 3D Studio VIZ R4) with the correct ground elevation, lens, and height above ground level, target distance, and viewing orientation of the original photographs.

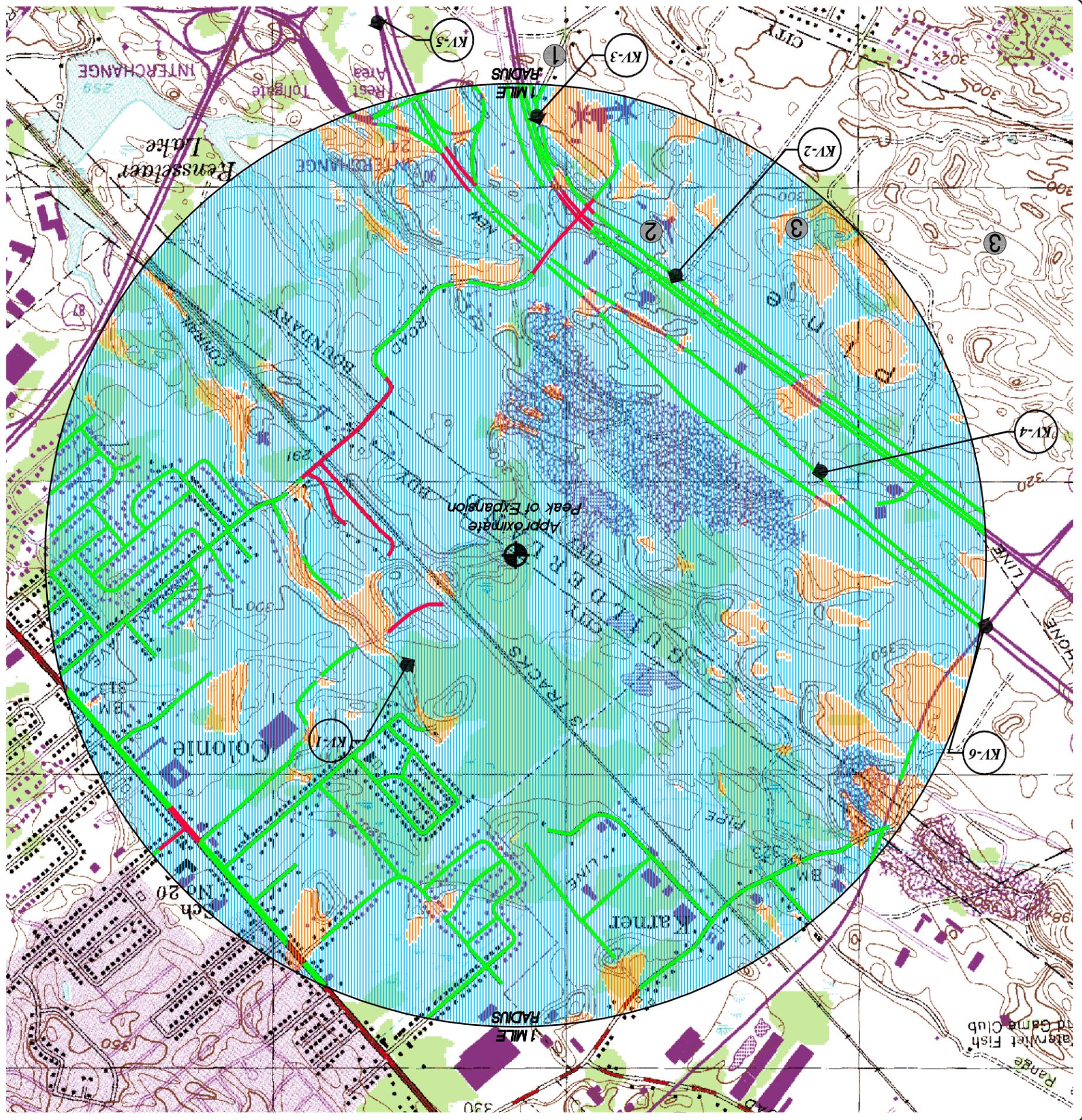
The digital photographs were then imported as screen backgrounds into the appropriate camera views. Points of known elevation and distance were then matched within the screen images and the three-dimensional models. These merged images were then rendered in 3D Studio VIZ R4 and exported as Tagged Image File Format (TIFF) image files, with resolutions of 300 dpi, into Adobe Photoshop CS 2. Within Photoshop, portions of the photosimulations were masked to accurately portray what would be visible from the photograph locations. These new images were saved as TIFF image files to give maximum clarity and resolution.

Final Viewshed Map

The Final Viewshed Maps (Figures 2-1 through 2-4) represent the results of the field investigations for each alternative superimposed upon the preliminary viewshed map. The locations of the potential aesthetic resources are located on this map as well.

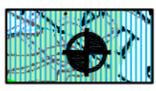
The Final Viewshed Map indicates areas where there is a potential for visibility as pre-determined by the digital cross section analysis of USGS mapping. It should be noted that these areas were based solely on topography, assuming there was no vegetation present, therefore depicting a "worst case scenario".

All areas in orange on the map indicate that topography obstructed any views of the site and were subsequently dismissed from further analysis. The areas shaded in blue indicated that there was a potential



LEGEND

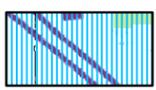
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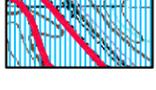
SECTION LOCATION & KEY VIEW PHOTOGRAPH



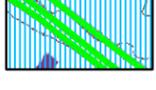
EXPANSION POTENTIALLY VISIBLE BASED SOLELY ON TOPOGRAPHY



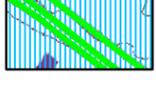
ABSENT VEGETATION



PORTIONS OF EXPANSION VISIBLE (WITHIN PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAYS)



EXPANSION NOT VISIBLE DUE TO VEGETATION AND/OR BUILDINGS (SEE NOTE BELOW)



EXPANSION NOT VISIBLE DUE TO TOPOGRAPHY (INTERPOLATED FROM USGS MAPPING)

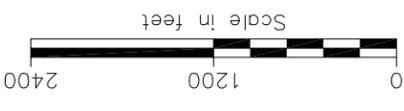


POTENTIAL RESOURCES



AESTHETIC RESOURCES:

1. RAPP ROAD HISTORIC DISTRICT
2. TERESIAN HOUSE
3. PINE BUSH PRESERVE



NOTE:

AREAS ON THIS VIEWSHED MAP DEPICTING LOCATIONS OF LANDFILL VISIBILITY WERE DETERMINED FROM FIELD VERIFICATION DURING BALLOON TEST. AREAS ON THIS MAP THAT ARE DEPICTING LOCATIONS SCREENED BY TOPOGRAPHY WERE INTERPOLATED FROM EXISTING USGS VIEWSHED DETERMINATIONS ON PRIVATELY OWNED PROPERTY OR LANDS NOT ACCESSIBLE VIA PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAYS. VIEWSHED INFORMATION SHOWN ON PRIVATELY OWNED LANDS ON THIS MAP WAS INTERPOLATED FROM EXISTING VEGETATION MAPPING AND WAS NOT FIELD VERIFIED.

FIG. 2-1

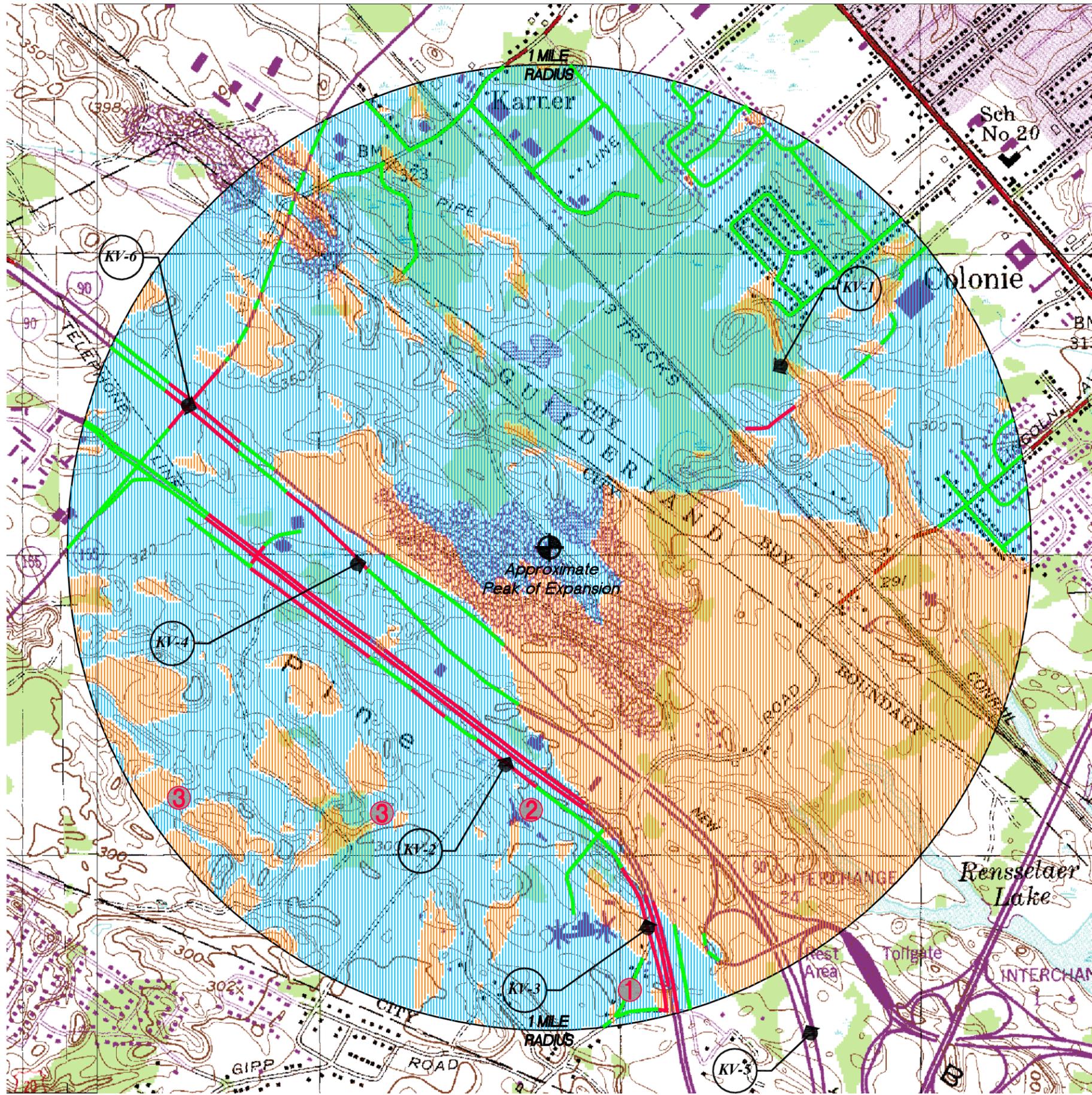
CITY OF ALBANY DGS
 RAPP ROAD LANDFILL EXPANSION
 ALTERNATIVE 1
 VIEWSHED MAP

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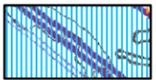
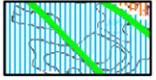
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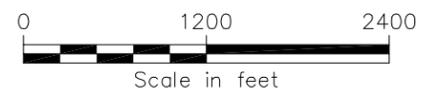
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-  APPROXIMATE CENTER OF PROPOSED EXPANSION LANDFILL
-  KEY VIEW PHOTOGRAPH & SECTION LOCATION
-  EXPANSION POTENTIALLY VISIBLE BASED SOLELY ON TOPOGRAPHY ABSENT VEGETATION
-  PORTIONS OF EXPANSION VISIBLE (WITHIN PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAYS)
-  EXPANSION NOT VISIBLE DUE TO VEGETATION AND/OR BUILDINGS (SEE NOTE BELOW)
-  EXPANSION NOT VISIBLE DUE TO TOPOGRAPHY (INTERPOLATED FROM USGS MAPPING)
-  POTENTIAL RESOURCES



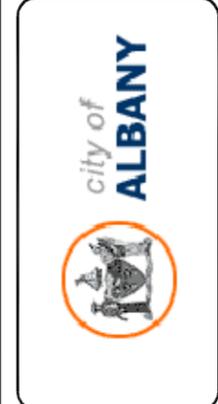
AESTHETIC RESOURCES:

1. RAPP ROAD HISTORIC DISTRICT
2. TERESIAN HOUSE
3. PINE BUSH PRESERVE

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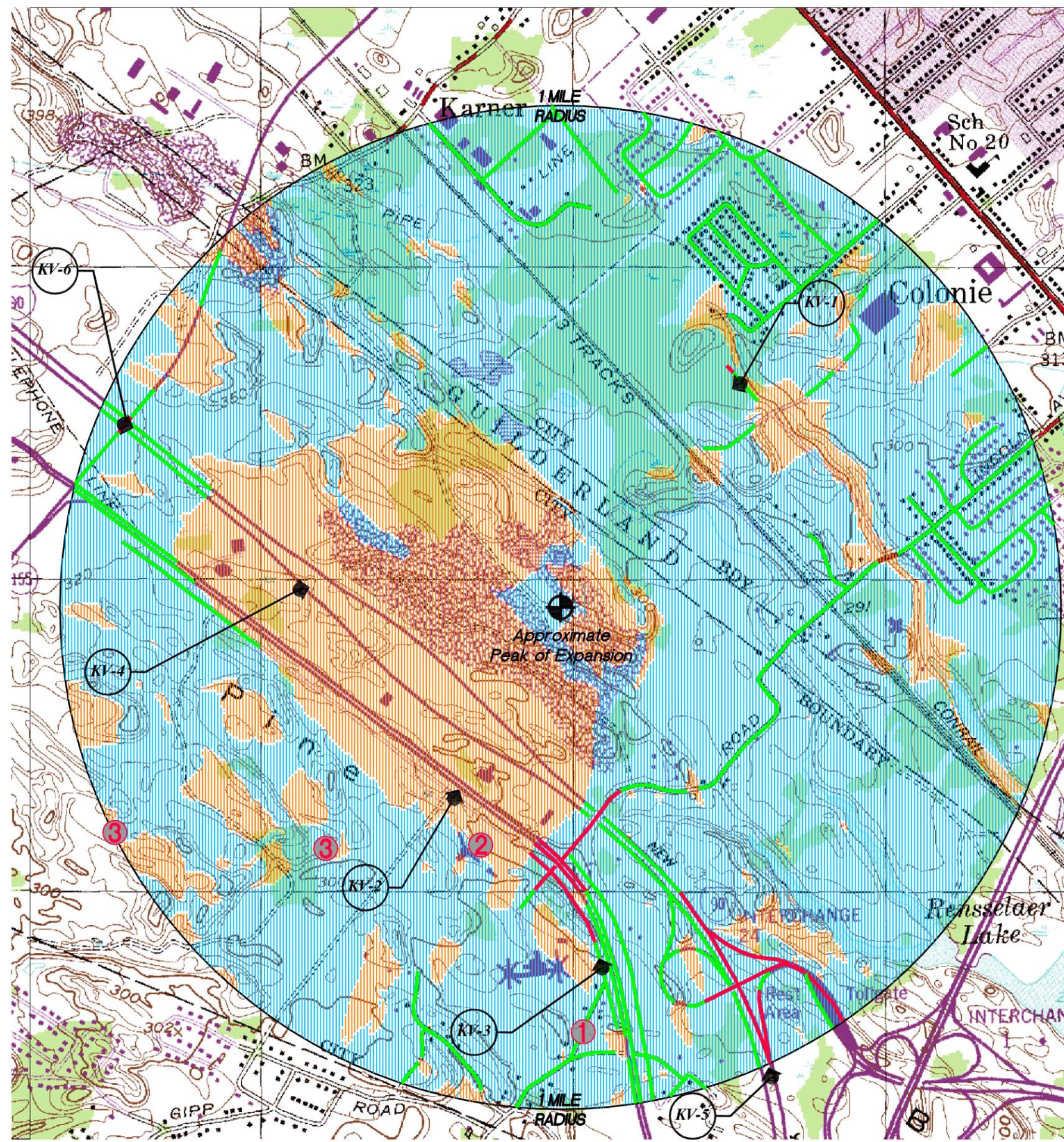
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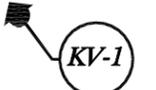
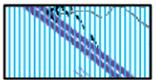
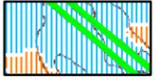
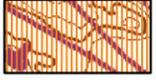
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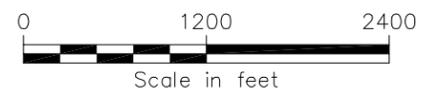
FIG. 2-2

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LEGEND

-  APPROXIMATE CENTER OF PROPOSED LANDFILL EXPANSION
-  KEY VIEW PHOTOGRAPH & SECTION LOCATION
-  EXPANSION POTENTIALLY VISIBLE BASED SOLELY ON TOPOGRAPHY ABSENT VEGETATION
-  PORTIONS OF EXPANSION VISIBLE (WITHIN PUBLIC RIGHT-OF-WAYS)
-  EXPANSION NOT VISIBLE DUE TO VEGETATION AND/OR BUILDINGS (SEE NOTE BELOW)
-  EXPANSION NOT VISIBLE DUE TO TOPOGRAPHY (INTERPOLATED FROM USGS MAPPING)
-  POTENTIAL RESOURCES



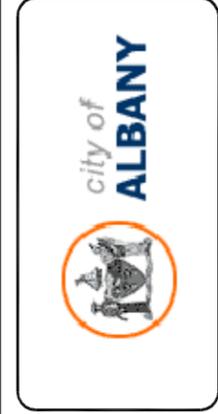
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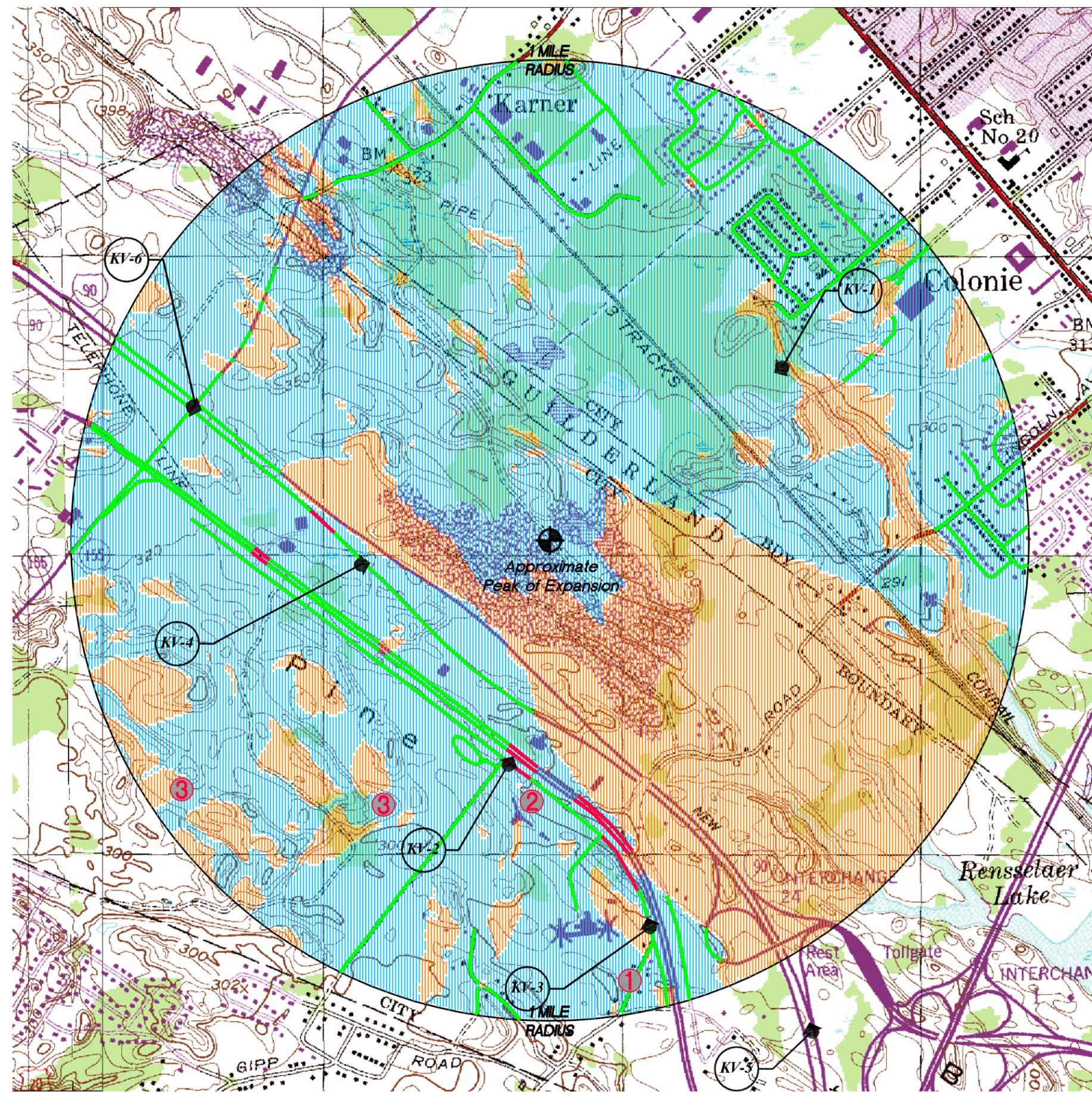
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CITY OF ALBANY DGS
 RAPP ROAD LANDFILL EXPANSION
 ALTERNATIVE 3
 VIEWSHED MAP

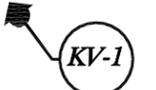
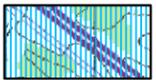
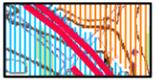
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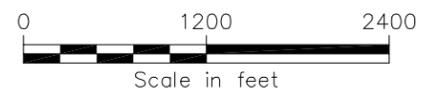
FIG. 2-3

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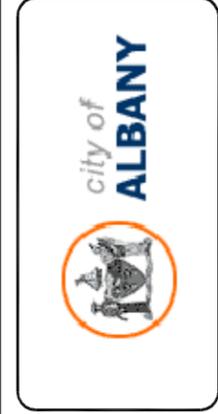
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CITY OF ALBANY DGS
 RAPP ROAD LANDFILL EXPANSION
 ALTERNATE 4
 VIEWSHED MAP

Issue Date: Jan. 2007 Project No.: 12206 Scale: 1" = 1200'

FIG. 2-4

for visibility from that location and that field verification would be required. The green lines on the roads indicate that during the field visit the balloon representing the proposed expansion was not visible. The red lines on the roads indicate areas where the balloon could be seen. It is important to note that only public areas such as right-of-ways, parks or schools were visited during the field evaluations. It is assumed that if the balloon is not visible from the street right-of-way the landfill expansion will not be visible from the adjacent residential properties or conversely, if the balloon is visible from the street the landfill expansion would be visible from the adjacent residences. To visit each property within the study area far exceeds the intent of NYS DEC Policy DEP-00-2 and would not be reasonable.

The proposed landfill expansion would not be visible within a majority of the viewshed due to topography and vegetation as illustrated on the Final Viewshed Maps. Due to the size of the existing landfill and existing land uses surrounding the project area, the expansion would likely blend in with the existing landscape character from the locations where it would be visible.

IV. POTENTIAL IMPACTS TO VIEWER GROUPS

The potential aesthetic resources which may have a visual impact from the expansion are identified below:

Table 1
Potential Aesthetic Resources

Key	Name of Potential Resource	Location	Type of Resource	Visibility
1	Albany Pine Bush Preserve	Adjacent to site	Recreational	Potentially visible
2	Rapp Road Historic District	Apx. 0.93 miles south of the site	Historic District	Potentially visible

As noted on the Final Viewshed Maps both potential aesthetic resources would possibly have views of the proposed new landfill expansion except Alternative 3, the preferred alternative. A field investigation was performed to determine the actual visibility from the potential aesthetic resources to the expansion on two occasions, August 2006 when the balloon test was completed and leaves were on the trees and in April 2007 when there were no leaves. All sites were visited and photographs taken looking toward the site. These photographs were also used to identify the general visual character of the area (refer to Appendix A).

In the Rapp Road Historic District, the actual topography and vegetation in the vicinity of the resource obstructed any potential views to the landfill in all alternatives. This location was discounted as a potential viewer group.

The Albany Pine Bush Preserve is adjacent to the expansion and could possibly be considered an aesthetically significant place according to the DEC definitions. Based on the balloon test conducted on February 25, 2008, there are areas from the public trails where the landfill is currently visible and would continue to be visible under the proposed conditions. Figure 2.5 indicates the key views from trails within the Albany Pine Bush Preserve that were visible and those that would not be visible. The key view locations shown on Figure 2.5 were determined with assistance from representatives of the Pine Bush Commission on select trails where it was felt there would be significant visual impacts.

Identification of Viewer Groups

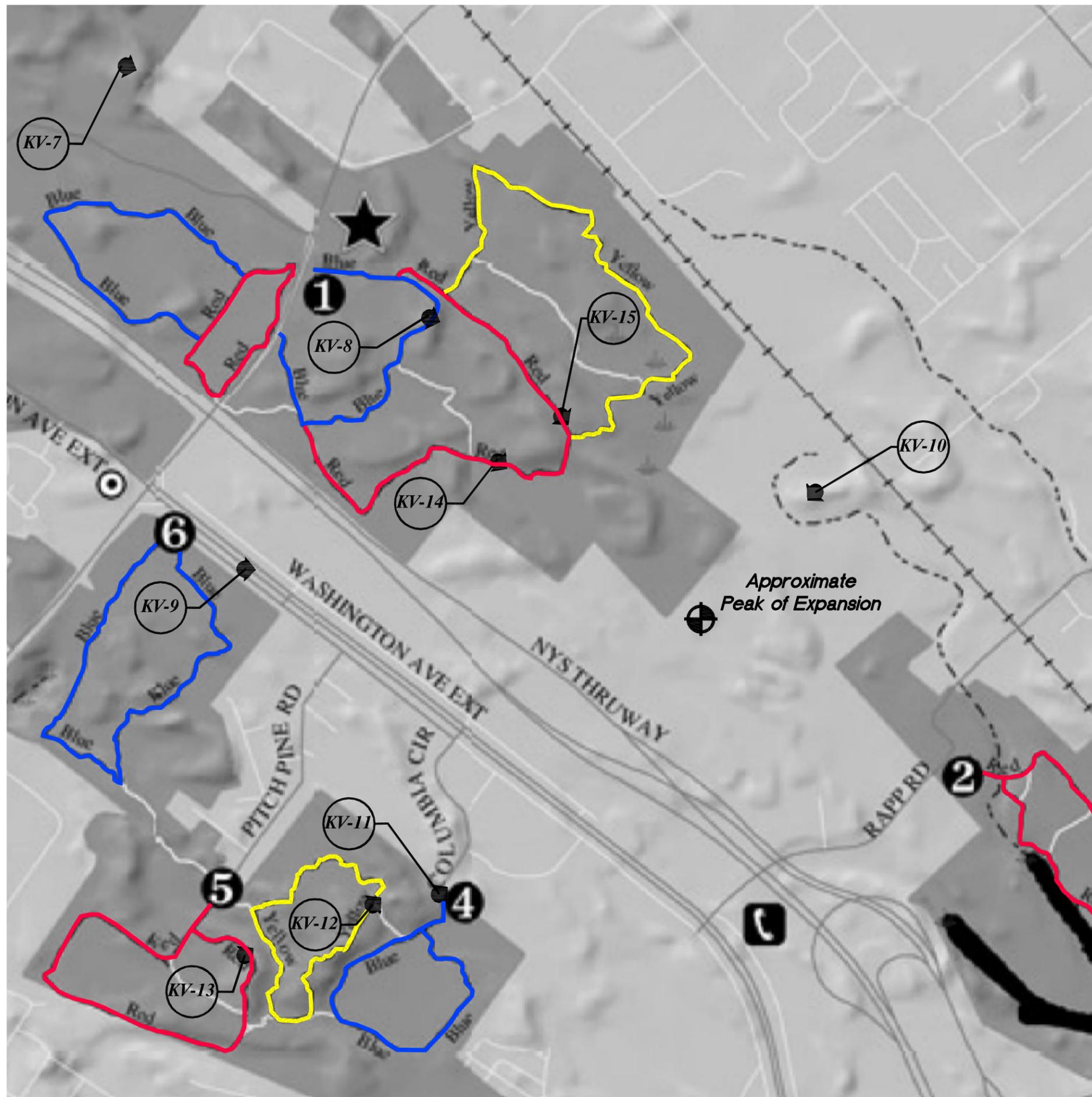
The evaluation of the potential visual impacts is dependent upon factors such as who is viewing the project and their location, the activity the viewers are involved in when viewing the project, the duration of the view and the overall scale of the project. Identification of the viewer groups allows the project to be evaluated in sub-categories, applicable to the user group, which defines the length of the view.

**Table 2
Viewer Groups, Locations and Exposure to Project Site**

Viewer Group	Potential Viewing Location	Potential Exposure
Motorists	Interstate Highway System State Roads County Roads Local Roads	Motorists would have both filtered and unfiltered views of the project site. The duration of the view is expected to be short term due to the speed of the vehicle (30 - 65mph). Topographic changes and vegetation adjacent to the site would also limit views.
Property Owners/ Visitors to the Pine Bush Preserve	Adjacent Properties	Property owners and users of the Pine Bush Preserve would have filtered and unfiltered views of the project due to vegetation and topography.

Based on the Final Viewshed Map and field investigation, there are no residential units which would have views of the expansion. The greatest impact to individual viewers, within the one mile viewshed radius, would be motorists driving on I-90, Washington Ave. Extension and NY State Route 155 and users of the Albany Pine Bush Preserve.

File: K:\12206\EXPANSION\SEOR\VISUAL_ASSESSMENT\ACAD\12206_FIGURE_ARBP.DWG
 Saved: 6/19/2008 12:00:49 PM. Plotted: 6/19/2008 12:20:34 PM. User: Chlopek, Jason

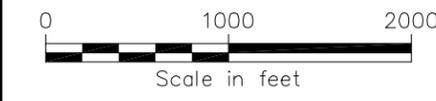


Legend

- Albany Pine Bush Preserve

PHOTO LOCATIONS:

- KV-7 VIEW FROM TRAIL OFF OLD STATE ROAD.
SITE POTENTIALLY VISIBLE
- KV-8 VIEW FROM OVERLOOK DUNES
SITE VISIBLE
- KV-9 VIEW FROM WESTERN FRONTAGE ROAD
FILTERED VIEWS TOWARD SITE
- KV-10 VIEW FROM HILL AT FOX RUN TRAILER PARK
SITE VISIBLE
- KV-11 VIEW FROM BLUEBERRY HILL EAST TRAIL HEAD
FILTERED VIEWS TOWARD SITE
- KV-12 VIEW FROM BLUEBERRY HILL EAST BLUE TRAIL
SITE NOT VISIBLE
- KV-13 VIEW FROM BLUEBERRY HILL EAST RED TRAIL
SITE NOT VISIBLE
- KV-14 VIEW FROM RED TRAIL
SITE NOT VISIBLE
- KV-15 VIEW FROM RED TRAIL NEAR BASE OF EXISTING LANDFILL
SITE NOT VISIBLE



NOTE:

BASE MAP WAS CREATED USING THE ALBANY PINE BUSH TRAILS MAP FROM THE ALBANY PINE BUSH PRESERVE WEBPAGE.

No.	Submitted / Revision	App'd By	Date



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CITY OF ALBANY DGS
 RAPP ROAD LANDFILL EXPANSION
 VIEWS FROM THE
 ALBANY PINE BUSH PRESERVE
 Issue Date: Mar., 2008 Project No.: 12206 Scale: 1" = 1200'

FIG. 2-5

Key View 5 – view is from the NYS Thruway westbound, approximately one mile south of the proposed expansion

Key View 6 – view is from NYS Route 155 at the I-90 overpass, approximately 0.8 miles northwest of the proposed expansion

Key Views 1-6 are representative of the relationship the major viewer groups have with the project site, locations which best represent the visual character of the area and locations that most clearly demonstrate the project's visual impact on the environment. Key Views 7-15 are exclusively within the Albany Pine Bush Preserve and represent the views trail users would have of the expansion.

Key View Analysis

Key Views 1-6 provide a description of the existing view, based on field visits, and a photo of the existing view with leaves on and leaves off. A photosimulation (sims) of the already approved height (P4 height) with both leaf on and leaf off condition is also included for reference since the landfill is currently permitted to be 50 – 60 feet higher than what presently exists. The leaf on P4 sims were developed using standard CHA methodologies; however the leaf off sims were created without the benefit of a balloon test or the precise measurements required to accurately match the simulated camera to the photo. CHA has developed these sims using our best professional judgment. This is a result of the trees leafing out the same week the request was received to complete this task.

The potential visibility of the expansion is provided in the photosims for each of the four possible development alternatives considered for the expansion. The type and height of any intervening vegetation which would filter the view is identified.

Key View 1 – View from the end of Petra Lane

The existing view from Petra Lane is primarily scrub growth and sand under the transmission lines in the foreground, parking lot and deciduous natural vegetation ranging in height from 50 – 70 feet in the midground and filtered and unfiltered views of the existing landfill in the background.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs nearly all views of the existing landfill and proposed expansion.

Alternative 1: This alternative would not differ significantly from what presently exists or the approved P4 development scenario

Alternative 2: This alternative would be visible as an elongation in the open transmission line corridor beyond the P4 limits but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view.



Key View 1 – Existing Condition – Leaf Off



Key View 1 – Existing Condition – Leaf On



Key View 1 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf Off



Key View 1 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf On



Key View 1 – Proposed Alternative 1



Key View 1 – Proposed Alternative 2



Key View 1 – Proposed Alternative 3 – Leaf Off



Key View 1 – Proposed Alternative 3 - Leaf On



Key View 1 – Proposed Alternative 4

Alternative 3: This alternative would be less visible in the open transmission line corridor than Alternative 2 and would generally be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. This alternative does not vary significantly from the approved P4 development scenario.

Alternative 4: This alternative would be less visible in the open transmission line corridor than Alternative 2 and would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill expansion on the viewers from the end of Petra Lane would not be significant from what has previously been approved. Views toward the landfill would appear as an elongation of the existing landfill with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged in all alternatives. Alternative 3, the preferred alternative, would have no greater visual impact than the other alternatives. The proposed landfill expansion would generally be indistinguishable from the existing permitted P4 landfill height.

Key View 2 – View from South Frontage Road

The existing view from South Frontage Road is Washington Ave. Extension and lawn in the foreground, guide rail, Washington Ave. Extension and lawn in the midground and a church and primarily deciduous natural vegetation ranging in height from 50 – 70 feet in the background with filtered views of the existing landfill. Currently motorists driving on and accessing businesses along South Frontage Road and Washington Ave Extension have views of the existing active portion of the landfill which is currently 50-60 feet below final cap height.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs nearly all views of the existing landfill and proposed expansion.

Alternative 1: This alternative would not be visible from this location.

Alternative 2: This alternative would be visible in limited areas but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim. This alternative does not vary significantly from the approved P4 development scenario.

Alternative 3: This alternative would not be higher than Alternative 2 but would be slightly more elongated. It would be visible in limited areas but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. This alternative is slightly higher than the approved P4 height behind the existing building but does not vary significantly. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.



Key View 2 – Existing Condition – Leaf Off



Key View 2 – Existing Condition – Leaf On



Key View 2 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf Off



Key View 2 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf On



Key View 2 – Proposed Alternative 1 – Not visible



Key View 2 – Proposed Alternative 2



Key View 2 – Proposed Alternative 3 – Leaf Off



Key View 2 – Proposed Alternative 3 - Leaf On



Key View 2 – Proposed Alternative 4

Alternative 4: This alternative would be visible in limited areas but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim. This alternative does not vary from the approved P4 development scenario.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill on the viewers on South Frontage Road would not be significant from what has previously been approved. Views toward the landfill would appear as an elongation of the existing landfill with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged in all alternatives. Alternative 3, the preferred alternative, would have no greater visual impact than the other alternatives. The proposed landfill expansion height of 10' would be visually indistinguishable from the existing permitted P4 landfill height.

Key View 3 – View from South Frontage Road

The existing view from South Frontage Road is pavement, lawn and scrub growth in the foreground, light poles, pavement, scrub growth and lawn in the midground and a brick building and primarily deciduous natural vegetation ranging in height from 50 – 70 feet in the background with filtered views of the existing landfill. Currently motorists driving on and accessing businesses along South Frontage Road and Washington Ave Extension have views of the existing active portion of the landfill which is currently 50-60 feet below the final cap height.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs most views of the existing landfill and proposed expansion.

Alternative 1: This alternative would not be visible from this location.

Alternative 2: This alternative would be visible in the viewshed but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim. This alternative does not vary from the approved P4 development scenario.

Alternative 3: This alternative would be slightly higher than Alternative 2 and P4 and be more elongated within the view. It would be visible in the view but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Alternative 4: This alternative would be visible in the viewshed but does not vary from the approved P4 development scenario. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the



Key View 3 – Existing Condition – Leaf Off



Key View 3 – Existing Condition – Leaf On



Key View 3 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf Off



Key View 3 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf On



Key View 3 – Proposed Alternative 1 – Not visible



Key View 3 – Proposed Alternative 2



Key View 3 – Proposed Alternative 3 – Leaf Off



Key View 3 – Proposed Alternative 3 - Leaf On



Key View 3 – Proposed Alternative 4

landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Potential Visibility: Although it will be visible, the visual impact of the landfill on the viewers on South Frontage Road would not be significant from what has previously been approved. Views toward the landfill would appear as an elongation of the existing landfill with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged in all alternatives. Alternative 3, the preferred alternative, would have no greater visual impact than the other alternatives. The proposed landfill expansion height of 10' would be visually indistinguishable from the existing permitted P4 landfill height at this location.

Key View 4 – View from the NYS Thruway southbound

The existing view from the Thruway southbound is pavement and a lawn median in the foreground, lawn, pavement and deciduous vegetation in the midground and primarily deciduous natural vegetation ranging in height from 50 – 70 feet in the background with filtered views of the existing landfill.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs a majority of the views of the existing landfill and proposed expansion.

Alternative 1: This alternative would not be visible from this location.

Alternative 2: This alternative would be visible in the viewshed and would be higher than the approved P4 height but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Alternative 3: This alternative would not generally be visible from this location or vary from the approved P4 development scenario.

Alternative 4: This alternative would be visible in the viewshed and would be higher than the approved P4 height but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill on the viewers on the Thruway southbound would not be significant since the tree line along the right-of-way focuses the motorists' attention straight ahead and not at the facility. Views toward the landfill would appear as an elongation of the existing landfill with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged in all alternatives. Alternative 3, the preferred alternative, would have less visual impact than the other



Key View 4 – Existing Condition – Leaf Off



Key View 4 – Existing Condition – Leaf On



Key View 4 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf Off



Key View 4 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf On



Key View 4 – Proposed Alternative 1 – Not visible



Key View 4 – Proposed Alternative 2



Key View 4 – Proposed Alternative 3 – Leaf Off



Key View 4 – Proposed Alternative 3 - Leaf On



Key View 4 – Proposed Alternative 4

alternatives. The proposed landfill expansion height of 10' would be visually indistinguishable from the existing permitted P4 landfill height at this location.

Key View 5 - View from the NYS Thruway westbound

The existing view from the Thruway westbound is pavement in the foreground, pavement and guide rail in the midground and an overpass and primarily deciduous natural vegetation ranging in height from 40 – 60 feet in the background with filtered views of the existing landfill.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs a majority of the views of the existing landfill and proposed expansion.

Alternative 1: This alternative would not be visible from this location.

Alternative 2: This alternative would be visible in the view and would be an elongation of the approved P4 development scenario but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Alternative 3: This alternative would be more visible from this location than Alternative 2 or 4 or the approved P4 development scenario as it extends across the entire view above the existing tree line. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Alternative 4: This alternative would be visible in the viewshed as an elongation of the approved P4 development scenario but would be buffered by existing vegetation in the balance of the view. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill on the viewers on the Thruway westbound would be noticeable however motorists at Exit 24 should be focused on the surrounding traffic volumes in this area. Views toward the landfill would appear as an elongation of the existing landfill with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged in all alternatives. Alternative 3, the preferred alternative, would have no greater visual impact than the other alternatives. The proposed landfill expansion height of 10' would be visually indistinguishable from the approved P-4 height but would be an elongation of the P-4 development scenario.

Key View 6 - View from NYS Route 155 at the I-90 overpass

The existing view for motorists on Route 155 at the I-90 overpass bridge looking southeast toward the I-90 exit 24 interchange is a utility pole, utility wires and scrub growth in the foreground, I-90 eastbound and



Key View 5 – Existing Condition – Leaf Off



Key View 5 – Existing Condition – Leaf On



Key View 5 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf Off



Key View 5 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf On



Key View 5 – Proposed Alternative 1 – Not visible



Key View 5 – Proposed Alternative 2



Key View 5 – Proposed Alternative 3 – Leaf Off



Key View 5 – Proposed Alternative 3 - Leaf On



Key View 5 – Proposed Alternative 4



Key View 6 – Existing Condition – Leaf Off



Key View 6 – Existing Condition – Leaf On



Key View 6 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf Off



Key View 6 – Approved P4 Height – Leaf On



Key View 6 – Proposed Alternative 1 – Not visible



Key View 6 – Proposed Alternative 2



Key View 6 – Proposed Alternative 3 – Leaf Off



Key View 6 – Proposed Alternative 3 - Leaf On



Key View 6 – Proposed Alternative 4

westbound and lawn in the midground and lawn and deciduous vegetation 50 – 70 feet in height in the background. Currently the motorists using Route 155 do not have views of the existing landfill but when full build out of the expansion is reached the top cap would be visible from this location.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs all views of the existing landfill and nearly all views of the proposed expansion.

Alternative 1: This alternative would not be visible from this location.

Alternative 2: This alternative would be more visible than the approved P4 development scenario but would be buffered by existing vegetation in front of the expansion. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Alternative 3: This alternative would not be as visible as Alternative 2 and slightly more visible than the approved P4 development scenario. There is one area where the expansion would extend above the existing buffer. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Alternative 4: This alternative would be more visible than the approved P4 development scenario above the existing vegetation in front of the expansion. The existing vegetation would continue to mature as the landfill expands which would likely provide more buffering than what is illustrated in the photosim.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill on the viewers on Route 155 at the I-90 overpass for Alternatives 1 and 3 would not be significant from what has previously been approved. Views toward the landfill would appear behind the existing vegetative buffer with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged in all alternatives. Alternative 3, the preferred alternative, would have less visual impact than alternatives 2 and 4 and be similar to the already approved P4 development scenario.

Key Views 7-15 (Figure 2.5) provide a description of the existing view based on field visits. The locations of the key views were determined with assistance from representatives from the Albany Pine Bush Commission. The potential visibility of the expansion is provided in the sims for Alternative 3, the preferred alternative. The type and height of any intervening vegetation which would filter the view is identified. For key views 7 – 11, the photo represents the existing condition and the sims represent the current permitted P4 height and the proposed expansion height. In Key Views 12 - 15 it was thought by Pine Bush staff that there was the potential for visibility however the balloons were not visible from these locations.

Key View 7 - View from trail off Old State Road

The existing view for trail users is vegetation in the foreground, warehouse, parking area and light poles in the midground and deciduous vegetation and the existing landfill in the background.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs a majority of the existing landfill and nearly all views of the proposed expansion. During leaf on season views would be more restricted.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill on the viewers using the trail off of Old State Road would be consistent with what has previously been approved. Views toward the landfill would appear behind the existing vegetative buffer with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged. The proposed landfill expansion height of 10' would be visually indistinguishable from the permitted P4 landfill height at this location.

Key View 8- View from Overlook Dunes

The existing view for trail users is vegetation in the foreground, mixed deciduous and evergreen vegetation in the midground and the existing landfill in the background.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs a majority of the existing landfill and nearly all views of the proposed expansion. During leaf on season views would be more restricted.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill on the viewers using the trails at Overlook Dunes would be consistent with what has previously been approved. Views toward the landfill would appear behind the existing vegetative buffer with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged. The proposed landfill expansion height of 10' would be visually indistinguishable from the permitted P4 landfill height at this location.

Key View 9 - View from end of western Frontage Road

The existing view for users of the Frontage Road is fencing, deciduous vegetation and grass in the foreground, Washington Avenue Extension and light poles in the midground, and mixed evergreen and deciduous vegetation and office buildings in the background.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous and evergreen vegetation which obstructs a majority of the existing landfill and nearly all views of the proposed expansion.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill on the viewers from the western Frontage Road would be consistent with what has previously been approved. Views toward the landfill would appear behind the existing vegetative buffer with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and



Key View 7 – Existing Condition



Key View 7 – Approved P4 Height



Key View 7 – Proposed Alternative 3



Key View 8 – Existing Condition



Key View 8 – Approved P4 Height



Key View 8 – Proposed Alternative 3



Key View 9 – Existing Condition



Key View 9 – Approved P4 Height



Key View 9 – Proposed Alternative 3

midground would remain unchanged. The proposed landfill expansion height of 10' would be visually indistinguishable from the permitted P4 landfill height at this location.

Key View 10 - View from hill at Fox Run trailer park

The existing view for trail users is scrub growth in the foreground, mobile homes, access road and deciduous vegetation in the midground and deciduous vegetation and the landfill in the background.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs a majority of the existing landfill.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill on the trail users would be consistent with what has previously been approved P4 development scenario. Views toward the landfill would appear behind the existing vegetative buffer. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged in all alternatives. The proposed landfill expansion height of 10' would be visually indistinguishable from the permitted P-4 landfill height at this location. The expansion would be an elongation of the approved P4 development scenario.

Key View 11 - View from Blueberry Hill east trail head

The existing view for trail users is parking area and ornamental trees in the foreground, pavement and Columbia Circle office park and deciduous and evergreen vegetation in the midground and sky in the background. The landfill is not readily visible.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs all views of the existing landfill and nearly all views of the proposed expansion.

Potential Visibility: The visual impact of the landfill on the trail users would be consistent with what has previously been approved for P4. Views toward the landfill would appear behind the existing vegetative buffer with no distant views or background elements affected. The foreground and midground would remain unchanged. The proposed landfill expansion height of 10' would be visually indistinguishable from the permitted P4 landfill height at this location.

Key View 12 - View from Blueberry Hill east blue trail

The existing view for trail users is scrub grass in the foreground, deciduous scrub growth in the midground and deciduous and evergreen vegetation in the background.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous vegetation which obstructs all views of the existing landfill and all views of the proposed expansion.

Potential Visibility: The landfill expansion will not be visible from this location.



Key View 10 – Existing Condition



Key View 10 – Approved P4 Height



Key View 10 – Proposed Alternative 3



Key View 11 – Existing Condition



Key View 11 – Approved P4 Height



Key View 11 – Proposed Alternative 3



Key View 12 – Not visible

Key View 13 - View from Blueberry Hill east red trail

The existing view for trail users is scrub grass and deciduous vegetation in the foreground, deciduous and evergreen scrub growth in the midground and deciduous and evergreen vegetation in the background.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing vegetation which obstructs all views of the existing landfill and all views of the proposed expansion.

Potential Visibility: The landfill expansion will not be visible from this location.

Key View 14 - View from red trail

The existing view for trail users is scrub growth in the foreground, deciduous and evergreen scrub growth in the midground and deciduous and evergreen vegetation in the background.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing deciduous and evergreen vegetation which obstructs all views of the existing landfill and all views of the proposed expansion.

Potential Visibility: The landfill expansion will not be visible from this location.

Key View 15 - View from red trail near base of existing landfill

The existing view for trail users is scrub growth in the foreground, evergreen scrub growth in the midground and evergreen vegetation in the background.

Intervening Vegetation: There is existing evergreen vegetation which obstructs all views of the existing landfill and all views of the proposed expansion.

Potential Visibility: The landfill expansion will not be visible from this location.

VI. MITIGATION

Possible mitigation measures referred to in DEC Policy DEP-00-2 include the following: relocation, camouflage, low profile, downsizing, and screening. Given the nature of the project and its size most of the suggested mitigation measures would not be viable. Relocation has been considered in the form of presenting four different locations for the expansion. Lowering the profile or downsizing of the expansion would defeat the intent of achieving additional volume and lifespan for the landfill.

Camouflage and screening are the proposed mitigation measures for the expansion of the landfill. Since the site is adjacent to the Albany Pine Bush Preserve the mitigation would be in the form of recreating a pine barrens habitat utilizing plant materials that would invite indigenous wildlife species to the area. The Conceptual Restoration plan calls for the cap of the landfill to be a dry prairie restoration. The side abutting the Thruway would be a dense pitch pine forest along the right-of-way and pitch pine/scrub oak forest restoration farther upslope near the cap and on the remaining sides of the landfill. Although the final



Key View 13 – Not visible



Key View 14 – Not visible



Key View 15 – Not visible

landfill would be higher than its surroundings it will visually blend into its surroundings as much as possible. During construction of the expansion, the exposed areas will be maintained using the same means and methods presently used at the landfill to mitigate disturbed areas. The solid waste at the working face within the landfill will be covered on a daily basis with several different types of materials, including petroleum contaminated soils and alternative daily cover materials such as Posi-Shell. Posi-Shell is currently used at the Rapp Road Landfill and consists of a spray-on material that dries and hardens into a shell over the waste. This is a commercially generated product that is used at a wide range of landfill facilities. Aesthetically, the Posi-Shell creates a dark gray coating. When PCS or other soils are used as daily cover, the working face will resemble bare ground at the end of each day.

VII. CONCLUSION

General

The greatest visual impacts result when the viewer is exposed to the project view for an extended period of time and the project itself contrasts with its surrounding visual environment. To compare the potential changes in visibility and contrast within the project study area each viewer group that could be affected by the landfill is discussed below.

Motorists Views

The greatest impacts to motorists' views would occur from I-90 while traveling both east and west, Route 155 at the bridge over I-90, portions of South Frontage Road and portions of Washington Avenue Extension. Motorists' would see portions of the landfill expansion for approximately 1 – 39 seconds depending on their location and speed. The expansion would be most visible from Washington Avenue Extension and South Frontage Road for the most prolonged period of time while traveling in either direction; however the views into the site would be limited due to existing intervening vegetation, the speed at which the user group is traveling and the motorists' cone of vision. Currently the landfill is approximately 50-60 feet below the already approved cap height. When the landfill is completed to the full build out height the proposed expansion would appear to be an elongation of the currently permitted P4 development scenario.

Property Owner /Visitors to the Pine Bush Preserve Views

The project would have the greatest potential impact to the businesses off of South Frontage Road and users of several of the trails within the Albany Pine Bush Preserve. The views of the site would be mitigated with the growth of existing vegetation in the foreground and midground as well as the creation of pine barrens to simulate the surrounding area. The homeowners located on Rapp Road would not have views of the landfill due to the mature vegetation which currently blocks the views. This would not be

expected to change significantly with the seasons due to the land uses surrounding the project site and the final height of the expansion.

Summary

It is not anticipated the Rapp Road Landfill Expansion would have a significant visual impact on any of the referenced user groups. The expansion would not affect the areas aesthetic quality or create an aesthetic impact that varies substantially from what presently exists and has previously been approved.

The largest potential impact would be to the motorists using Washington Avenue Extension and the businesses located off of South Frontage Road. The landfill would be most visible from I-90 at the Exit 24 area however the views would be limited due to existing vegetation, the speed at which the user group is traveling and the motorists' cone of vision. Users of several trails in the Albany Pine Bush Preserve would also have views of the landfill from the Fox Run trailer park and the Overlook Dunes which would be mitigated by leaf on season. As has been noted previously, the overall height increase of 10 feet from the previously approved P-4 development scenario will be insignificant within the context of the environment. The expansion will appear as an elongation of the P4 development scenario.

The proposed landfill expansion, Alternative 3, is to be sited on the north side of the existing landfill which would make the proposed expansion appear as an elongation of the existing landfill with no distant views or background elements affected. The existing vegetation which would remain and the surrounding land uses adjacent to the site would reduce the number of viewers and the viewers' ability to gauge the increase in the landfill size. Photosimulations were completed for four different expansion scenarios and Alternative 3 has been shown to have no greater visual impact than the other scenarios proposed. The overall height would not differ substantially from what has previously been approved and the habitat management plan proposed upon completion of the expansion will serve to mitigate visual impacts by installing indigenous plantings to blend into the surrounding pine bush.