

## 4.12 AESTHETICS

This section contains an analysis of the impacts the Draft General Plan may have on aesthetics and visual resources in and surrounding the planning area. The section provides a description of the existing aesthetic and visual resources, and an evaluation of how adoption and implementation of the Draft General Plan would affect these resources.

### 4.12.1 REGULATORY SETTING

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

No federal plans, policies, regulations or laws pertaining to aesthetics are applicable.

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

##### California Scenic Highway Program

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) manages the California Scenic Highway Program. The goal of the program is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would affect the aesthetic value of the land adjacent to highways. For designated highways, Caltrans requires that local jurisdictions implement a monitoring program that reviews and enforces scenic-corridor protection measures to preserve scenic views. The local agency is required to report to Caltrans once every five years on the success and continued enforcement of the protection measures. Caltrans requires developers of projects located adjacent to a state scenic highway to consult with the agency to determine whether the project would constitute a minor, moderate, or major intrusion to the scenic quality of the corridor. A minor intrusion is one that either is complementary to the landscape or is recognized for its cultural or historical significance (e.g., widely dispersed buildings with visual screenings). A moderate intrusion is one that is integrated into the landscape and does not degrade or obstruct scenic views (e.g., orderly and well-landscaped developments with or without roadway screening). A major intrusion is one that dominates the landscape and degrades or obstructs views (e.g., dense and continuous development that dominates the view).

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

##### Sacramento County General Plan

The Sacramento County General Plan (1993) contains the following policies that relate to the county's intent for the visual character of development in the unincorporated portion of the planning area.

- ▶ **LU-22.** Exterior building materials on nonresidential structures shall be composed of a minimum of 50% low-reflectance, non-polished finishes.
- ▶ **LU-23.** Bare metallic surfaces such as pipes, flashing, vents, and light standards on new construction shall be painted so as to minimize reflectance.
- ▶ **LU-24.** Require overhead light fixtures to be shaded and directed away from adjacent residential areas.
- ▶ **LU-25.** Require exterior lighting to be low-intensity and only used where necessary for safety and security purposes.

## **City of Citrus Heights Zoning Code**

### ***Tree Preservation and Protection***

Title 106 (Zoning Code) of the City of Citrus Heights Municipal Code includes a Tree Preservation and Protection ordinance (Chapter 106.39). The ordinance regulates the protection, preservation, and maintenance of:

- ▶ native oak trees;
- ▶ the habitat values of oak woodlands;
- ▶ trees of historic or cultural significance;
- ▶ groves and stands of mature trees; and
- ▶ mature trees in general that are associated with proposals for development.

## **4.12.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS**

### **LOCATION AND SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES**

The City of Citrus Heights is located in northern Sacramento County, approximately 12 miles northeast of downtown Sacramento. This portion of Sacramento County is largely developed. Citrus Heights is located adjacent to the Placer County boundary and the City of Roseville to the north, and the unincorporated suburban communities of Orangeville to the east, Fair Oaks to the southeast and south, Carmichael to the south and southwest, Foothill Farms to the southwest and west, and Antelope to the west. All of these communities contain primarily single-family residential communities. The communities located generally east of Citrus Heights, Orangevale and Fair Oaks, tend to be older and more established, with larger lots, a substantial number of trees, and with limited hobby farming and animal keeping. The communities of Foothill Farms and Antelope can be characterized by newer single-family residential development on smaller lots than those described above, and hobby farming and animal keeping do not have as much of a presence. The community of Carmichael contains a mix of residential uses and lot sizes. In general, smaller lot suburban housing tract development occurs in the areas adjacent to Citrus Heights, while some more rural, larger lot residential uses are generally located in portions of Carmichael further to the south, closer to the American River. The portion of Roseville directly adjacent and to the north of Citrus Heights is largely industrial along the western portion of the boundary with Citrus Heights, and more residential in character toward the east.

### **PHYSICAL SETTING**

Topography in Citrus Heights is primarily flat with small hills in some locations. Elevations within the City range from 120 feet above mean sea level (msl) near the southwestern edge of the City to 200 feet msl in the southeastern portion of the City. Slopes range from 0 to 15%, with most of the steeper slope areas occurring in the southeastern corner of the planning area.

Three small creeks run through the planning area – Cripple Creek along the northern half of the City, Arcade Creek flowing east-west in the central portion of the City north of Greenback Lane, and Brooktree Creek extending south of Greenback Lane, along with several associated tributaries. Coyle Creek is located along the City's southern boundary and converges with Brooktree Creek near the intersection of Greenback Lane and Auburn Boulevard.

### **VISUAL CHARACTER**

The existing visual character of Citrus Heights is mainly suburban and largely developed. Less than 2% of the City's total land area is vacant. The City is primarily residential with commercial located along its major traffic corridors and at major roadway intersections. These traffic corridors are described in more detail, below. Higher density residential development tends to be closest to these corridors, while lot sizes generally increase as

distances from roadways/intersections and commercial uses increase. Very low density residential uses can be found in the north-central portion of the City, where the character is more rural and limited sidewalks and small-scale hobby farming/animal maintain more of a presence. Parks and public uses such as civic buildings, schools, and post offices are scattered throughout the City, primarily located along major roadways. Undeveloped, natural habitat in the City is limited to riparian areas located along creeks, with few isolated pockets of native grassland and oak savanna remaining.

Views within the City are characterized by urban development and its associated infrastructure (i.e., roadways). Some of the more rural portions of the City, particularly in the northern portion of the City have more mature trees and vegetation than the highly developed areas. The majority of the planning area is urbanized and contains significant existing sources of light and glare, such as street lights along roadways, parking lots and walkways, lighted recreation facilities and light emitted from residential and non-residential buildings. Buildings and structures made with glass, metal and polished exterior or roofing materials exist throughout the planning area; combined with existing natural and manmade light sources, these can constitute a source of localized glare. The more rural, less dense areas of the City do not contain as many of these light sources, but their proximity to light sources in other portions of the City leave them exposed to light pollution and glare.

## **HISTORIC CHARACTER**

Since the City experienced a boom in urbanization in the 20th Century, many of its older structures that may have lent the area a distinctive historical character were demolished or significantly altered. Today, Citrus Heights contains a few historically noteworthy structures, although there are no entire areas remaining with a particular historical character that contributes significantly to the City's visual character. Of the remaining historical structures, many have been altered in such a way as they do not or may no longer qualify for protection under historical preservation regulations. Several of these historic or potentially historic resources are located within or adjacent to the City's proposed redevelopment areas, so redevelopment activities could possibly affect the historic character and integrity of these resources and result in changes to the visual character of the surrounding areas. This issue is discussed in more detail in Section 4.11, "Cultural Resources."

## **Viewsheds**

Viewsheds in Citrus Heights are located primarily along major transportation corridors. These corridors vary in visual character, ranging from intense suburban commercial uses to rural residential and riparian open space along creek corridors. The major viewshed corridors in Citrus Heights include the following: Auburn Boulevard, Old Auburn Road, Sunrise Boulevard, Greenback Lane, and Antelope Road. The visual character of each of these corridors is described in more detail, below.

Although views are by no means limited to corridors, other views, particularly long-range views, within the City are generally limited to the surrounding neighborhood, due to the flat nature of the City, vegetation, and residential development pattern that generally blocks distant views. An exception to this is the industrial railyard located in the northwestern corner of the planning area, but outside of the incorporated City limits. Roseville Road runs southwest to northeast in this area, parallel to the Union Pacific Railroad. Single-family residential development separated by sound walls is located east of Roseville Road, while the railyard and the associated industrial views of that facility are located west of Roseville Road and the railroad. The Sierra Nevada Mountains can sometimes be seen to the northeast from this area on clear days. There are no areas within the City that provide views of any scenic vistas that are considered significant by the City.

### ***Auburn Boulevard***

The visual character along Auburn Boulevard is dominated by a mix of urban uses alternating with some open space and sparse-to-mature landscaping. The area surrounding the intersection of Auburn Boulevard and Greenback Lane is characterized by a mix of retail and heavy service commercial uses. Further northeast along

Auburn Boulevard, the surrounding character transitions into multifamily residential on the south side and single story office uses on the north side; this area is interspersed with some single family homes and undeveloped lots until the corridor reaches Van Maren Lane, where commercial uses, a library, and a park surround the intersection. Farther northeast along the corridor, the visual character again becomes residential, with one large commercial shopping center located southwest of the intersection with Old Auburn Road and Sylvan Road. At this intersection, Auburn Boulevard turns north and continues until it becomes Riverside Avenue at the boundary with the City of Roseville. Within that segment of the corridor, the visual character is largely commercial, with Sylvan Middle School and a cemetery located northwest of the intersection with Old Auburn Road and Sylvan Road. Some limited single-family residential is located along this segment as well.

### ***Old Auburn Road***

Old Auburn Road has a rural character that is distinct from Auburn Boulevard. This is especially true for the area located east of its intersection with Auburn Boulevard. The parcels along Old Auburn Road are large single-family lots containing tall, mature trees and landscaping. Curbs, gutters and sidewalks along this road are intermittent, mostly occurring adjacent to newer developments, but may be absent in more established neighborhoods. Along this segment, there are a mix of uses, including churches, schools, parks and limited commercial uses, with larger-scale commercial uses dominating the intersection of Old Auburn Road and Sunrise Boulevard. This general character of primarily single-family residential development with limited other uses and mature landscaping continues along the corridor east of Sunrise Boulevard, to the City boundary. Curbs, gutters and sidewalks are interspersed, while unimproved pedestrian walkways are more prevalent.

### ***Sunrise Boulevard***

The Sunrise Boulevard corridor north of Antelope Road provides a mostly rural viewshed dominated by large lot single family and some multifamily residential uses and mature landscaping. Along this segment, utilities are located above ground, and curbs, gutters, and sidewalks are lacking on the east side of Sunrise Boulevard. Cripple Creek crosses beneath Sunrise Boulevard near the northern boundary of the City. South of Antelope Road, the visual character of Sunrise Boulevard transitions to more strip commercial uses, with some residential uses, including both multi- and single-family homes. A park and some limited large open lots can also be found along this segment. North of the intersection with Greenback Lane, the visual corridor again transitions to more intense commercial uses, namely the regional retail commercial uses within Sunrise MarketPlace, including Sunrise Mall and the Market Place at Birdcage. This area also contains a higher intensity of office uses. Residential uses are not located directly along this segment of Sunrise Boulevard, but higher density residential can be found set back behind the retail and commercial uses within the Sunrise MarketPlace. Sunrise MarketPlace is set apart visually from other areas of the City with gateway signs and a wide, landscaped median from Greenback Lane to Madison Avenue.

### ***Greenback Lane***

The view corridor surrounding Greenback Lane is highly urbanized, with a mix of commercial strip malls, suburban offices, some public uses, and interspersed residential uses, including both single- and multifamily homes. Much of the corridor contains above-ground utilities, and sound walls separate the roadway from residential uses that back up to Greenback Lane. Sidewalks, curbs, and gutters are present along the corridor. On clear days, the Sierra Nevada foothills may be visible in the distance to the east from certain areas along the Greenback Lane corridor.

### ***Antelope Road***

The Antelope Road corridor crosses over I-80 near the northwest corner of the City. This roadway serves as the only connection to the portion of the planning area located west of I-80, and as a result, the areas west and east of I-80 each have a distinct visual character.

In the area west of I-80, office and retail uses containing landscaped setbacks are present from the I-80 off-ramps to Zenith Drive. This area contains curbs, gutters and sidewalks and above-ground utilities. West of Zenith Drive to the City's western boundary, the visual landscape is dominated by sound walls and landscaping separating the adjacent single-family residential uses that back up to Antelope Road.

East of I-80, the visual character changes to a more heavily vegetated landscape dominated by single-family residential development, Rusch Park, and a small pocket of commercial uses at the intersection of Antelope Road and Auburn Boulevard. There are two creek crossings along this portion of the corridor. Above-ground utilities are visible in this area, and curbs, gutters, and sidewalks are intermittent.

### **4.12.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This visual impact analysis evaluates the visual changes that would occur with implementation of the Draft General Plan using the standards of quality, consistency, and symmetry typically used for a visual assessment. The visual impacts that could result with implementation of the Draft General Plan were evaluated by comparing existing land uses with buildout of designated land uses under the Draft General Plan.

The assessment of visual quality and the perception of change in the visual environment is a subjective matter. What is visually pleasing to one person may not be considered so by another, and reasonable people can disagree as to whether an alteration to the existing visual environment would also be considered a substantial degradation of the visual character. For the purposes of this analysis, a conservative approach was taken in analyzing the potential for degradation of visual resources, so permanent alterations of a visual resource are considered significant if they vary substantially from the surrounding area.

#### **SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA**

Based on Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact on aesthetics and visual resources is considered significant if implementation of the Draft General Plan would:

- ▶ have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- ▶ substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to trees and rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway;
- ▶ substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- ▶ create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

A portion of I-80 runs through the planning area. However, there are no officially designated scenic corridors along the segment of I-80 that runs through or near the planning area. This issue will not be analyzed further in this DEIR.

There are limited areas in Citrus Heights that provide scenic vistas – they are long-range views of the Sierra Nevada range, which are generally blocked by development and vegetation. Since these resources do not exist within, and are not visible from Citrus Heights, these impacts are not further addressed any further in this EIR.

## IMPACT ANALYSIS

**IMPACT 4.12-1** *Degradation of Visual Character. Implementation of the Draft General Plan would result in some limited urban development and redevelopment that could alter the current visual character present within and surrounding the planning area. This impact would be less than significant.*

Implementation of the Draft General Plan would allow development on vacant land, as well as redevelopment in designated redevelopment areas. While less than 2% of the City's land is vacant and therefore available for development, any development on these parcels, along with redevelopment, would result in some change to the existing visual character of the area, particularly as perceived by individuals near the developed or redeveloped property.

The overall visual character throughout and surrounding the planning area is dominated by residential development, with nodes of retail, commercial, and public uses located at major intersections and along major roadways. The City contains redevelopment areas that contain unmaintained, underused, and blighted properties that can pose threats to public safety and cause negative visual impacts on surrounding properties and neighborhoods in addition to negative economic impacts.

Although the intention of many Draft General Plan policies and actions related to visual character are to enhance the City's aesthetic environment and create a unique City distinct from other communities, whether a change in character enhances or degrades the visual character of an area is subjective, and what one person finds to be an enhancement of visual character another may find to be a degradation of character. Since this analysis assumes that any permanent alteration of visual character is significant, any new or redevelopment activities on vacant and/or underutilized or blighted parcels would represent a change in visual character, whether it be visually pleasing or not.

The policies and actions pertaining to visual character of the Draft General Plan are intended to enhance the City's visual character by making new and redevelopment activities consistent with existing surrounding development. Many of the policies focus on the maintenance of character in existing neighborhoods and making new development and redevelopment consistent with the surrounding neighborhood. Other policies and actions seek to improve areas that most people agree need visual enhancement.

### Draft General Plan Policies and Actions

The following policies and actions from the Draft General Plan are intended to enhance visual character of the community:

#### ***Policies***

- ▶ **3.4:** Enhance the visual quality of City neighborhoods.
- ▶ **7.7:** Preserve the character of the rural areas by providing for compatible residential design and landscaping.
- ▶ **10.1:** Require superior architectural and functional site design features for new development projects along major corridors.
- ▶ **10.7:** Require removal of abandoned, unsafe, or unsightly buildings where such action is preferable to rehabilitation.
- ▶ **19.1:** Promote improvements to major corridors to make them more distinctive and inviting. Encourage installation and maintenance of landscaping in median and street frontages along arterial roadways.

- ▶ **19.3:** Require landscaping on commercial, residential, and institutional uses adjacent to all public street frontages.
- ▶ **19.4:** Monitor and enforce the maintenance of landscaping on private property along major corridors.
- ▶ **36.1:** Incorporate existing trees into development projects. Avoid adverse effects on health and longevity of native oaks or other significant trees through appropriate design measures and construction practices. When tree preservation is not possible, require appropriate tree replacement.
- ▶ **39.3:** Require buildings to conform to existing natural topography, and minimize cutting and filling.

**Actions**

**19.1A.** Seek a funding mechanism to support installation and maintenance of landscaping.

**39.3A.** Develop and adopt Community Design Guidelines that include standards for earthwork and grading.

**Conclusion**

Implementation of the Draft General Plan would allow for new development and redevelopment that would result in some permanent changes within Citrus Heights, which would be a potentially significant impact. Whether or not these changes in visual character are positive is subjective, but they would result in a permanent change in character to a visual resource. However, since the types of new and redevelopment activities that could occur under implementation of the Draft General Plan would be consistent with and designed to be compatible with existing surrounding land uses, implementation of these policies would lessen the potential adverse impacts on the visual character of the City. In addition, since the amount of land to be developed, although permanent, would be relatively small, project design requirements (e.g., Community Design Guidelines) would require such development to fit in with the existing environment. Therefore, this impact is considered **less than significant**.

**IMPACT**    **New Sources of Light and Glare.** *Implementation of the Draft General Plan would result in some limited development of new urban uses and redevelopment which would create new sources of light and glare in the planning area. This impact would be less than significant.*

The development and redevelopment activities that could be promoted by implementation of the Draft General Plan would result new in new sources of light and glare, including street lighting and new reflective building materials and glass for new and rehabilitated buildings. Citrus Heights is mostly urbanized and is surrounded by similar urban development. Urban environments such as these generate significant amounts of light and glare, which adversely affect visibility of the night sky.

**Draft General Plan Policy and Actions**

The following policy and actions from the Draft General Plan are intended to reduce the effect of nighttime lighting and glare in the planning area:

**Policy**

- ▶ **10.5:** Improve the appearance of the City by creating livelier, friendlier, safer spaces through the artful illumination of buildings, streetscapes, walkways, plazas, public art and other highlights.

**Actions**

**10.5A.** Develop lighting standards that require, at a minimum:

- ▶ Lighting sources to be thoughtfully located and have cutoff lenses to avoid light spillage and glare on adjacent properties
- ▶ Lighting to be directed at a surface rather than toward the sky or off-site

**10.5B.** Review existing City requirements for lighting, update as needed, and consider establishing both minimum and maximum lighting levels.

**34.2A.** Prepare and adopt Community Design Guidelines to include standards to protect habitat areas from encroachment of lighting, exotic non-native landscaping, noise, soil erosion and toxic substances.

## **Conclusion**

Future land uses consistent with the Draft General Plan would result in new sources of light and glare within an already urban environment. In comparison to the amount of existing light and glare sources within and surrounding the City, any additional sources of light and glare that could potentially be developed with implementation of the Draft General Plan would be minimal. In addition, the Draft General Plan policy and actions shown above would ensure that new lighting and glare sources would be designed and installed in locations that minimize the encroachment of lighting and spillover light and glare onto other properties and into the sky. This impact would be **less than significant**.