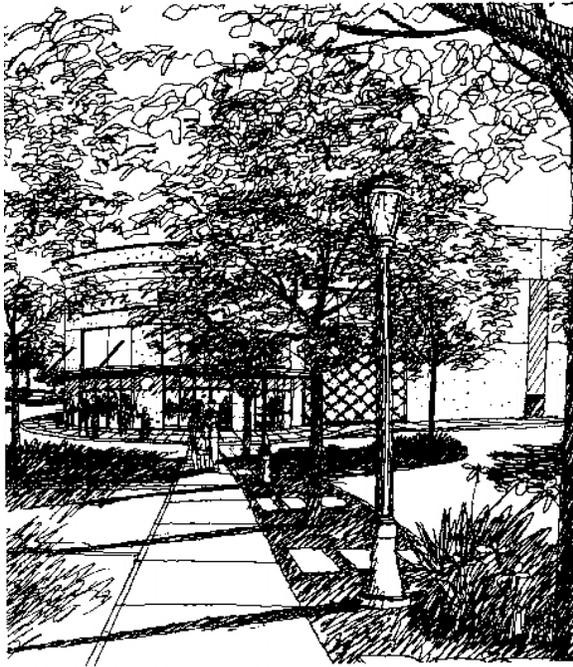


4.12 VISUAL RESOURCES/LIGHT AND GLARE



The purpose of the Design Guidelines is to provide an orderly and aesthetically pleasing development.

4.12.1 ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE

Physical changes brought about by a project can affect the nature and character of the project site. These changes can affect aesthetics when they result in a site with physical features, or structures, that are out of character with their surroundings, and that adversely affect those who view the site, be they passerbys or neighbors. This section evaluates the proposed project from the perspective of impacts to *visual resources*.

4.12.2 METHODOLOGY

Visual resources are the visible natural and cultural components of the environment. *Natural components* consist of landforms, water features, and vegetation. *Cultural components* result from modification of the natural landscape, and include features such as buildings, roads, and transmission lines.

The first step in evaluating the aesthetic impacts of a proposed project is to assess the existing visual setting of the project site.

The next step is to evaluate the visual characteristics of the proposed project. A number of factors are considered in this regard:

- *Visual quality* is an evaluation of the visual resources in the project setting, considering the project site's intrinsic physical properties, and associated cultural or public values. When publicly adopted goals or standards apply to the project site, they are given substantial weight in evaluating the visual quality of the site. A basic question in this regard is whether the proposed project would be compatible with the character of the existing landscape.
- *Viewer sensitivity* is the evaluation of the level of interest or concern of viewers regarding the visual resources of an area. Viewer sensitivity is usually expressed as high, moderate, or low. In general, sensitivity with regard to visual resources is considered high in cases involving parks, wilderness areas, scenic highways, recreational areas, and residential neighborhoods.
- *Visibility of the project* affects the determination of level of significance. This factor includes an examination of screening, angle of view, and the effect that time of observation (e.g., evening hours when the site is lighted) may have. The project site is

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considered from the perspective of key observation points that would be occupied by those viewing the project site.

- *Viewer exposure* evaluates the extent to which the site may be visible to persons in various locations, and involved in various types of activities (e.g., driving an automobile, walking, cycling past the site).

The analysis results in a determination of the visual impact of the proposed project, based on the thresholds of significance, set forth below. Mitigation measures may be effective in reducing impacts on visual resources. A conclusion is reached regarding the impact of the project based on the project's impacts, and the effectiveness of mitigation measures, if any, in mitigating the impacts.

4.12.3 SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

According to the CEQA Guidelines, significant effects on the environment include substantial or potentially substantial adverse changes in objects having aesthetic significance, and substantial or potentially substantial, demonstrable negative effects (CEQA Guidelines, Section 15382).

A visual impact is considered significant if it would result in one of the following:

- 1) **View obstruction:** Views from or of a project site may be physically blocked, reduced in area, or reconfigured by elements of a proposed project.
- 2) **View Impairment:** Impairment of the quality of important public views can result from the introduction into an existing view of a visual feature that is "aesthetically offensive" in itself, or from the degradation of an existing visual feature that has aesthetic significance, or from the introduction into an existing view of objects or patterns that exhibit a high degree of visual contrasts with the existing objects and patterns on the site.
- 3) **Degradation of Aesthetically Significant Objects:** Degradation of objects having historic or aesthetic significance may result when such an object is removed or physically altered, or when the object's immediate contextual surroundings are changed so as to visibly detract from the aesthetically positive elements that contribute to the object's aesthetic significance.
- 4) **Disruption or Division of Established Community:** Division or disruption of the physical arrangement of an established community may result from development that is substantially larger in scale than existing uses, or that introduces novel forms, materials, textures or colors into existing areas in which building types, land uses and architectural styles are homogenous, or that interposes barriers between spatially related features.
- 5) **Introduction of New Sources of Light and Glare:** Intrusive new sources of light and glare may include commercial signs, nighttime security and task lighting, expanses of surface parking, and reflective building materials and finishes.

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- 6) Conflict with Adopted Environmental Plans or Goals: A project may result in changes in visual character and/or existing views that conflict with the adopted environmental plans or goals of the community in which the project is proposed.

4.12.4 EXISTING SETTING

The Stock Ranch project site is bounded on the north by Auburn Boulevard, on the east by Sylvan Estates, apartments and Sylvan Road, on the south by Stock Ranch Road and on the west by the Crosswoods development.

The project site is currently undeveloped and contains fallow almond orchard, oak woodland, grassland, riparian, and aquatic habitats (portions of San Juan Creek, Arcade Creek and associated tributary drainages run through the site). Grasslands are the predominant habitat type on the project site.



View along Arcade Creek.

Portions of San Juan Creek, Arcade Creek and associated tributary drainages traverse the site. Arcade Creek is the primary east-west waterway that separates land uses in the northern portion of the site from those in the south. The Arcade Creek floodplain varies in width from 120 to 200 feet with fingers of floodplain extending to the north and south.

The riparian habitat of the creek corridor includes Valley oak, willow, walnut and cottonwoods. A concentration of blue elderberry shrubs occurs within the Arcade Creek riparian corridor on the site. Several dirt roads and paths are located throughout the northern half of the property. Some areas on the site have been altered due to past land use activities.

Auburn Boulevard and Sylvan Road are two heavily traveled roadways adjacent to the project site. A brief description of existing views from these roadways is provided below:

Auburn Boulevard. The scenery along Auburn Boulevard is dominated by a mix of urban uses alternating with some open space and sparse to mature landscaping. Beginning at Auburn Boulevard and Greenback Lane, uses along Auburn include a mix of retail and heavy/service commercial to an area near Charwood Lane. Once past Charwood Lane the uses transition into multifamily residential on the south side and single-story office uses on the north side interspersed with undeveloped lots until Van Maren Lane where commercial uses exist. This stretch of Auburn Boulevard contains some multi-canopy landscaping and aboveground utilities. Approaching Linear Parkway, uses transition into single and multi-family residential with frontage roads, and the Sylvan



View of project site looking south along Auburn Boulevard.

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Oaks Library located south east of Van Maren and Auburn Boulevard. Within the area of the single- and multi-family residential, mature landscaping and a linear parkway dominate the scenery. Commercial uses and a school exist at the intersection of Sylvan Road and Auburn Boulevard (City of Citrus Heights, 2000b).

Sylvan Road. The view corridor on Sylvan Road south of Auburn Boulevard consists of multi-level canopy landscaping, single-family uses and some multi-family residential uses with landscaped setbacks. A significant open space component contributes to the viewshed at Stock Ranch Road. From Stock Ranch Road to Greenback, the viewshed is almost entirely suburban commercial (City of Citrus Heights, 2000b).

In addition to Auburn Boulevard and Sylvan Road, the project site is surrounded by residential uses on the west, east and south. Views of the site from these areas vary from unobstructed (e.g. from Stock Ranch Road north towards to the site) to partially obstructed (e.g. views from the Crosswoods, Sylvan Estates and apartments to the east of the project site).



View of the site northwest from the intersection of Stock Ranch Road and Sylvan Road.

4.12.5 PROJECT IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Obstruction/Impairment of Views

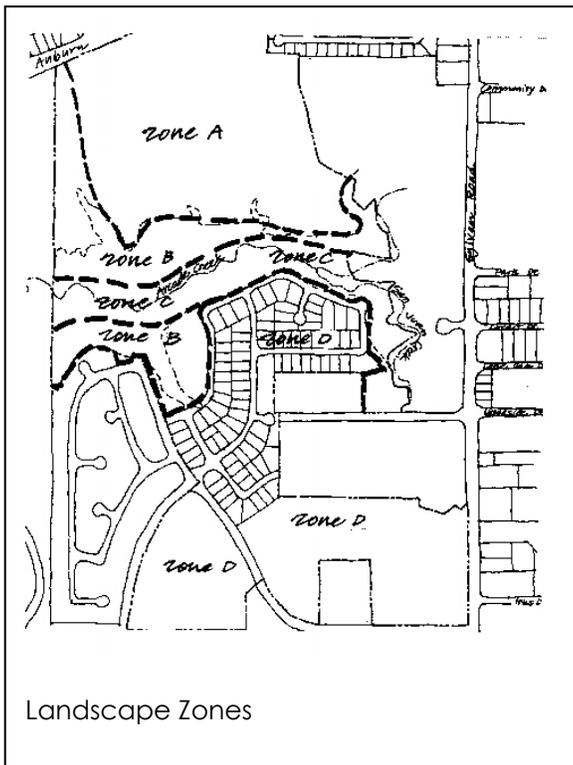
Impact 4.12.1 The proposed project would introduce urban uses to a previously undeveloped piece of property. The placement of such uses could result in the obstruction/impairment of views from surrounding roadways and neighboring uses. This is considered a **potentially significant impact**. *Note: This impact can be mitigated to an acceptable level through the implementation of design standards in the Guide to Development. See discussion below.*

In assessing the degree of impact of the project on obstructing or impairing views of the project site it is important to assess the existing visual quality of the site. Currently, both Auburn Boulevard and Sylvan Road have limited, but direct views on to the project site. Existing views of the site from Auburn Boulevard are characterized by trees and grasses that cover the property. While the site is undeveloped and primarily undisturbed, its most striking visual features are dense stands of oaks along the northern boundary of the property and Arcade Creek which meanders throughout the site.

The Auburn Commerce District (i.e. commercial uses proposed on the portion of the project site north of Arcade Creek) would introduce large warehouse-type structures to previously undeveloped land. As a result, views of the project site from Auburn Boulevard would change substantially. However, the Guide acknowledges that this edge will be the most viewed by passersbys and will act as a foreground between development and the street. Views into the site are to

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be designed to create interest and beauty. To this end, the Guide contains specific directives for development occurring along Auburn Boulevard. The architecture of the Auburn commerce District will be distinctive and reflect the surrounding natural environment. The Guide's Development Standards limit gateway towers for anchor tenants (over 65,000 sq. ft.) to a height of 50 feet and the building height to 35' or less. Existing trees lining the Auburn Road frontage provide a green edge to the street. If these trees cannot be preserved, the Guide directs that they be replaced with new trees, not necessarily of the same type. Removal of oak trees is governed by City ordinance and requires replacement if they cannot be avoided.



Extensive landscaping is planned throughout the project site to enhance and unify the project. "Landscape Zones" have been developed for each specific area of the site. Landscape at the main entrance from Auburn Boulevard is to be dramatic and include symmetrical, boulevard tree plants on both sides of the main entry. The planting along the Auburn Boulevard frontage is to be informal in nature with a "layered" or "tiered" effect. This will provide interest and variety as well as visually connect the streetscape into the local landscape aesthetic. The overall goal is to maximize visual street appeal and interest.

Views of the site from Sylvan are of vacant land and almond orchard. Unobstructed views of Merrill Gardens to the south of the project site are also available from Sylvan Road. Utility lines adjacent to Sylvan Road are the main elevated feature to passersby. This area would be developed with either multi-family, commercial or office uses which must conform to existing City architectural requirements.

The Guide recognizes that the Sylvan Road edge is a

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highly visible portion of the project. This area will serve as a foreground between development and the street. The Guide specifies that views into the site be maintained from this vantage point. To this end, the Development Standards contained in the Guide prohibit blank walls, require screening of HVAC equipment and other exterior mechanical equipment, and require use of a monochromatic or neutral color palette for the body of buildings. A combination of groundcover, low shrubs, and grass are proposed to landscape this area. In addition, large canopy shade trees and ornamental trees are proposed to maximize visual street appeal and interest. Based on these Standards, the project would present a change in current views of the site, but not necessarily result in an obstruction or impairment of views.

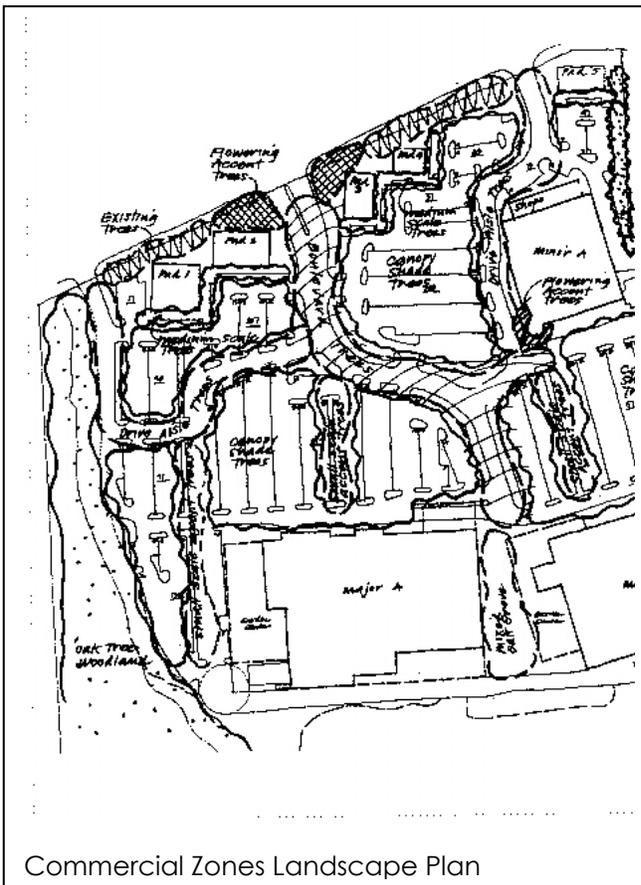
In terms of neighboring uses (i.e. Crosswoods, Sylvan Estates, Stock Ranch Village, Merrill Gardens, etc.), views of the site would be altered to the extent that they are visible from adjacent residential areas. As these adjacent uses represent previous development, the proposed project represents a continuation of the pattern of urbanization. While the project is not incompatible with existing uses,

the issue then becomes one of viewer sensitivity. Because the project site is predominantly surrounded by residential uses, viewer sensitivity would be considered high.

To address issues of views from surrounding residential uses, the Guide's Design Guidelines suggest that the landscape areas adjacent to the existing residential areas be designed to provide a buffer from the proposed uses. Planting treatments are specified along all residential edges and would include evergreen trees adjacent to the fence dividing the project from adjacent uses. Lower story plantings are directed in front of the evergreen trees to provide visual interest from the project side. Existing trees and vegetation are to be retained whenever possible.

Architecturally, the Design Guidelines stress that buildings are to be designed to incorporate the concepts of conservation, sensitivity to the environment and regional vernacular through the design of a unique architectural character. The design character envisioned would be primarily

wood and stone reflecting the surrounding environment. Single family-residential design is directed to complement surrounding development without mimicking adjacent residential designs. All commercial, office, or multi-family structures in



Commercial Zones Landscape Plan

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the Sylvan Commerce District Zone district are required to conform to the existing City requirements. Further, blank walls are prohibited, roof-mounted HVAC equipment must be screened and the use of recycled building materials is encouraged.

In conclusion, the impacts of the project with regard to visual obstruction or impairment are addressed within the Guide. The project is designed to respect the infill character of the site, surrounding land uses and the site's natural character.

In addition, this document notes that the project site has been considered for development for more than 20 years; the most recent land use approval (discussed in the Project Description section of this document) considered commercial and light industrial development in the northern portion of the project site. The Draft General Plan also considers development of the site with the uses proposed in the Stock Ranch Guide to Development.

Therefore, visual obstruction/impairment impacts are considered **less- than-significant**.

Degradation of Aesthetically Significant Areas

Impact 4.12.2 The proposed project would surround Arcade Creek with urban uses including commercial uses to the north and residential uses and/or commercial and office to the south. This is considered to be a significant impact. *Note: This impact can be mitigated to an acceptable level through the implementation of design standards contained in the Guide to Development. See discussion below.*

Arcade Creek is the foremost aesthetic feature on the project site. Its steep, heavily vegetated banks provide dramatic visual diversity to the property. The Creek is an asset not only in terms of its visual offerings, but its recreational potential as well. In recognition of its significance, 27 acres including and surrounding the Arcade and San Juan Creek floodplains have been preserved as open space and will remain forested riparian. Passive recreational uses and detention basins are proposed within this area, however, these uses have been designed to compliment the surrounding natural environment.

A variety of building sizes and retail types are anticipated to the north of Arcade Creek. The prime tenants are expected to be, at maximum two "big box" retailers whose building pads are located at the south end of the commercial area adjacent



The steep, heavily vegetated banks present dramatic views along Arcade Creek.

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to Arcade Creek. A service drive will be located between the building pads and Arcade Creek. The majority of the site south of Arcade Creek is designated for the development of a variety of housing types and densities. These homes would be oriented towards Arcade Creek, the neighborhood park and resource preserve areas. South of Arcade Creek, a band of houses on relatively large lots would front on the creek. Densities of housing would increase with distance from the Creek.

Viewer sensitivity would be considered high for pedestrians hiking the proposed trails along the Creek corridor as well as proposed residences oriented toward the Creek. Moreover, viewer exposure would be greatest for those using the trails, as they would have views of rear/backyards of residences south of the Creek.

The Guide recognizes the value of Arcade and San Juan Creek and includes specific Development Standards relative to preserving its aesthetic qualities while at the same time taking advantage of the Creek as a visual amenity. Development Standards for uses adjacent to the creek require building walls facing Arcade Creek to be visually buffered by planting native and riparian-type plantings to blend with the native landscape of the creek and soften the building elevations. Shrub and vine plantings on the creek side shall be used to screen any walls adjacent to the service drive.

The Guide's Development Standards and Design Guidelines address the protection of Arcade Creek as a visual and recreational amenity. The requirements included in the Guide relative to protection and enhancement of the Creek corridor would mitigate impacts associated with degrading Arcade and San Juan Creeks. Therefore, this impact is considered **less-than-significant**.

Disruption or Division of Surrounding Community

Impact 4.12.3 Development of the Stock Ranch property would provide infill on the largest remaining parcel in the City of Citrus Heights. This project is consistent with and planned for in the General Plan. Therefore, no impact would occur in association with disrupting the surrounding community.

The Guide identifies blending aesthetics of the past and present as a specific architectural principle to be employed as part of the project design. In addition, buildings are to be designed to be sensitive to and consider opportunities for connections with surrounding land uses. As the last large infill project in the City, Stock Ranch is extremely important in terms of providing a cohesive fit with neighboring properties. While the project is consistent on a land use level as anticipated in the Draft General Plan, it nevertheless must also demonstrate visual compatibility in the existing context of the surrounding area. To this end, the Guide has included a variety of Development



Street lighting will play an integral role in the project.

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Standards and Guidelines directing the architecture, landscape, hardscape, setback and signage requirements of Stock Ranch. Taken together, the provisions of the Guide mitigate any impacts associated with disrupting or dividing the surrounding community. Therefore, this impact is considered **less-than-significant**.

Introduction of New Sources of Light and Glare

Impact 4.12.4 The proposed project would introduce new light sources to the project site in association with commercial and residential development. This is considered a **significant impact**. *Note: This impact can be mitigated to an acceptable level through the implementation of design standards contained in the Guide to Development. See discussion below.*

Development of the proposed project would introduce commercial, residential and potentially office uses to the Stock Ranch property. These uses would create new sources of light and glare because each of these uses is typically lit or partially lit at night. These sources of light could be noticeable from surrounding uses, especially those that are at a higher elevation than the project site. In particular, commercial uses proposed north of Arcade Creek could create some lighting disturbance for residences in the Crosswoods to the west, and Sylvan Estates and the apartment complex to the east.

Daytime glare would also increase in association with the introduction of new buildings, signage, automobiles and other vehicles. The increase in glare from reflective automobile surfaces (e.g. windshields) would increase, since there are currently no sources of glare on the site.

The Guide acknowledges that lighting will be used throughout the project site and is specific as the requirements of the types and intensities allowed. Development Standards specific to lighting are as follows:

- Lights shall not be placed to cause glare or excessive light spillage on neighborhood sites.
- Lighting adjacent to residential areas shall be shielded with cut-off luminaries.
- All light fixtures are to concealed source fixtures except for pedestrian oriented lights.
- Light standards for parking areas shall not exceed 25 feet in height.
- Lighting shall provide a minimum average of one-foot candle parking lots and .25 foot-candles in pedestrian areas. Maximum illumination levels shall not exceed twenty-foot candles (20 FC) at any point.
- Lighting shall provide a minimum of 0.25-foot candles in pedestrian areas.
- Parking lot lights may be high-pressure sodium or metal halide and shall be consistent throughout the Stock Ranch Development.
- Lights in parking lot areas shall be on three-foot (3') high concrete bases.

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- Fifteen foot (15') maximum height pedestrian lights shall be provided along pedestrian ways
- Service area lighting shall be contained within the service yard boundaries and enclosure walls. No light spillover shall occur outside the service area. The light source shall not be visible from the street and residences.
- Building illumination and architectural lighting shall be indirect.

These standards would mitigate lighting impacts to **less than significant** levels.

Glare impacts would be addressed through the use of landscape. In this regard, the Development Standards require a single species of tree to be used for each discreet parking area. Evergreen trees (minimum 25 percent 24" box and 75 percent 15-gallon size) planted in a formal row specified along the project side of the fence at residential edges. One tree planting is required for every 20 linear feet of property line adjacent to residential uses. Further, existing trees and vegetation shall be retained whenever possible (EIP, 2000). Based on the extensive use of landscape throughout the project (i.e. in parking lots, along residential edges) as directed by the Guide for Development, glare impacts would be reduced to **less-than-significant** levels.

Conflict with Draft General Plan

Impact 4.12.5 The proposed project conforms to the City of Citrus Heights Draft General Plan Goals and Policies relative to corridors and streetscapes and gateways. The Development Guide supports and serves to implement these goals and policies. Therefore, **no impact would occur.**

The Guide identifies goals and policies of the Draft General plan relevant to the Stock Ranch. Relative to the issue of aesthetics, the most pertinent goals and policies relate to Corridors and Streetscapes and Gateways. The applicable goals and policies are listed below followed by a discussion of consistency.

Goal 10: Achieve attractive, inviting and functional corridors.
Discussion: The project will support this goal through the development of the Auburn Commerce District along Auburn Boulevard.

Policy 10.1 Require superior architectural and functional site design features for new development projects along major corridors.
Discussion: The Guide includes specific Development Standards for Auburn Boulevard and Sylvan Road that support the intent and directive of this policy.

Policy 10.4 Encourage high quality signage that is attractive, appropriate to the location and balances visibility needs with aesthetic needs.
Discussion: Signage will be used throughout the commercial portions of the project. The Guide identifies Development Standards and Design Guidelines that directly address types, sizes and styles of signage that may be used. Final signage

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plans must be submitted to the City for design review and approval prior to construction.

Goal 19 Establish attractive streetscapes along the City's major roadways.

Discussion: Landscaping and Streetscape Design Guidelines are included in the Guide for Auburn Boulevard and Sylvan Road. Therefore the Guide supports this goal.

Policy 19.3 Require landscaping on commercial, residential, and institutional uses adjacent to all public street frontages.

Discussion: The Guide includes specific landscaping requirements for all areas of the project site including residential edges, Auburn Boulevard and Sylvan Road.

Based on the above discussion, it is apparent that the project will support and implement the goals and policies relevant to corridors, streetscapes and gateways. As a result, no conflict would occur between the proposed project and the Draft General Plan relative to aesthetics.

4.12.6 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

Visual impacts resulting from the proposed project would cumulatively add to the urbanized character of the City. As the City is planned for infill in on the project site, this would not be a significant cumulative impact.

Increases in light and glare on the project site would add to the overall increase in light and glare created onsite. However, because the sources of light and glare (the project's commercial areas) are separated from other commercial areas in Citrus Heights, and because the project incorporates measures to reduce overspill of light and glare (such as directing light sources downward and into the project site, this increase would not be cumulative with other sources of nighttime light in Citrus Heights. Therefore, cumulative impacts **are less than significant**.

Visual Resources/Light and Glare

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City of Citrus Heights. City of Citrus Heights Draft General Plan. (August 2000a).

City of Citrus Heights. Draft General Plan Environmental Impact Report (August 2000b).

EIP. *Stock Ranch Draft Guide for Development*. (August 30, 2000).