

ing is shown on Figure 3-19 with the numbers representing the order in which the different areas would be built out.

The Specific Plan would be divided into four roughly equal quadrants during project phasing: the northwest quadrant largely composed of the proposed private high school, the southwest quadrant bordered by the private high school to the north and the major collector road to the east, and the northeast and southeast quadrants each composed of half the area east of the major collector road. Within these quadrants, the Specific Plan proposes that there would be twelve villages, each constituting a separate phase of construction.

The minor collector and each residential road within the Specific Plan area would be installed by the developer of that phase where said road occurs.

Water infrastructure would be provided for each phase. As each final map is processed, a water system analysis would be required to ensure adequate water pressure and looping for each phase of build-out. Similarly, as each phase develops the developer would install the non-potable lines within their area. Temporary connections are proposed to the potable system until construction of the pump station is completed, which is proposed to be installed by the issuance of the 400<sup>th</sup> building permit for the Specific Plan area. As with the potable water installation, as each area is developed, a water system analysis would be required to ensure adequate water pressure and supply.

The first developer would be required to construct the detention basin and install the pump station and piping to and from this basin. Subsequent developers of the Brighton Landing area would be required to construct storm drainage lines in conformance with the master plan to insure adequate drainage from their development.

#### *E. Components Related to the Jepson Parkway Project*

Part of the Jepson Parkway Project will include widening the segment of Leisure Town Road that forms the western border of the Specific Plan area. In

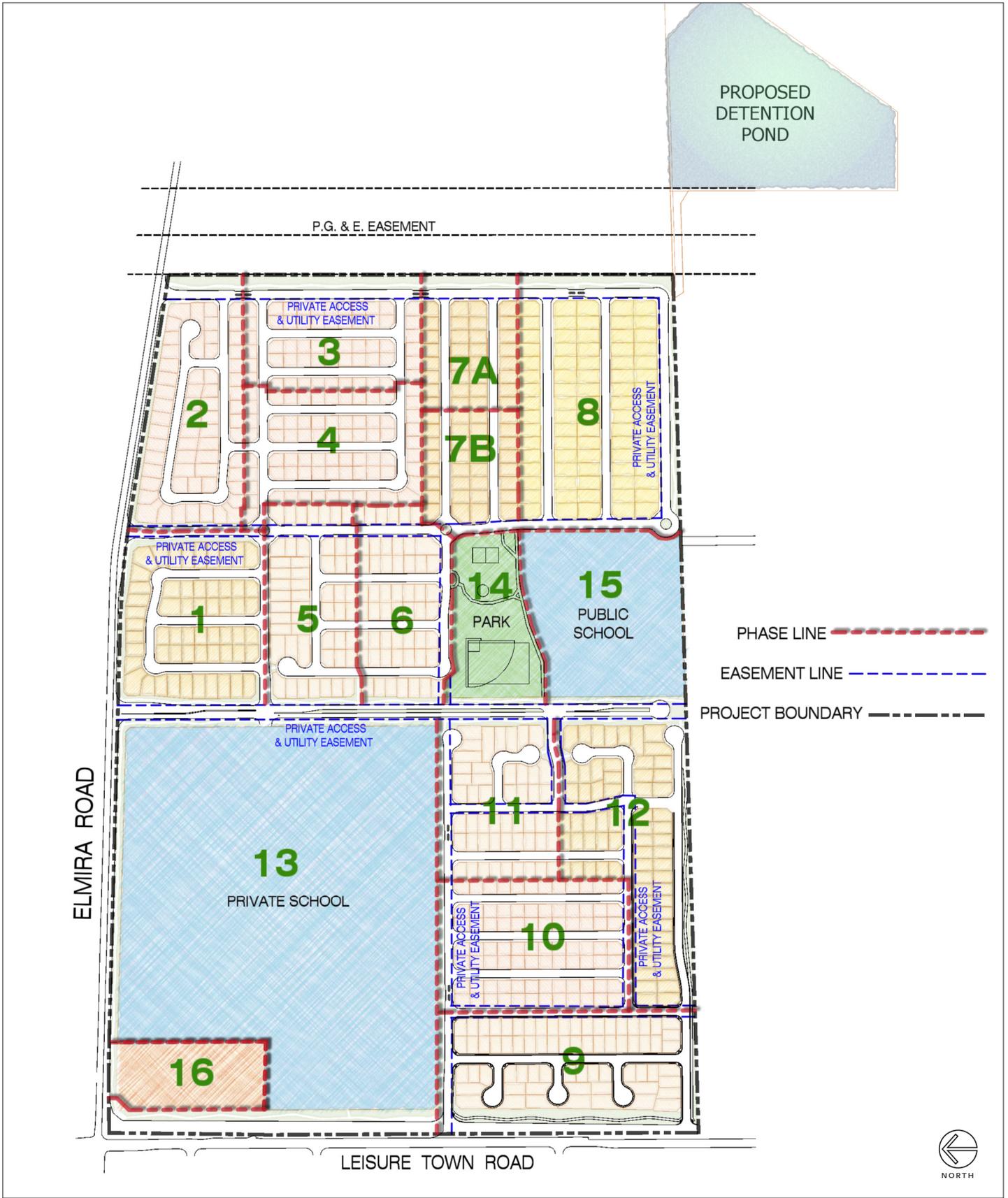


FIGURE 3-19  
PHASING PLAN

addition, the existing 5-foot by 10-foot box culvert for Old Alamo Creek would be extended or replaced with a series of large culverts underneath the widened Leisure Town Road and Elmira Road.<sup>17</sup> Old Alamo Creek is a seasonal creek which flows through an existing culvert on the northwest corner of the Specific Plan area. The environmental impacts extending the culverting of the creek are part of the *Jepson Parkway EIR/EIS*, therefore, its mitigation measures regulate future activity related to the Jepson Parkway project in the Specific Plan vicinity. The analysis in the biological resources section of this Brighton Landing Specific Plan EIR tiers off of the analysis of biological impacts in the *Jepson Parkway EIR/EIS*, as authorized by CEQA Guideline section 15152. The *Jepson Parkway EIR/EIS* is available for public review at the City of Vacaville Community Development Department.

The Jepson Parkway roadway is currently being designed and construction is projected to occur between 2015 and 2018, provided that funding is available and applicable State and federal permits are obtained. The Brighton Landing Specific Plan depicts conditions assuming the Jepson Parkway Project is completed, as illustrated in Figures 3-4 and 3-5 in Chapter 3 of this Draft EIR. However, the timing for implementation of the Jepson Parkway project in the Specific Plan area is uncertain. If the Jepson Parkway project is not constructed, then the landscaping and sidewalk shown in Figures 3-4 and 3-5 would not be installed, and the existing alignment of Old Alamo Creek within the Specific Plan area would remain as it is.

#### ***F. Relationship to General Plan Update***

The City of Vacaville is currently engaged in a General Plan Update (Proposed General Plan Update). The Brighton Landing Specific Plan conforms to the Preferred Land Use Alternative accepted by the City Council on December 13, 2011. However, because the Proposed General Plan Update will not be adopted at the time of publication of this Draft EIR on the Brighton

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<sup>17</sup> Solano Transportation Authority, *Jepson Parkway Project Draft Environmental Impact Report/Environmental Impact Statement*, May 2011. Page 2-35.

Landing Specific Plan, this EIR will review consistency with existing policies and land use regulations from the 1990 General Plan and also the land uses, although not the policies, proposed as part of the General Plan Update.

*G. Permits and Approvals Required*

Permits and approvals required for the Specific Plan include those shown in Table 3-4. Under CEQA 15381, “Responsible Agencies” include all public agencies other than the Lead Agency which have discretionary approval over the Specific Plan. One of the items listed is a Development Agreement. As part of the Development Agreement, the developer will be making the 100-acre Robbins property, located north of Interstate 80 along Laguna Creek, available for City acquisition for the purpose of constructing a regional stormwater detention basin. The detention basin is in very preliminary planning stages at this time. If a property transaction were to occur, it would not necessarily commit the City to construction of a basin until and unless funding was certain. As this detention basin has not been designed or sized and this is only a potential option, not a contract or application, meaningful environmental review is not possible at this time and would be speculative. Future environmental review would be required prior to approval of the detention basin on the Robbins property.

TABLE 3-4 PERMITS AND APPROVALS REQUIRED

Jurisdiction	Permits/Approvals
Department of Fish and Game	Lake and Streambed Alteration Agreement
Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB)	Section 401 Clean Water Quality Certification Waste Discharge Requirements/National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) permit
Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) of Solano County	Jurisdiction over possible special district formation
Solano Irrigation District	Master Water Agreement Amendment (together with City of Vacaville)
County of Solano <sup>a</sup>	Land use permit Grading permit
City of Vacaville	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Certification of EIR</li> <li>2. General Plan Amendment</li> <li>3. Master Water Agreement Amendment</li> <li>4. Rezoning approval</li> <li>5. Specific Plan approval</li> <li>6. Development Agreement approval</li> <li>7. Tentative Map approval</li> <li>8. Design Review approval</li> <li>9. Grading permits</li> <li>10. Wastewater Contribution permit</li> <li>11. Encroachment permits</li> <li>12. Building permits</li> </ol>

<sup>a</sup> If the detention basin is constructed by the developer, prior to dedicating the land to the City, then the developer would need to obtain a land use permit approval from the County and obtain a grading permit for construction of the basin. If the City takes ownership of the property and constructs the basin, then no County permits would be required.

Sources: Buder, Fred. City Planner, Community Development Department, City of Vacaville. Personal communication with Melissa McDonough, The Planning Center | DC&E. March 29, 2012; Solano County, 2008, *County Code*, Chapter 28 Zoning Regulations, Section 28.21.030, Agriculture District Land Uses and Permit Requirements.

CITY OF VACAVILLE  
BRIGHTON LANDING SPECIFIC PLAN DRAFT EIR  
PROJECT DESCRIPTION

## 4 ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

This chapter evaluates the direct, indirect, and cumulative environmental impacts of the Specific Plan by examining the following environmental issue areas:

- “ Aesthetics
- “ Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- “ Air Quality
- “ Biological Resources
- “ Cultural Resources
- “ Geology, Soils, and Mineral Resources
- “ Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- “ Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- “ Hydrology and Water Quality
- “ Land Use and Planning
- “ Noise
- “ Population and Housing
- “ Public Services and Recreation
- “ Transportation/Traffic
- “ Utilities and Service Systems

This Draft EIR uses the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G sample checklist which includes questions that refer to the effects of the environment on the Project, as well as those that relate to the effects of the Project on the environment. However, pursuant to recent case law, the main purpose of this Draft EIR is to identify the significant effects of the Project on the environment, not the significant effects of the environment on the Project.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The purpose of this Draft EIR is to identify the significant effects of the Project on the environment, not the significant effects of the environment on the Project. (*South Orange County Wastewater Authority v. City of Dana Point* (2011) 196 Cal.App.4th 1604, 1614-1618; *City of Long Beach v. Los Angeles Unified School Dist.* (2009) 176 Cal.App.4th 889, 905.) While identifying the environmental effects of attracting development and people to an area is consistent with CEQA's legislative purpose and statutory requirements, identifying the effects on the Project and its users of locating the Project in a particular environmental setting is neither consistent with CEQA's legislative purpose nor required by the CEQA statutes.

### ***A. Chapter Organization***

This chapter consists of 15 sections that evaluate the environmental impacts of the Specific Plan. Each issue area uses the same format and consists of the following subsections:

- “ The *Regulatory Setting* section describes which local, State, and/or federal regulations are applicable to the Plan.
- “ The *Existing Conditions* section describes current conditions with regard to the environmental factor reviewed.
- “ The *Standards of Significance* section describes how an impact is judged to be significant in this EIR. These standards are derived from CEQA Appendix G Guidelines unless stated otherwise.
- “ The *Project Impacts* assesses potential impacts (direct and indirect), and tells why impacts were found to be significant or less than significant. This section also numbers and lists identified impacts, and presents measures that would mitigate each impact. In each case, the significance following mitigation is also explained.
- “ The *Cumulative Impacts* section analyzes impacts that the Plan may have when considered in addition to other past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects. (See further discussion below.)

### ***B. Cumulative Impact Analysis***

A cumulative impact consists of an impact created as a result of the combination of the project evaluated in the EIR, together with other reasonably foreseeable projects causing related impacts. Section 15130 of the CEQA Guidelines requires an EIR to discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is “cumulatively considerable.”

Where the incremental effect of a project is not “cumulatively considerable,” a Lead Agency need not consider that effect significant, but must briefly describe its basis for concluding that the incremental effect is not cumulatively

considerable. Where the cumulative impact caused by the project's incremental effect and the effects of other projects is not significant, the EIR must briefly indicate why the cumulative impact is not significant.

The cumulative discussions in Chapters 4.1 through 4.15 explain the geographic scope of the area affected by each cumulative effect (e.g. immediate Specific Plan area vicinity, City of Vacaville, Solano County area, or air basin). The geographic area considered for each cumulative impact depends upon the impact that is being analyzed. For example, in assessing aesthetic impacts, only development within the vicinity of the Specific Plan area would contribute to a cumulative visual effect because that is the only area in which the Specific Plan area is visible. In assessing macro-scale air quality impacts, on the other hand, all development within the air basin contributes to regional emissions of criteria pollutants, and basin-wide projections of emissions is the best tool for determining the cumulative effect.

The CEQA Guidelines provide two approaches to analyzing cumulative impacts. The first is the “list approach,” which requires a listing of past, present, and reasonably anticipated future projects producing related or cumulative impacts. The second is the projections-based approach, which summarizes the relevant growth projections contained in an adopted General Plan or related planning document that is designed to evaluate regional or area-wide conditions. A reasonable combination of the two approaches may also be used.

The cumulative impact analysis in this Draft EIR uses both a projections-based approach and list approach, depending on the topic under consideration. For some environmental topics (such as traffic, air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise), a greater geographic extent is used for the cumulative analysis and foreseeable development projects outside of the City of Vacaville are taken into consideration. The list below includes all develop-

ment projects for the Specific Plan area and several outside of Vacaville but within Solano County.<sup>2</sup>

### *C. Future Development<sup>3</sup>*

This section lists specific approved projects and remaining development capacity under the 1990 General Plan and the Proposed Draft General Plan to explain the context used for the cumulative analyses in this Draft EIR.

#### **1. Approved Projects and Proposals**

A variety of development proposals that are located near the Specific Plan area have been approved by the City, or other local or regional government when applicable, including the following:

- **Jepson Parkway Project.** This project would improve and widen twelve miles of roadways throughout Solano County to provide an Interstate 80 reliever route. Jepson Parkway would run from the intersection of State Route 12 and Walters Road in Suisun City to the Interstate 80 and Leisure Town Road interchange in Vacaville. Besides expanding the route roadway to four lanes, the project would also construct medians, traffic signals, shoulders, and separate bike lanes. CalTrans signed a Record of Decision adopting the Jepson Parkway Project as approved on June 21, 2011. Construction is scheduled to start in 2014.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The traffic analysis included these projects as well as those farther from the Specific Plan area. For the more extensive list, see the Traffic Study, which is included as Appendix K to this Draft EIR.

<sup>3</sup> Maps showing all development proposals are included in Appendix C.

<sup>4</sup> Solano Transportation Authority. The Jepson Parkway Project, [http://www.sta.ca.gov/Content/10080/The\\_Jepson\\_Parkway\\_Project.html](http://www.sta.ca.gov/Content/10080/The_Jepson_Parkway_Project.html), accessed on February 7, 2012.

- “ **Cheyenne.** This project consists of 221 residential units on approximately 86 acres. It is a partially constructed subdivision, with 59 units built.<sup>5</sup>
- “ **Approved projects around Cheyenne.** Rogers Ranch (28 residential units on 35 acres), Rancho Rogelio (40 residential units and a 5-acre detention basin on 20.9 acres), Amber Hills (38 residential units on 19.1 acres), Verona (4 residential units on 4.72 acres), and Knoll Creek (38 units on 10 acres).<sup>6</sup>
- “ **Gibson/North Vine.** This project consists of 8 residential units on 9.01 acres.<sup>7</sup>
- “ **Ivywood.** This project proposes to build 37 residential units on 5.9 acres.<sup>8</sup>
- “ **Lower Lagoon Valley Specific Plan.** The Specific Plan area is located 4 miles to the southwest of the Specific Plan Area. It is included in the Housing Element as containing over 860 acres including 874 single-family detached homes (75 units would be affordable to moderate-income households), 100 senior attached townhouses (a maximum of 1,025 units approved for this project), as well as space for retail, recreational use, business uses, a new fire station, and a golf course.<sup>9</sup>
- “ **North Village Specific Plan.** This is located north of Vaca Valley Parkway, east of Interstate 505, and west of Leisure Town Road. The 882-acre site would allow up to approximately 2,220 units and a school.<sup>10</sup>
- “ **Villas at North Village.** This project would construct 228 apartment units on 9.9 acres.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The Planning Center | DC&E, 2010. *Land Use Technical Memorandum*, page 18; City of Vacaville, *Residential Activity Report*, 2010.

<sup>6</sup> City of Vacaville, 2012. *Residential Activity Report*.

<sup>7</sup> City of Vacaville, 2012. *Residential Activity Report*.

<sup>8</sup> City of Vacaville, 2012. *Residential Activity Report*.

<sup>9</sup> City of Vacaville, 2010. *Housing Element*.

<sup>10</sup> The Planning Center | DC&E, 2010. *Land Use Technical Memorandum*, page 19.

- “ **Nut Tree Ranch Policy Plan.** This area is located on 560 acres between East Monte Vista Avenue, Interstate 80, and Interstate 505. Approximately 124 acres are designated for commercial and office uses with a residential overlay. The 62-acre residential overlay would allow commercial and office uses, as well as attached high or medium density housing. The remaining 436 acres are designated for golf course and/or City park use.<sup>12</sup>
- “ **Southtown Project.** Approximately 3.5 miles west of the Specific Plan area, this project would result in a total of 1,500 units, including two high density residential areas, one area of low-medium density clustered single-family homes, and some second dwelling units on large lots.<sup>13</sup> As of January 2010, 205 units had been constructed.<sup>14</sup>
- “ **Southtown Commons.** This project is east of the Southtown Project and adjacent to the Union Pacific Railroad tracks. The project consists of 240 small-lot and cluster-type units, as well as a self-storage facility.
- “ **Sterling Chateau 4/Vandengate.** Near the southeast corner of Alamo and Vanden Road, this project would construct 54 units on 13.7 acres.<sup>15</sup>
- “ **Vanden Meadows Specific Plan.** The Vanden Meadows Specific Plan and Development Project (Proposed Project) consists of the annexation of approximately 265.6 acres into the City of Vacaville (City) and the approval and implementation of a specific plan for the property that would result in the development of 939 single-family clustered and multi-family units, a 28-acre school site, 7 acres of park, connecting pedestrian trails, and a bike station.

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<sup>11</sup> City of Vacaville, *Residential Activity Report*.

<sup>12</sup> The Planning Center | DC&E, 2010. *Land Use Technical Memorandum*, page 19.

<sup>13</sup> City of Vacaville, 2010. *Housing Element*.

<sup>14</sup> The Planning Center | DC&E, 2010. *Land Use Technical Memorandum*, page 20.

<sup>15</sup> City of Vacaville, 2012. *Residential Activity Report*.

- “ **Villages on Vine 2.** This project consists of 25 units on approximately 12.9 acres. It is partially constructed, with 14 units built.<sup>16</sup>
- “ Other approved commercial projects (Crossroads Church Master Plan, Vaca Valley Hospital, and several unnamed projects near the Interstate 80 corridor).
- “ **Fairfield Train Station Specific Plan.** This would build a train station on 2,970 acres near the intersection of Peabody Road and Vanden Road, approximately eight miles southwest of the Specific Plan area, to serve the Amtrak Capitol Corridor line. It would include construction of 6,800 dwelling units of varying densities, 344 acres of land developed for commercial, industrial, and warehouse uses, 122 acres devoted to community facilities, 1,690 acres dedicated to parks, recreation, and open space, 228 acres for roads and railroads, and 7 acres for the proposed train station. The Fairfield City Council adopted the Fairfield Train Station Specific Plan on July 26, 2011. Construction is scheduled to begin in 2013 and finish by 2015.<sup>17</sup>

## 2. 1990 General Plan Projects and Proposals

Additionally, there are a number of smaller miscellaneous parcels areas scattered throughout Vacaville that have the capacity for growth under the 1990 General Plan.

## 3. Proposed General Plan Update Projects and Proposals

As noted throughout this EIR, the City is currently in the process of preparing a Proposed General Plan Update and has identified the Preferred Land Use Alternative that will serve as the basis for the Proposed General Plan land use diagram and the CEQA analysis of the Proposed General Plan. Given that this major project is underway concurrently with the Brighton Landing

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<sup>16</sup> The Planning Center | DC&E, 2010. *Land Use Technical Memorandum*, page 18; City of Vacaville, *Residential Activity Report*, 2012.

<sup>17</sup> City of Fairfield Public Works, Fairfield Train Station Project, and Peabody Road Improvements. <http://www.fairfield.ca.gov/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=7783>, accessed on February 7, 2012.

Specific Plan EIR, this document discloses potential cumulative impacts relating to the Proposed General Plan in each of the following sections. Since the Proposed General Plan is not expected to be adopted at the time of publication of the Brighton Landing Specific Plan EIR, findings or conclusions about potential impacts are provided based on the existing General Plan as the most appropriate basis for assessing project impacts.

The Proposed General Plan Update has identified Growth Areas on the east side of the city, and Focus Areas which include parcels within and adjacent to the city that could potentially change from their existing use. These are shown in maps from the Preferred Land Use Alternative, accepted by the City Council on December 13, 2011 as the basis for further study, and included in Appendices C and D of this Draft EIR. There are two Growth Areas, both located along the easternmost edge of the urban growth boundary: the East of Leisure Town Road Growth Area (which includes the Specific Plan area) and the Northeast Growth Area. Focus Areas are primarily located in the central and northern portions of Vacaville and include:

- Glenbrook Plaza
- Alamo Plaza
- Golden Hills Plaza
- Peabody Center
- Elmira Square
- Peabody Road at Marshall Road
- Interchange Business Park
- Vaca Valley Business Park
- Vacaville-Golden Hills Business Park
- Gaspare Property
- Paranjpe Property
- Pierson Property
- CCC Associates Property
- Locke Paddon Community
- Opportunity Hill
- Depot Street Project Site
- RUHD Overlay

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- “ East Monte Vista Shopping Center
- “ Downtown VUSD Properties
- “ Rice McMurtry Properties
- “ Elm School Site
- “ Jepson Middle School.

CITY OF VACAVILLE  
BRIGHTON LANDING SPECIFIC PLAN DRAFT EIR  
ENVIRONMENTAL EVALUATION

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

This section describes the visual resources in the Specific Plan area and provides an evaluation of the effects the proposed Specific Plan would have on these resources. Impacts involving light and glare, such as additional nighttime lighting, are also discussed in this section.

### *A. Regulatory Framework*

The following describes plans, codes, and regulations relating to aesthetics that are applicable to the proposed Specific Plan.

#### **1. Vacaville 1990 General Plan**

The City's 1990 General Plan (existing General Plan) contains goals and policies pertinent to the Brighton Landing Specific Plan area in regards to aesthetics. A selection of relevant General Plan goals and policies is listed in Table 4.1-1.

#### **2. Vacaville Municipal Code**

The City of Vacaville Municipal Code (Code) has a number of Chapters requiring design review and stipulating aesthetic standards, such as ensuring that a project's proposed building type, intensity, design, and size is appropriate for the location and compatible with adjacent uses and resources (Section 14.09.113) and providing standards for architectural design, variety in housing types and massing, configuration of subdivisions, and site improvements such as landscaping and fencing (Section 14.09.074). Additionally, Section 14.09.127.110 of the Code regulates lighting and glare by setting standards for allowable lighting design, installation, and intensity. Specifically, the Code requires that:

- “ Lighting shall be shielded and directed so as not to create a hazard or nuisance to other properties or impact traffic on adjacent streets.
- “ Exterior lighting should be installed to identify building entrances and to promote on-site safety or security.

TABLE 4.1-1 VACAVILLE EXISTING GENERAL PLAN GOALS AND POLICIES RELEVANT TO AESTHETICS

<b>Policy No.</b>	<b>Policies</b>
Guiding Policy 2.1-G1	Maintain Vacaville as a free-standing community surrounded by foothills, farmland and other open space.
Guiding Policy 2.1-G3	Establish open space linkages by preserving habitat areas, including natural creek corridors. Use utility easements where possible as open space linkages.
Guiding Policy 2.1-G4	Minimize conflicts between agriculture and urban uses and provide for a transitional area or buffer between agricultural and urban uses.
Guiding Policy 2.1-G5	Design aesthetically pleasing roadways, including a loop street system lined with trees or other appropriate landscaping, that connect Vacaville neighborhoods and serve planned development. Streets alone should not be used to set the outer limits of urbanization.
Guiding Policy 2.1-G8	Preserve the predominant single-family residential character of Vacaville while providing other housing opportunities. Protect established neighborhoods from incompatible uses.
Guiding Policy 2.1-G 9	Preserve scenic features and the feel of a city surrounded by open space, and preserve view corridors to the hills, and other significant natural areas.
Guiding Policy 2.1-G 10	Protect the natural environment that the City enjoys and use creeks, hills, utility corridors, viable agricultural lands or other significant natural features wherever appropriate to establish ultimate City boundaries.
<i>Implementing Policy 2.1-I 1</i>	<i>Continue to implement design guidelines for all development, including residential, commercial and industrial projects and public facilities. Identify and prepare design guidelines for entry points into the City and Downtown.</i>
<i>Implementing Policy 2.1-I 3</i>	<i>Adopt and implement a plan to establish standards and design guidelines for the city's streets, entry ways and open spaces. Making streets identifiable by their design, marking entrances to the City, finding alternatives to sound walls, and getting the strongest visual lift from existing open spaces are important ingredients of image. The practice of designating some roadways as "scenic" implies that lesser design standards are acceptable on others. The Plan calls for high-quality design throughout the Planning Area.</i>
Guiding Policy 2.5-G 5	Encourage creative site design and architectural quality and variety by a design approval process that provides for a variety of single-family houses and designs and/or multi-family designs.

<b>Policy No.</b>	<b>Policies</b>
<i>Implementing</i> Policy 2.5-I 2	<i>Implement and maintain residential design guidelines which encourage residential subdivisions that are sensitive to topography, limit use of mass grading, provide for functional and aesthetically pleasing neighborhoods, and a variety of housing sizes. Lot sizes and building bulk shall be a component of design guidelines. Residential Design guidelines include illustrations of good design and standards for building siting, landscaping, energy conservation, common areas and community facilities. The Land Use and Development Code addresses infill development and the need to ensure compatibility with existing neighborhoods.</i>
Guiding Policy 2.6-G 7	Ensure that new development is compatible with the character and scale of existing and planned adjoining land uses.
<i>Implementing</i> Policy 4.6-I 12	<i>Cooperate with the school districts in developing standards for Neighborhood Schools Parks that ensure diversity, quality and innovation in design. Because most new neighborhood parks are being planned adjacent to schools, it is important that efforts be made to avoid standardized "programmatic" designs. Each neighborhood park should have a distinct and identifiable character which will enhance its use and function in its residential area. No new neighborhood park should be sited on an arterial street.</i>
Guiding Policy 5.2-G 4	Design public buildings and facilities to maintain and improve the beauty of the Vacaville Planning Area.
Guiding Policy 5.2-G 5	Design public buildings to fit into and complement their ultimate surroundings; buffer public buildings from their surroundings so as to shield unsightly areas from public view.
Guiding Policy 5.3-G 2	Promote the construction of school buildings and facilities which will be a source of civic pride, visual pleasure, and community identity.
<i>Implementing</i> Policy 5.3-I 6	<i>Encourage school districts to promote innovative and high-quality design in school building architecture, landscaping, and campus layout. Schools and adjacent parks are the focus of life for young residents of Vacaville. School buildings constitute important landmarks in the image that children form of their community.</i>
Guiding Policy 8.1-G 1	Preserve and enhance Vacaville's creeks for their value in providing visual amenity, drainage, and wildlife habitat.
Guiding Policy 8.2-G 1	Protect natural environments in recognition of their importance as wildlife habitats and visual amenities.

Source: City of Vacaville, 1990. *Vacaville General Plan*.

- “ Parking lot lighting shall comply with the standards of the Off-Street Parking and Loading Design Guidelines, including, but not limited to, the following:
  - ÿ Exterior lighting shall be a minimum of one foot candle and a maximum of six foot candles;
  - ÿ A photometric plan demonstrating compliance with these lighting standards and a site plan showing the location and design of exterior lighting fixtures shall be required as a condition of project approval:
    - The lighting plan shall be subject to the approval of the Director;
    - The requirement for a photometric plan may be waived if the Director determines that the plan is not necessary to demonstrate compliance with the lighting standards;
  - ÿ Flickering or flashing lights shall not be permitted;
  - ÿ A reduction in the minimum lighting or an exception to the maximum lighting standard requirement may be granted by the Director if the applicant or developer can demonstrate to the satisfaction of the Director that the minimum lighting is unnecessary or that additional lighting is needed.<sup>1</sup>

## ***B. Existing Setting***

The following provides a general description of the existing urban character and visual quality of the proposed Specific Plan area and its immediate surroundings.

### **1. Visual Character**

#### **a. Visual Character of the Specific Plan Area**

The Specific Plan area is mostly agricultural, flat land. The vast majority of the site is under cultivation as row crops, bisected by one unpaved, dirt farm

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<sup>1</sup> City of Vacaville, Municipal Code, 14.09.127.110.

road running west-to-east and two running north-to-south. There are also two farm roads running from the site's southern boundary to the west-to-east farm road. Along the eastern border of the site are a series of PG&E towers and power lines, running parallel to and over a farm road and irrigation ditch. Irrigation pumps are interspersed along the western border of the site, along Leisure Town Road. The only area within the site not devoted entirely to crop growing is its northwest corner, which has a different, more residential character. Figures 4.1-2 through 4.1-4 show the visual character of the Specific Plan area. Figure 4.1-1 shows the locations of the viewpoints from which the photos were taken.

b. Visual Character of the Surrounding Area

On three sides, the Specific Plan area is surrounded by agricultural land. To the north of the site, the visual landscape is of flat, row crops occasionally interspersed by stands of trees, rural residences, and agricultural buildings, extending to the horizon, and is strikingly similar to that within the Specific Plan site itself. While the Southern Pacific Railroad lies just east of the site, extending in a northeast-southwest direction, the tracks are not visible at a distance. On either side of the railroad, there is agricultural land devoted to row crops. In addition to farmland and the railroad, there is a small town, Elmira, to the east of the site, hidden from view by tall trees. South of the site, farmland typical of the area (i.e. flat, row crops) extends to the far horizon line which is marked by the outlines of trees. Gazing to the southwest of the site, the Vaca Mountains range is clearly visible in the distance, defining the horizon-line. The west of the site boundary is a stark, clean boundary between agricultural areas to the east and the developed area of Vacaville to the west. The development to the west is of suburban homes, visually represented by soundwalls, fences, roof-tops, mature ornamental trees, and, occasionally, the second story of a house.



Source: NAIP 2009, City of Vacaville, and The Planning Center | DC&E.

FIGURE 4.1-1  
MAP OF VIEW POINTS

A1



A2



B1



FIGURE 4.1-2  
VIEWS FROM ELMIRA ROAD

B2



C



FIGURE 4.1-3  
VIEWS FROM LEISURE TOWN ROAD

D1



D2



FIGURE 4.1-4  
CORNER PARCELS

## **2. Scenic Vistas Of and Across the Specific Plan Area**

There are no officially designated scenic vistas in the Specific Plan area, although the General Plan does broadly refer to view corridors to the hills. The site's broad, flat expanse with small stands of trees acting as only occasional interruptions provides widely-angled and deep views of the surrounding countryside.

### **a. Views Of and Across the Site from Elmira Road**

To the north of and across the site, the view is partially obscured by stands of trees near to Elmira Road, to the east the view is interrupted by PG&E towers and power lines, and to the west the view is obscured by houses. The only clear and complete view is to the south and southwest of and across the site from Elmira Road, and could be considered a scenic vista as it is in a view corridor to the hills, as demonstrated in Figure 4.1-2. This view sweeps across a patchwork of fields under cultivation and extends to the horizon-line where a blurry line of trees and occasional buildings alternately meet the sky towards the south and mark the base of a mountain range and hills to the southwest.

### **b. Views Of and Across from Leisure Town Road**

From Leisure Town Road there are no scenic vistas. The view from Leisure Town Road of and across the site to the northeast and to the southeast is quite similar, as evident in Figure 4.1-3. Both views are of fields extending to the distant horizon. On the horizon the dim outlines of trees and the faint silhouettes of power lines and the PG&E towers are visible.

## **3. Views from a Scenic Highway**

There is neither an Eligible nor an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway near the Specific Plan area. The closest such highway is State Highway 37, an Eligible State Scenic Highway approximately 25 miles from the Specific Plan area.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> California Department of Transportation, September 7, 2011, *California Scenic Highway Mapping System*, < [http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic\\_highways/index.htm](http://www.dot.ca.gov/hq/LandArch/scenic_highways/index.htm) > , accessed on December 14, 2011.

#### 4. Lighting and Glare

Currently, there is only street lighting along Leisure Town Road and at the intersection of Leisure Town and Elmira Road. On the site itself, the two occupied parcels in its northwest corner also contribute to light in the area.

At the outskirts of town and only bordering a “lit” district on one side, the rest of the Specific Plan area is unlit most of the year. During some agricultural activities, vehicles equipped with lights may traverse the site. In the evening, trains passing through to the east of the site, as well as automobile traffic to its north and south, briefly contribute light to the area. However, because of the close proximity of development and the City of Vacaville to the west of the site, there is likely spillover light pollution obscuring nighttime views of the sky and stars from the Specific Plan area.

The Easterly Wastewater Treatment Plant (EWWTP), which is less than one mile east of the project site, operates 24 hours per day, including at night, and has external lighting at its facilities.<sup>3</sup> During a recent EIR process for a proposed plant expansion, members of the public expressed concern about the EWWTP’s existing and proposed outdoor night lighting. However, the Final EIR found project-specific and cumulative light and glare impacts of the plant expansion to be less-than-significant with the incorporation of a mitigation measure. The project-specific mitigation measure called for, “Design plans that configure exterior EWWTP light fixtures to emphasize lower intensity light. Lighting shall be directed downward in order to minimize glare on adjacent uses and minimize impacts to night sky views.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> City of Vacaville, EWWTP Tertiary Project Final Environmental Impact Report, 4.1 Aesthetics  
[http://www.ci.vacaville.ca.us/departments/public\\_works/\\_\\_\\_documents/Public%20Works/4.1%20Aesthetics.pdf](http://www.ci.vacaville.ca.us/departments/public_works/___documents/Public%20Works/4.1%20Aesthetics.pdf), accessed on April 9, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> City of Vacaville, EWWTP Tertiary Project Final Environmental Impact Report, 4.1 Aesthetics,  
[http://www.ci.vacaville.ca.us/departments/public\\_works/\\_\\_\\_documents/Public%20Works/4.1%20Aesthetics.pdf](http://www.ci.vacaville.ca.us/departments/public_works/___documents/Public%20Works/4.1%20Aesthetics.pdf), accessed on April 9, 2012.

### *C. Standards of Significance*

The Specific Plan would have a significant impact to visual and design factors if it would:

1. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
2. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
3. Substantially damage scenic resources, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### *D. Project Impacts*

Below is a discussion of the impacts of the proposed Specific Plan on the aesthetic character of the Specific Plan area and its immediate vicinity. This discussion responds to each of the potential impacts identified in the Standards of Significance.

#### **1. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.**

##### a. Visual Character of the Specific Plan Area

Development under the Specific Plan would significantly alter the existing visual character of the site. The character would shift from undeveloped, rural, flat, open farmland to suburban, landscaped, populated residential development. Residential and neighborhood commercial development would adhere to City design guidelines, as well as to General Plan and Zoning Code policies, standards, and regulations. The Specific Plan area would have a typical suburban design, replete with cul-de-sacs, meandering sidewalks, and schools, promoting a moderately dense, community neighborhood. This would be very different from its current, sparsely populated (by either buildings or residents), agricultural character. The stands of trees and creek banks

would also disappear. Some areas of the site now devoted to crops would become landscaped yards, parks, trails and streets as demonstrated in Chapter 3, the Project Description. Additionally, the Specific Plan would transform the area into a more active and inviting space by creating distinctive entry ways to the neighborhood and a system of interlocking sidewalk paths, bike paths, and trails.

To some people this change in landscape from agricultural to developed land would be a deterioration and to others it would represent an improvement. The 1990 General Plan includes policies to ensure that new development is compatible with the character and scale of existing and planned adjoining uses and preserves the predominant single-family residential character of Vacaville. Development under the Specific Plan would unquestionably alter the existing visual character (i.e. rural and agricultural) by extending the City's single-family residential character. This would amount to a substantial change and this change cannot likely be mitigated. Therefore, there would a *significant* impact.

**Impact AES-1:** The visual character of the site would be substantially altered.

Mitigation Measure AES-1: There are no available mitigation measures.

Significance After Mitigation: This change cannot be mitigated and the impact would be *significant and unavoidable*.

b. Visual Character of Surrounding Area

Development under the Specific Plan would change much of the existing visual character of the surrounding area. As viewed from either Leisure Town Road or Elmira Road and shown on Figures 4.1-2 and 4.1-3, the surrounding area would no longer be a vast stretch of flat farmland stretching to the horizon in the north, east, and south with a clear border with residential development to the west. Instead it would extend the residential border in the

west to create a jutting peninsula of suburban development within an agricultural landscape.

Visually, approaching the area from either direction along Elmira Road Figure 4.1-2 or looking east from Leisure Town Road Figure 4.1-3 (viewpoints B2 and C), the character would shift from one of a sparsely populated patchwork of level fields continuing to the horizon, interrupted only occasionally by a home, a stand of trees, or power lines, to views to the south of soundwalls, fences, roof-tops, trees, and the second story of homes or of the proposed private school. The visual character of the area, as seen from Elmira Road, looking southwest and shown in Figure 4.1-2 (viewpoints A1 and A2), the new development would likely blend in with existing development on the opposite side of Leisure Town Road, but would also obscure views of the mountains. From the south, along Fry Road, the rural, agricultural visual character is already interrupted by the development west of Leisure Town Road and the buildings on the parcels on the northwest corner of the site, but it would be substantially changed with the Specific Plan development by the introduction of additional homes, soundwalls, fencing, and ornamental trees under the Specific Plan.

In conclusion, by placing a new development on largely undeveloped agricultural land, the Specific Plan would significantly the existing visual character of the surrounding area. While, as with the visual character of the site itself, the change in landscape would be viewed by some people as a deterioration and by others as an improvement, there would still be a *significant* impact.

**Impact AES-2:** The visual character of the surrounding area would be substantially altered.

Mitigation Measure AES-1: There are no available mitigation measures.

Significance After Mitigation: This change cannot be mitigated and the impact would be *significant and unavoidable*.

**2. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.**

There are no officially designated vistas in the existing General Plan. However, there are policies calling for preservation of scenic features and view corridors to the hills. As mentioned earlier, the views to the east and southeast are interrupted by PG&E towers and lines, while those to the west are obstructed by residential development. However, views along Elmira Road facing south or southeast across the site would no longer include the scenic vista of level farmlands reaching to mountains on the distant horizon. Instead, the view would be largely of landscaping and single-family homes. This would represent a *significant impact* on a scenic vista.

**Impact AES-3:** Development under the Specific Plan would have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

Mitigation Measure AES-3: There are no available mitigation measures.

Significance After Mitigation: Preservation of scenic features and view corridors to the hills is a policy within the existing General Plan. There is only one area from which a scenic vista would be impacted, namely the view from Elmira Road towards the south and southwest, and it would be eliminated by development under the Specific Plan. There are no feasible mitigation measures that can reduce the substantial adverse effects to a scenic vista to less-than-significant levels. This impact remains *significant and unavoidable*.

**3. Substantially degrade the view from a scenic highway, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings.**

A view from a scenic highway would not be substantially degraded because there is neither an Eligible nor an Officially Designated State Scenic Highway in the immediate environs. Therefore, development under the Specific Plan would have *no impact* on the view from a scenic highway.

**4. Expose people to substantial light or glare, which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.**

Development under the Specific Plan, although it would meet Code standards, in comparison to current conditions, would expose people to substantial light in the evenings, adversely affecting nighttime views in the area. Currently, lighting in the area is limited to street lighting along one border of the site, headlights from passing vehicular and rail traffic, a small number of buildings in the northwest corner of the site, lighting from the EWWTP, and headlights from occasional nighttime use of farm equipment. These activities, excepting the EWWTP, generate little regular nighttime light, with the bulk of the site remaining dark throughout most evenings. The Specific Plan would add a new regional high school which will likely include an artificially-lit outdoor sports field and parking lot. Additionally, the proposed project would add many homes, streetlamps and vehicles to the area, all representing new sources of nighttime light. Adding these light sources would likely detract from views of the nighttime sky and stars, however, these views are already at least partially obscured by the combined light of existing development to the west and east of the site and the City of Vacaville itself. Yet, nighttime lighting from buildout of the proposed project would be a potentially *significant* impact.

**Impact AES-4:** Development under the Specific Plan may expose people to substantial light or glare and impact nighttime views.

Mitigation Measure AES-4: The Specific Plan shall incorporate design standards to ensure that the:

- a. Exterior lighting (for example on parking lots, schools, or commercial buildings) is angled downwards to preclude or minimize to the maximum extent practicable the glare observed by viewers on the ground;
- b. Reflectivity of materials used is not greater than the reflectivity of standard materials used in residential and commercial developments.

- c. A lighting plan shall be prepared that meets requirements of GP and Muni Code to minimize impacts to the extent feasible and includes operational plans for non-residential uses that restrict late night lighting.
- d. Compliance with this mitigation measure shall be determined by the City of Vacaville during the design review process. Applications for Design Review shall include design of light fixtures to demonstrate compliance with this standard.

Significance After Mitigation: Implementation of this mitigation measure would reduce impacts associated with lighting and glare to the maximum extent practicable and result in a *less-than-significant* impact.

### ***E. Cumulative Impacts***

The nature of the visual influence of physical development is such that multiple projects will contribute to a cumulative aesthetic impact only when located close to one another. In order to significantly and cumulatively impact visual quality, projects must be contained in the same views and visually associated within similar perspectives. For this reason, the following analysis, examines the immediate Specific Plan area vicinity and accounts for the visual corridor of the hills, looking south and southwest from the Specific Plan area.

#### **1. With Approved Projects**

A new residential neighborhood, Southtown, is under construction approximately one mile southwest of the Specific Plan area between Nut Tree Road and Leisure Town Road. However, this neighborhood will lie just outside the view corridor and behind existing development west of Leisure Town Road. Another approved project, Southtown Commons, is located approximately one mile south of the Specific Plan area, and is within the view corridor to the hills. It is not immediately adjacent to the Specific Plan area, will be a relatively small development, and is within the urban growth boundary. However, since it is within the view corridor, when considered together with

the proposed project, it would have a *significant* and *unavoidable* impact on views.

**Impact AES-CUM-1:** Views of hills, looking south and southwest over the Specific Plan area would be obstructed by the Brighton Landing Project together with the Southtown Commons (an approved project).

Mitigation Measure AES-CUM-1: There are no available mitigation measures.

Significance After Mitigation: This change cannot be mitigated and the impact would be *significant and unavoidable*.

## **2. Under Existing 1990 General Plan**

Much of the land within the view corridor to the south of the Specific Plan area is outside of city boundaries, constituting part of unincorporated Solano County. The Solano County General Plan designates this land as Agriculture and it would be restricted to agricultural uses and related restrictions. There is, however, land to the south and southwest of the Specific Plan area within Vacaville's boundaries, which is designated as residential, including the lands within 1,000 feet of the east side of Leisure Town Road, which are designated as Estate Residential on the current General Plan. Future development on this land could result in obstructing part of the view corridor. Although much of this land is a mile or more south and north of the Specific Plan area, development-related impacts on the view corridor under buildout of the 1990 General Plan in addition to the proposed project's change to the City's planned urban area would be a *significant* impact.

**Impact AES-CUM-2:** Views of hills, looking south and southwest over the Specific Plan area would be obstructed by the Brighton Landing Project together with other land to the south and southwest that would be developed under the existing 1990 General Plan.

Mitigation Measure AES-CUM-2: There are no available mitigation measures.

Significance After Mitigation: This change cannot be mitigated and the impact would be *significant and unavoidable*.

### **3. With Proposed General Plan Update<sup>5</sup>**

The Proposed General Plan Update's Preferred Land Use Alternative map shows the land adjacent to the Specific Plan area in the north and the south as primarily residential, which represents a change from its currently agricultural land use. At buildout, this change would further extend the residential visual character of the city, but also would, together with the Specific Plan, obstruct views of the hills (i.e. a scenic vista), causing a cumulative effect of visually expanding the urban area to a greater extent than currently anticipated in the City's 1990 General Plan. The project would contribute to this expansion of the City's urban "footprint."

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<sup>5</sup> Land uses are shown on the Preferred Land Use Alternative accepted by the City Council on December 13, 2011. Although the update is in progress, and the General Plan in draft form, policies are subject to change and have not therefore been taken into account in this analysis.

CITY OF VACAVILLE  
BRIGHTON LANDING SPECIFIC PLAN DRAFT EIR  
AESTHETICS

## 4.2 AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

This section evaluates potential impacts on the existing agricultural resources found within and adjacent to the Specific Plan area.

### *A. Regulatory Framework*

This section summarizes key State and local regulations, policies, and programs pertaining to agriculture in the Specific Plan area.

#### **1. State Regulations and Programs**

State regulations and programs pertaining to agricultural resources are discussed in this section.

##### **a. Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program**

Within the California Natural Resources Agency, the State Department of Conservation (DOC) provides technical services and information to promote informed land-use decisions and sound management of the State's natural resources. DOC manages the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP), which supports agriculture throughout California by developing maps and statistical data for analyzing land use impacts to farmland. Every two years, FMMP publishes a field report for each county in the State. The most recent field report for Solano County was published in 2008. The field report categorizes land by agricultural production potential, according to the following classifications:

- “ **Prime Farmland** has the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. Prime Farmland has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agriculture production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- “ **Farmland of Statewide Importance** is similar to Prime Farmland, but with minor shortcomings, such as steeper slopes or less ability to store soil moisture. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.

- “ **Unique Farmland** consists of lesser quality soils used for the production of the State’s leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated, but may include non-irrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been farmed at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- “ **Grazing Land** is the land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock.
- “ **Urban and Built-Up Land** is occupied by structures with a building density of at least one unit per 1.5 acres, or approximately six structures to a 10-acre parcel. Common examples include residential structures, industrial structures, commercial structures, institutional facilities, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment structures, and water control structures.
- “ **Other Land** is land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low density rural developments, brush, timber, wetlands, riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing, confined livestock, poultry facilities, aquaculture facilities, and strip mines. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.
- “ **Water** is used to describe perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.

b. Williamson Act

The California Land Conservation Act, better known as the Williamson Act, conserves agricultural and open space lands through property tax incentives and voluntary restrictive land use contracts administered by local governments under State regulations. Private landowners voluntarily restrict their land to agricultural and compatible open space uses under minimum ten-year rolling term contracts, with counties and cities also acting voluntarily. In

return, restricted parcels are assessed for property tax purposes at a rate consistent with their actual use, rather than potential market value.<sup>1</sup>

## **2. Solano County Regulations and Policies**

The Solano County General Plan and County Code include policies and regulations related to agriculture. These policies and regulations apply to the lands outside of the Vacaville city limits.

### **a. Solano County General Plan**

The Solano County General Plan, which was adopted in November 2008, is a long-range guide for the future of land use in the unincorporated areas of the county. The Plan includes an Agriculture Element with goals and policies for agriculture that apply to lands adjacent to, and surrounding, Vacaville. The General Plan considers agriculture to be a significant business within Solano County and highlights agriculture as a major theme of the Plan. One specific provision requires using an urban-agricultural buffer of approximately 300 to 500 feet of vegetated land in municipal service areas between residential and agricultural uses.<sup>2</sup> Such buffers are considered tools that can be used both to minimize resident-farmer conflict and to reduce pesticide drift.<sup>3</sup> The Plan includes policies to strengthen the Williamson Act, encourages the conservation of water resources for agricultural purposes, and encourages county water districts to expand agricultural water usage and explore new water sources.

In addition, the Plan establishes ten unique production regions defined by the agricultural environment. The five regions bordering the City of Vacaville are the Dixon Ridge; Elmira and Maine Prairie; Jepson Prairie; Pleasants, Vacca, and Lagoon Valleys; and Western Hills regions.

To the immediate north, east, and south of the Specific Plan area is the Elmira and Maine Prairie agricultural region. Field crops, such as alfalfa, corn, and

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<sup>1</sup> California Department of Conservation, 2002. *California Land Conservation (Williamson) Act Status Report*, page 1.

<sup>2</sup> Solano County, 2008. *General Plan*, Agriculture Chapter, page AG-14.

<sup>3</sup> Solano County, 2008. *General Plan*, Agriculture Chapter, page AG-14.

wheat are typical of this region. Usually, these field crops are purchased by local dairies as livestock feed.

b. Solano County Code

Chapter 2.2 of the Solano County Code, commonly known as the “Right-to-Farm Ordinance,” protects agricultural operations from nuisance complaints. Nuisance complaints against agricultural uses are most commonly issued when residential uses are located adjacent to agricultural operations. These complaints can cease or curtail agricultural operations and prevent investment in local agricultural infrastructure or operations that would result in a boost to the local economy. Chapter 2.2 protects the right of an agricultural operator to continue any agricultural operation that took place before the establishment of adjacent residential uses. Additionally, upon the purchase of real property in agricultural areas, the County notifies the buyers to accept inconveniences or discomforts resulting from nearby agricultural activities as a normal and necessary aspect of living in a county with a strong rural character and a healthy agriculture sector. To assist in resolving problems between residential and agricultural land use, an Agricultural Grievance Committee has been created in Solano County to arbitrate and mediate disputes concerning agricultural operations.<sup>4</sup>

c. Land Conservation Contract

As a method of implementing the Williamson Act locally, Solano County has adopted Uniform Rules and Procedures Governing Agricultural Preserves and Land Conservation Contracts (Uniform Rules). These uniform rules require a landowner to first establish an agricultural preserve prior to entering into a land conservation contract.<sup>5</sup> An agricultural preserve officially devotes

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<sup>4</sup> Solano County Code, <http://www.co.solano.ca.us/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?BlobID=4607>, accessed on May 17, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Solano County, 2008. *Final Draft Solano County Uniform Rules and Procedures Governing Agricultural Preserves and Land Conservation Contracts*, <http://www.co.solano.ca.us/civica/filebank/blobdload.asp?blobid=2492#page=>, accessed December 2, 2011.

an area solely to agricultural, recreational, or open space uses.<sup>6</sup> Once land is part of an agricultural preserve, then the property owner can enter into a land conservation contract with the County, which:

- “ Restricts land uses to agricultural, recreational, or open space for a minimum of ten years.
- “ Reduces property taxes for the length of the contract.
- “ Assesses property by agricultural production capacity, as opposed to fair market value or Proposition 13 value.<sup>7</sup>

### 3. Vacaville 1990 General Plan

The 1990 General Plan (existing General Plan) addresses agriculture in its Land Use and Open Space Elements. The Land Use Element, in conjunction with the Land Use and Development Code, describes appropriate land uses allowed under the Agriculture and Agricultural Buffer land use designations.

The Agriculture land use designation allows agricultural uses such as growing fruit and nut trees, vegetables, grains, field crops, horticultural specialties, and timber; accessory structures such as farm employee housing and housing for the processing of agricultural products; livestock grazing; single-family dwellings and accessory uses such as raising poultry, rabbits and other small animals; seasonal roadside stands for the sale of agricultural produce grown on-site; stables and corrals for livestock keeping; and minor telecommunication facilities.

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<sup>6</sup> Solano County, 2008. *Final Draft Solano County Uniform Rules and Procedures Governing Agricultural Preserves and Land Conservation Contracts*, <http://www.co.solano.ca.us/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=2492#page=>, accessed December 2, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Solano County, 2008. *Final Draft Solano County Uniform Rules and Procedures Governing Agricultural Preserves and Land Conservation Contracts*, <http://www.co.solano.ca.us/civicax/filebank/blobdload.aspx?blobid=2492#page=>, accessed December 2, 2011.

The Agricultural Buffer designation, also known as the Transitional Zone, separates intensive agriculture operations from urban development by allowing low intensity transitional uses such as parks or floodwater basins.

Both the Land Use Element and the Open Space Element include policies to guide agricultural land use in Vacaville. Table 4.2-1 presents policies from the 1990 General Plan relevant to agriculture.

Notably, Policy 2.10-G2 of the 1990 General Plan calls for an agricultural mitigation with any urban development on lands east of Leisure Town Road. Essentially, for every acre converted to non-agricultural uses, developers would be required to permanently preserve at least one acre of land located outside of but within 1 mile of the 1990 General Plan-designated Urban Growth Boundary as agricultural land or open space.<sup>8</sup>

#### **4. Land Use and Development Code**

The Specific Plan area is currently zoned Agriculture. The Zoning Code subsection of the City's Land Use and Development Code contains two agricultural zoning code designations relevant to the proposed project: Agriculture District Uses and Development Standards (AG).<sup>9</sup> The AG district accommodates long-term commercial animal-raising and crop cultivation, and typical uses and structures accessory to farm or ranch operation, such as grazing, farm employee housing, and seasonal roadside stands.<sup>10</sup> The zoning code lists specific intentions informing the standards in the AG district, including:

- “ Protect land for long-term agricultural use on land suitable for raising crops or livestock.

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<sup>8</sup> City of Vacaville, 1990. *Vacaville General Plan*, pages 43 to 44.

<sup>9</sup> City of Vacaville, 2011. *Municipal Code*, Land Use and Development Code, Division 14.09 Zoning.

<sup>10</sup> City of Vacaville, 2011, *Municipal Code*, Land Use and Development Code, Division 14.09 Zoning, Chapter 14.09.097 Agriculture Districts – AG, Agriculture District Uses and Development Standards.

TABLE 4.2-1 1990 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURE

Policy Number	Policy
<b>Land Use Element</b>	
Policy 2.1-G 4	Minimize conflicts between agriculture and urban uses and provide for a transitional area or buffer between agricultural and urban uses.
Policy 2.1-I 2	Continue to work through established agreements with the City of Fairfield, City of Dixon, Solano County, and Solano Irrigation District and negotiate with other public and private agencies to ensure creation of agricultural zones and open space corridors that will serve as community separators between Vacaville and Fairfield and Vacaville and Dixon.
Policy 2.1-I 4	Establish a mechanism whereby new development in City fringe areas may be assessed impact fees or be required to purchase conservation easements to acquire lands designated for protection within community separators or Agricultural Buffers.
Policy 2.1-I 5	Implement adopted resource protection regulations that establish standards for designated agriculture and hillside agriculture areas and public open space for protection of major ridgelines, creek and riparian corridors, wetlands, and hillsides. Standards for open space management and grading also shall be established.
Policy 2.1-I 11	Implement provisions of the agriculture hillside district which provide for a maximum density of 1 unit per 20 acres which recognize the limited residential development potential of the land due to its physical characteristics and which provide for a transfer of density to residential land use designations.
Policy 2.2-G 1	Establish a long-term Planning Area, and within this area distinguish an agricultural service zone and an urban service zone.
Policy 2.2-I 1	In accordance with the May 1995 City of Vacaville/Solano Irrigation District Master Water Agreement, urban services will be extended only to development within the Urban Service Area. Any consideration by the City to expand the Urban Service Area will be in accordance with the provisions of the agreement, which addresses future extension of the urban service area.  In conjunction with the consideration of a Specific Plan for the property located east of Leisure Town Road and south of the Locke Paddon subdivision (within the existing Urban Service Area), a determination shall be made regarding the potential expansion of the Urban Service Area to the east in order to establish a permanent agricultural buffer on the eastern edge of the city. The City will allow no development east of Leisure Town Road until this determination is made.

TABLE 4.2-1 1990 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURE  
 (CONTINUED)

Policy Number	Policy
	This will also ensure that any development and extension of urban services and infrastructure east of Leisure Town Road is not planned in a piecemeal manner.
Policy 2.2-I 4	Maintain and implement agreements with the Solano Irrigation District, nearby cities and the County and negotiate agreements with other local government entities to help direct the provision of urban services while maintaining as much viable agriculture on prime agricultural soils as is practical and supportive of regional agricultural production consistent with the policies of this General Plan.
Policy 2.3-I 18	The second and final phase of the Spring Lane project, south of Buck Avenue and west of Alamo Drive, shall not be developed until the Wykoff water system is adequately improved in accordance with the plans approved by the City. Ridges and slopes of 25 percent and greater shall remain undeveloped and designated as Hillside Agriculture in order to maintain agricultural grazing areas, protect the public health and safety and to provide for open space.
Policies 2.3-I 21 and 2.3-I 22	In conjunction with the consideration of a Specific Plan for the property located east of Leisure Town Road and south of the Locke Paddon subdivision (within the existing Urban Service Area), a determination shall be made regarding the potential expansion of the Urban Service Area to the east in order to establish a permanent agricultural buffer on the eastern edge of the city. The City will allow no development east of Leisure Town Road until this determination is made. This will also ensure that any development and extension of urban services and infrastructure east of Leisure Town Road is not planned in a piecemeal manner.
Policy 2.5-I 8	<p>Maintain buffers between residential and agricultural areas and between residential areas and industrial parks as required by adopted regulations and Policy Plans. The minimum separation shall be as follows:</p> <p><b>Between residential and agricultural uses:</b> 500 feet. Standards for walls and landscaping and compatible uses permitted within the buffer area are defined in the Land Use and Development Code and Policy Plans. The Planning Commission may reduce this standard upon review and approval of a Planned Development where design features such as solid masonry walls and appropriate building setbacks are provided. In addition, Disclosure Statements and a Right to Farm Deed Restriction may also be required. (Where the Agricultural Buffer borders the Cypress Lakes Golf Course, the width shall be determined by the noise and safety buffer requirements for the Southern</p>

TABLE 4.2-1 1990 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURE  
 (CONTINUED)

Policy Number	Policy
	Pacific Rail Road.)
	<b>Between residential, business, and industrial park uses: 200 feet.</b>
Policy 2.10-G 1	To enhance and protect the City's quality of life, establish and maintain a Growth Boundary so that urban development will be focused within the Growth Boundary and the land outside the Growth Boundary will not be redesignated other than for agriculture, park, open space, public facility and utility uses until March 1, 2028, specifically as set forth in Implementing Policies 2.10-I 1 through 2.10-I 4.
Policy 2.10-G 2	In conjunction with approval of any new urban development on lands inside the Growth Boundary but east of Leisure Town Road and between the Locke Paddon Colony areas on the north and New Alamo Creek on the south, the City shall require such development to mitigate its impact on agricultural and open space lands by preserving, to the extent consistent with applicable law, for each acre of land developed, at least 1 acre of land outside the Growth Boundary but within Pleasants Valley, Upper Lagoon Valley, Vaca Valley, or any other location that is within 1 mile of the Growth Boundary. Alternatively, to the extent consistent with applicable law, such development may pay an equivalent in-lieu fee as determined by the City in consultation with the Solano Land Trust. Lands acquired directly or with fees collected pursuant to this requirement shall first be offered to the Solano Land Trust. Any such fees transferred to the Solano Land Trust may only be used to acquire or protect lands outside of the Growth Boundary but within 1 mile of the Growth Boundary, or within Pleasants Valley, Upper Lagoon Valley, or Vaca Valley. Acquisitions pursuant to this requirement shall be coordinated with the Solano Land Trust.
Policy 2.10-G 3	If the Solano County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) adopts an open space or agricultural land mitigation program applicable to the area defined in Guiding Policy 2.10-G 2, lands defined therein shall be subject only to the requirements of the LAFCO mitigation program, provided that if the requirement described in Policy 2.10-G 2 provides greater mitigation than the LAFCO requirement, the incremental difference between the two programs shall be imposed in addition to the LAFCO requirement to the maximum extent permitted by State law. To the extent the LAFCO requirement and this requirement overlap, development shall be subject to only the LAFCO requirement.

TABLE 4.2-1 1990 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURE  
 (CONTINUED)

<b>Policy Number</b>	<b>Policy</b>
Policy 2.10-I 1	Establish and maintain a Growth Boundary so that urban development within the City’s land use jurisdiction will be focused within the Growth Boundary and the land outside the Growth Boundary but within the City’s land use jurisdiction will be maintained primarily for agriculture, park, open space, public facility, and utility uses until March 1, 2028, as generally described in Guiding Policies 2.10-G1 through 2.10-G3, and as more specifically set forth in Implementing Policies 2.10-I2 through 2.10-I4. Until March 1, 2028, Section 2.10 of the Vacaville General Plan Land Use Element may be amended only by the voters of the City or as provided in Implementing Policy 2.10-I4.
Policy 2.10-I 2	The Growth Boundary is a line beyond which the General Plan land use designation cannot be amended to apply any designation other than Public Parks, Open Space, Agriculture, or Hillside Agriculture (as those designations are defined in the General Plan as amended through the Submittal Date), except by the voters or as provided in Implementing Policy 2.10-I 4. Additionally, any lands outside the Growth Boundary that are not currently subject to the General Plan, but which may become so in the future, shall be subject to these same restrictions on land use designations.
<b>Open Space Element</b>	
Policy 3.5-G 5	Maintain a compact urban form and locate growth areas to minimize loss of agricultural resources.
Policy 3.5-G 6	Minimize conflicts between urban and agricultural uses by establishing Agricultural Buffers and community separators.
Policy 3.5-I 1	Maintain agricultural production areas east of Leisure Town Road. In accordance with policies set forth in the 1980 General Plan, maintain agricultural production areas in Upper Lagoon Valley, Bassford Canyon and the Vaca Valley.
Policy 3.5-I 2	Ridges and slopes at or exceeding 25 percent shall remain undeveloped in order to maintain agricultural grazing areas, protect the public health and safety, and to provide for community separation and open space.
Policy 3.5-I 8	Require a permanent Agricultural Buffer as part of residential developments on the urban edge. Establish appropriate development standards, density transfer provisions, and use regulations for these buffer areas.
Policy 3.5-I 9	Avoid pressures for conversion of agricultural land to urban use east of Leisure Town Road by implementing and maintaining the agreement with the Solano Irrigation District to limit urban water service

TABLE 4.2-1 1990 GENERAL PLAN POLICIES RELEVANT TO AGRICULTURE  
 (CONTINUED)

Policy Number	Policy
	to these areas. In accordance with policies set forth in the 1980 General Plan, avoid pressures for conversion of agricultural land to urban use in Upper Lagoon Valley, Bassford Canyon and the Vaca Valley.
Policy 3.5-I 11	Do not convert Public Open Space lands to developed urban uses unless an overriding public purpose requires such a change. Do not convert Agricultural Buffer lands to developed urban uses except where such a conversion is part of a logical extension of the Urban Service Area and where an adequate Agricultural Buffer can still be maintained.
Policy 3.5-I 12	Public Open Space lands and Agricultural Buffers that are converted to developed urban use shall be compensated for by providing equal or better lands for a similar use in another location. All proceeds that the City receives from any sale of Public Open Space lands and Agricultural Buffers shall be used to acquire additional open space lands elsewhere.

Source: City of Vacaville, 1990. *Vacaville General Plan*.

- “ Provide for interim agricultural uses on land potentially suitable for future development.
- “ Provide for single-family dwellings and accessory uses pertinent to a principal agricultural use.
- “ Prevent intrusion of urban development into prime agricultural areas.

***B. Existing Conditions***

The Specific Plan area is on agricultural land, just across Leisure Town Road from the City limits and a series of residential neighborhoods. This type of land-use pattern is indicative of changes to Vacaville, which, while founded as an agricultural community, is now a thriving and growing city with agricultural uses pushed to its outskirts. In alignment with its current zoning desig-

nation, "Agriculture,"<sup>11</sup> the Specific Plan area and adjacent lands to the north, east, and south are agricultural lands. Much of the Specific Plan area land is currently cultivated with row crops.

Historically, the Specific Plan area was planted with corn, wheat, or sunflower crops. In 2011, all 217.21 acres were devoted to corn. As of 2010, corn was worth \$892 per acre.<sup>12</sup> The land is currently valued at \$5,275,000 with a \$36,384.42 property tax bill for the 2011-12 fiscal year.<sup>13</sup>

### **1. Farmland Classifications**

Table 4.2-2 describes the acreage and identifies the classification of agricultural land within the Specific Plan area.

As illustrated in Figure 4.2-1, over 90 percent of the Specific Plan area is considered Prime Farmland. The remaining land consists of a narrow strip of Urban and Built-Up Land running parallel to the west of the Specific Plan area along Leisure Town Road, a triangular area of Unique Farmland extending across the southeast corner of the Specific Plan area, and a square area of Other Land near the northwest corner of the Specific Plan area. Two single family residential homes are located on the area designated Other Land.

Although not within the Specific Plan area, the proposed detention basin would be located on approximately 17.6 acres of farmland, which is designated Unique Farmland. Additionally, the portion of the Agricultural Buffer which lies outside of the Specific Plan area would be located on approximately 12.69 acres of Prime Farmland and 7.04 acres of Unique Farmland.

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<sup>11</sup> The City of Vacaville Community Development Department, City of Vacaville Zoning Map, 2008, [http://cityofvacaville.com/departments/community\\_development/\\_\\_\\_documents/plans\\_reports/Zoning%20for%20Website%2034x44.pdf](http://cityofvacaville.com/departments/community_development/___documents/plans_reports/Zoning%20for%20Website%2034x44.pdf), accessed on December 5, 2011.

<sup>12</sup> Solano County Department of Agriculture, "Solano County 2010 Crop and Livestock Report," page 8.

<sup>13</sup> Solano County Online Tax Information, <https://www.solanocounty.com/depts/ttcc/onlinetaxinfo.asp>, accessed on December 29, 2011.



Source: NAIP 2009, City of Vacaville, CA Department of Conservation and The Planning Center | DC&E.

- Prime Farmland
- Unique Farmland
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Grazing Land

FIGURE 4.2-1  
 IMPORTANT FARMLANDS - FARMLAND CLASSIFICATION

TABLE 4.2-2 AGRICULTURAL LAND

	Urban and Built-Up Land (Acres)	Prime Farmland (Acres)	Unique Farmland (Acres)	Other Land (Acres)
Study Area	0.08	203.24	7.06	7.28
Agricultural Buffer (Outside of Study Area)	-	12.69	7.04	-
Detention Basin	-	-	17.6	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.08</b>	<b>215.93</b>	<b>31.7</b>	<b>7.28</b>

Source: Department of Conservation, Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program GIS data, 2008.

## 2. Williamson Act Contracts

The Williamson Act, as described earlier, provides an important tool for land easement in the agricultural areas surrounding Vacaville. Figure 4.2-2 shows that there is no land under Williamson Act contract in the Specific Plan area.

### C. Standards of Significance<sup>14</sup>

Per Appendix G of the CEQA guidelines, the Specific Plan would have significant impacts on agricultural resource if it would:

1. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Natural Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use.
2. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use.

<sup>14</sup> Although Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines also includes standards for forest lands, this is not being evaluated under the scope of this document.



Source: NAIP 2009, City of Vacaville, CA Department of Conservation and The Planning Center | DC&E.

CONTRACT CATEGORY

-  Prime
-  Prime Non-Renewal

FIGURE 4.2-2  
 WILLIAMSON ACT - ACTIVE CONTRACTS

3. Conflict with an existing Williamson Act Contract.
4. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code section 51104(g)).
5. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.
6. Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to non-agricultural use.

*D. Project Impacts*

The following discussion provides an analysis of potential agricultural impacts that could occur as a result of implementation of the Specific Plan.

**1. Conversion of prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance (farmland) to non-agricultural use.**

Much of the Specific Plan area is under cultivation and considered key farmland, with 203.24 acres of Prime Farmland covering the majority of the Project site and an additional 7.06 acres of Unique Farmland located in the site's southeast corner. There are three components of the proposed project that would convert farmland to non-agricultural use:

- “ The Specific Plan proposes to convert the approximately 211 acres of land from its current agricultural use to residential, community facility, and possible commercial uses.
- “ Additionally, a proposed agricultural buffer, which would extend 385 feet outside of the Project site, and 115 feet inside the Project site, would take another 12.69 acres of Prime Farmland and 7.04 acres Unique Farmland out of productive use. Potential uses in the agricultural buffer are described in the 1990 existing General Plan. These uses include open space,

solar panels, and a detention basin. Construction of the detention basin would involve removal of top soil and therefore prevent agricultural use.

- “ The planned detention basin to the southeast of the Specific Plan area would remove an additional 17.6 acres of Unique Farmland from agricultural use.

The Preferred Land Use Alternative envisions the Specific Plan area and environs as primarily low-density residential with schools and parks, along with a scattering of commercial zones.<sup>15</sup> However, under the 1990 General Plan, this farmland was designated as agricultural land and its conversion to non-agricultural land has not been previously analyzed under CEQA. Therefore, there would be a *significant* impact to both Prime Farmland and Unique Farmland.

**Impact AGRI-1:** Development under the Specific Plan would convert Prime and Unique Farmlands to non-agricultural use.

Mitigation Measure AGRI-1: A total of 254.54 acres of agricultural land that is viable for farming operations would be purchased and preserved. The area represents the sum of the area of the agricultural buffer outside of the Specific Plan area (12.69 + 7.04 acres), the detention basin (17.6 acres), and the entire Specific Plan area (217.21 acres, including residential parcels). This land would be near the Urban Growth Boundary and in Solano County. This would satisfy the 1990 General Plan policy that the City shall require development in the Specific Plan area “to mitigate its impact on agricultural and open space lands by preserving, to the extent consistent with applicable law, for each acre of land developed, at least one acre of land outside the Growth Boundary but within Pleasants Valley, Upper Lagoon Valley, or Vaca Valley, or any other location that is within 1 mile of the Growth Boundary. Alternatively, to the extent consistent with applicable law, such development may pay an equivalent in-

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<sup>15</sup> City of Vacaville, 2011. *City Council Preferred Land Use Alternative: Jepson Ranch General Plan Land Use Diagram.*

lieu fee as determined by City in consultation with the Solano Land Trust. Lands acquired directly or with fees collected pursuant to this requirement shall first be offered to the Solano Land Trust. Any such fees transferred to the Solano Land Trust may only be used to acquire or protect lands outside of the Growth Boundary but within 1 mile of the Growth Boundary, or within Pleasants Valley, Upper Lagoon Valley, or Vaca Valley. Acquisitions pursuant to this requirement shall be coordinated with the Solano Land Trust.”

Significance After Mitigation: Although agricultural land would be preserved elsewhere, the Prime and Unique Farmland in the Specific Plan area, in the proposed Agricultural Buffer area beyond the project boundary, and in the detention basin area would all still be permanently lost for agricultural use. Therefore, even with mitigation, this impact is *significant and unavoidable*.

## **2. Conflicts with existing zoning for agricultural use.**

All 217 acres of the Specific Plan area is zoned for agricultural use under the 1990 General Plan and Municipal Code. The proposed Specific Plan calls for developing the area into a residential neighborhood with two schools. This new land use would conflict with the site’s existing zoning and with the zoning on the adjacent property that would be designated as a portion of the agricultural buffer. As part of the proposed project, the current land use and zoning of the Specific Plan area would be changed, through a General Plan Amendment and Zoning Map Amendment, from agriculture to new land-use and zoning designations that are consistent with those specified in the Specific Plan. With this land use change and consequent zoning update, the Specific Plan would no longer conflict with existing zoning. Therefore, there would be a *less-than-significant* impact.

Additionally, the proposed project would not change the agricultural zoning either to the north or south of the project site, areas which are in unincorporated Solano County, and some of which are outside of the City’s Sphere of Influence (SOI). Although, as part of the Proposed General Plan Update, the

Preferred Land Use Alternative envisions non-agricultural land uses in areas within its revised SOI to the north and south of the project site, in the interim and if the Preferred Land Use Alternative is not adopted as proposed, the proposed project would leave new residential uses very close to Agricultural use and zoning. This would be in conflict with the 1990 General Plan. General Plan Policy 2.1-G4 would require an Agricultural Buffer along all sides of the project that adjoin agricultural land, including the northern and southern boundaries. Potential impacts resulting from land-use conflicts that could occur in the absence of a buffer are discussed in Section D.6, below. However, since the Vacaville zoning code does not establish specific agricultural buffer requirements, and there would be no requirement that these adjacent agricultural zonings be changed, the lack of full buffers to the north and south would not conflict with existing zoning, thus there would be a *less-than-significant* impact.

**3. Conflicts with the existing Williamson Act contracts or the county's Williamson Act ordinance and guidelines.**

There is no land within the Specific Plan area that is under a Williamson Act contract. There would be *no impact*.

**4. Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land, timberland, or timberland zoned timberland production.**

There is no land within the Specific Plan area that is forest land or timberland. There would be *no impact*.

**5. Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use.**

There is no land within the Specific Plan area that is forest land. There would be *no impact*.

**6. Changes in the existing environment which could result in conversion of farmland to non-agricultural use.**

As mentioned earlier, the proposed Specific Plan would develop the area, converting it from farmland to parks, schools, a residential neighborhood,

and a 500-foot buffer area in which no farming is allowed. This would change the existing environment by converting farmland to non-agricultural use. Moreover, the new development allowed by the Specific Plan would extend residential development into a currently agricultural area, resulting in a peninsula of residential development surrounded on three sides by agriculture.

Although the Specific Plan includes a 500-foot agricultural buffer on the eastern boundary that will separate homes from farming activities, the Specific Plan proponent does not own or otherwise control all of the land that would be within this 500-foot buffer, which is currently used for farming. Therefore, there is no way to guarantee that agricultural activities on this land will cease. If the owner of this land is unwilling to cede control of the property and cease farming, then the land could not be used as an agricultural buffer. In this scenario, the land would not be converted from agriculture. However, impacts would result from the conflict caused by new residential development along the eastern edge of the Specific Plan area being developed immediately adjacent to land used for farming.

New homes along the northern edge of the Specific Plan area would be located immediately south across Elmira Road from existing farmland. These homes would be separated by a 6-foot soundwall, a 35-foot landscaped area, and, ultimately, a reconfigured 52-foot Elmira Road right-of-way with two lanes divided by a landscaped median. Similarly, along the southern edge of the Specific Plan area, new homes would be separated from adjacent farmland by a fence, a linear park ranging from 11 feet to 43 feet in width, a new two-lane road, and front yards, for a total separation of approximately 100 to 150 feet between homes and agricultural uses. While the fences, roadways, and landscaped areas would serve as something of a buffer, they would not be sufficient to entirely prevent dust, odors, noise, or sprayed chemicals from affecting residents along these outer edges of the Specific Plan area.

Introducing new residents immediately adjacent to farmland can create circumstances that impair the productivity and profitability of agricultural operations, which could eventually lead farmers to take their land out of produc-

tion. For example, complaints from new residents about noise, dust, and chemical use from agricultural operations, and concerns of farmers and ranchers about increased vandalism, traffic, access difficulties, and the introduction of domestic animals, can lower productivity in the absence of an adequate buffer. These conflicts could endanger the long-term viability of agriculture on the land surrounding the Specific Plan site. Therefore, the Specific Plan would result in a *significant impact*.

**Impact AGRI-2:** The Specific Plan would allow development which would change the existing environment from farmland to non-agricultural use.

Mitigation Measure AGRI-2a: See Mitigation Measure AGRI-1.

Mitigation Measure AGRI-2b:

- “ At the time of a final map for a housing unit within 80 feet of the southern border of the Specific Plan area, if a development application has not been submitted for the land adjacent to the southern border of the Specific Plan area, then the applicant shall record a disclosure against such housing unit disclosing that agricultural operations occur to the south of the home and that agricultural operations may involve activities involving, among other things, noise, dust, and odors, that a resident may consider to be offensive. The disclosure shall also identify a point of contact such as a Brighton Landing homeowners’ association for any complaints related to agricultural operations.
- “ Fencing along the southern edge of the Specific Plan Area shall be designed to prevent people and pets from trespassing onto the farmland to the south.
- “ Landscaped areas including trees with large spreading canopies shall be included in project design.
- “ For the linear park along the southern edge of the Specific Plan Area, playgrounds or other facilities that would place people in the linear park for long periods of time, shall be prohibited.

Significance After Mitigation: Although requiring a 500-foot wide agricultural buffer to the north and south might seem a suitable mitigation, this measure is infeasible as the land to the north and south is outside of the City's jurisdiction and is not owned by the Applicant. Additionally, placing an interim buffer within the Specific Plan area adjacent to its north and south boundaries would not be feasible, given the phasing and development patterns envisioned in the Specific Plan and the intention to eventually connect to similar future development to the north and south of the Specific Plan area.

Even if a roughly equivalent portion of land is purchased and dedicated to Agriculture or Open Space uses outside the Specific Plan area, this does not halt the conversion of agricultural land in the Specific Plan area or encroachment of non-farm uses into an agricultural area to the north and south of the Specific Plan area, since the project proposes a buffer on the east side only. Land use control of the entire 500 foot wide buffer on the east side of the project site is not assured at this time. Therefore, with mitigation, this impact would remain *significant and unavoidable*.

### *E. Cumulative Impacts*

#### **1. With Approved Projects**

Approved plans and projects in Vacaville which impact agricultural land include the Southtown Project and the Lower Lagoon Valley Specific Plan. These projects would not develop agricultural land, but would cause residential neighborhoods to be built alongside agricultural land. Typically, more development near agriculture will lead to increased land use conflicts and, eventually, a decline in land devoted to agriculture.<sup>16</sup> However, both Southtown and Lower Lagoon Valley projects are located within the urban growth boundary and on land zoned for non-agricultural uses. These ap-

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<sup>16</sup> American Farmland Trust website <http://www.farmland.org/programs/states/futureisnow/projections.asp> accessed January 5, 2012.

proved projects, when considered together with the Specific Plan, may have a cumulatively *significant* impact on agricultural land.

**Impact AGRI-CUM-1:** The Specific Plan, together with approved projects, would allow development which would change the existing environment from farmland to non-agricultural uses.

Mitigation Measure AGRI-CUM-1: See Mitigation Measure AGRI-1.

Significance After Mitigation: There is no mitigation which would halt the loss of the agricultural land in the Specific Plan Area, although preservation of 254.54 acres of land outside the Specific Plan area for Agricultural or Open Space uses does reduce the impact. Therefore, although the Specific Plan's contribution is somewhat mitigated, the cumulative loss of agricultural land with Approved Projects is *significant and unavoidable*.

## 2. Under Existing 1990 General Plan

According to the American Farmland Trust, if current land use trends continue, nearly 900,000 acres of Central Valley farmland would be converted to urban uses and ranchette development. On an additional 2 million acres, agriculture could be compromised by potential conflicts with nearby urban uses.<sup>17</sup>

Development under the 1990 General Plan would convert some prime agricultural farmland to non-agricultural uses.<sup>18</sup> Although all of this land is within the urban growth boundary and all conversions of this land would require mitigations such as the purchase of an equivalent amount of agricultural land in the vicinity, it still represents the cumulative loss of prime agricultural land and thus would be a *significant* impact.

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<sup>17</sup> American Farmland Trust website <http://www.farmland.org/programs/states/futureisnow/projections.asp> accessed January 5, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Department of Conservation, 2008. *Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program GIS Data*.