

This section of the EIR describes the existing visual resources of the Rancho Cordova Planning Area (Planning Area), summarizes the landscape characteristics of the surrounding area, and discusses the impacts associated with implementation of the land use plan options in the proposed Rancho Cordova General Plan. This analysis relies on qualitative principles to assess how visual and scenic resources within the Planning Area could be affected by the development patterns associated with the General Plan.

### 4.13.1 EXISTING SETTING

#### EXISTING CONDITIONS

In general, the dominant visual characteristics within the Planning Area are the open sections of the valley floor, urbanized land uses, agricultural land uses, rivers and creeks, and various species of trees. Because the entire Planning Area consists of relatively flat terrain, views of these resources are available from roadways throughout the Planning Area.

Oak trees, streams, creeks, and the American and Cosumnes Rivers are among the most significant natural visual features in the Planning Area. Distant views of the Sierra Nevada and Coastal ranges can be visible under clear conditions.

#### SIGNIFICANT VISUAL FEATURES

##### **Rivers, Creeks, and Waterways**

There are several rivers, creeks, and waterways located within or adjacent to the General Plan Planning Area that serve as a visual transition from natural scenic corridors to the City's urbanized development areas. The most prominent waterways in the vicinity of the Planning Area include: the American River, Cosumnes River, Morrison Creek, Laguna Creek, and Elder Creek.

The American River makes up the Planning Area's northern boundary and flows westward from the crest of the Sierra Nevada above Lake Tahoe to its confluence with the Sacramento River near downtown Sacramento. The American River corridor through the planning area is a part of the American River Parkway, which is an open space greenbelt that extends approximately 29 miles from the Folsom Dam to its confluence with the Sacramento River (further described under Parkways). The Cosumnes River is located approximately two miles southeast of the Planning Area's southeastern boundary. The Cosumnes River corridor contains thousands of acres of wetlands and adjacent uplands that provide critical habitat to a diverse group of plants and animal species.

The Morrison Creek drainage basin covers approximately 192 square miles and has nine tributaries. Morrison Creek starts near the intersection of Douglas Road and Mather Boulevard and flows southwest and eventually drains into the Beach Stone Lakes area west of Interstate 5 (I-5) and in turn into the Sacramento River. Laguna Creek starts near the eastern portion of the Sunrise Douglas Community Plan (SDCP) area and drains into Blodgett Reservoir, located near Grant Line Road and State Route 16 (Jackson Highway). Laguna Creek flows into the City of Elk Grove and eventually into Morrison Creek near the Sunridge Community Service District Wastewater Treatment Plant. Both Morrison Creek and Laguna Creek have been substantially altered by various channels, levees, and culverts, constructed primarily to alleviate potential flooding hazards. Elder Creek starts near the southern boundary of the Planning Area and drains into Morrison Creek, west of Highway 99, and ultimately into the Beach Stone Lakes area.

## 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

---

The developed bikeway and pedestrian path along the Folsom South Canal (FSC) starts at the Nimbus dam and extends southward for approximately 27 miles, through the planning area and past the community of Wilton. The path provides views and scenic opportunities overlooking the central and southern portions of the Planning Area.

The riparian areas associated with these rivers and creeks are considered some of the most biologically rich regions in California's Central Valley and greatly enhance the aesthetic and visual character of the Planning Area. Visually based opportunities include bird watching, hiking, scenic tours, guided trips, and various seasonal outings.

### **Vernal Pools**

Vernal pools are seasonally flooded depressions found on soils with an impermeable layer such as a hardpan, claypan, or volcanic basalt. The impermeable layer allows the seasonal pools to retain water much longer than the surrounding uplands, and often fill and empty several times during the rainy season. Various specialized plant and animal species have adapted to the vernal pool cycle of wetting and drying. In spring, the vernal pools produce brightly colored concentric rings of flowers, which provide specialized and unique habitat conditions for various native species and are considered valuable visual and aesthetic resources. Guided vernal pool tours and hikes are available during various times of the rainy season. There are several vernal pool complexes located throughout the General Plan Planning Area. The reader is referred to Section 4.10 (Biological Resources) for a further description of vernal pool resources in the Planning Area.

### **Parkway**

The American River Parkway (Parkway), also referred to as the "Jewel of Sacramento", borders the American River on both the northern and southern sides. More than 5 million visitors enjoy this unique wildlife and recreation area annually. The Parkway is one of the County's most visited and distinct natural visual features and provides several scenic based activities (i.e, picnic sites, guided natural and historic tours, bird watching and hiking). There are several distinct areas of the Parkway, each having unique visual features, which contribute to their separate identities. The Lower American River (from the Folsom Dam to its confluence with the Sacramento River) is classified as a "Recreation" river, as defined by the Federal and State Wild and Scenic Rivers System due to its aesthetic qualities and wealth of recreational opportunities that it provides. There are also several neighborhood and community parks as well as Goethe Park, which is a 444 acre regional park, which provide a wide variety of recreational opportunities, open space, and greatly enhance the aesthetic quality of the City and Planning Area.

### **Nature Preserves, Landscape Corridors, and Greenbelts**

Nature preserves, landscape corridors, and greenbelts keep natural terrain, drainages, and vegetation types intact. Several of the new developments proposed within the City have designated preserve areas to conserve wetlands, vernal pools and other valuable aesthetic resources. However, only the Anatolia developments, which are located southeast of the intersection of Sunrise Boulevard and Douglas Road, have established on-site preservation areas. These developments were required to incorporate nature preserve areas to maintain the integrity of the existing watersheds, establish interconnected conservation areas to preserve vernal pool hydrology, and incorporate natural features in the design of the projects.

### **Agriculture and Open Space**

Many portions of the Planning Area south of US 50 are not urbanized; rather, they are characterized by large areas of grazing and pasture land, which reinforces the existing uniform rural visual character of the area. These areas provide panoramic views of open space and distant views of the Sierra Nevada range and the foothills of El Dorado County.

### **Tree Resources**

The Planning Area contains native and non-native tree species. The majority of the native trees are located along the American River Parkway and consist mostly of valley oak, blue oak, interior live oak, cottonwood, sycamore, and willow. The Planning Area also includes numerous non-native species, which are generally used for ornamental value, shade production, resistance to particular pests, or proven adaptation to the urban environment. The reader is referred to Section 4.10 (Biological Resources) for a further description of tree resources in the Planning Area.

### **Light and Glare**

The southeastern portion of the Planning Area is currently sparsely developed and used for agriculture. These rural land uses typically do not generate substantial amounts of glare, lighting, or illumination, and the ambient nighttime lighting and illumination levels are very low. The remainder of the Planning Area includes existing sources of daytime glare and nighttime lighting and illumination. Sources of daytime glare include direct beam sunlight and reflections from windows, architectural coatings, glass and other shiny reflective surfaces. Nighttime light illumination and associated glare can be divided into stationary and mobile sources. Stationary sources of nighttime light include structure illumination, decorative landscape lighting, lighted signs, sports field lighting and streetlights. The source of mobile nighttime light is primarily headlights of motor vehicles. During winter nighttime hours, the ambient light in the Planning Area can be accentuated during periods of low cloudiness or fog, which reflects light, resulting in intensification of the amount of light.

### **4.13.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

#### **FEDERAL**

#### **Federal Aviation Regulations**

The Code of Federal Regulations, Title 14, Volume 2 revised as of January 1, 2004 (14CFR77.1) pertains to aeronautics and space. Chapter 1 specifically includes the Federal Aviation Administration regulations and Part 77 (Federal Aviation Regulation or FAR Part 77) pertains to objects affecting navigable airspace. FAR Part 77 establishes standards for determining obstructions in navigable airspace; sets forth the requirements for notice to the Administrator of certain proposed construction or alteration; provides for aeronautical studies of obstructions to air navigation in order to determine their effect on the safe and efficient use of airspace; provides for public hearings on the hazardous effects of proposed construction or alteration on air navigation; and provides for the establishment of antenna farm areas.

## 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

---

### STATE

#### Caltrans

Caltrans manages more than 45,000 miles of California's highway and freeway lanes, provides inter-city rail services, assists more than 100 public general aviation airports and works with local agencies. Caltrans carries out its mission of improving mobility across California with six primary programs: Aeronautics, Highway Transportation, Mass Transportation, Transportation Planning, Administration and the Equipment Service Center. Caltrans has jurisdiction over U.S. 50, which passes through the entire Plan Area from west to east. To improve and maintain the visual quality of U.S. 50, Caltrans implements the Adopt-a-Highway program, which was established in 1989. Adoptions usually span a two-mile stretch of roadside and permits are issued for five-year periods. Groups may apply for additional, five-year permits. Since 1989 more than 120,000 California residents have 15,000 shoulder miles of state roadways clean. The City of Rancho Cordova can participate in the Adopt-a-High in any of the following activities:

- Litter removal (work frequency varies with location).
- Planting and establishing trees, or wildflowers.
- Graffiti removal.
- Controlling vegetation

### LOCAL

#### Sacramento County General Plan

The Sacramento County General Plan guides future development in unincorporated portions of the County, including sections of the Planning Area that are outside the Rancho Cordova city limits. The Sacramento County visual resource policies applicable to the Planning Area outside the existing city limits of Rancho Cordova include policies that address glare via restricting use of polished surfaces in exterior building materials and requiring exterior lighting to be shaded and directed away from residential areas. The following policies are included in the Sacramento County Plan Land Use Element and are applicable to visual resources: LU 22, LU 23, LU 24, and LU 25.

#### City of Rancho Cordova Zoning Code

Upon incorporation, the City adopted the Sacramento County Zoning Code to guide development in the City. The purpose of the Zoning Code is to regulate the use of buildings, structures and land between agriculture, industry, business, residential, open space, recreation and other land uses to ensure compatibility and to enhance the enjoyment of scenic beauty and other natural resources. The City of Rancho Cordova Zoning Code includes lighting standards and tree standards. The Zoning Code will be updated for consistency following the adoption of the General Plan.

#### Tree Ordinance

Title 19 of the Zoning Code is the Tree Preservation Ordinance ("Tree Ordinance" (Ord. 915 § 1, 1966). The Tree Ordinance was established to promote the health, safety and enhance the beauty and general welfare of the County and, by virtue of the City having adopted the Tree Ordinance, the City of Rancho Cordova. The Ordinance requires the City to plant, maintain, protect, preserve, and to regulate the planting, maintaining, protecting and preserving of public trees and landscaping; to eliminate dangerous conditions caused by trees and shrubs that may result in injuries to persons or property; to protect all trees within the City against the spread of

disease or pests, and to provide for the special protection of heritage and landmark trees within the city limits.

### Lighting Standards

Title 1 (General Provisions) of the Zoning Code contains standards requiring that illumination of buildings, landscaping, signs, and parking and loading areas be shielded and directed so that no light trespasses onto adjacent properties. Title III (Use Regulations and Development Standards) requires that lighting shall be directed away from residential areas and public streets so that glare is not produced that could impact the general safety of vehicular traffic and the privacy and well-being of residents.

### City of Rancho Cordova Design Guidelines

On September 6, 2005, the Rancho Cordova City Council adopted the City's first comprehensive Design Guidelines document. (Resolution 108-2005). The Design Guidelines reflect the City's desire for quality development; they apply to all types of development. The Design Guidelines were created using input and direction from the Urban Design workshops held in the spring/summer of 2004, the visual preference survey and General Plan survey conducted in the summer of 2004, visioning workshops and land use map discussions for the City's General Plan, and the City's the guiding principles of the City's Design Review Ordinance. These provisions provide a framework to evaluate new development projects against the City's adopted vision and are intended to reflect the City's desires relative to land planning, as well as individual site design and architecture. The guidelines and standards set forth in Chapter 2, Community Design, are applicable to all project types and cover a wide range of topics from general circulation and project signage to landscaping and sustainable development. The subsequent chapters provide additional provisions that are applicable to unique project types, including commercial and commercial mixed use, office and office mixed use, residential (all types from single family detached to residential mixed use), community facilities, and industrial. A series of checklists (Appendix B) have been created for the implementation of the design guidelines. Each of the 6 checklists corresponds to one of the design guideline chapters in the document. The checklists are intended for use by applicants/designers, staff, and decision makers in the preparation, review, and action of individual projects. Ultimately, it is up to the designated Approving Authority to determine if a proposed project is consistent with the overall intent of the guidelines.

### 4.13.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following significance thresholds are based on Appendix G, from the State CEQA Guidelines. A project is considered to have a significant visual effect on the environment if it will:

- 1) Substantially damage scenic resources within a state scenic highway, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings;
- 2) Have a substantial adverse affect on a scenic vista;
- 3) Substantially degrade the existing visual character of quality or the site and its surroundings or introduce a feature that is out of character that dominates the view.

## 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

---

- 4) Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### METHODOLOGY

The visual resource/light and glare analysis is based on field observations and review of the topographic conditions of the Planning Area. The results of the observations and field reviews were then related to the proposed City of Rancho Cordova General Plan to determine potentially significant impacts. The field observations included walking, driving, and establishing key vantage points in the Planning Area to identify sensitive aesthetic areas and valuable visual resources. The policies of the Sacramento County General Plan and City of Rancho Cordova General Plan that pertain to visual quality were used for guidance for this visual analysis. In addition, staff performed a visual field study from several vantage points within the City and public viewpoints within the Planning Area.

### PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### Alteration of Scenic Resources within a Scenic Highway

**Impact 4.13.1** Implementation of the proposed General Plan Land Use Map will not result in substantial damage to scenic resources within a state scenic highway. There is **no impact**.

There are no state or locally designated scenic highways within or proximate to the Planning Area. Therefore, implementation of the General Plan Land Use Map would not have the potential to affect scenic resources within a scenic highway and there is **no impact**.

#### Mitigation Measures

None required.

#### Degradation of a Scenic Vista

**Impact 4.13.2** Implementation of the General Plan will encourage new development and redevelopment activities that could potentially degrade existing scenic vistas. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

The topography of the Planning Area is characterized as flat to gently rolling hills, with elevations generally ranging from approximately 30 feet near the American River and southeastern portion of the Planning Area (near the Cosumnes River corridor) to nearly 300 feet in the northeastern Planning Areas. The slopes in the Planning Area generally range from 0% to 8%, with the higher slopes being associated with the dredge tailings, in the northeastern portion of the Planning Area. Important scenic vistas include the American River and the Sierra Nevada mountain range.

#### General Plan Planning Area – Areas within Existing City Boundaries

Numerous scenic vistas of the American River are provided within the City at various public accesses within the American River Parkway and at river crossings at Watt Avenue, Sunrise Boulevard, and Folsom Boulevard. Development within the American River Parkway is regulated via the provisions of the American River Parkway Plan, which includes numerous criteria for evaluating the potential to impact the viewshed. The City of Rancho Cordova is a participant in

the current update of the American River Parkway Plan, the first update in almost twenty years. However, the City's involvement is purely advisory at this point as the American River Parkway is under the jurisdiction of Sacramento County Municipal Services Agency Department of Regional Parks, Recreation, and Open Space, and the current legislation does not identify Rancho Cordova as one of the local agency signatories to the Parkway Plan. To date, the local agency signatories have stated that Rancho Cordova will remain as a non-voting, advisory agency through the planning horizon of the current update.

### General Plan Planning Area – Areas outside of Existing City Boundaries

From the northeastern portions of the Planning Area, during clear weather conditions, there are distant scattered and diffused views of the El Dorado County foothills and the Sierra Nevada. Diffused or scattered views are those views that are partially obstructed and limited by distance, trees, existing structures, intervening topography or vegetation, air quality conditions, and weather conditions. Implementation of the General Plan could result in future annexation and development of much of the southern portions of the Planning Area. Although new roadways and public facilities (parks, restaurants) may provide additional access to the area and thus more opportunities for distant views of the Sierra Nevada, that same development and associated landscaping will further obstruct and scatter opportunities for diffused views of the Sierras. Due to the distance from the Sierras and the existing diffused and scattered nature of the available views, opportunities to view this scenic vista are currently limited and the implementation of the General Plan represents a less than significant affect on this scenic vista.

New development and redevelopment activities proposed in association with the General Plan that are adjacent to the Parkway must comply with viewshed protections contained within the American River Parkway Plan that will ensure no significant degradation of the scenic viewshed. Views of the Sierra afforded in the northeastern of the Planning Area are too distant and diffused to be considered an important scenic vista. For these reasons, development of the Planning Area will not substantially adversely affect an important scenic vista and this is a **less than significant impact**.

### Mitigation Measures

None Required.

### **Alteration of Visual Character**

**Impact 4.13.3** Implementation of the General Plan will encourage new development and redevelopment activities that could degrade the existing visual character or quality of the Planning Area. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

Implementation of the General Plan would change the visual character of the Planning Area through intensification of urban uses within the existing city limits and introduction of urban uses within the Planning Area.

### General Plan Planning Area – Areas within Existing City Boundaries

Within the existing city limits, the area is presently predominately urban in character and is planned for intensification, particularly in the Downtown Planning Area, which is located north of Mather Airport. Proposed General Plan goals would provide the opportunity for mixed land use categories that combine residential, commercial, and office uses on a single site thus permitting

## 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

---

both horizontal and vertical mixing. The development of any structure within the City boundaries is subject to City Council discretionary Design Review for consistency with General Plan policies. General Plan policies and associated action items from the Land Use Element, LU 1.5 and LU 2.7 and Urban Design Element policies UD 1.1 and UD 4.2, address creation of design guidelines to ensure the compatibility of land uses, protection of residential neighborhoods from incompatible activities, and buffering of incompatible uses to retain the existing community character. These design guidelines were adopted by the City in September 2005 and are currently applicable to development in the City.

The General Plan would establish land use development standards for all land use designations, including standards contained in the Land Use Element that would limit the maximum height allowable within a particular land use zone. The exception would be the Downtown Planning Area for which there would be no height restrictions (included in the General Plan). This area is planned for intensification of uses and, given the lack of height restrictions development in the Downtown Planning Area, could conceivably include high-rise buildings that are out of character with the present low-rise development in the Planning Area. The existing office and commercial buildings along the most intensively developed US 50 corridor within the General Plan Planning Area generally range from one to twelve stories in height. Further, high-rise buildings can result in their own unique set of impacts (shadowing of adjacent properties, a source of glare, visual intrusion, wind tunnel effects from the channeling of wind conditions, need for specialized fire fighting and emergency access equipment including heliport, interruption of electronic microwave transmissions, locally concentrated traffic and parking, noise and vibration from pile driving during construction, and other temporary construction-related impacts) that can cause incompatibilities with existing and planned adjacent uses. Views onto the City and across the City would change as a result of high-rise development in the Downtown Planning Area. The construction of high rises in this area would alter the existing distant views of the Planning Area for travelers using US 50 as the City's skyline characteristics would change from smaller office and commercial complexes to a more dense and vertical appearance. Additionally, ground level views, line of site characteristics and lighting and glare levels would also change for pedestrians, motorists, residents, and workers in the area.

Development in the Downtown Planning Area is subject to compliance with Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) regulations (i.e., Title 14 of the Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR), part 77, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace). This regulation establishes "imaginary surfaces" within the vicinity of any public airport. These imaginary surfaces identify heights above the ground at which any building or structure may constitute a hazard to aircraft navigation. Two such surfaces are located above the Downtown Planning Area, the horizontal surface and the conical surface. FAR Part 77 states that the horizontal surface encompasses an area within 10,000 feet of any major runway and starts at 150 feet above the ground. The conical surface extends from that point outward for an additional 4,000 feet and rises from 150 feet upward at a slope of twenty horizontal feet for every vertical foot gained. At this slope the conical surface begins at 150 feet above the ground at 10,000 feet from the runway and rises to 350 feet at the outermost edge, 14,000 feet from the runway. These surfaces and their relation to the Downtown Planning Area are included in **Figure 4.4-2** in Section 4.4 of this EIR. It should be noted that taller buildings or structures are subject to FAA and Caltrans Division of Aeronautics review and approval to ensure that proposed activities do not pose a hazard to aviation.

### General Plan Planning Area – Areas outside of Existing City Boundaries

The southern and eastern portions of the Planning Area are comprised predominately of large lots and the land use is rural. Implementation of the General Plan would result in the conversion of many of these rural areas into suburban and urban land uses. Over time, implementation of



the General Plan would change the visual character of the area into an urban landscape from a rural landscape of relatively flat open grasslands interspersed with native trees, creeks and intermittent streams developed intermittently with ranchettes, agricultural and grazing facilities. Policies and associated action items from the General Plan Land Use Element, Natural Resource Element, and Urban Design Element, identified below, would be intended to protect the natural features and transition land uses with appropriate density and intensity from rural areas to urbanized areas, thus establishing a sense of entry and arrival to the City.

The Land Use Element Policy LU 2.1, promotes the integration of natural resources with urban land uses as one of the City's nine Smart Growth Principals. Implementation of LU 2.1 would promote integration of natural resources with urban land uses. Natural Resource Element policies NR 2.1, NR 2.2, NR 3.1, and NR 3.5 require the protection of vernal pool and wetland resources such that there is no net loss of functional areas for special status species, encourage environmentally sensitive project siting and design to minimize impacts to wetland resources, encourage the creation of buffer zones adjacent to creeks and wetlands, and encourage development of guidelines for native habitat restoration during bank stabilization efforts along creek corridors and storm water channels. Policies NR 4.1, NR 4.2, and NR 5.4, establish minimum requirements for protecting and preserving native oak trees, non-oak native trees and landmark trees in the City, require development of guidelines that require avoidance of oak habitat, and encourage the planting of native trees in buffer areas of preserve sites, and open space and creek corridors to retain the visual quality of the Planning Area's natural features.

### Proposed General Plan Policies and Action Items that Provide Mitigation

The following General Plan policies and action items contained in the Land Use Element, Natural Resource Element, and Urban Design Element address preservation of the visual character of the Planning Area:

- Policy LU.1.4 Promote high quality, efficient, and cohesive land utilization that minimizes negative impacts (e.g., traffic congestion and visual blight) and environmental hazards (e.g. flood, soil instability) on adjacent neighborhoods and infrastructure and preserve existing and future residential neighborhoods from encroachment of incompatible activities and land uses. [Cross-reference Economic Development, ED.2.6]*
- Action LU.1.4.1 Establish performance and development standards in the Zoning Code and guidelines in the Citywide Design Guidelines to address compatibility between existing and proposed development and within proposed mixed-use development (vertical and horizontal).*
- Action LU.1.4.2 Create development standards and design guidelines to specifically address the compatibility of high-rise development in the Downtown Planning Area. Give special consideration to those issues unique to high-rise development, including the following: visual intrusion, distant viewshed, shadowing of adjacent properties, glare, wind tunnel effects, emergency service, interruption of electronic transmissions, traffic and parking, and noise and vibration.*
- Action LU.1.4.3 Require the disclosure of potential land use compatibility issues in all parts of the City, such as noise, dust, odors, etc., in order to provide potential purchasers with the information necessary to make informed decisions about the property and its future land uses.*

#### 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

---

- Action LU.1.4.4 *Develop guidelines for the buffering of incompatible land uses in ways that retain community character but do not consume large land area, create pedestrian barriers, or result in unsafe conditions.*
- Policy NR.3.1 *Coordinate with groups such as the Sacramento Urban Creeks Council to restore, enhance, and preserve creeks in Rancho Cordova.*
- Policy NR.3.2 *Create or retain the natural topographic relief and meandering alignment of natural creek corridors in the construction of new channels and the modification of existing channels, and discourage the placement of concrete within creeks and channels.*
- Action NR.3.2.1 *Develop guidelines for channel creation or modification that will ensure channel meander, naturalized side slope, and varied channel bottom elevation are considered in design.*
- Action NR.3.2.2 *Adopt and implement improvement standards for soft bottom channels.*
- Policy NR.3.3 *Encourage the creation of secondary flood control channels where the existing channel supports extensive riparian vegetation.*
- Action NR.3.3.1 *Work with the County's drainage and flood control engineers, and federal and state agencies to determine if natural creek corridors can and should accommodate storm flows or if separate storm water conveyance structures are necessary.*
- Policy NR.3.4 *Encourage projects that contain wetland preserves or creeks, or are located adjacent to wetland preserves or creeks, to be designed for maximum visibility and, as appropriate, access. (Cross-reference: Open Space, Parks and Trails Element)*
- Action NR.3.4.1 *Establish performance standards for natural resource preserves that accomplish the following:*
- *Provide sufficient width for a mowed firebreak (where necessary), adjacent passive recreation uses, and access for channel maintenance and flood control.*
  - *Offer sufficient width to allow for existing and created wildlife habitat, species sensitive to human disturbance, vegetative filtration for water quality, corridor for wildlife habitat linkage, protection from runoff, and other impacts of urban uses adjacent to the corridor.*
  - *Allow for sufficient width adjacent to natural resource preserves to allow for trails and greenbelts.*
  - *Do not place water quality treatment structures designed to meet pollutant discharge requirements within the stream buffer zone.*
- Action NR.3.4.2 – *Establish standards that allow public access in the floodplain and buffers along creek corridors and preserves. Mitigation measures shall be*

incorporated into environmental documents and conditions of approval that require open-view fencing adjacent to preserves.

- Action NR.3.4.3 Establish standards and/or guidelines for development adjoining wetland preserves or creeks to maximize visibility by designing the land plan with public streets on at least one side of the corridor or preserve with vertical curbs, gutters, footpath(s), street lighting, and post and cable barriers to prevent unauthorized vehicular entry into creek corridors and preserves.
- Policy NR.4.1 Conserve native oak and landmark tree resources for their historic, economic, aesthetic, and environmental value.
- Action NR.4.1.1 Adopt a Tree Preservation Ordinance to establish minimum requirements for preserving native trees and landmark trees in the City, including a definition of the size, species, and age requirements of landmark, oak, and other trees to be protected and/or replaced.
- Action NR.4.1.2 Where feasible, require underground utility lines that are in close proximity to oaks and other landmark trees to be designed and installed to minimize impacts to trees. Work with the utility provider(s) to coordinate transmission line location and other potential impacts associated with the undergrounding of the utilities.
- Action NR.4.1.3 Establish development guidelines that require all oak habitat to be avoided to the maximum extent feasible. When avoidance is not possible, require mitigation efforts that result in preservation of in-kind habitat in the Planning Area.
- Policy NR.4.2 Improve overall landscaping quality and sustainability in all areas visible to the public.
- Action NR.4.2.1 Create development guidelines to establish minimum planting standards and require appropriate tree species and planting densities within newly landscaped areas that are visible to or shared by the public. An adopted Tree List should be used as a guideline for all tree plantings within the City.
- Action NR.4.2.2 Create development guidelines that address landscaping standards and that require appropriate tree species and densities in buffer areas. The guidelines should also ensure that medians will include native plantings and trees, and will be wide enough to support the long-term viability of the plantings.
- Action NR.4.2.3 Provide leaflets and planting guides that promote the use of drought-tolerant native vegetation in home landscaping.
- Policy NR.4.3 Promote trees as economic and environmental resources for the use, education, and enjoyment of current and future generations.
- Action NR.4.3.1 Achieve "Tree City USA" status. This will require the City to adopt a tree ordinance, appoint a board, department or commission to advise the city on tree issues, spend two dollars per capita on community forestry activities, and hold an Arbor Day celebration. (Cross-reference: Air Quality Element)

## 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

---

- Action NR.4.3.2 Designate local funds to educate the public on tree planting and preservation.*
- Action NR.4.3.3 Offer programs or other resources to provide property owners with information on proper tree selection, planting, and maintenance.*
- Action NR.4.3.4 Actively participate in the Sacramento County Greenprint Program.*
- Policy UD.1.2 Promote the design of residential neighborhoods in accordance with the desired character of the village and district in which it is located. [Cross Reference: Land Use, LU.2.2]*
- Policy UD.2.3 Transition the density and intensity of uses from an urban to rural character with a clear City edge and establish a sense of entry and arrival to the City.*
- Action UD.2.3.1 Land uses along the eastern and southern boundaries of the City shall transition down the intensity and density of development from urban to rural at the City edge.*
- Policy UD.4.2 Design new development to be compatible with surrounding development in ways that contribute to the desired character of the City and District.*
- Action UD.4.2.1 Develop standards and guidelines that require and illustrate compatibility between new and existing development.*

### Mitigation Measures

The development of any structure within the City boundaries is subject to City Council discretionary Design Review for consistency with General Plan policies. General Plan policies and associated action items address the implementation of additional design guidelines to ensure the retention of the existing community character. These policies do not however specifically address consideration of the unique visual impacts associated with high-rise buildings that can extend well beyond the immediate neighborhood. The following mitigation measure is identified.

**MM 4.13.3** The following shall be added as a new policy under Goal LU.1:

Create development standards in the Zoning Code and design guidelines in the Citywide Design Guidelines to specifically address the compatibility of high-rise development in the Downtown Planning Area with consideration of those issues unique to high-rise development (visual intrusion, distant viewshed, shadowing of adjacent properties, glare, wind tunnel effects, emergency service, interruption of electronic transmissions, traffic and parking, noise and vibration).

Even with adoption of this policy, the introduction of high-rise structures will irrevocably alter the skyline and visual character of the City of Rancho Cordova. Outside of the current City boundaries, the General Plan would allow future conversion of the existing rural environment to an urban environment. Although the General Plan contains many policies and actions to ensure that this development is sensitive to the preservation of important natural features of the area and provides a transition in the density and intensity with a clear city boundary, the inevitable result of the decision to urbanize this area is an irreversible change in the character of this

portion of the Planning Area. In the event that high-rise structures are introduced into the Downtown Planning Area and urban development occurs in the Planning Areas outside of the current city limits, implementation of the General Plan will result in a **significant and unavoidable** change in visual character.

### Daytime Glare and Nighttime Lighting

**Impact 4.13.4** Implementation of the General Plan Land Use Map would create new sources of daytime glare, and substantially change nighttime lighting and illumination levels in the Planning Area, associated with new and redevelopment activities. This is considered a **less than significant** impact.

Implementation of the General Plan Land Use Map would introduce new sources of daytime glare and substantially change nighttime lighting and illumination levels in the Planning Area. Lighting nuisances typically are categorized by the following 1) Glare – Intense light that shines directly, or is reflected from a surface into a person's eyes; and 2) "Skyglow"/Nighttime Illumination – Artificial lighting from urbanized sources that alters the rural landscape in sufficient quantity to cause lighting of the nighttime sky and reduction of visibility of stars and other astronomical features; and 3) "Spillover" Lighting – Artificial lighting that spills over onto adjacent properties, which could interrupt sleeping patterns or cause other nuisances to neighboring residents.

The main sources of daytime glare in the Planning Area are from sunlight reflecting from structures with reflective surfaces such as windows. The proposed General Plan land uses would include various densities of commercial, office, recreation and other public uses containing structures and other potential sources of glare. Building materials (i.e., reflective glass and polished surfaces) are the most substantial sources of glare. The amount of glare depends on the intensity and direction of sunlight, which is more acute at sunrise and sunset because the angle of the sun is lower during these times.

A source of glare during the nighttime hours is artificial light. The sources of new and increased nighttime lighting and illumination include, but are not limited to, new residential developments, lighting from non-residential uses, lights associated with vehicular travel (i.e., car headlights), street lighting, parking lot lights, and security related lighting for non-residential uses. Increased nighttime lighting and illumination could result in adverse effects to adjacent land uses through the "spilling over" of light into these areas and "sky glow" conditions, described above.

### General Plan Planning Area – Areas within Existing City Boundaries

Implementation of the proposed General Plan would increase the amount of daytime glare in existing developed areas through intensification of development. Daytime glare impacts, intensification of lighting and increased potential for spill-over lighting to affect adjacent uses could be substantially increased in developed areas, particularly if the intensification of uses increases horizontally. High-rise structures are visible to a wider surrounding area and frequently contain a high ratio of window surface area. Daytime glare can be reduced or eliminated by using appropriate building materials and architectural coatings, roof overhangs, and proper structural design. Urban Design Policy 4.2 and Action 4.2.1 contain the requirement that the City prepare design guidelines that address the compatibility of new development with surrounding development in the community. Further, adopted City of Rancho Cordova Design Guidelines, which implement these policies, already include specific lighting standards (see Design Guidelines, pages 2-69 through 2-70).

## 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

---

### General Plan Planning Area – Areas outside of Existing City Boundaries

Implementation of the General Plan could result in the introduction of new sources of daytime glare (new development) into undeveloped areas which currently have few sources of glare due to lack of existing structures and the residential and low-rise nature of the development that is present. Development would also introduce new sources of nighttime lighting and illumination into the undeveloped portions of the Planning Area. Urban Design Policy 4.2 and Action 4.2.1 contain the requirement that the City prepare design guidelines that address the compatibility of new development with surrounding development in the community. Further, adopted City of Rancho Cordova Design Guidelines, which implement these policies, already include specific lighting standards (see Design Guidelines, pages 2-69 through 2-70

### Proposed General Plan Policies and Action Items that Provide Mitigation

The following General Plan policies and action items are contained in the Urban Design Element address design compatibility.

*Policy UD.4.2 Design new development to be compatible with surrounding development in ways that contribute to the desired character of the City and District.*

*Action UD.4.2.1 Develop standards and guidelines that require and illustrate compatibility between new and existing development.*

Implementation of the General Plan policies and associated action items and the adopted City of Rancho Cordova Design Guidelines would reduce the daytime glare and nighttime lighting impacts to **less than significant**. The adopted City of Rancho Cordova Design Guidelines, which implement these policies include specific lighting standards. The reader is referred to the Design Guidelines page 2-69, and more specifically, page 2-70 for policies addressing potential lighting and glare impacts.

### Mitigation Measures

None required.

## 4.13.5 CUMULATIVE SETTING, IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

### CUMULATIVE SETTING

The cumulative setting for visual resources includes the viewshed of existing, proposed, planned, approved and reasonably foreseeable developments in the region as identified in Section 4.0 of this document and those communities surrounding the Planning Area that have a view of the City.

### CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### Cumulative Visual Resources Impacts

**Impact 4.13.5** Implementation of the General Plan will encourage new development and redevelopment activities that would contribute to the cumulative alteration of existing landscape characteristics of the region. This impact is **cumulatively considerable**.

Because of the lack of height limitations and potential for high-rise development in the Downtown Planning Area, the viewshed for evaluating cumulative visual impacts in this EIR extends to all Counties bordering Sacramento County. High-rise buildings located in the City of Sacramento are visible for many miles from the City in direct relation to their height. The introduction of high-rise development in the City of Rancho Cordova would create a new highly visible skyline. High-rise development in the City of Rancho Cordova could result in an extension of the high-rise character of the skyline east of the present concentration within the City of Sacramento, creating two city skylines visible for miles from the boundaries of these cities.

The conversion of the Planning Area from its current rural visual character to an urban character in combination with the increased urbanization of the City of Folsom, City of Sacramento, El Dorado County, City of Elk Grove and potentially the County of Sacramento, depending upon policies adopted in the upcoming update to the County's General Plan, will result in a cumulatively considerable change in the visual character of the area. Even with adoption of proposed Policy UD 2.3 that provides for a transition in the density and intensity of uses from an urban to rural character at the fringes of the Planning Area, with a clear city edge, it is unknown which of the Planning Areas outside of the present City limits will develop first which could provide for disjointed application of this policy and increase pressure to urbanize at the fringes. The conceptual land uses proposed for the sub-planning areas at the south and east boundaries of the overall Planning Area (Grant Line South, East, Aerojet, and Glenborough) do not uniformly depict this transition and do show some intensive urban uses adjacent to rural areas outside of the Planning Area. Even in the event that other surrounding jurisdictions attempt to maintain a rural character, the proposed General Plan will contribute to alteration of the viewshed and the visual character will become increasing urban. The change in the visual character of the southeast portion of the Sacramento region, resulting from changes in the visual character within the Planning Area from implementation of the General Plan, is considered a cumulatively considerable contribution to the overall urbanization of the region.

### Proposed General Plan Policies and Action Items that Provide Mitigation

The following General Plan policies and action items contained in the Land Use Element, Natural Resource Element, and Urban Design Element address preservation of the visual character of the Planning Area:

- Policy LU.1.4 Promote high quality, efficient, and cohesive land utilization that minimizes negative impacts (e.g., traffic congestion and visual blight) and environmental hazards (e.g. flood, soil instability) on adjacent neighborhoods and infrastructure and preserve existing and future residential neighborhoods from encroachment of incompatible activities and land uses. [Cross-reference Economic Development, ED.2.6]*
- Action LU.1.4.1 Establish performance and development standards in the Zoning Code and guidelines in the Citywide Design Guidelines to address compatibility between existing and proposed development and within proposed mixed-use development (vertical and horizontal).*
- Action LU.1.4.2 Create development standards and design guidelines to specifically address the compatibility of high-rise development in the Downtown Planning Area. Give special consideration to those issues unique to high-rise development, including the following: visual intrusion, distant viewshed, shadowing of adjacent properties, glare, wind tunnel effects, emergency service,*

#### 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

---

*interruption of electronic transmissions, traffic and parking, and noise and vibration.*

- Action LU.1.4.3 Require the disclosure of potential land use compatibility issues in all parts of the City, such as noise, dust, odors, etc., in order to provide potential purchasers with the information necessary to make informed decisions about the property and its future land uses.*
- Action LU.1.4.4 Develop guidelines for the buffering of incompatible land uses in ways that retain community character but do not consume large land area, create pedestrian barriers, or result in unsafe conditions.*
- Policy NR.2.1 Require mitigation that provides for "no net loss" of wetlands.*
- Policy NR.2.2 Ensure that direct and indirect effects to wetland habitats are minimized by environmentally sensitive project siting and design, to the maximum extent feasible.*
- Action NR.2.2.1 During the environmental review process, evaluate feasible on-site alternatives that will reduce impacts to wetland resources and effectively preserve these resources.*
- Policy NR.3.1 Coordinate with groups such as the Sacramento Urban Creeks Council to restore, enhance, and preserve creeks in Rancho Cordova.*
- Policy NR.3.2 Create or retain the natural topographic relief and meandering alignment of natural creek corridors in the construction of new channels and the modification of existing channels, and discourage the placement of concrete within creeks and channels.*
- Action NR.3.2.1 Develop guidelines for channel creation or modification that will ensure channel meander, naturalized side slope, and varied channel bottom elevation are considered in design.*
- Action NR.3.2.2 Adopt and implement improvement standards for soft bottom channels.*
- Policy NR.3.3 Encourage the creation of secondary flood control channels where the existing channel supports extensive riparian vegetation.*
- Action NR.3.3.1 Work with the County's drainage and flood control engineers, and federal and state agencies to determine if natural creek corridors can and should accommodate storm flows or if separate storm water conveyance structures are necessary.*
- Policy NR.3.4 Encourage projects that contain wetland preserves or creeks, or are located adjacent to wetland preserves or creeks, to be designed for maximum visibility and, as appropriate, access. (Cross-reference: Open Space, Parks and Trails Element)*
- Action NR.3.4.1 Establish performance standards for natural resource preserves that accomplish the following:*



- Provide sufficient width for a mowed firebreak (where necessary), adjacent passive recreation uses, and access for channel maintenance and flood control.
- Offer sufficient width to allow for existing and created wildlife habitat, species sensitive to human disturbance, vegetative filtration for water quality, corridor for wildlife habitat linkage, protection from runoff, and other impacts of urban uses adjacent to the corridor.
- Allow for sufficient width adjacent to natural resource preserves to allow for trails and greenbelts.
- Do not place water quality treatment structures designed to meet pollutant discharge requirements within the stream buffer zone.

*Action NR.3.4.2 Establish standards that allow public access in the floodplain and buffers along creek corridors and preserves. Mitigation measures shall be incorporated into environmental documents and conditions of approval that require open-view fencing adjacent to preserves.*

*Action NR.3.4.3 Establish standards and/or guidelines for development adjoining wetland preserves or creeks to maximize visibility by designing the land plan with public streets on at least one side of the corridor or preserve with vertical curbs, gutters, footpath(s), street lighting, and post and cable barriers to prevent unauthorized vehicular entry into creek corridors and preserves.*

*Policy NR.4.1 Conserve native oak and landmark tree resources for their historic, economic, aesthetic, and environmental value.*

*Action NR.4.1.1 Adopt a Tree Preservation Ordinance to establish minimum requirements for preserving native trees and landmark trees in the City, including a definition of the size, species, and age requirements of landmark, oak, and other trees to be protected and/or replaced.*

*Action NR.4.1.2 Where feasible, require underground utility lines that are in close proximity to oaks and other landmark trees to be designed and installed to minimize impacts to trees. Work with the utility provider(s) to coordinate transmission line location and other potential impacts associated with the undergrounding of the utilities.*

*Action NR.4.1.3 Establish development guidelines that require all oak habitat to be avoided to the maximum extent feasible. When avoidance is not possible, require mitigation efforts that result in preservation of in-kind habitat in the Planning Area.*

*Policy NR.4.2 Improve overall landscaping quality and sustainability in all areas visible to the public.*

*Action NR.4.2.1 Create development guidelines to establish minimum planting standards and require appropriate tree species and planting densities within newly landscaped areas that are visible to or shared by the public. An adopted Tree List should be used as a guideline for all tree plantings within the City.*

## 4.13 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE

---

- Action NR.4.2.2 *Create development guidelines that address landscaping standards and that require appropriate tree species and densities in buffer areas. The guidelines should also ensure that medians will include native plantings and trees, and will be wide enough to support the long-term viability of the plantings.*
- Action NR.4.2.3 *Provide leaflets and planting guides that promote the use of drought-tolerant native vegetation in home landscaping.*
- Policy NR.4.3 *Promote trees as economic and environmental resources for the use, education, and enjoyment of current and future generations.*
- Action NR.4.3.1 *Achieve "Tree City USA" status. This will require the City to adopt a tree ordinance, appoint a board, department or commission to advise the city on tree issues, spend two dollars per capita on community forestry activities, and hold an Arbor Day celebration. (Cross-reference: Air Quality Element)*
- Action NR.4.3.2 *Designate local funds to educate the public on tree planting and preservation.*
- Action NR.4.3.3 *Offer programs or other resources to provide property owners with information on proper tree selection, planting, and maintenance.*
- Action NR.4.3.4 *Actively participate in the Sacramento County Greenprint Program.*
- Policy UD.1.2 *Promote the design of residential neighborhoods in accordance with the desired character of the village and district in which it is located. [Cross Reference: Land Use, LU.2.2]*
- Policy UD.2.3 *Transition the density and intensity of uses from an urban to rural character with a clear City edge and establish a sense of entry and arrival to the City.*
- Action UD.2.3.1 *Land uses along the eastern and southern boundaries of the City shall transition down the intensity and density of development from urban to rural at the City edge.*
- Policy UD.4.2 *Design new development to be compatible with surrounding development in ways that contribute to the desired character of the City and District.*
- Action UD.4.2.1 *Develop standards and guidelines that require and illustrate compatibility between new and existing development.*

### Mitigation Measures

Implementation of the above General Plan policies and action items and Mitigation Measure MM 4.13.3 would partially reduce the alteration of visual character and light/glare impacts within the Planning Area. However, the change in the visual character of the region from implementation of the General Plan and other anticipated development in the region, and the potential change in the skyline from introduction of high-rise development, results in a cumulatively considerable contribution to the overall urbanization of the region and is a **cumulatively considerable** and is considered a **significant and unavoidable** impact of the General Plan.

REFERENCES

County of Sacramento Department of Planning and Community Development. *American River Parkway Plan*. 1985

County of Sacramento Planning Department. *Sacramento County General Plan*. 1993

Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Title 14 Code of Federal Regulations (14 CFR) part 77, Objects Affecting Navigable Airspace.

Caltrans Division of Aeronautics regs/guidelines/standards?

Current proposed parkway plan?