

## **3.10 LAND USE AND AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

### **3.10.1 AFFECTED ENVIRONMENT**

#### **EXISTING LAND USES**

##### **Specific Plan Area**

The 1,265.5-acre SPA is located within the Sunrise Douglas Community Plan area in the city limits of the City of Rancho Cordova, California in eastern Sacramento County (see Exhibits 2-1 and 2-2 in Chapter 2, “Alternatives”). The SPA is located south of Douglas Road, north of Jackson Highway (i.e., State Route [SR] 16), west of Grant Line Road, and east of Sunrise Boulevard.

The SPA is identified in the City of Rancho Cordova General Plan as part of the SunCreek/Preserve Planning Area (City of Rancho Cordova 2006). The City General Plan assumes that the SunCreek portion of the planning area would encompass 1,762 acres, develop 5,104 dwelling units, and generate 1,331 jobs and 13,526 new residents by 2030 (City of Rancho Cordova 2006, City of Rancho Cordova 2009).

The SPA is generally undeveloped land that has been used for dry land farming and grazing on spring grasses. Five rural residences are located within the approximate center of the SPA. The SPA is zoned as AG-80 and AG-20, and the land use is designated as the “SunCreek/Preserve Planning Area” on the City General Plan Land Use Map (see Exhibit 3.10-1). The AG-80 and AG-20 zoning designations accommodate a wide range of agricultural uses, such as crop production, animal keep, and commercial agricultural-related uses (e.g., stables), on parcels greater than or equal to 80 acres and 20 acres, respectively (City of Rancho Cordova 2009). The land use designation of Planning Area is used to conceptually indicate areas where incorporated parts of the city may be developed to contain a variety of land uses, including: residential, commercial, institutional, recreational, and open space (City of Rancho Cordova 2006).

##### **Adjacent Land Uses**

Land in Rancho Cordova south of U.S. 50 is in the process of urbanizing, and various residential, commercial, and mixed-use projects in the vicinity of the proposed SunCreek project are either in the planning process, under environmental review, have been approved, or are under construction. Adjacent land uses include the Anatolia III development, which has been partially constructed, but is still under construction to the west; and vacant land to the north, east, and south. Other nearby land uses include Kiefer Landfill, located approximately 1 mile southeast of the SPA, and the Sacramento Rendering Company, which is located southwest of the SPA at the intersection of Sunrise Boulevard and Kiefer Boulevard (see Section 3.2, “Air Quality” for additional details about these facilities). Mather Airport (formerly Mather Air Force Base) is located approximately 3 miles northwest of the SPA. There are no designated airport land use zones that overlap with the SPA.

##### **PLANNED LAND USES**

There are numerous development projects planned in the vicinity of the SPA. As depicted in Exhibit 3.0-1 (see Section 3.0.2, “Cumulative Context”), north of the project, land is planned or constructed as individual developments, including Anatolia I, II, and IV and Montelena to the northwest; Sunridge Lot J, Sunridge Park, Douglas 103 and 98, Grantline 208, The Ranch at Sunridge, and Arista Del Sol to the north and northeast; and Arboretum to the south. In addition, the area east of Grant Line Road, outside of the Rancho Cordova city limits in eastern Sacramento County, is planned for scattered development. Reasonably foreseeable projects in this area include the Cordova Hills development, Excelsior Estates, Teichert Quarry, Walltown Quarry, and De Silva Gates Quarry (see Section 3.0.2, “Cumulative Context,” for more information).

## Planning Areas

The City General Plan contains 16 Planning Areas. The City has included Conceptual Land Plans to show general locations of natural resource areas, areas constrained by the Mather overflight zone, sites for additional employment opportunities, and desirable locations for retail development (City of Rancho Cordova 2006). As the name suggests, the densities, land uses, and boundaries are intended to be conceptual. Final land uses and locations are intended to be determined in conjunction with subsequent mater planning of these areas. Conceptual Land Plans are provided to reflect the City’s building block concepts and relevant goals, policies, and actions. Some of the Planning Areas included in the City General Plan are located outside of the Rancho Cordova city limits. Because the City does not have jurisdiction in areas outside of the city limits, they are intended to be considered to be advisory in nature. Planning Areas in the vicinity of the SPA are described below and shown on Exhibit 3.10-1.

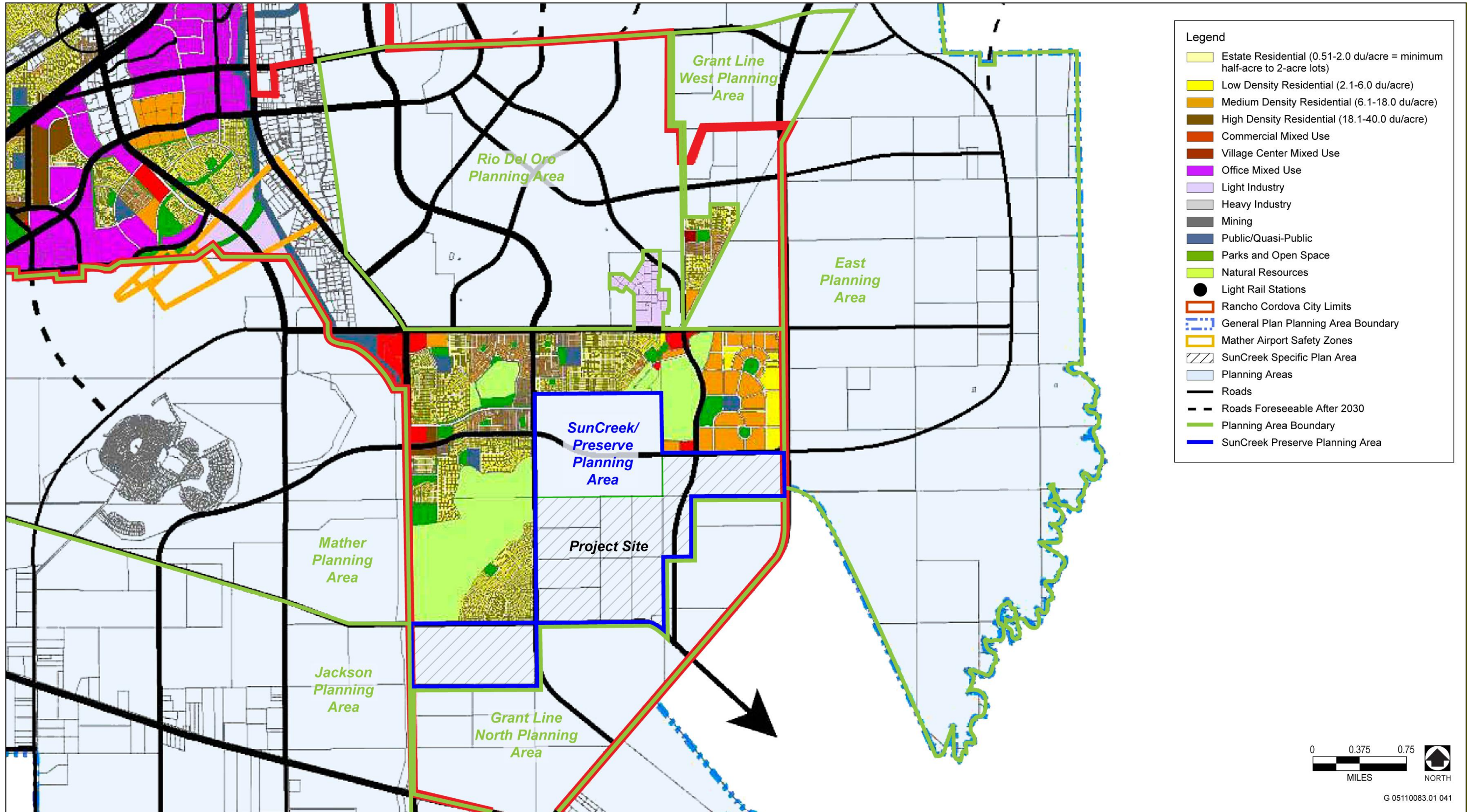
- ▶ The **Grant Line North Planning Area** is located to the south of the SPA. This area is planned to be developed into five or six neighborhoods to support a population of 16,601 people, and would contain at least one village center that would provide employment opportunities. The Grant Line North Planning Area would include recreational trails and facilities, public transit services, and open space. It consists of 1,846 acres, and would be developed to provide 6,916 dwelling units and 3,634 jobs.
- ▶ The **Jackson Planning Area**, located southwest of the SPA, is outside of the existing city limits. The conceptual plan includes residential, commercial, office, and light industrial uses over 8,602 acres. The planning area contains floodplains, creeks, vernal pools, and open space, and would be bordered by surface mining and heavy industrial uses. The area is expected to support a population of 15,457 people within 5,806 dwelling units, and provide 10,753 jobs.
- ▶ The **Mather Planning Area** is located northeast of the SPA, outside of the existing city limits. Consisting of 6,306 acres, this area is planned to accommodate 1,982 dwelling units to support a population of 5,175 people, and provide 15,841 employment opportunities. The majority of the Mather Planning Area would remain undeveloped, and approximately 450 acres would be used as the Legionaries of Christ College. Areas north of Kiefer Boulevard would be developed as residential, office, and commercial uses.
- ▶ The 7,353-acre **East Planning Area** is outside of the existing city limits, northwest of the SPA. This area is planned for residential, office, parks, and open space. Nine neighborhoods and an employment center are anticipated to be developed with 10,390 dwelling units for a population of 27,781 people and provide 5,644 jobs.
- ▶ The **Rio del Oro Planning Area** is located north of the SPA within the city limits. This area consists of 3,828 acres, and based on the approved Rio del Oro Specific Plan, would result in 31,671 new residents; 11,601 dwelling units located in mainly in the northeast, east, and southeast area of the planning area; and a village center, local town center, regional town center, and business and industrial parks that would provide 18,318 jobs.

These five Planning Areas adjacent to the SPA would account for development of 27,935 acres of land, would result in an estimated 36,460 new dwelling units, would support an estimated population of 96,685, and would generate approximately 54,190 employment opportunities.

## AGRICULTURAL AND FORESTLAND RESOURCES

### Agricultural Resources

Important Farmland is defined under the State CEQA Guidelines as Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, and Unique Farmland (see Section 3.10.2, “Regulatory Framework,” for further discussion). The Sacramento County Important Farmland map, published by the California Department of Conservation’s (DOC’s)



Source: City of Rancho Cordova 2006, Adapted by AECOM in 2010

**Rancho Cordova General Plan Planning Areas**

**Exhibit 3.10-1**



Division of Land Resource Protection, designates 1,240 acres of the SPA as Grazing Land and 12.8 acres as Farmland of Local Importance (DOC 2008a). Therefore, the SPA does not include any agricultural land designated as Important Farmland as defined by State CEQA Guidelines.

Small areas of Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance are located south and southeast of the SPA within the Arboretum Specific Plan. In addition, areas of Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, and Farmland of Local Importance are located southwest of the SPA within the Jackson Planning Area and in areas south of Florin Road (Exhibit 3.10-2).

### **Williamson Act Contracts**

The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, also known as the Williamson Act, is designed to preserve agriculture and open-space lands by discouraging their premature and unnecessary conversion to urban uses. The act enables local governments to enter into contracts with private landowners for the purpose of restricting specific parcels of land to agricultural or related open-space use. In return, landowners receive property tax assessments that are much lower than normal because they are based on farming and open-space uses as opposed to full market value. (DOC 2008b.) None of the land at the SPA is held under Williamson Act contracts (Exhibit 3.10-2). Lands northeast of the SPA within the East Planning Area are under active Williamson Act contracts. Lands southwest of the SPA within the Jackson Planning Area and south of Florin Road include lands under existing Williamson Act contracts and contracts that are in the process of nonrenewal.

### **Forestland Resources**

Forestland, as defined in PRC Section 12220(g) is land that can support 10% native tree cover of any species—including hardwoods—under natural conditions, and that allows for management of one or more forest resources—including timber, aesthetics, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, water quality, recreation—and other public benefits. The SPA does not contain 10% native tree cover that would be classified as forestland under PRC Section 12220(g).

## **3.10.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

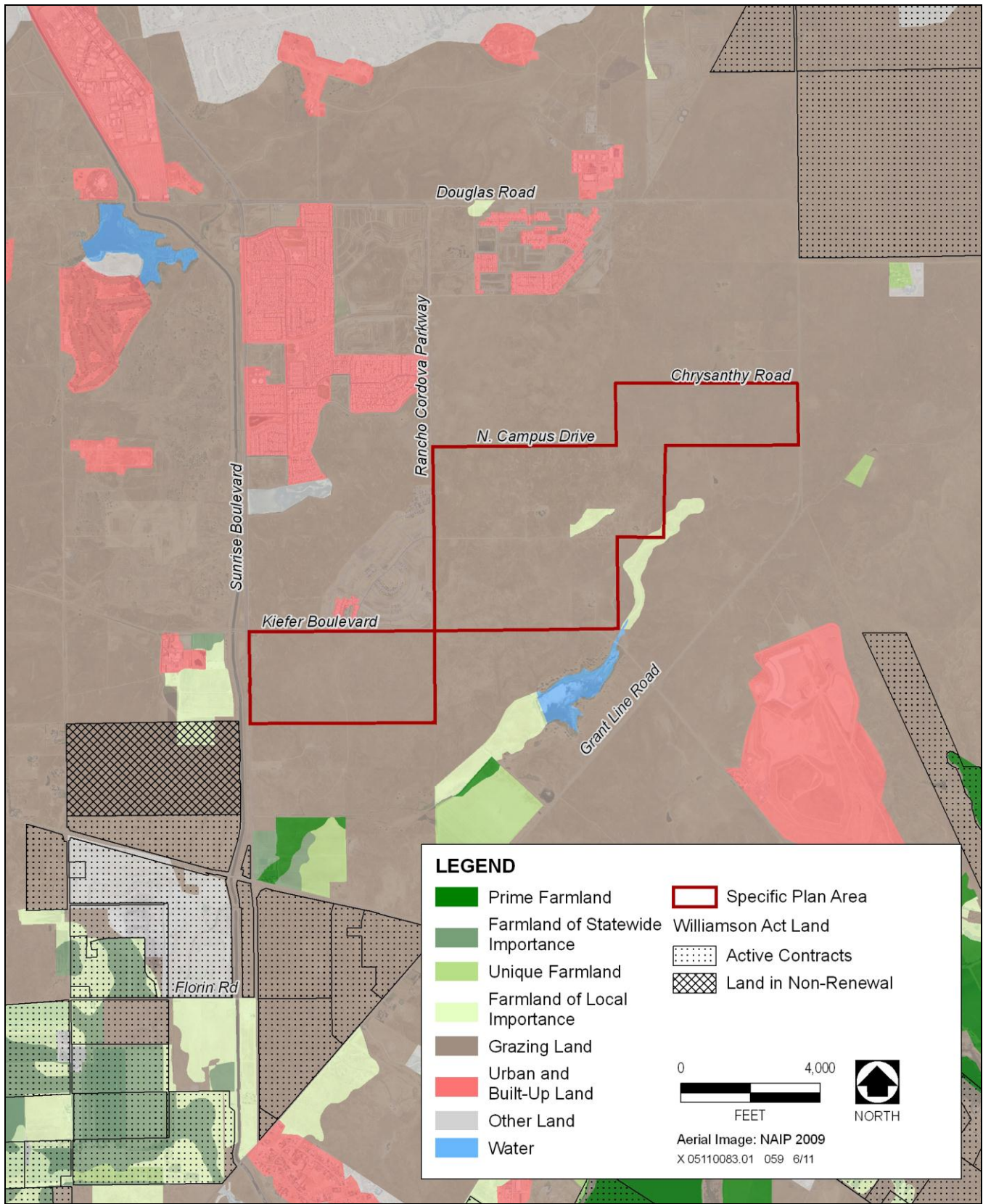
### **FEDERAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS**

There are no Federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws related to land use planning that are applicable to the Proposed Project or alternatives under consideration.

### **STATE PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS**

#### **State Planning and Zoning Laws**

California Government Code Section 65300 et seq. establishes the obligation of cities and counties to adopt and implement general plans. The general plan is a comprehensive, long-term, and general document that describes plans for the physical development of a city or county and of any land outside its boundaries that, in the city's or county's judgment, bears relation to its planning. The general plan addresses a broad range of topics, including, at a minimum, land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. In addressing these topics, the general plan identifies the goals, objectives, policies, principles, standards, and plan proposals that support the city's or county's vision for the area. The general plan is a long-range document that typically addresses the physical character of an area over a 20-year period. Finally, although the general plan serves as a blueprint for future development and identifies the overall vision for the planning area, it remains general enough to allow for flexibility in the approach taken to achieve the plan's goals.



Sources: DOC Farmland Mitigation and Monitoring Program 2008a; DOC 2009, Adapted by AECOM in 2011

**Agricultural Land and Williamson Act Contracts**

**Exhibit 3.10-2**

The State Zoning Law (California Government Code Section 65800 et seq.) establishes that zoning ordinances, which are laws that define allowable land uses within a specific district, are required to be consistent with the general plan and any applicable specific plans. When amendments to the general plan are made, corresponding changes in the zoning ordinance may be required within a reasonable time to ensure that the land uses designated in the general plan would also be allowable by the zoning ordinance (California Government Code Section 65860[c]).

A specific plan is another planning device that governs a smaller land area than the general plan, but must be consistent with the overarching general plan. Specifically, it implements the general plan in a particular geographic area. (California Government Code, Section 65450.) Generally, it describes the distribution, location, and extent of the land uses and the associated infrastructure, as well as standards governing future development. The specific plan must include a statement of the relationship between it and the general plan. (California Government Code, Section 65451, subd. [b].) An agency's conclusion that a specific plan is consistent with its general plan "carries a strong presumption of regularity." (*Napa Citizens for Honest Government v. County of Napa Board of Supervisors* [2001] 91 Cal.App.4th 342, 357.)

### **California Important Farmland Inventory System and Farmland Mitigation and Monitoring Program**

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) was established by the State of California in 1982 to continue the Important Farmland mapping efforts begun in 1975 by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (now called the Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS] of the U.S. Department of Agriculture). The intent of the U.S. Soil Conservation Service was to produce agricultural-resource maps based on soil quality and land use across the nation. The DOC sponsors the FMMP and is also responsible for establishing agricultural easements in accordance with California Public Resources Code Sections 10250–10255.

As part of the nationwide agricultural-land-use mapping effort, the U.S. Soil Conservation Service/NRCS developed a series of definitions known as Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) criteria. The LIM criteria classify the land's suitability for agricultural production. Suitability includes both the physical and chemical characteristics of soils as well as the actual land use. Important Farmland maps are derived from the NRCS (formerly U.S. Soil Conservation Service) soil survey maps using the LIM criteria and are available by county. Important Farmland maps classify land into one of eight categories, which are defined as follows (DOC 2007):

- ▶ **Prime Farmland**—Land that has the best combination of features for the production of agricultural crops.
- ▶ **Farmland of Statewide Importance**—Land other than Prime Farmland that has a good combination of physical and chemical features for the production of agricultural crops.
- ▶ **Unique Farmland**—Land of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural cash crops.
- ▶ **Farmland of Local Importance**—Land that is of importance to the local agricultural economy, as defined by each county's local advisory committee and adopted by its board of supervisors.
- ▶ **Grazing Land**—Land with existing vegetation that is suitable for grazing.
- ▶ **Urban and Built-up Lands**—Land occupied by structures with a density of at least one dwelling unit per 1.5 acres.
- ▶ **Land Committed to Nonagricultural Use**—Vacant areas; existing lands that have a permanent commitment to development but have an existing land use of agricultural or grazing lands.
- ▶ **Other Lands**—Land that does not meet the criteria of the remaining categories.

## REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND ORDINANCES

### Sacramento Area Council of Governments' Sacramento Region Blueprint

The Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) is a regional organization that provides a variety of planning functions over its six-county region, which includes Sacramento, Yolo, Placer, Sutter, Yuba, and El Dorado Counties. SACOG's primary functions are to provide transportation planning and funding for the region and to study and support resolutions of regional issues. In 2002, SACOG initiated what is now known as the Sacramento Region Blueprint (Blueprint) process after computer modeling of the region showed that current growth patterns and transportation investment priorities would result in significant increases in congestion over the next 50 years, as well as significant consumption of privately held natural and agricultural land. The goal of the process was to determine whether alternatives to current and planned transportation and land use patterns could be established to improve the region's long-term travel patterns and air quality, as well as retain substantially more open space. The Blueprint is the product of a 3-year public-involvement effort and is intended to guide land use and transportation choices over the next 50 years. During this 50-year period the region's population is projected to grow from 2 million to more than 3.8 million, jobs are projected to increase from 921,000 to 1.9 million, and housing units are projected to increase from 713,000 to 1.5 million.

The starting point for the Blueprint process was the "Base Case Scenario," which shows how the region would develop through the year 2050 if growth patterns of the recent past continue. Under the Base Case Scenario, growth would continue outward into largely rural areas and on the fringes of current development. The model predicted that the average resident living in a version of a future typical of the Base Case Scenario in 2050 would probably live in a single-family house on a fairly large lot in a subdivision with similar houses. This resident would commute a longer distance to work than is typical today; trips to work and commercial areas would be lengthy and slow because of significant increases in congestion.

In December 2004, the SACOG Board of Directors adopted the Preferred Blueprint Scenario, a vision for growth that promotes compact, mixed-use development and more transit choices as an alternative to low-density development. It includes a greater range of housing products, reinvestment in already developed areas, protection of natural-resource areas from urbanization, and more transportation choices. Residents living in a future developed area consistent with the Preferred Blueprint Scenario in 2050 would probably live in a home on a smaller lot, in a neighborhood with some larger houses and some attached row houses, apartments, and condominiums. Residents would drive to work, but the trip would be shorter than presently, and the time needed to get there would be about the same as it is now. It is anticipated that residents may sometimes use public transportation (i.e., train or bus). Most of their shopping and entertainment trips would still be via the automobile, but the distances would be shorter. Some of these shopping trips might be via walking or biking down the block a short distance to a village or town center that contains neighborhood stores with housing units built on top of them, and a small park or plaza.

The Sacramento Region Blueprint depicts a way for the region to grow through the year 2050 generally consistent with seven principles of "Smart Growth." These principles are summarized below and include a comparison of development projected under Base Case Scenario to development projected under the Preferred Blueprint Scenario. (SACOG and Valley Vision 2004b.)

- ▶ **Transportation Choices:** Developments should be designed to encourage people to sometimes walk, ride bicycles, ride the bus, ride light rail, take the train, or carpool. Use of Blueprint growth concepts for land use and right-of-way design would encourage use of these modes of travel and the remaining auto trips would be, on average, shorter. In the Base Case, 2% of new housing and 5% of new jobs would be located within walking distance of 15-minute bus or train service, the number of vehicle miles traveled (VMT) per day per household would be 34.9 miles, and the total time devoted to travel per household per day would be 81 minutes. The Blueprint Scenario reduces the number of trips taken by car by about 10%. These trips are shifted to transit, walking, or biking. In the Blueprint Scenario, 38% of new homes and 41% of new jobs



would be located within walking distance of 15-minute bus or train service, the number of VMT per day per household would be 47.2 miles, and the total time devoted to travel per household per day would be 67 minutes. With the Blueprint Scenario, per capita, there would be 14% less carbon dioxide and particulates produced by car exhaust compared to the Base Case.

- ▶ **Mixed-Use Developments:** Building homes and shops, entertainment, office, and light industrial uses near each other can encourage active, vital neighborhoods. This mixture of uses can be either in a vertical arrangement (mixed in one building) or horizontal (with a combination of uses in close proximity). These types of projects function as local activity centers where people would tend to walk or bike to destinations. Separated land uses, on the other hand, lead to the need to travel more by auto because of the distance between uses. Under the Base Case scenario, 26% of people would live in communities with a good, or balanced, mix of land uses by 2050. In the Blueprint Scenario, 53% of people would live in balanced communities.
- ▶ **Compact Development:** Creating environments that are more compactly built and use space in an efficient but aesthetic manner can encourage more walking, biking, and public-transit use, and shorten auto trips. Under the Base Case, by 2050, new development would require the consumption of an additional 661 square miles of land. Under the Blueprint Scenario, 304 square miles of new land would be required for new development.
- ▶ **Housing Choice and Diversity:** Providing a variety of places where people can live—apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and single-family detached homes on varying lot sizes—creates opportunities for the variety of people who need them: families, singles, seniors, and people with special needs. This issue is of special concern for people with very low, low, and moderate incomes. By providing a diversity of housing options, more people would have a choice.
- ▶ **Use of Existing Assets:** In urbanized areas, development on infill or vacant lands, intensification of the use of underutilized parcels, or redevelopment can make better use of existing public infrastructure. This can also include rehabilitation and reuse of historic buildings, denser clustering of buildings in suburban office parks, and joint use of existing public facilities such as schools and parking garages. Under the Base Case Scenario, all new development would be on vacant land. Under the Blueprint Scenario, it is suggested that 13% of all new housing and 10% of all new jobs would occur through reinvestment.
- ▶ **Quality Design:** The design details of any land use development—such as the relationship to the street, setbacks, placement of garages, sidewalks, landscaping, the aesthetics of building design, and the design of the public rights-of-way—are factors that can influence the attractiveness of living in a compact development and facilitate the ease of walking and biking to work or neighborhood services. Good site and architectural design is an important factor in creating a sense of community and a sense of place. Under the Base Case, 34% of people would live in pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. Under the Blueprint Scenario, in 2050, pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods would rise to 69%.
- ▶ **Natural Resources Conservation:** This principle encourages the incorporation of public-use open space (such as parks, town squares, trails, and greenbelts) within development projects, above state requirements; it also encourages wildlife and plant habitat preservation, agricultural preservation, and promotion of environmentally friendly practices such as energy efficient design, water conservation and stormwater management, and planting of shade trees. Under the Base Case, 166 square miles of agricultural land would be converted into urban uses. Under the Blueprint Scenario, 102 square miles of agricultural land would be converted to urban uses. When the Preferred Blueprint Scenario was developed, the authors included a calculated, predetermined “preservation factor” that was intended to account for a certain amount of land that could be set aside in the future to preserve natural resources. However, the Preferred Blueprint Scenario did not attempt to map specific areas that could potentially be set aside as preserves. The only “preserve” areas that were mapped were those already designated as such that were in existence at the time the Preferred Blueprint Scenario was created.

Under smart growth principles, areas that are planned for development are developed at higher densities. Although these higher densities may result in greater on-site impacts on biological, cultural, open space, and agricultural resources, the overall area of disturbance within the region is reduced in the long term as development is concentrated in particular locations. Sacramento County has experienced demographic pressure which has reflected an increasing statewide population and intrastate migration from the San Francisco Bay Area, and the City of Rancho Cordova is interested in furthering its goals and objectives of providing a mix of housing and new jobs to its residents. Smart growth principles therefore suggest that developing the site with a higher density use while avoiding wetland areas and other environmental resources would focus market demand for development into an area near existing development, infrastructure, and services.

The Preferred Blueprint Scenario predicts long-term environmental benefits from undertaking a realistic long-term planning process; these benefits are intended to minimize the extent of the inevitable physical expansion of the overall regional urban areas. In summary, if the Preferred Blueprint Scenario were followed, it would result in more mixed-use communities; provide a greater number of small-lot, single-family detached homes; develop a greater number of attached homes; reinvest in existing business and residential areas; and create more pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. The results of implementing these principles would be the protection of natural resources (because less land would be required for urban uses) and less agricultural land conversion. In addition, the Preferred Blueprint Scenario predicts less time devoted to travel, fewer car trips, and fewer miles traveled to work and local businesses compared with development under the Base Case. The reduction in traffic would improve air quality in the region by reducing carbon monoxide and particulate matter produced by car exhaust.

The Blueprint process received broad support from most of its member agencies. The Blueprint is advisory and therefore does not establish land use restrictions for the City. SACOG has no land use authority. Although it is only advisory, the Blueprint is the most authoritative policy guidance in the Sacramento region for long-term regional land use and transportation planning. A number of jurisdictions either are adopting the Blueprint concepts or are considering and encouraging projects consistent with the Blueprint. Further, the land uses in the City General Plan generally reflect the types and intensity of land uses shown in the Preferred Blueprint Scenario, which envisions relatively higher overall residential densities than currently in place.

The SACOG Blueprint Preferred Scenario anticipates an additional 112,000 households and 144,000 jobs in Rancho Cordova between 2000 and 2050. The Blueprint assumes Rancho Cordova would have a population of over 332,000 people by 2050 and a fairly even mixture of jobs and housing and this growth would occur through development on underutilized lands along and near Folsom Boulevard and lands inside the current Urban Services Boundary. Housing is expected to be primarily single-family detached homes plus multi-family units (attached rowhouses, townhomes, condominiums, and apartments) to ensure housing for the growing population and work force. (SACOG and Valley Vision 2004a.)

### **Proposed South Sacramento County Habitat Conservation Plan**

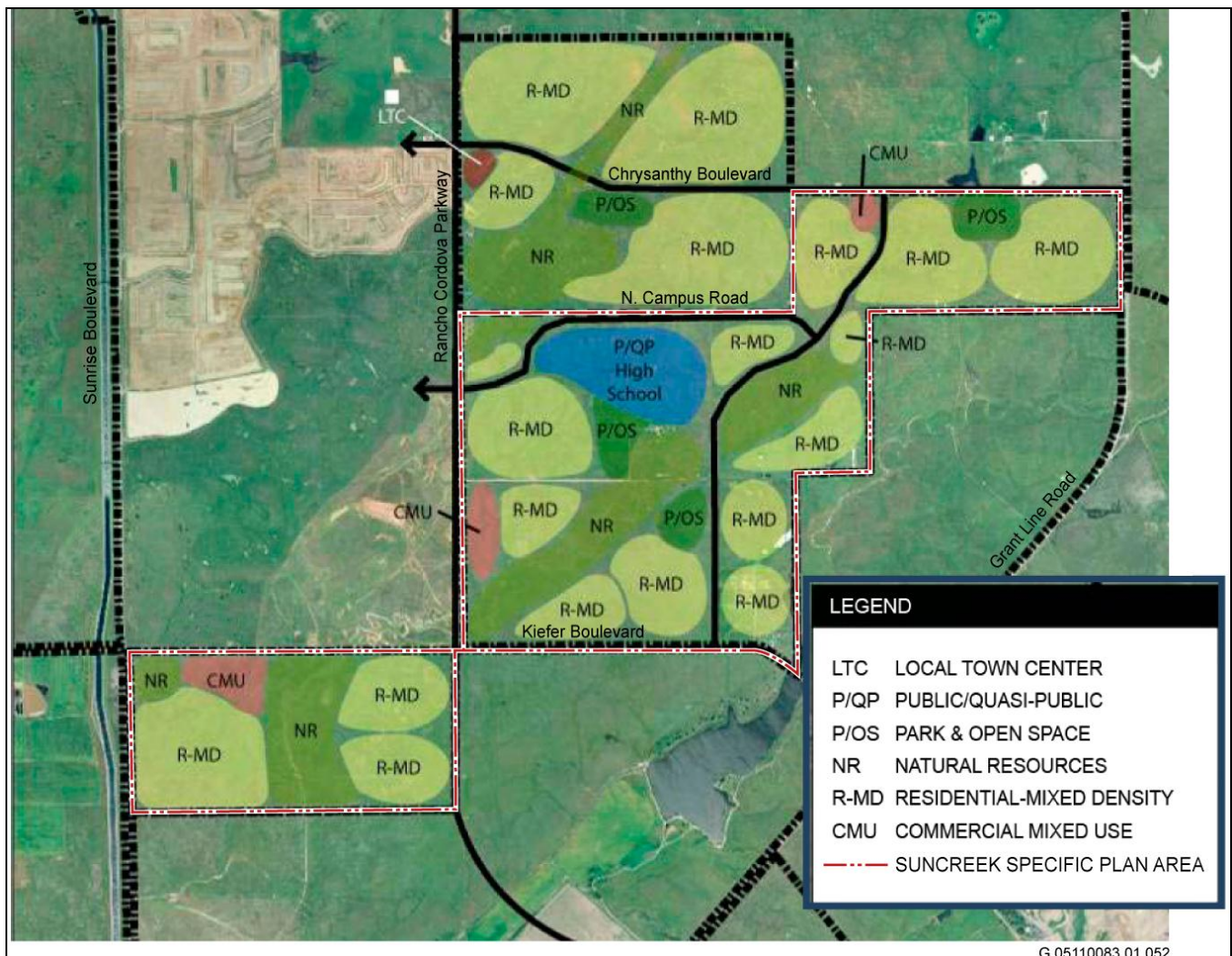
The SPA is located within the proposed South Sacramento County Habitat Conservation Plan (SSCHCP) area. The SSCHCP is intended to provide a regional approach to issues related to urban development habitat conservation, agricultural production and open space planning. The SSCHCP would provide strategies to conserve habitat for nine special-status plants and 42 special-status wildlife species. If adopted, it would serve as a multispecies, multihabitat conservation plan addressing the biological impacts of future urban development within the southern portion of Sacramento County, including the cities of Rancho Cordova, Elk Grove, and Galt, and the under the jurisdictional boundaries of the Sacramento County Water Agency and Sacramento County Regional Sanitation District.

To mitigate impacts, land developers that convert habitat within the urban development area would pay a defined per-acre fee, which would be used to protect, restore, maintain, and monitor habitat. The process for developing the SSCHCP was initiated in 1992. The SSCHCP is currently undergoing environmental review and the best-case estimates for completion and implementation is late 2011-early 2012 (McCormick, pers. comm., 2010). See Section 3.3, "Biological Resources," for further discussion and analysis related to the SSCHCP.

## City of Rancho Cordova General Plan

The *City of Rancho Cordova General Plan (2006)* establishes a land use development pattern that would consist of a series of walkable neighborhoods, villages, and districts. The City envisions that development would provide a mix of housing, jobs, commercial activities and services that would be connected through a series of streets and contiguous open space areas. The City General Plan is intended to reinvent the City of Rancho Cordova as a regional destination, providing a full range of retail services and entertainment venues (Rancho Cordova 2006).

Planning Areas (areas that are described in the City General Plan Land Use Element and designated in the Land Use Map) in the vicinity of the SPA are described above and shown in Exhibit 3.10-1. The SPA is identified in the City General Plan Land Use Element as part of the SunCreek/Preserve Planning Area. As shown in Exhibit 3.10-3, the City’s Conceptual Land Plan for the SPA consists of the following land use designations: Public/Quasi-Public (P/QP), Park & Open Space (P/OS), Natural Resources (NR), Residential-Mixed Density (R-MD), and Commercial Mixed Use (CMU). Table 3.10-1 provides the existing Conceptual Land Plan definitions, compatible uses, and zoning as defined by the City General Plan for the SPA. Table 3.10-2 presents the proposed SunCreek Specific Plan land use designations and zoning. As described in Chapter 2, “Alternatives,” the project would require a General Plan Amendment to implement the proposed approximately 60-acre Local Town Center. No general plan policy changes are proposed.



Source: City of Rancho Cordova 2006

### SunCreek/Preserve Planning Area Conceptual Land Plan

### Exhibit 3.10-3

**Table 3.10-1  
Existing SunCreek Planning Area Conceptual<sup>1</sup> Land Use Designations**

<b>Land Use Designation</b>	<b>Compatible Zoning</b>	<b>Permitted Uses</b>
Public/Quasi-Public	P/QP	A variety of Public/Quasi-Public uses, including: civic buildings, schools, colleges, religious institutions, hospitals, museums, and cemeteries.
Park and Open Space	P/OS	Active and passive recreational activities, such as parks, lakes, golf courses, trails, detention basins, and creeks.
Natural Resources	NR	Natural habitat that contains no urban development.
Residential-Mixed Density	R-MD	Typical neighborhood development, consisting of a range of densities.
Commercial Mixed Use	CMU	Commercial uses combined with office and/or residential uses. These areas may also include public/quasi-public uses.
Notes: <sup>1</sup> As the name suggests, the City General Plan states that the densities, land uses, and boundaries are intended to be conceptual and are provided to reflect the City's Building Block concepts and relevant goals, policies, and actions. Final land uses and locations are intended to be determined in conjunction with subsequent master planning of these areas. Source: City of Rancho Cordova 2006		

**Table 3.10-2  
SunCreek Specific Plan Proposed Land Use Designations and Zoning**

<b>Proposed Land Use Designation</b>	<b>Proposed Zoning</b>	<b>Specific Plan Definition</b>	<b>Permitted Uses</b>
Public/Quasi Public	Community Services	Provides for a variety of public and other land uses, including land owned by the City and other public agencies. All public/quasi-public uses, including schools, would have an underlying Medium Density Residential land use designation and would apply if the school district determines a proposed school and/or park site is not needed or if the site must be adjusted in size or configuration.	Churches, schools, parks, private schools, public utilities, libraries, fire stations, and detention basins.
Parks and Open Space	P/OS	Provides for both active and passive recreational activities.	Parks, paseos, open space, resource preservation, detention basins
Natural Resources (NR)	NR	Provides for natural resource preservation areas dedicated to protecting Federally-listed endangered and threatened species habitat.	Resource preservation and detention basins.
Low Density Residential	LDR	Densities of 2.1–6 du/acre. Provides for single-family residential development and would allow for flexibility in selecting dwelling unit types and parcel configurations to suit particular site conditions and housing needs.	Single-family dwellings, duplex and halfplex dwellings, and all public/quasi-public land uses.
Medium Density Residential	MDR	Densities of 6.1–12 du/acre. Provides for a mix of single-family and multifamily housing types and would allow for flexibility in selecting dwelling unit types and parcel configurations to suit particular site conditions and housing needs.	Small-lot single-family dwellings, patio homes, paseo homes, duplexes, halfplexes, live/work dwellings, neighborhood work centers, and all public/quasi-public land uses.

**Table 3.10-2  
SunCreek Specific Plan Proposed Land Use Designations and Zoning**

Compact Medium Density Residential	CMDR	Densities of 12.1–18 du/acre. Provides for multifamily dwelling units that would result in compact urban forms. Dwelling units within this land use designation would often be in linear and share common walls or low low-scale apartments.	Townhomes, garden apartments, small-lot single-family dwellings, patio homes, paseo homes, duplexes, halfplexes, live/work dwellings, neighborhood work centers, and all public/quasi-public land uses.
High Density Residential	HDR	Densities of 18.1–40 du/acre. Provides for multifamily dwelling units that are located adjacent to Village Commercial or Local Town Center sites.	Townhomes, apartments, live/work dwellings, neighborhood work centers, and all public/quasi-public land uses.
Village Commercial	VC	Provides retail services, restaurant, entertainment and office employment uses as described in the City’s building block concept. Village Commercial serves the daily shopping needs of residents and may include small- and medium-size grocery stores, drug stores, restaurants, banks, and other similar uses. Within a mixed use development plan, the sites may be integrated vertically with mixed uses above one another, such as residential or office uses over a commercial use. Sites may also be mixed horizontally with the uses side-by-side, but linked together through common walkways, plazas and parking areas. Each site is located along a major street and could be a transit oriented development served by bus, bus rapid transit, a local shuttle, or all three. The sites are adjacent to high density residential and are served by the pedestrian and bike trail network that connects the sites to the surrounding neighborhoods. Each of the sites has within it or nearby a small neighborhood scale park.	Retail and Service Commercial, Offices, Children and Senior Day Care Centers, Recreation Centers, Churches, Schools, Parks, Private Schools, Public Utilities, Libraries, Fire Stations
Local Town Center	LTC	Provides for retail services, restaurant, and entertainment uses within a district as described in the City’s building block concept. Development would be pedestrian friendly with gathering places for both daytime and nighttime activities.	General retail services, restaurants, commercial and office uses, entertainment, public/quasi-public uses, and indoor and outdoor recreational facilities.
NA	AG-80 <sup>a</sup> (Agricultural, 80-acre minimum)		Crop production, animal keep, and commercial agricultural-related uses.

Notes: du/ac = dwelling units per acre; NA = not applicable.

<sup>a</sup> The Luxori and Grantline 220 property owners are not currently participating in the EIR/EIS process, and are not seeking approval of development agreements, large-lot tentative maps, or zoning amendments at this time. Therefore, these parcels would remain zoned as AG-80.

Sources: Wade Associates 2012 and City of Rancho Cordova 2006

## City of Rancho Cordova Zoning Code

The current City of Rancho Cordova zoning code became effective on February 20, 2009. It is specifically intended to:

- ▶ Serve as the principle tool for implementing the City’s General Plan in a manner that protects the health, safety, and welfare of the citizens of Rancho Cordova.
- ▶ Facilitate prompt review of development proposals and provide for public information, review, and comment on development proposals that may have a significant impact on the community.
- ▶ Create a comprehensive and stable pattern of land uses to help ensure the provision of adequate water, sewerage, transportation, drainage, parks, open space, and other public facilities.
- ▶ Conserve and protect the City’s natural resources and features such as creeks, significant trees, such as Heritage Oaks, historic, and environmental resources.
- ▶ Create a complete multi-modal transportation network that promotes pedestrian-oriented development, safe and effective traffic circulation, and adequate facilities for all transportation modes (e.g., walking, bicycling, driving, and using transit).
- ▶ Require that permitted uses and development designs provide reasonable protection from fire, flood, landslide, erosion, or other man-made and natural hazards.
- ▶ Ensure compatibility between residential and non-residential development and facilitate the development of compatible mixed-use developments.

The project requires an amendment to the City General Plan zoning designations at the SPA, from AG-80 and AG-20 to a variety of zoning designations that would allow for various types of urban development, as shown in Exhibit 2-3 in Chapter 2, “Alternatives.” The proposed zoning designations are also listed in Table 3.10-2.

As described previously in Chapter 1, “Introduction,” and Chapter 2, “Alternatives,” although the Specific Plan includes a proposal for development on the Luxori and Grantline 220 parcels, those property owners are not currently participating in the EIR/EIS process, and are not seeking approval of development agreements, large-lot tentative maps, or zoning amendments at this time.

## City of Rancho Cordova General Plan Goals and Policies

Goals and policies from the *City of Rancho Cordova General Plan* (City General Plan 2006) relating to land use and agricultural resources that are applicable to the Proposed Project and alternatives under consideration are listed in Appendix K.

### 3.10.3 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES AND MITIGATION MEASURES

#### THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The thresholds for determining the significance of impacts for this analysis are based on the environmental checklist in Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines. These thresholds also encompass the factors taken into account under NEPA to determine the significance of an action in terms of its context and the intensity of its impacts. The Proposed Project or alternatives under consideration were determined to result in a significant impact related to land use or agricultural resources if they would do any of the following:

- ▶ physically divide an established community;

- ▶ conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) with jurisdiction over the project adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect;
- ▶ conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan;
- ▶ convert Important Farmland (i.e., Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance) as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the FMMP of the California Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use;
- ▶ conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract;
- ▶ conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in PRC Section 12220[g]), timberland (as defined in PRC Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104[g]);
- ▶ result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forestland to non-forest use; or
- ▶ involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Important Farmland to nonagricultural use or conversion of forestland to non-forest use.

Issues related to conflicts with an applicable adopted habitat conservation plan and potential direct and/or indirect impacts associated with such conflicts are addressed in Section 3.3, “Biological Resources.”

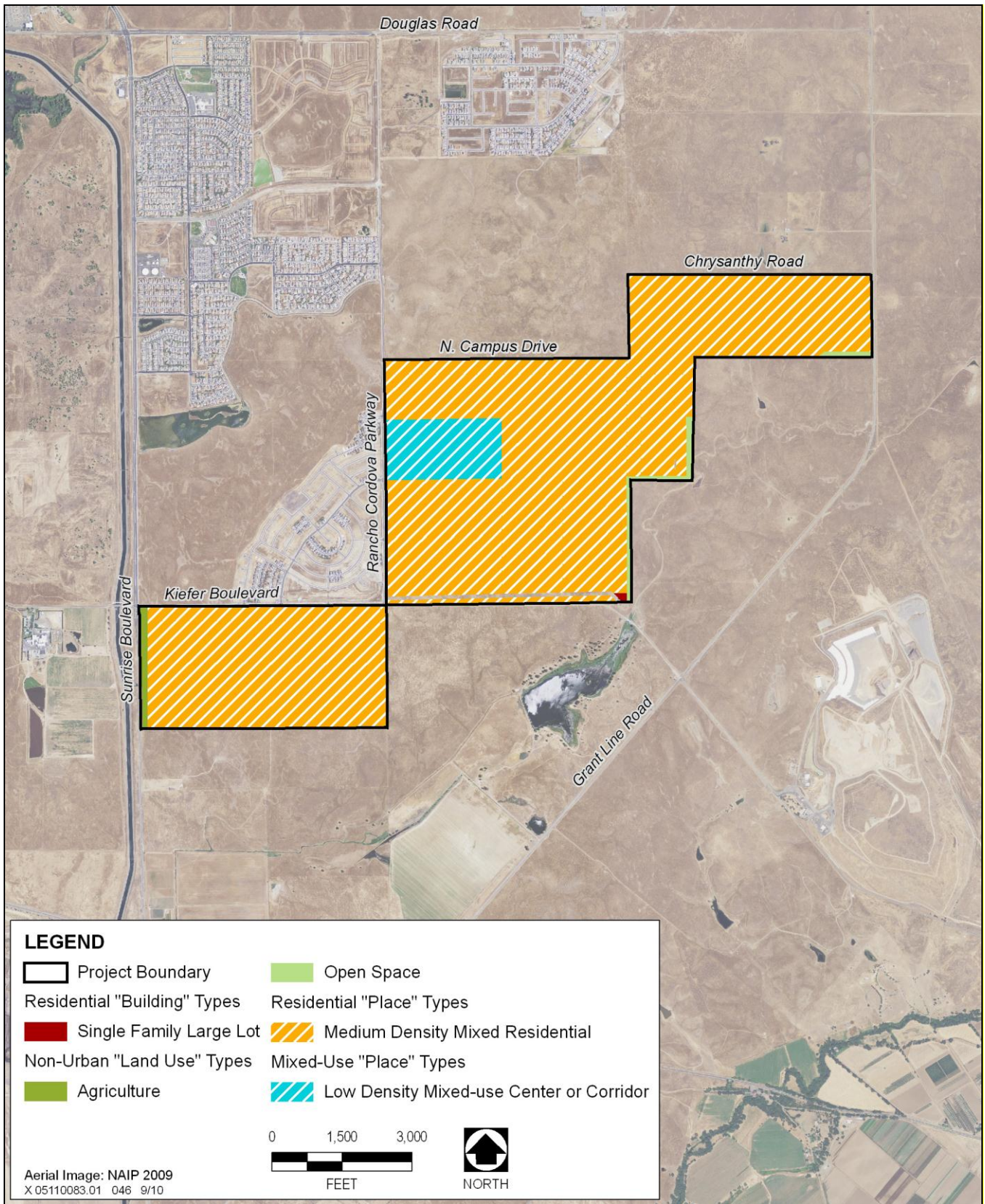
## **ANALYSIS METHODOLOGY**

Evaluation of potential land use impacts of the Proposed Project and the alternatives under consideration were based on a review of planning documents pertaining to the SPA and vicinity, including the City General Plan (2006) and zoning code and the SACOG Blueprint. In addition, the DOC Important Farmland map and Williamson Act contract map for Sacramento County were used to evaluate the significance of the lands in the SPA.

The land use planning and zoning authority of local jurisdictions in California is set forth in the state’s planning laws. The project is located within the City of Rancho Cordova, and therefore the City has planning jurisdiction over the SPA. Any inconsistencies between the City land use designations and zoning code and the project’s proposed land use designations and zoning would be a land use regulation issue rather than a physical environmental consequence of project implementation and would not necessarily be considered a significant impact under CEQA or NEPA in and of itself.

Presently, the SPA is designated as part of the SunCreek/Preserve Planning Area under the Rancho Cordova General Plan. Consistent with the City General Plan and the principles of Smart Growth, the SunCreek Specific Plan contains a mix of low, medium, and high density residential units, local and community parks, neighborhood and village center, schools, and other public/quasi-public uses. The proposed SunCreek Specific Plan zoning is intended to be consistent with these land uses with the exception of proposed zoning on the Grantline 220 or Luxori parcels (non-participating landowners), which would be retained in the existing agricultural zoning until such time as those landowners came forth with specific development proposals and undergo future site-specific environmental review.

The Blueprint identifies the SPA as a future planned community accommodating the long-term needs of Rancho Cordova and contributing to the Sacramento region. As shown in Exhibit 3.10-4, the Blueprint Vision generally consists of medium and low density residential housing over nearly the entire SPA, does not include large areas of non-urban land uses, and only a small amount of open space and agriculture. The SACOG Blueprint designated the SPA as Single Family Large Lot, Medium-Density Mixed Residential, Low-Density Mixed-Use Center or Corridor,



Source: SACOG 2004a

**SACOG Blueprint Land Use Designations for the SPA**

**Exhibit 3.10-4**



Open Space, and Agriculture. (Note that the SACOG Blueprint is a regional plan and does not precisely correspond with the SPA boundary. As shown Exhibit 3.10-4, land use designations along Kiefer Boulevard do not correspond to the aerial image; as a result, it is reasonable to assume that the Single Family Large Lot SACOG land use designation is outside of the SPA project boundary.) SACOG describes the remaining land use designations in the SPA as follows:

- ▶ **Medium-Density Mixed Residential:** emphasis of residential land uses with approximately 30% of the site small-lot single-family dwelling units; 48% of the site single-family large-lot dwelling units; 12% of the site multifamily attached units such as apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and residential mixed use (two-to four-story buildings); and 10% of the site retail land uses.
- ▶ **Low-Density Mixed-Use Center or Corridor:** emphasis of residential land uses with approximately 50% of the site small-lot single-family dwelling units; 35% of the site multifamily attached units such as apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and residential mixed use (one-to three-story buildings); and 15% of the site retail land uses.
- ▶ **Open Space:** passive-use areas, no development allowed.
- ▶ **Agriculture:** continuation of agricultural activities, no urban development allowed.

Although it is only advisory, the Sacramento Region Blueprint provides policy guidance in the Sacramento region for long-term regional land use and transportation planning that would potentially result in the protection of additional natural resources (because less land would be required for urban uses), less conversion of agricultural land, and reduction in traffic that would improve air quality in the region. The Blueprint does not establish land use restrictions on any jurisdiction and SACOG has no land use authority. SACOG makes clear that the land use designations presented in the Blueprint Preferred Scenario are conceptual and reflect general land use locations in a local area. Therefore, this EIS/EIR does not evaluate consistency with the SACOG Blueprint as an environmental impact. The potential for the project's consistency with the SACOG Blueprint to result in growth-inducing impacts is discussed in Chapter 4, "Other Statutory Requirements."

## ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED FURTHER IN THIS EIR/EIS

**Physically Divide an Established Community**—The SPA consists of livestock grazing lands and five scattered rural residences. These residences are not formally or informally known as a community. Therefore, implementing the project would not physically divide an established community. For this reason, this issue is not evaluated further in this EIR/EIS.

**Conversion of Important Farmland to Nonagricultural Uses**— The SPA contains Grazing Land and Farmland of Local Importance, which are not considered Important Farmland under CEQA (California Public Resources Code Section 21060.1 and 21095 and State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G). Furthermore, the City General Plan Policy LU.1.9 only requires protection of (i.e., mitigation for loss of) Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance—none of which are present on the SPA. For these reasons, there would be no direct impact related to the conversion of Important Farmland to nonagricultural uses; therefore, this issue is not evaluated further in this EIR/EIS.

**Conflict with Existing Zoning for Agricultural Use or a Williamson Act Contract**—There are no Williamson Act contracts associated with land within the SPA; therefore, there would be no impact related to conflicts with existing Williamson Act contracts. For this reason, this issue is not evaluated further in this EIR/EIS.

**Conflict with Existing Zoning for, or Cause Rezoning of, Forest Land, Timberland, or Timberland Zoned Timberland Production**—The is no forestland, timberland, or a timberland production zone within the SPA or that would be rezoned as a result of project implementation; thus, there would be no impact. For these reasons, this issue is not evaluated further in this EIR/EIS.

**Result in the Loss of Forestland or Conversion of Forestland to Non-Forest Use**— The SPA does not contain 10% native tree cover that would be classified as forestland under PRC Section 12220(g); therefore, there would be no impact related to conversion of forest land to non-forest use. For this reason, this issue is not evaluated further in this EIR/EIS.

As described in Chapter 2, “Alternatives,” and discussed earlier in this section, the project would require a General Plan Amendment and zoning changes to implement the proposed approximately 60-acre Local Town Center and the associated urban zoning designations. No general plan or zoning policy changes are proposed. Because there would be no physical/environmental impact associated with the general plan redesignation or zoning actions, the issue is not evaluated further in this EIR/EIS. Any inconsistencies between the project and City General Plan policies are addressed as individual, topic-specific impacts within Sections 3.1 through 3.17 of this EIR/EIS.

## IMPACT ANALYSIS

Impacts that would occur under each alternative development scenario are identified as follows: NP (No Project), NCP (No USACE permit), PP (Proposed Project), BIM (Biological Impact Minimization), CS (Conceptual Strategy), and ID (Increased Development). The impacts for each alternative are compared relative to the PP at the end of each impact conclusion (i.e., similar, greater, lesser).

**IMPACT 3.10-1 Potential that the Project would Involve other Changes in the Existing Environment which, due to their Location or Nature, could Result in Conversion of Important Farmland to a Nonagricultural Use.**  
*Implementation of the project could potentially result in the ultimate conversion of off-site agricultural (i.e., grazing) land to nonagricultural land uses.*

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### NP

Under the No Project Alternative, there would be no project-related construction. Thus, there would be **no direct** or **indirect** impacts from project-related changes in the environment that could induce conversion of Important Farmland to urban land uses. [*Lesser*]

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### NCP, PP, BIM, CS, ID

Important Farmland is defined as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. The location of the different types of agricultural land in the vicinity of the SPA are shown on Exhibit 3.10-2. Lands immediately adjacent to the SPA are currently used for and designated by the DOC as livestock “grazing land.” Most of the Important Farmland in the project vicinity is located south and southeast of the SPA.

Over time, expansion of urbanizing areas into rural areas can result in future additional conversion of agricultural land to urban land uses. However, urbanization of the area surrounding the SPA has already begun (e.g., Anatolia III), and future development is imminent. As discussed above in the “Affected Environment” and shown in Exhibits 3.10-1 and 3.0-1 (Section 3.0, “Approach and Cumulative Context”), the SPA and surrounding areas to the north, south, and west within the City are either planned for development and/or undergoing environmental review under the City General Plan, development entitlements have been granted, or are in the construction process. As further discussed above, the City of Rancho Cordova General Plan envisions development of urban land uses within the City limits in each of its designated Planning Areas, and therefore considered the conversion of agricultural to urban land uses in its General Plan EIR (2006, incorporated herein by reference). As with the approach taken in this EIR/EIS, Section 4.2, “Agricultural Resources” of the City General Plan EIR indicates that conversion of grazing land to urban uses is not a significant impact, because it does not meet the CEQA definition of “Important Farmland” (California Public Resources Code Section 21060.1 and 21095 and State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G). As stated previously, City General Plan Policy LU.1.9 only requires protection of (i.e., mitigation for loss of) Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance. As further

discussed in Section 4.2 “Agricultural Resources” of the City General Plan EIR, nearly all of the agricultural land within the existing City limits is composed of grazing land. While there is a small amount of “Important Farmland” on the Arboretum project site immediately south of the SPA, the Arboretum project is already undergoing the EIR/EIS process for a specific plan that would guide the development of urban mixed-uses. Finally, the land to the east of the SPA (under the jurisdiction of Sacramento County), which is also designated by the DOC as “grazing land,” is already proposed for urban development as part of the Cordova Hills project, and land southeast of the SPA is already in use by, and proposed for expansion of, Kiefer Landfill. Thus, the potential for the project to result in changes to the physical environment that could cause the conversion of Important Farmland to non-agricultural uses under the No USACE Permit, Proposed Project, Biological Impact Minimization, Conceptual Strategy, and Increased Development Alternatives is considered to be a **less-than-significant, indirect** impact. **No direct** impacts would occur. *[Similar]*

**Mitigation Measure: No mitigation measures are required.**

### **3.10.4 RESIDUAL SIGNIFICANT IMPACTS**

Project-related impacts associated with land use and agricultural resources would be less than significant. Therefore, no residual significant impacts would occur.

### **3.10.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS**

#### **LAND USE**

The SPA consists of livestock grazing lands, and five existing single-family residences and associated agricultural outbuildings spread throughout the SPA. Issues involving consistency of adopted land use plans or policies and zoning generally do not constitute physical impacts on the environment; furthermore they are site-specific and therefore would not combine to result in cumulative impacts. The determination of significance for impacts related to these issues, as described by Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, is whether a project would conflict with any applicable land use plan or policy adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental impacts. Such a conflict is site-specific; it is addressed on a project-by-project basis. The project’s ultimate consistency with adopted local land use plans, policies, and zoning is provided for through a requested amendment to the City of Rancho Cordova General Plan and Zoning Code designations for the SPA. These requested amendments would not result in any physical environmental impacts; therefore, the project would not contribute to a cumulative impact related to consistency with general plan policies or land use designations.

Any land use inconsistencies of future projects, by themselves, are not considered a significant cumulative effect because those are land use regulations, not a physical environmental impact. Implementation of those plans and policies adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating environmental impacts for the project and the related projects could lead to physical environmental impacts, which are considered in the appropriate topical issue areas within Chapter 3 of this EIR/EIS.

The five rural residences are not formally or informally known as a community, and therefore implementing the project would not physically divide a community. Thus, project implementation would not result in a cumulatively considerable incremental contribution to a significant cumulative impact.

#### **AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES**

The SPA does not contain forest land, timberland, or land zoned for Timberland Production, nor does it contain 10% native tree cover that would be classified as forest land under PRC Section 12220(g). Thus, project implementation would not result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to a significant cumulative impact.

Approximately 187,102 acres of land in Sacramento County was under Williamson Act contracts in 2007. Of these lands, approximately 10,605 acres were in the nonrenewal process. The nonrenewal process is the most common mechanism for termination of Williamson Act contract lands and most Williamson Act contracts are terminated through nonrenewal expiration. In Sacramento County, approximately 406 acres of land under of Williamson Act contracts entered the nonrenewal process, and the amount of contract land terminated through nonrenewal expirations was approximately 524 acres as of 2007 (DOC 2008b). The amount of Williamson Act land terminated through nonrenewal has continued to increase each year as urban development proceeds in the region. Some of the related projects have Williamson Act contracted lands. However, the SPA does not contain land subject to a Williamson Act contract and thus the project would not result in a cumulatively considerable incremental contribution to this significant cumulative impact related to termination of Williamson Act contracts.

Implementation of the project and the related projects would replace existing agricultural uses (primarily designated as “grazing land” by the DOC) with urban uses. As described above, implementation of the project is consistent with the City General Plan’s analysis related to planned conversion of agricultural land within the City limits to urban uses. The Sacramento County Important Farmland map, published by DOC’s Division of Land Resource Protection, designates the SPA as Grazing Land and Farmland of Local Importance. These farmland designations are not considered “Important Farmland” under CEQA (California Public Resources Code Sections 21060.1 and 21095 and State CEQA Guidelines Appendix G). Of the related projects considered in this cumulative analysis (see Section 3.0, “Approach and Cumulative Context”), a few would result in the conversion of “Important Farmland” (i.e., Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance) to a non-agricultural use. Because the project does not contain “Important Farmland” it would not result in a cumulatively considerable incremental contribution to a significant cumulative impact.