7

VISUAL RESOURCES

The Visual Resources chapter of the EIR describes existing visual and aesthetic resources for the project area and the region, and evaluates potential aesthetic impacts of the project. In addition, *Placer County General Plan* (PCGP) and *Granite Bay Community Plan* (GBCP) goals and policies pertaining to aesthetics are described. The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) describes the concept of aesthetic resources in terms of scenic vistas, scenic resources (such as trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway), the existing visual character or quality of the project area, and light and glare impacts. The following impact analysis is based on information drawn from the PCGP, the *PCGP EIR*, the GBCP, and the *GBCP EIR*. In addition, portions of the impact analysis are based on a site visit that was conducted for the proposed project area by Raney Planning & Management on September 24, 2008.

Impacts that have already been identified in the Rancho Del Oro Estates Initial Study as having *no impact* (i.e., have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings, within a state scenic highway) are not further addressed within this chapter. The impacts identified as *potentially significant* in the Initial Study are addressed in this chapter.

7.1 Environmental Setting

The following setting information provides an overview of the existing condition of visual resources in the Rancho del Oro project area, which is located in Placer County within the community of Granite Bay, which is located east of the City of Roseville (See Figure 3-1, Regional Location, in Chapter 3, Project Description, of this EIR).

Regional Landscape Character

The proposed project is located in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada in southern Placer County. The ridges of low to moderate length height and narrow foothills canyons are characterized by a mosaic of dark, dense mature trees and shrubs with openings of light annual grassland. The contrasts in form, color, and texture of this vegetation add visual variety and interest to foothill viewscape.

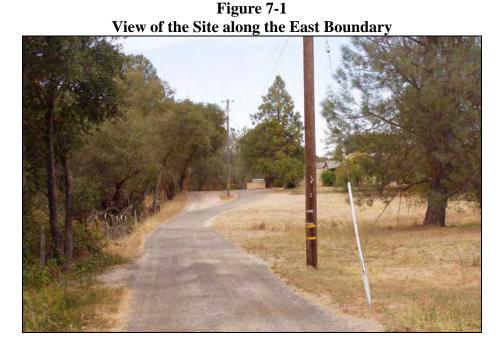
Views in the area vary from those of low spreading residences, partially concealed by dense vegetation, to views of residential areas characterized by soundwalls and large residences. Commercial areas are located at major intersections in the area. The PCGP does not identify any roadways in the vicinity of the proposed project as scenic or requiring restrictions.

Local Study Area Landscape Character

The proposed project is located in the community of Granite Bay, in southern Placer County (See Chapter 3, Figure 3-1, Regional Location). The proposed project area is located approximately 0.75 miles northeast of the intersection of Douglas Boulevard and Sierra College Boulevard. The project site is surrounded by residential to the west, south, and east. The proposed project site is currently 119.4 acres of undeveloped land used for cattle grazing and is characterized by varying topography, with rolling hills along the western, southern, and eastern edges and a relatively flat area located in the central portion of the site. The topography of the site is moderately sloped with elevations ranging between 245 feet and 300 feet above mean sea level. Vegetation consists of a dense growth of trees along the western, southern, and eastern edges of the property with a moderate growth of grass throughout the entire project site. The project site is composed of mixed oak woodland and annual grasslands. Annual grassland is found mainly in the central portion of the site, but is also interspersed within the oak woodland vegetation throughout the remainder of the site. The densest portion of oak woodland is found in the eastern and southeastern portions of the site. Miners Ravine traverses the northerly boundary of the project site. Although the site does not contain any structures, metal fencing for cattle pens is present in the southern portion of the site.

Summary of Viewing Conditions

Off-site views from the west, south and east of the project site are screened by trees (see Figures 7-1, 7-2, 7-3, 7-4, and 7-5). However, portions of the site are visible from distant elevated areas north of the site.





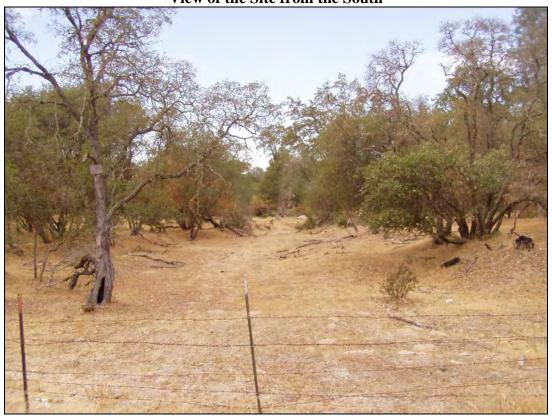
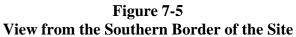


Figure 7-3 View of the Site along Olive Ranch Road





Figure 7-4 View of the Western Border of the Site





7.2 REGULATORY SETTING

Specific federal or State regulations do not directly pertain to the visual quality of an area. However, the existing policies and regulations established in the GBCP are listed below, as applicable.

Granite Bay Community Plan

The following are applicable goals and policies related to aesthetic resources from the GBCP Community Design Element.

- Goal 1 Maintain the existing rural character of the area.
- Goal 3 See that development enhances the natural setting and helps to establish an identifying trait to the Granite Bay area.
- Goal 5 Develop Planned Unit Developments and small lot subdivisions which maintain the pastoral nature of the community through site-sensitive design.
 - Policy 3 Encourage the use of Planned Unit Developments to protect significant natural features.
 - Policy 4 Support design of lot patterns within subdivisions that provides for the least amount of site disturbance and greatest amount of open space.
 - Policy 5 Maintain the heavily vegetated corridors that exist along circulation corridors to preserve their rural nature.
 - Policy 8 Where possible, preserve native trees and support the use of native, drought tolerant plant materials in all revegetation/landscaping projects.
 - Policy 11 To the maximum extent possible, all structures, including residences, should complement and blend in with the natural setting of the planning areas, and to this end the following principles shall be adhered to:
 - a. The visual impact of the structure shall be mitigated either through reduction of building bulk, increased setbacks, or introduced screening such as landscaping. In general, hillside structures shall be designed to step down the natural hillside in order to achieve a low building profile and minimize grading.
 - b. Structures may be located in existing tree covered areas to the extent possible and still be consistent with slope,

- geologic and related conditions, and the need to preserve natural terrain and locally unique or especially beautiful wooded areas.
- c. Largely bare slopes and sparsely wooded ridges visible from large portions of the planning areas should be kept free of structures to the maximum extent possible.
- d. If development does take place on highly visible barren, slopes or ridges, it must be done unobtrusive and designed to maintain the character of the natural setting.
- Policy 12 The use of natural materials (i.e. wood siding and field stone) is encouraged. Exterior colors shall blend with the surrounding natural landscape. The use of "earth tones" or natural finishing which blend with the natural background is encouraged.
- Policy 13 Landscaping shall be used to reduce visual impact of all structures and fences. Natural vegetation should dominate where possible. The use of native plant materials is encouraged. Landscaping plans and raw materials provide an informal character and smooth transition between buildings, parking lots, adjacent roadways, and open areas.
- Policy 15 Utility lines shall be installed underground to ensure minimum disruption to the environment and as little disturbance as possible to vegetation, particularly in scenic corridors.

The following collector roads in Granite Bay are designated as Country Roadways:

- Cavitt-Stallman Road;
- Barton Road:
- Eureka Road:
- Wells Avenue:
- Laird Road:
- Val Verde Road;
- Dick Cook Road;
- Olive Ranch Road;
- Berg Street; and
- Auburn-Folsom Road, north of the Douglas Boulevard commercial area.

As Country roadways, the following guidelines shall be considered for land development projects, in addition to the broader guidelines described in the Placer County Rural Design Guidelines:

1. Building setback from the edge of the road right-of-way should be a minimum of 75 feet.

- 2. When practical, trees and significant shrubs should not be removed beyond 15 feet of edge of pavement during road construction, except for significant defined safety issues.
- 3. Re-vegetation or landscaping as a requirement of development or construction shall provide predominantly native plants within the road right of way.
- 4. Meandering sidewalks, curbs or gutters should not be provided in residential areas where parcel sizes will be 0.9 acres or greater, unless there is a significant definable safety issue.
- 5. All utilities shall be under grounded where parcel sizes will be less than 0.9 acres.
- 6. Adequate space for a meandering path of a native material, such as decomposed granite, shall be provided in areas where the land use designation requires parcel sizes of 0.9 acres or greater, unless there is a significant definable safety issue.
- 7. Solid fences shall be set back from edge of pavement 50 feet or more and must be fully concealed by existing or added vegetation.
- 8. Road widths shall be minimized to preserve the rural character.
- 9. Street lighting, consistent in design with the Rural Design Guidelines, may only be installed if needed where arterials intersect, where collectors intersect with arterials or other connectors, or where a critical specifically defined safety issue exists.
- 10. Lighting for entrance features for developments shall be limited to direct and shielded lighting of only the identifying portion of the entrance feature.
- 11. Leveling and straightening of vertical and horizontal curves shall be minimized except to resolve critical specifically defined safety issues.
- 12. Removal of geological features or significant trees to provide straightened road alignment shall be minimized except to resolve critical specifically defined safety issues.

7.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Standards of Significance

An impact to the visual resources of the proposed project vicinity would be considered significant if the proposed project would result in any of the following:

- Substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas:
- Substantial damage to scenic resources including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic sites within a State Scenic Highway corridor;
- Substantial degradation of the existing visual character or quality of the site and the site's surroundings; or

• Creation of a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Method of Analysis

The section below gives full consideration to the development of the project area and acknowledges the physical changes to the existing setting. Impacts to the existing environment of the project area are to be determined by the contrast between the site's visual setting before and after buildout of the proposed project. Although few standards exist to singularly define the various individual perceptions of aesthetic value from person to person, the degree of visual change can be measured and described in a reasonably objective manner in terms of visibility and visual contrast, dominance, and magnitude. Existing residences and travelers along Olive Ranch Road would be impacted by the visual and aesthetic alteration of the project site. The Standards of Significance listed above will be used to delineate the significance of any visual or aesthetic alterations of the site.

As stated earlier, impacts identified as *potentially significant* within the Initial Study are addressed below. All other impacts related to the Standards of Significance listed above have previously been addressed in the Initial Study and have been identified as having *no impact*, a *less-than-significant* impact, or include mitigation measures to reduce the proposed project's potential for an adverse impact to a *less-than-significant* level.

Project-Specific Impacts and Mitigation Measures

7-1 Impacts to scenic vistas and scenic resources.

Although the project site is not designated as a scenic resource by the PCGP or the GBCP, the site is visible from Sierra College Boulevard which is a County designated scenic roadway. The GBCP determined buildout of the community plan area could reduce the visual quality of the views from major thoroughfares and visual quality of scenic corridors. However, the GBCP concluded that with implementation of polices in the GBCP, the impacts to circulation routes and scenic corridors would be less-than-significant. Numerous trees and a few rock outcroppings exist on-site; however, historic buildings or State designated scenic highways do not exist within the project vicinity and the rock outcroppings are not visible from adjacent roadways. Development of the site would require removal of trees and rock outcroppings; see Chapter 5, Biological Resources, for further detail regarding removal of trees and Chapter 6, Cultural Resources for further detail regarding rock outcroppings. The project site was anticipated for rural residential development in the PCGP and the GBCP. Therefore, development of the site, including vegetation removal and alteration of site terrain was anticipated and a *less-than-significant* impact would occur to scenic resources.

Mitigation Measure(s) *None required.*

7-2 Impacts related to the existing visual character or quality of the site and surroundings.

The proposed project includes the development of 89 residential single-family lots and nine open space lots on approximately 119.4-acres. All residential lots would be at least 42,000 square feet, or roughly one acre.

The project site currently has the appearance of being rural in nature (See Figures 7-2 and 7-3), which is consistent with the current RS-AG-B100-PD 0.83 (Residential Single-Family, Combining Agricultural, Combining Minimum Building Site of 100,000 square feet, Planned Development, Density Limitation of 0.83 units per acre) zoning designation for the project site. Implementation of the proposed project would rezone the project site to RS-B-42 DL 0.83 (Residential Single-Family, Combining Minimum Building Site of 42,000 square feet, Density Limitation of 0.83 units per acre). The proposed project is primarily surrounded by existing or approved residential development. However, the change of the site from a rural undeveloped setting to a rural residentially developed environment would constitute a permanent alteration of the existing visual character, impacting surrounding properties.

The proposed project includes the construction of an ornamental six-foot iron fence and six-foot privacy wall along Olive Ranch Road. The proposed privacy wall is located 50 feet from the edge of pavement of Olive Ranch Road. Developments along GBCP designated country collector roads, which includes Olive Ranch Road, are required to comply with the Placer County Rural Design Guidelines (PCRDG). Guideline 6 of the PCRDG requires development of a meandering path and Guideline 7 requires solid walls to be fully concealed by existing or added vegetation and set back at a minimum of 50 feet from the edge of pavement. The proposed project conceptual landscape plan and Vesting Tentative Map indicate that the privacy wall would be setback from the edge of pavement by a four-foot wide meandering concrete path surrounded by trees and vegetation and, as indicated above, the privacy wall would be set back 50 feet from the edge of pavement. Therefore, the location of the privacy wall would be consistent with the GBCP policies pertaining to country roadways, resulting in a *less-than-significant* aesthetic impact.

Mitigation Measure(s)

None required.

7-3 Impacts associated with new sources of light and glare.

Development of the proposed project would create new sources of light and glare. The introduction of building and street lighting in any currently undeveloped area would alter existing unlit conditions in those areas. Night lighting associated with residential development would be visible to neighboring properties that would be considered sensitive receptors to the new sources of light and glare. Although the proposed project site is designated for residential development, the proposed project includes a rezone to

increase the allowable density. Therefore, the project would introduce new sources of light and glare and a *potentially significant* impact would occur.

Mitigation Measure(s)

Implementation of the following mitigation measure would reduce the above impact to a *less-than-significant* level.

- 7-3 Prior to the issuance of building permits, the developer shall submit a lighting plan for the review and approval of the Placer County Building Official. The lighting plan shall include shielding on all light fixtures and shall address limiting light trespass and glare through the use of shielding and directional lighting methods, including but not limited to, fixture location and height. The lighting plan shall comply with the Placer County Design Guidelines for lighting, including, but not limited to, the following:
 - Maximum height for building and freestanding lighting should not exceed 14 feet.
 - If property is adjacent to a residential area or residentially zoned property, the lighting should not interfere with these areas.
 - Lighting shall be directed away from adjacent roadways and shall not interfere with traffic or create a traffic hazard.
 - *Upward lighting shall be minimized to the greatest extent possible.*

Endnotes

¹ Placer County, *Placer County General Plan*, August 1994.

² Placer County, *Placer County General Plan EIR*, October 1993.

³ Placer County, *Granite Bay Community Plan*, May 1989, amended through March 2008.

⁴ Placer County, Granite Bay Community Plan FEIR, May 2004.