

4.0

LAND USE AND AGRICULTURE

4.0 LAND USE AND AGRICULTURE

This section of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (“DEIR”; “Draft EIR”) addresses the potential environmental impacts of the proposed Project on land use and planning, as well as the proposed Project’s potential adverse environmental impacts to agricultural resources. Existing land uses at the Project site and in the surrounding area are characterized in the context of the Placer County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance and other adopted plans and policies. The section also describes the extent of the agricultural resources on and in the vicinity of the Project site.

The analysis contained in this section focuses on land use compatibility, potential urban-agricultural conflicts, and General Plan consistency. Information for this section was obtained primarily from applicable land use plans, site reconnaissance, and aerial photography.

The County of Placer published a Notice of Preparation/Initial Study (NOP/IS) for the Project on February 5, 2009. A copy of the NOP/IS and comments received during the public review period (February 5 to March 6, 2009) for the NOP/IS are contained in **Appendices 1.0-1** through **1.0-10**.

4.1 EXISTING SETTING

4.1.1 Regional Setting

The Project site is located in the unincorporated Granite Bay Community Plan area, in Placer County, about 15 miles northeast of Sacramento, about one-half mile east of Roseville, immediately south of Rocklin, and immediately southwest of Loomis. Placer County is situated in the Sierra Nevada foothills of central California, bordered by the State of Nevada to the east, as well as by the counties of Nevada and Yuba to the north, Sutter to the west, and Sacramento and El Dorado to the south. **Figures 3-1** and **4-1** show the Project site’s location, while **Figure 3-2** shows the Project’s location in the county.

In 2010, Placer County’s population was 348,432, growing nearly 40 percent since 2000, the second highest growth rate in the state behind Riverside County. The county is largely rural outside its urbanized population centers of the cities of Auburn, Colfax, Lincoln, Rocklin, and Roseville. The county has a total area of 1,507 square miles (964,480 acres), of which 1,404 square miles are land and 103 square miles are water (CSAC, 2009).

The Granite Bay community is located in southeastern Placer County. Land use patterns within the Granite Bay community have changed over the last 20 to 30 years from larger rural parcels to a mix of urban and rural-residential parcel sizes. The Community Plan area is currently at about 60 percent of buildout with a population of about 29,000. There are no airports in the Granite Bay community. The nearest airports are approximately 11 miles away in the cities of Lincoln and Auburn and in the Cameron Park area of El Dorado County (13 miles).

4.1.2 Local Setting

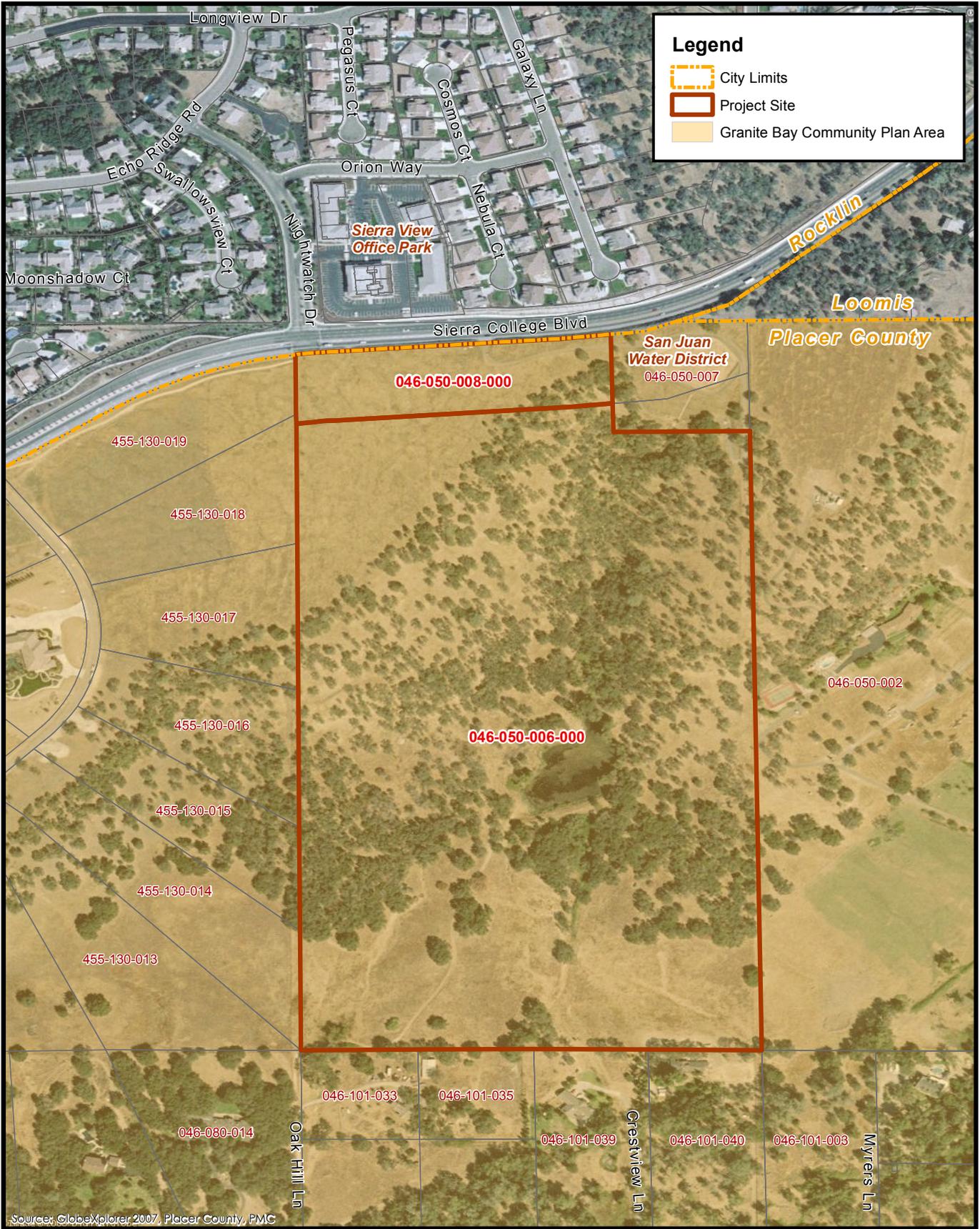
The Project site comprises a single parcel identified by two assessor’s parcel numbers (APN 046-050-006 and APN 046-050-008), totaling 74.2 acres bordered by Sierra College Boulevard on the north between Nightwatch Drive and Ridge Park Drive. The site is within the boundaries of the Granite Bay Community Plan area, northeast of the City of Roseville, east of the City of Rocklin, and south of the Town of Loomis. The Project site is currently undeveloped and unoccupied, containing only fencing at the property boundaries and three unpaved roads. Two of the roads are accessed from Sierra College Boulevard, one of which leads to San Juan Water District (SJWD)

property adjacent to the northeastern property corner. A third road leads from Oak Hill Lane near the southwestern property corner to a pond in the south-central portion of the site. There are no existing agricultural operations on the Project site.

Surrounding Land Uses

The Project site is located at the common boundaries of the City of Rocklin, the Town of Loomis, and the unincorporated Granite Bay Community Plan area, in Placer County (see **Figure 4-1**). Within the county, the Project site is bordered by San Juan Water District (SJWD) property along its northeastern corner and by rural residential property along its eastern, southern, and western boundaries. The SJWD property contains a water storage reservoir and is accessed via an unpaved road within an access easement that runs through the Project site. The adjacent rural residential area to the south is largely undeveloped, with sparse, large-lot residential developments located throughout. In addition, several large, estate-style homes have been recently developed or are under construction to the west along Cavitt Ranch Place. The site is bordered on the north by Sierra College Boulevard, which also marks the Rocklin city limits. Farther north, within the City of Rocklin, is the Sierra View Office Park and a medium-density residential subdivision including areas of open space and an elementary school. The small area northeast of the site located within the Town of Loomis is undeveloped and naturally vegetated. It should also be noted that the outlying area southeast of the Project site includes rural residential-agricultural properties, an organic orchard, and 1,000 feet east of the site a wholesale nursery operation.

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Source: GlobeExplorer, 2007, Placer County, PMC



Figure 4-1
Local Land Use Setting



General Plan and Community Plan Land Use Designations and Zoning

The Placer County General Plan and Granite Bay Community Plan designate the Project site as Rural Estate (RE) with 4.6- to 20-acre minimum parcel sizes. Existing County and City General Plan and Community Plan designations on and surrounding the Project site are shown on **Figure 4-2**.

The Granite Bay Community Plan's designation of Rural Estate (RE) is used to recognize those areas where the continued rural or agricultural uses of land are to be maintained and protected in perpetuity. The intent of this particular designation is to allow for a high number of family farms or hobby farms to satisfy a growing demand for home sites where an individual can raise a large home vegetable garden, orchard, Christmas tree farm, or livestock. This designation also includes areas unsuited for more dense residential development due to constraints imposed by natural features, such as soils, geology, and hydrologic factors, and man-made constraints, such as a lack of adequate roadways and unavailability of public sewers and water as well as other public services. The Community Plan does not provide a list of specifically permitted uses within this designation. However, the permitted zoning districts for this designation, Single Family Residential, Agricultural Residential, Farm and Open Space, provide further definition (Placer County, 2005). Each of these zoning districts allows houses of worship with approval of a minor use permit (Placer County, 2009a).

While the Project site is designated RE, the Granite Bay Community Plan recognizes the urban uses in the adjoining areas of the City of Roseville, City of Rocklin, and Sacramento County, and the Community Plan provides for an area transitioning from urban uses to rural uses under "Intensity of Use Policies – Policy 1" that specifically notes:

The planning area shall have the low intensity of development which is appropriate to its location on the fringe of the urban areas of the City of Roseville and the County of Sacramento, and should provide a transition between the urban densities in the adjoining communities and non-intensive land uses to the north and west. [underscore added for emphasis]

In part due to implementation of this policy, development along the eastern side of the Sierra College Boulevard corridor (from Old Auburn Road to Rocklin Road) consists of more urban uses and densities which generally transition to more rural uses further east of the Sierra College Boulevard corridor (see **Figure 3-2**).

The site is zoned by Placer County as Farm with a Building Site combining district (F-B-X 20-acre minimum) (see **Figure 4-3**). The intent of the Farm (F) zone is to provide areas for the conduct of commercial agricultural operations that can also accommodate necessary services to support agricultural uses, together with residential land uses at low population densities. Allowable uses within this zone include crop production, equestrian facilities, fisheries and game preserves, forestry, grazing, storage structures, and pipelines and transmission lines. Houses of worship, or churches, are also allowable uses with issuance of a minor use permit (Placer County, 2009a).

Parcels located immediately west, south, and east of the Project site are similarly designated. Parcels to the north of the Project site are designated and developed by the City of Rocklin and the Town of Loomis General Plans for residential uses (Placer County, 2005; Placer County, 2009b).

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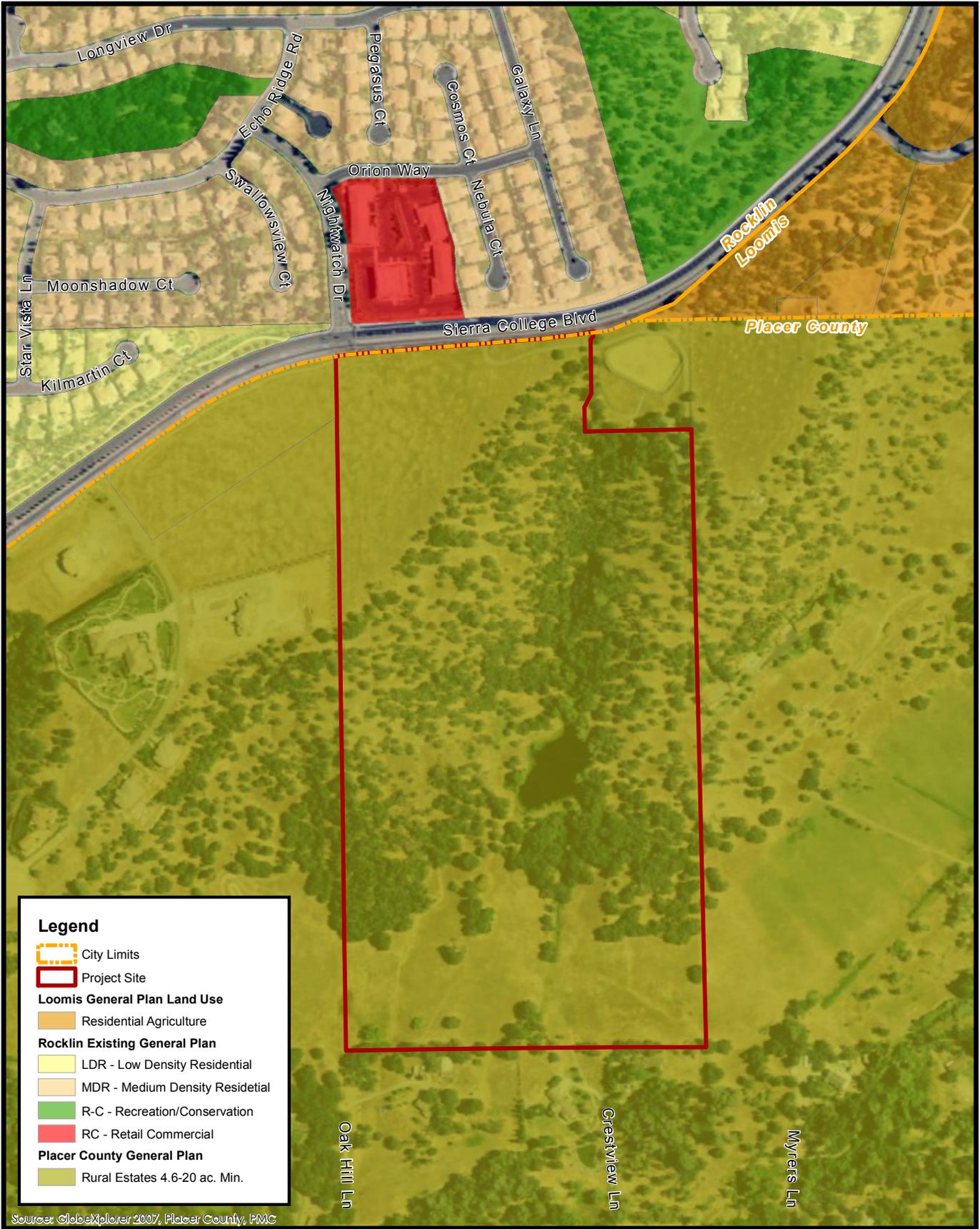
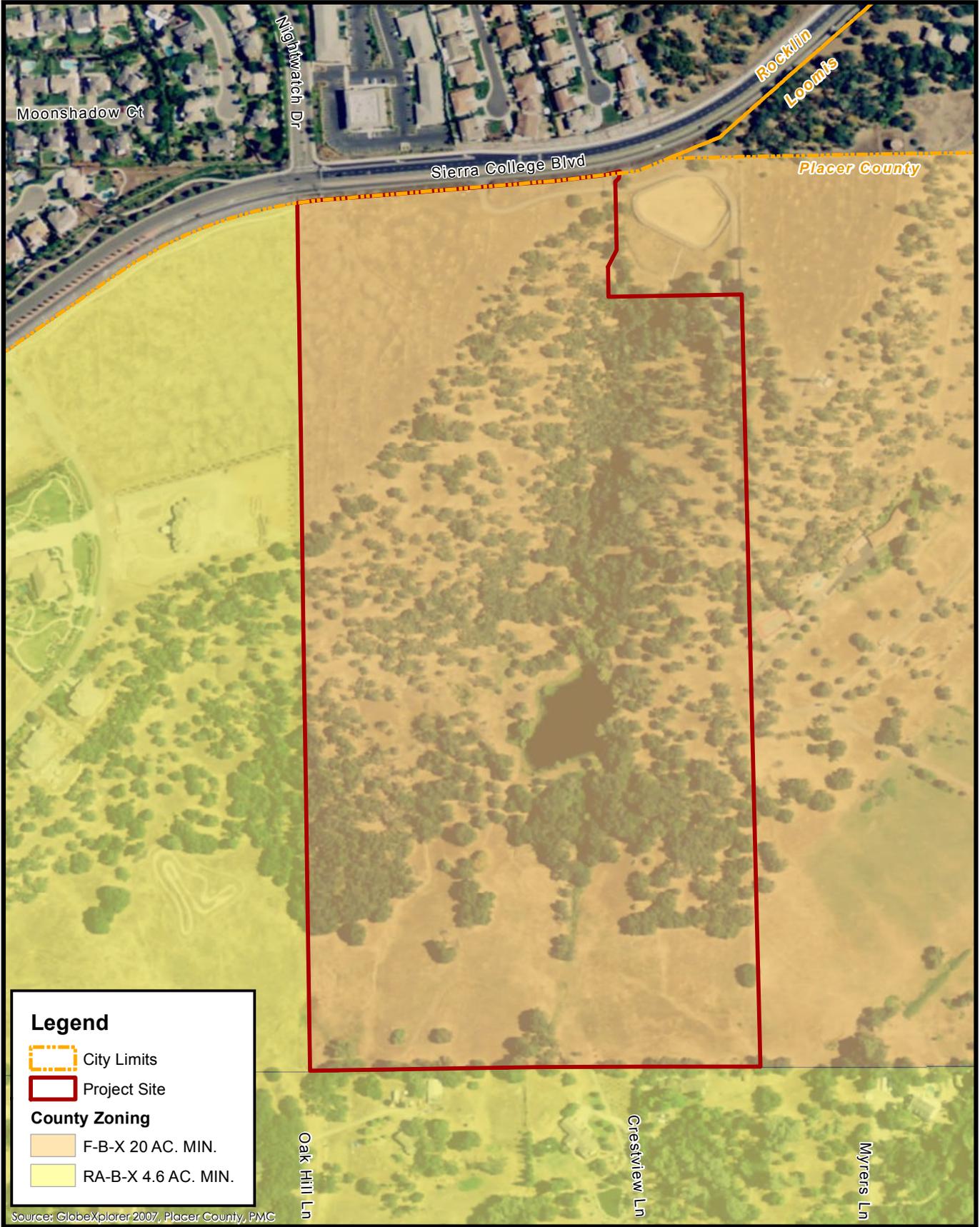


Figure 4-2
Existing City and County General
Plan Land Use Designations

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Legend

-  City Limits
-  Project Site

County Zoning

-  F-B-X 20 AC. MIN.
-  RA-B-X 4.6 AC. MIN.

Source: GlobeXplorer 2007, Placer County, PMC



Figure 4-3
Existing County Zoning



Agricultural Resources

Farmland Classification and Rating System

Farmland classification programs are used to determine the agricultural productivity of a particular soil. The two systems used by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) to determine a soil’s agricultural productivity are the Soil Capability Classification System and the Storie Index Rating System. The Soil Capability Classification System takes into consideration soil limitations, the risk of damages when the soils are used, and the way in which soils respond to treatment, whereas the Storie Index Rating System ranks soils based on their suitability for agriculture.

Land Capability Classification System

The Land Capability Classification System is a system of grouping soils primarily on the basis of their capability to produce common cultivated crops and pasture plants without deteriorating over a long period of time. Capability classes, the broadest groups, are designated by numerals 1 through 8. The numerals indicate progressively greater limitations and narrower choices for practical use. The classes are defined in **Table 4-1** below.

**TABLE 4-1
LAND CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM – CLASS DEFINITIONS**

Class	Definition
1	Soils have few limitations that restrict their use
2	Soils have moderate limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require moderate conservation practices
3	Soils have severe limitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require special conservation practices, or both
4	Soils have very severe imitations that reduce the choice of plants or that require very careful management, or both
5	Soils are not likely to erode but have other limitations, impractical to remove, that limit their use
6	Soils have severe limitations that make them generally unsuitable for cultivation
7	Soils have very severe limitations that make them unsuitable for cultivation
8	Soils and miscellaneous areas have limitations that nearly preclude their use for commercial crop production

Source: USDA, 2007.

Capability subclasses are soil groups within any one soil class that indicate the specific limitation of that soil class. They are designated by adding a small letter, e, w, s, or c, to the class numeral, for example, 2e. The capability subclasses are defined in **Table 4-2** below.

**TABLE 4-2
LAND CAPABILITY CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM – SUBCLASS DEFINITIONS**

Subclass	Definition
e	Indicates that the main hazard is the risk of erosion unless close-growing plant cover is maintained
w	Indicates that water in or on the soil interferes with plant growth or cultivation (in some soils the wetness can be partly corrected by artificial drainage)
s	Indicates that the soil is limited mainly because it is shallow, droughty, or stoney
c	Indicates that the chief limitation is climate that is very cold or very dry (used in only some parts of the United States)

Source: USDA, 2007.

Capability subclasses are further delineated into capability units that group soils which are similar enough to be suited to the same crops and pasture plants, require similar management, and have similar productivity.

Storie Index Rating System

The Storie Index Rating System ranks soil characteristics according to their suitability for agriculture. Ratings range from Grade 1 soils (80 to 100 rating), which have few or no limitations for agricultural production, to Grade 6 soils (rating of less than 10), which are not suitable for agriculture. Under this system, soils deemed less than prime can function as prime soils when limitations such as poor drainage, slopes, or soil nutrient deficiencies are partially or entirely removed (Storie, 1978). The six grades, ranges in index rating, and definition of grades, as defined by the NRCS, are provided below in **Table 4-3**.

**TABLE 4-3
STORIE INDEX RATING SYSTEM**

Grade	Index Rating	Definition
1 – Excellent	80 through 100	Soils are well suited to intensive use for growing irrigated crops that are climatically suited to the region.
2 – Good	60 through 79	Soils are good agricultural soils, although they may not be so desirable as Grade 1 because of moderately coarse, coarse, or gravelly surface soil texture; somewhat less permeable subsoil; lower plant available water holding capacity, fair fertility; less well drained conditions, or slight to moderate flood hazards, all acting separately or in combination.
3 – Fair	40 through 59	Soils are only fairly well suited to general agricultural use and are limited in their use because of moderate slopes; moderate soil depths; less permeable subsoil; fine, moderately fine or gravelly surface soil textures; poor drainage; moderate flood hazards; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination.
4 – Poor	20 through 39	Soils are poorly suited. They are severely limited in their agricultural potential because of shallow soil depths; less permeable subsoil; steeper slope; or more clayey or gravelly surface soil textures than Grade 3 soils, as well as poor drainage; greater flood hazards; hummocky micro-relief; salinity; or fair to poor fertility levels, all acting alone or in combination.
5 – Very Poor	10 through 19	Soils are very poorly suited for agriculture, are seldom cultivated and are more commonly used for range, pasture, or woodland.
6 – Nonagricultural	Less than 10	Soils are not suited for agriculture at all due to very severe to extreme physical limitations, or because of urbanization.

Source: Storie, 1978.

Project Site Soil Ratings

The Project site contains six individual soil types (see **Figure 12-2** in Section 12.0). **Table 4-4** provides a summary of the soil types within the Project site, the acreage of each, and the corresponding Storie Index Rating and Soil Capability Classification.

**TABLE 4-4
PROJECT SITE SOILS**

Map Unit	Soil Name	Land Capability		Storie Index	Acres
		Non-irrigated	Irrigated		
106	Andregg coarse sandy loam, 2 to 9 percent slopes	3e	3e	54	30.8
109	Andregg coarse sandy loam, rocky, 2 to 15 percent slopes	4e	4e	34	4.8
144	Exchequer very stony loam, 2 to 15 percent slopes	7s		15	11.3
152	Inks cobbly loam, 2 to 30 percent slopes	4e	4e	21	3.8
153	Inks cobbly loam, 30 to 50 percent slopes	6e		11	22.8
194	Xerofluvents, frequently flooded	4w	4w	36	0.0
198	Water				1.2

Source: DigitalGlobe, 2007; Placer County, 2009b; NRCS, 2009

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP) was established in 1982 to continue the Important Farmland mapping efforts begun in 1975 by the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) (formerly the Soil Conservation Service). The intent of the NRCS was to produce agricultural resource maps based on soil quality and land use across the nation. As part of the nationwide agricultural land use mapping effort, the NRCS developed a series of definitions known as Land Inventory and Monitoring (LIM) criteria. The LIM criteria classified the land's suitability for agricultural production; suitability included both the physical and chemical characteristics of soils and the actual land use. Important Farmland maps are derived from the NRCS soil survey maps using the LIM criteria (DOC, 2004).

Since 1980, the State of California has assisted the NRCS with completing its mapping in the state. The FMMP was created in the State Department of Conservation (DOC) to continue the mapping activity with a greater level of detail. DOC applied a greater level of detail by modifying the LIM criteria for use in California. The LIM criteria in California utilize the NRCA and Storie Index Rating systems, but also consider physical conditions such as a dependable water supply for agricultural production, soil temperature range, depth of the groundwater table, flooding potential, rock fragment content, and rooting depth.

Important Farmland Maps for the State of California are compiled using the modified LIM criteria, as described above, and current land use information. The minimum mapping unit is 10 acres unless otherwise specified. Units of land smaller than 10 acres are incorporated into the surrounding classification. The Important Farmland Maps identify five agriculture-related categories: Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of

Local Importance, and Grazing Land. In addition, the maps identify three categories of nonagricultural land types: Urban and Built-Up Land, Other Land, and Water. The categories are described below (DOC, 2004):

- **Prime Farmland (P):** Farmland with the best combination of physical and chemical features able to sustain long-term agricultural production. This land has the soil quality, growing season, and moisture supply needed to produce sustained high yields. Land must have been used for irrigated agricultural production at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Statewide Importance (S):** Farmland similar to Prime Farmland but with minor shortcomings, such as greater 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 (U):** Farmland of lesser quality soils used for the production of the state's leading agricultural crops. This land is usually irrigated but may include nonirrigated orchards or vineyards as found in some climatic zones in California. Land must have been cropped at some time during the four years prior to the mapping date.
- **Farmland of Local Importance (L):** Land of importance to the local agricultural economy as determined by each county's board of supervisors and a local advisory committee. Placer County defines Farmland of Local Importance within the county as farmlands not covered by the categories of Prime, Statewide, or Unique. This designation is further defined as those lands that are zoned for agriculture by County Ordinance and the California Land Conservation Act as well as dry farmed lands, irrigated pasturelands, and other agricultural lands of significant economic importance to the County and include lands that have a potential for irrigation from Placer County water supplies.
- **Grazing Land (G):** Land on which the existing vegetation is suited to the grazing of livestock. This category was developed in cooperation with the California Cattlemen's Association, University of California Cooperative Extension, and other groups interested in the extent of grazing activities. The minimum mapping unit for Grazing Land is 40 acres.
- **Urban and Built-Up Land (D):** Land occupied by structures with a building density of at least 1 unit to 1.5 acres, or approximately 6 structures to a 10-acre parcel. This land is used for residential, industrial, commercial, institutional, public administrative purposes, railroad and other transportation yards, cemeteries, airports, golf courses, sanitary landfills, sewage treatment, water control structures, and other developed purposes.
- **Other Land (X):** Land not included in any other mapping category. Common examples include low-density rural developments; brush, timber, wetland, and riparian areas not suitable for livestock grazing; confined livestock, poultry, or aquaculture facilities; strip mines, borrow pits; and water bodies smaller than 40 acres. Vacant and nonagricultural land surrounded on all sides by urban development and greater than 40 acres is mapped as Other Land.
- **Water (W):** Perennial water bodies with an extent of at least 40 acres.

It should be noted that Important Farmland classifications are not the same as land designated for agriculture by a general plan or other land use planning document. For example, land uses

designated by the Placer County General Plan Land Use Map as Agriculture or Rural Agriculture are areas where agricultural land uses are allowed by right but are not necessarily lands designated by the Department of Conservation as Important Farmland.

Important Farmland Map

The Important Farmland Map for the Project site and immediately surrounding area is shown in **Figure 4-4**. As shown in this figure, the majority of the Project site is designated Farmland of Local Importance, with the remaining portions designated Other Land and Urban and Built-Up Land. **Table 4-5** provides a summary of these FMMP designations on the Project site.

**TABLE 4-5
IMPORTANT FARMLAND DESIGNATIONS ON PROJECT SITE**

Important Farmland Designation	Acreage	Percentage of Site
Farmland of Local Importance	73.8	98.7
Other Land	0.82	1.1
Urban and Built-Up Land	0.13	0.2
Totals	74.8	100

Source: DOC, 2006

Note: Acreages may not add correctly or match other acreage calculations in the DEIR due to independent rounding.

North of the Project site, within the City of Rocklin, land is designated as Urban and Built-Up Land. The Farmland of Local Importance on the Project site continues east of the site with some Farmland of Statewide Importance beyond. Land south of the site is designated Other Land, while land west of the site is designated Grazing Land. There is some additional Grazing Land located northeast of the site (DOC, 2006).

Williamson Act Contracts and Farmland Security Zones

The Project site is not subject to any Williamson Act contracts or Farmland Security Zone contracts. Furthermore, there are no active Williamson Act contracts or Farmland Security Zone contracts in the immediate vicinity of the Project site.

4.2 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

4.2.1 Federal

There are no federal standards and regulations applicable to the Project site.

4.2.2 State

California Department of Conservation

The California Department of Conservation (DOC) administers and supports a number of programs, including the Williamson Act, the California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP), the Williamson Act Easement Exchange Program (WAEPP), the California Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Model, and the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. These programs are designed to preserve agricultural land and provide data on conversion of agricultural land to urban use. DOC has authority for the approval of agreements entered into

under the WAEEP. The population of California is expected to grow from its current 34 million to 50 million by 2025. This population growth and the need for new homes will put strain on the nation's leading agricultural economy. Key DOC tools available for land conservation planning are conservation easement grants, tax incentives to keep land in agriculture or open space, and farmland mapping and monitoring.

Williamson Act

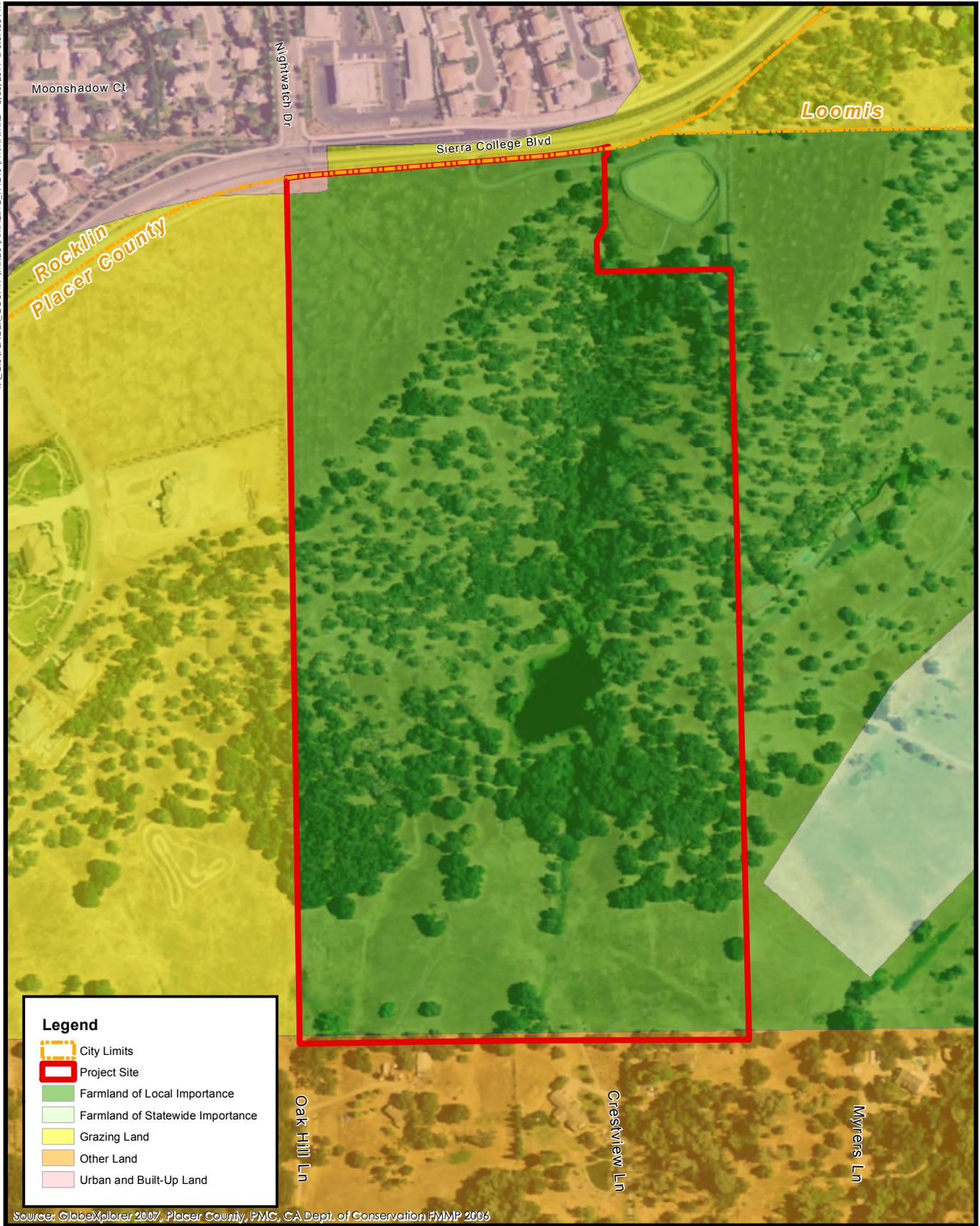
The California Land Conservation Act of 1965, commonly referred to as the Williamson Act, is a non-mandated state program, administered by counties and cities to preserve agricultural land and discourage the premature conversion of agricultural land to urban uses. The act authorizes local governments and property owners to (voluntarily) enter into contracts to commit agricultural land to specified uses for ten or more years. Once enforceably restricted, the land is valued for taxation based on its agricultural income rather than unrestricted market value. This results in a lower tax rate for owners. In return, the owners guarantee that these properties remain under agricultural production for an initial ten-year period. The contract is renewed automatically unless the owner files a notice of non-renewal, thereby maintaining a constant ten-year contract. Currently, approximately 70 percent of the state's prime agricultural land is protected under this act. Prime farmland under the Williamson Act includes land that qualifies as Class I and II in the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) classification of land that qualifies for rating 80 to 100 in the Storie Index Rating System. Participation is on a voluntary basis by both landowners and local governments and is implemented through the establishment of agricultural preserves and the execution of Williamson Act contracts.

It should be noted that in July 2009, the state legislature passed several bills to balance the state budget. Included in these bills was a provision that temporarily cuts local funding for the implementation of the Williamson Act program by approximately \$35 million, effectively eliminating the program until funding is restored.

Farmland Security Zones

Since 1998, another option within the Williamson Act program is the creation of Farmland Security Zones and contracts. A Farmland Security Zone (FSZ) is an area created within an agricultural preserve by a board of supervisors upon request by a landowner or group of landowners. An FSZ contract is a contract between a private landowner and a county that restricts land to agricultural or open space uses. The minimum initial term is 20 years. Like a Williamson Act contract, FSZ contracts renew annually unless either party files a "notice of nonrenewal" (DOC, 2003). FSZ contracts offer landowners greater property tax reductions. Land restricted by an FSZ contract is valued for property assessment purposes at 65 percent of its Williamson Act valuation or 65 percent of its Proposition 13 valuation, whichever is lower.

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- City Limits
- Project Site
- Farmland of Local Importance
- Farmland of Statewide Importance
- Grazing Land
- Other Land
- Urban and Built-Up Land

Source: GlobeXplorer 2007, Placer County, PMC, CA Dept. of Conservation FMMP 2006



Figure 4-4
FMMP Map
PMC

California Farmland Conservancy Program

The California Farmland Conservancy Program (CFCP) is a statewide grant funding program that supports local efforts to establish agricultural conservation easements and planning projects for the purpose of preserving important agricultural land resources. An agricultural conservation easement is a voluntary, legally recorded deed restriction that is placed on a specific property used for agricultural production. The goal of an agricultural conservation easement is to maintain agricultural land in active production by removing the development pressures from the land. Such an easement prohibits practices that would damage or interfere with the agricultural use of the land. Because the easement is a restriction on the deed of the property, the easement remains in effect even when the land changes ownership (DOC, 2009).

The CFCP provides grants to local governments and qualified nonprofit organizations for the following purposes:

- Voluntary acquisition of conservation easements on agricultural lands that are under pressure of being converted to nonagricultural uses;
- Temporary purchase of agricultural lands that are under pressure of being converted to nonagricultural uses, as a phase in the process of placing agricultural conservation easements on farmland;
- Agricultural land conservation policy and planning projects; and
- Restoration of and improvements to agricultural land already under easement.

California Land Evaluation and Site Assessment (LESA) Model

The LESA system ranks lands for suitability and inclusion in the FPP. LESA evaluates several factors, including soil potential for agricultural use, location, market access, and adjacent land use. These factors are used to numerically rank the suitability of parcels based on local resource evaluation and site considerations. The LESA system has spawned many variations, including the California LESA model, described below.

The California Land Evaluation and Site Assessment model was developed in 1997 and was designed based on the federal LESA system. It can be used to rank the relative importance of farmland and the potential significance of its conversion on a site-by-site basis. The California LESA model considers the following factors: land capability, Storie index, water availability (drought and non-drought conditions), land uses within one quarter mile, and “protected resource lands” (e.g., Williamson Act lands) surrounding the property. A score can be derived and used to determine if the conversion of a property would be significant under CEQA. The LESA model provides a broad range of scores and other factors that can be considered in determining impact significance.

Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program

The FMMP is a nonregulatory program that provides a consistent and impartial analysis of agricultural land use and land use changes throughout California. The first Important Farmland Maps produced in 1984 covered 30.3 million acres (38 counties). The first Farmland Conversion Report was released in 1988 and detailed farmland changes from 1984 to 1986. Nine subsequent reports have included additions to the project area as modern soil surveys became available. The

FMMP now maps agricultural and urban land uses on nearly 96 percent of the state’s privately held land and the coverage area is 47.9 million acres in 49 counties. It is the only statewide land use inventory conducted on a two-year basis that identifies agricultural and urban land conversions (DOC, 2009).

Assembly Bill (AB) 2881 – Right to Farm Disclosure

AB 2881 was passed by the State Legislature in 2008 and became effective January 1, 2009. This bill requires that as a part of real estate transactions, land sellers and agents must disclose whether the property is located within 1 mile of farmland as designated on the most recent Important Farmland Map. Any of the five agricultural categories — Prime Farmland, Farmland of Statewide Importance, Unique Farmland, Farmland of Local Importance, and Grazing Land — on the map qualifies for disclosure purposes.

4.2.3 Local

Placer County General Plan

The Placer County General Plan Policy Document was adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors in 1994. **Table 4-6** lists the General Plan policies that relate to land use and planning and the proposed Project and provides an analysis of the Project’s consistency with these goals and policies. While this Draft EIR analyzes the Project’s consistency with the Placer County General Plan pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the determination of the Project’s consistency with this General Plan rests with the Placer County Board of Supervisors. Environmental impacts associated with any inconsistency with General Plan policies are addressed under the impact discussions of this EIR.

**TABLE 4-6
GENERAL PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS – LAND USE AND AGRICULTURE**

General Plan Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
Section 1: Land Use		
Policy 1.A.2: The County shall permit only low-intensity forms of development in areas with sensitive environmental resources or where natural or human-caused hazards are likely to pose a significant threat to health, safety, or property.	Consistent	The proposed house of worship facilities will occupy only a portion of the Project site and would not be considered high-intensity development. Furthermore, the sensitive environmental resources that have been identified on the Project site, including wetlands and cultural resources, would be largely preserved on the site.
Policy 1.A.3: The County shall distinguish among urban, suburban, and rural areas to identify where development will be accommodated and where public infrastructure and services will be provided. This pattern shall promote the maintenance of separate and distinct communities.	Consistent	The Project site is located within the established Granite Bay community, is zoned for development (Building Site combining district) and is located adjacent to existing residential and office development.

4.0 Land Use and Agriculture

General Plan Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
<p>Policy 1.A.4: The County shall promote patterns of development that facilitate the efficient and timely provision of urban infrastructure and services.</p>	Consistent	<p>The Project site is located adjacent to existing development and has been zoned for development. As such, implementation of the proposed Project would be considered an efficient and timely provision of infrastructure and public services.</p>
<p>Policy 1.A.5: The County shall not approve intensive forms of development or land divisions into parcels of 10 acres or less within any city's sphere of influence where that city's general plan calls ultimately for urban development except where the County General Plan or applicable Community Plan designates the area for urban development. The County shall inform cities in a timely manner when applications for development within their sphere of influence are filed with the County and shall consider the city's ultimate plans for the relevant area during project review. In such cases, Policy #16 in Part III shall apply to such development projects.</p>	Consistent	<p>The proposed Project does not include the subdivision of any parcels. Furthermore, the Project site is zoned for urban development.</p>
<p>Policy 1.B.6: The County shall require new subdivided lots to be adequate in size and appropriate in shape for the range of primary and accessory uses designated for the area.</p>	Consistent	<p>The proposed Project does not include the subdivision of any parcels. The existing parcels are of adequate size and are appropriately shaped for the proposed uses.</p>
<p>Policy 1.H.1: The County shall maintain agriculturally designated areas for agricultural uses and direct urban uses to designated urban growth areas and/or cities.</p>	Consistent	<p>The Project site is designated for rural estate uses but is zoned for agricultural uses. However, houses of worship are considered an acceptable use within the F-B-X zoning district with a minor use permit. Furthermore, the Project site is not currently and has not in the past been used for agricultural production.</p>
<p>Policy 1.H.2: The County shall seek to ensure that new development and public works projects do not encourage expansion of urban uses into designated agricultural areas.</p>	Consistent	<p>The surrounding parcels are designated for residential uses. Although the site and some surrounding parcels are zoned for agricultural uses, the proposed use is permitted with a minor use permit. Furthermore, the proposed Project is not a major commercial or residential development and would not be expected to encourage expansion of urban uses into the area.</p>
<p>Policy 1.H.4: The County shall allow the conversion of existing agricultural land to urban uses only within community plan areas and within city spheres of influence where designated for urban development on the General Plan Land Use Diagram.</p>	Consistent	<p>The Project site is zoned for agricultural use; however, the site is not utilized for agricultural production. Furthermore, the Project site is located within the Granite Bay Community Plan area.</p>

General Plan Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
<p>Policy 1.H.5: The County shall require development within or adjacent to designated agricultural areas to incorporate design, construction, and maintenance techniques that protect agriculture and minimize conflicts with adjacent agricultural uses.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>There a few small-scale residential-agricultural operations in the vicinity of the Project site, including a small organic orchard, a nursery, and a small personal farm. However, these agricultural uses are not immediately adjacent to the site and would be separated from the proposed development by the southern portion of the Project site, which is not proposed for development. Therefore, the proposed Project would not conflict with these agricultural uses.</p>
<p>Policy 1.H.6: The County shall require new non-agricultural development immediately adjacent to agricultural lands to be designed to provide a buffer in the form of a setback of sufficient distance to avoid land use conflicts between the agricultural uses and the non-agricultural uses. Such setback or buffer areas shall be established by recorded easement or other instrument, subject to the approval of County Counsel. A method and mechanism (e.g., a homeowners association or easement dedication to a non-profit organization or public entity) for guaranteeing the maintenance of this land in a safe and orderly manner shall be also established at the time of development approval.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>There a few small-scale residential-agricultural operations in the vicinity of the Project site's southern boundary, including a small organic orchard, a nursery, and a small personal farm. These uses are not immediately adjacent to the site. Furthermore, these agricultural uses would be separated from the proposed development by the southern portion of the Project site, which is not proposed for development. Therefore, no buffer would be required in order to avoid land use conflicts between the agricultural uses and the nonagricultural uses.</p>

Granite Bay Community Plan

The Granite Bay Community Plan (GBCP) was adopted by the Placer County Board of Supervisors in 1989. The circulation element of the GBCP was updated in 2005 (Resolution #2005-149). Updating the Granite Bay Community Plan began in August of 2008, when the Board of Supervisors directed the County Planning Department to begin review of the document. Public workshops and meetings have been conducted on the update since 2009. The Planning Department provided an update on the Granite Bay Community Plan review to the Supervisors in April 2010 and discussed several alternatives to keep the planning process moving forward. At their budget workshop in August, 2010, the Board of Supervisors voted to only update the policy section of the Community Plan and not make changes to the Land Use Map. It is anticipated that the update will be considered by the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors at the end of 2011.

Table 4-7 lists the Community Plan policies that relate to land use and agricultural resources and the proposed Project and provides a preliminary analysis of the Project's consistency with these policies. While this Draft EIR analyzes the Project's consistency with the Granite Bay Community Plan pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15125(d), the determination of the Project's consistency with this Community Plan rests with the Placer County Board of Supervisors. Environmental impacts associated with any inconsistency with General Plan policies are addressed under the impact discussions of this EIR.

**TABLE 4-7
COMMUNITY PLAN CONSISTENCY ANALYSIS – LAND USE AND AGRICULTURE**

Community Plan Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
General Community Policies		
Policy 1: Land uses in the Granite Bay Community shall be compatible with the Community Plan.	Consistent	The Project site is designated by the Community Plan as Rural Estate (RE) with 4.6- to 20-acre minimum parcel size. According to the permitted zoning districts for this land use designation, houses of worship are considered allowable uses with a minor use permit (MUP). The proposed Project includes an application for a MUP. Should the Project be approved by the County, the MUP would be issued and the Project would be consistent with the Granite Bay Community Plan.
Policy 2: Uses of land in the Granite Bay Community shall, in general, be restricted to residential sites; conservation and open space preserves for watershed protection, air quality protection, scenic enjoyment and recreation; agricultural pursuits and such public, private and commercial uses as are necessary to serve the frequent needs of the community and to provide reasonable or accustomed services to local residents.	Consistent	The proposed house of worship would be a public use that would serve the ongoing needs of the surrounding community. Furthermore, houses of worship are considered allowable uses under the Project site's General Plan and Community Plan land use designations and zoning district with a minor use permit.
Policy 3: The magnitude and intensity of land use within the Granite Bay area should be limited by natural and other planning constraints.	Consistent	The proposed development is appropriately designed for the natural conditions of the site as well as the planning constraints that apply to the site as provided in the County General Plan, the Granite Bay Community Plan, the County Zoning Code, and other applicable plans.
Land Use Element Policies		
Policy 6: Strive to minimize negative impacts of development on the existing agricultural operations.	Consistent	The Project site is not used for agricultural production of any kind. There are a few agricultural operations located near the southern boundary of the Project site. However, these uses are not immediately adjacent to the site and would be separated from the proposed development by the southern portion of the Project site, which is not currently proposed for development and would be limited by the County's permitting process in regard to the type and location of development allowed. The Project site is zoned F-B-X-20 and designated Rural Estate 4.6- to 20-acre; therefore, the proposed Project would not conflict with existing agricultural operations.

Community Plan Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
<p>Policy 17: Landscaped buffer yards shall be provided wherever necessary to minimize the adverse effects of higher intensity uses upon lower intensity uses.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>The proposed house of worship facilities will occupy only a portion of the Project site and would not be considered high-intensity development. Furthermore, the southern portion of the Project site is not proposed for development and would be limited by the County's permitting process in regard to the type and location of development allowed. The three residential parcels to the west would be separated from the Project by a seven-foot sound wall along the primary access road on the site, thereby providing a buffer. The parcel to the east is owned and operated by the San Juan Water District and would not require a buffer. North of the site is Sierra College Boulevard, the frontage of which would be landscaped as part of the Project. Therefore, the proposed Project will provide buffers as indicated on Figures 3-6a and 3.6-b and is consistent with this policy.</p>
<p>Intensity of Use Policies</p>		
<p>Policy 1: The planning area shall have the low intensity of development which is appropriate to its location on the fringe of the urban areas of the City of Roseville and the County of Sacramento, and should provide a transition between the urban densities in the adjoining communities and non-intensive land uses to the north and west.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>The Project site is located at the edge of the GBCP area. This area has transitioned from rural with larger parcels to a mix of urban and rural-residential with smaller parcel sizes. The proposed development would be low intensity with only a small portion of the site being developed with urban uses. In addition, the site is immediately south of existing intensive development within the City of Rocklin and would therefore provide a transition between the city and the primarily undeveloped area to the south within unincorporated Placer County.</p>
<p>Public and Private Institutions Policies</p>		
<p>Policy 1: Institutional uses shall be limited to those which provide non-commercial services or facilities for local residents and contribute to the general well-being of the community.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>The proposed Project would provide only noncommercial services and facilities that would be available to all local residents. A house of worship facility would generally be considered to contribute to the well-being of the community.</p>
<p>Policy 2: The intensity of use of an institutional site shall be limited to that which is compatible with adjoining uses and in keeping with the rural character of Granite Bay; the institution should not generate excessive noise or traffic.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>The Project site is designated by the Community Plan as Rural Estate (RE) with 4.6- to 20-acre minimum parcel size, which allows houses of worship with a minor use permit (MUP). The proposed house of worship would only occupy approximately 17 acres of the 74.2-acre Project site, and the Project site is adjacent to the Sierra Vista Office Complex to the north, which includes 50,200 square feet of office space in one- and two-story buildings, as well as medium-density residential development in Rocklin, at the edge of the GBCP. Furthermore, the Project includes certain measures to soften the appearance of the development and maintain</p>

Community Plan Policies	Consistency Determination	Analysis
		<p>the rural character of the surrounding area. These measures include orienting the proposed buildings off Sierra College Boulevard and away from existing rural uses to the south, reducing the overall height of the main building by constructing the first floor below grade, using natural materials and a neutral color palette, and providing landscaping throughout the site. In addition, development is currently proposed only on the northern portion of the site.</p>
<p>Policy 3: Institutional buildings shall be of a size and scale compatible with the rural atmosphere of the community.</p>	<p>Consistent</p>	<p>While the larger Granite Bay community is generally considered to exhibit a rural atmosphere as indicated in this policy, the GBCP recognizes the urban uses in the adjoining areas of the cities of Rocklin and Roseville and Sacramento County and provides for an area transitioning from urban uses to rural uses under “Intensity of Use Policies – Policy 1” as discussed previously in this section.</p> <p>The Project site is located at the edge of the GBCP area within this transition area and is adjacent to the existing Sierra Vista Office Complex, which includes 50,200 square feet of office space in one- and two-story buildings, as well as medium-density residential development. As such, the proposed development is considered to be of a size and scale that would be compatible with the atmosphere of the surrounding area.</p>

Placer County “Right-to-Farm” Ordinance

Chapter 5, Section 5.24.040 of the Placer County Code contains a “right-to-farm” ordinance. The ordinance is intended to reduce the loss of commercial agricultural resources by limiting the circumstances under which agricultural operations may be deemed to constitute a nuisance. The ordinance acknowledges that when nonagricultural land uses extend into agricultural areas, agricultural operations often become the subject of nuisance suits. As a result, agricultural operations are sometimes forced to cease or are substantially curtailed and others may be discouraged from making investments in agricultural improvements. In order to protect agricultural operations, the ordinance states that no agricultural activity conducted for commercial purposes shall be or become a nuisance, private or public, due to any changed condition in or about the locality, after the same has been in operation for more than one year if it was not a nuisance at the time it began. In addition, the ordinance requires each prospective buyer of property in unincorporated Placer County to be informed by the seller or his/her authorized agent of the right-to-farm ordinance.

Western Placer County Agricultural Land Assessment and Agricultural Land Conservation Evaluation Criteria

The Western Placer Agricultural Land Assessment and Agricultural Land Conservation Evaluation Criteria report identifies a means of achieving the County’s goal of conserving and

protecting valuable agricultural lands. The report includes a comprehensive assessment of the existing agricultural resources within western Placer County and provides a program to protect valuable agricultural resources and avoid premature conversion of agricultural lands in the unincorporated areas through the use of existing conservation programs, conservation easements, and other methods. The study area for the report includes all of south, west, and mid Placer County, extending approximately 25 miles east of Auburn (Placer County, 2003).

Placer County Zoning Code

The Placer County Zoning Ordinance is Chapter 17 of the Placer County Code. It is currently in its ninth edition and was printed in February 2005. The primary purposes of the Zoning Ordinance are to carry out the goals and objectives of the County General Plan and community plans, manage land use in a manner that will assure the orderly development and beneficial use of the unincorporated areas of the county, manage the distribution of population, protect and preserve important features of the county's natural environment, and reduce public hazards resulting from the inappropriate location, use, or design of buildings and land uses.

As described in the Existing Setting subsection above, the Project site is zoned as Farm (F) with a Building Site combining district (F-B-X 20-acre minimum). The intent of the F zone is to provide areas for the conduct of commercial agricultural operations that can also accommodate necessary services to support agricultural uses, together with residential land uses at low population densities. Allowable uses within this zone include crop production, equestrian facilities, fisheries and game preserves, forestry, grazing, storage structures, and pipelines and transmission lines. Houses of worship, or churches, are allowable uses with issuance of a minor use permit (Placer County, 2009a). The purpose of the minor use permit process is to evaluate whether a marginal use, such as the proposed Project, is appropriate for an individual site.

4.3 IMPACTS

4.3.1 Standards of Significance

Based on Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, a project would have significant land use and agricultural resource impacts if it would:

- 1) Physically divide an established community.
- 2) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the general plan, specific plan, local coastal program, or zoning ordinance) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental impact.
- 3) Conflict with any applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan.
- 4) 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 Resources Agency, to nonagricultural use.
- 5) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

- 6) Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of farmland to nonagricultural use.

4.3.2 Methodology

The following evaluation of potential land use and planning impacts analyzes the proposed Project's consistency with applicable land use planning documents as well as the Project's consistency with the types and intensities of the existing and planned land uses on and surrounding the Project site, including surrounding agricultural uses. Potential land use conflicts or incompatibilities include agricultural-urban conflicts as well as conflicts that are typically the result of other environmental effects, such as the generation of noise, traffic, or objectionable odors. Potential land use conflicts resulting from the effects of Project construction and operation are summarized here. The reader is also referred to other DEIR sections (Noise, Visual Resources, Traffic, Air Quality, etc.) for more detailed discussions of other relevant environmental effects.

Evaluation of potential land use impacts associated with the proposed Project was based on review of applicable land use planning documents including the Placer County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance and the Granite Bay Community Plan, as well as consultation with appropriate agencies and field review of the Project site and surrounding area.

4.3.3 Project-Level Impacts and Mitigation Measures

IMPACT 4.1: Divide an Established Community

The proposed Project is a house of worship. The Project site is currently undeveloped with no existing residential component and is located at the edge of urban development in the City of Rocklin comprising primarily office and single-family residential uses. The site does not provide any important roadway or pedestrian connections to any surrounding communities. Implementation of the proposed Project will not result in the division of any established communities. Thus, the Project would have **no impact** and no mitigation is required.

IMPACT 4.2: Conflict with Applicable Land Use Plans, Policies, or Regulations

The Project site is specifically zoned by the Placer County Zoning Ordinance as Farm with a combining minimum building site of 20 acres (F-B-X 20-acre minimum). Again, this zoning district allows for houses of worship, or churches, with issuance of a minor use permit.

The Project site is also located within the Granite Bay Community Plan and designated Rural Estate (RE) 4.6- to 20-acre minimum. This designation allows for rural and agricultural uses such as family farms and hobby farms. Allowable uses within this designation are further defined by the zoning districts permitted within this designation, each of which requires a minor use permit for the development of a house of worship. Houses of worship are considered compatible with rural residential land uses. Although the Project site is adjacent to large-lot rural residential land uses (south of Sierra College Boulevard in unincorporated Placer County) and the County-approved Cavitt Ranch Estates (located directly west of the Project site), which is a 31-lot single-family residential subdivision on 175+ acres with an average lot size of 5.5 acres and large, estate-type houses, the Project site is also adjacent to the Sierra Vista Office Complex to the north, which includes 50,200 square feet of office space in one- and two-story buildings. Furthermore, the Project includes certain measures to soften the appearance of the development and maintain the rural character of the surrounding area. These measures include orienting the

proposed buildings onto Sierra College Boulevard and away from existing rural uses to the south, currently only proposing development on the northern portion of the site, reducing the overall height of the main building by constructing the first floor below grade, using natural materials and a neutral color palette, and providing landscaping throughout the site. In addition, the applicant would be limited, via the final permitting process, as to the type and specific location of development on the Project site, including issues associated with the final scale, size, and building mass.

As the proposed Project is an allowed use with a MUP under the existing zoning on the site and the zoning is consistent with the County General Plan, this impact is considered to be **less than significant**.

IMPACT 4.3: Conflict with any Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan

The County presently has not adopted a habitat conservation plan or a natural community conservation plan. As such, the proposed Project poses no conflict with such plans. There will be **no impact** to such plans and no mitigation is required.

IMPACT 4.4: Convert Farmland of Local Importance

The Project site is not designated as Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) by the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. Although the site is designated Farmland of Local Importance, it is not currently used for agricultural uses and the site soils do not support agricultural uses. There are no active agricultural uses on the surrounding properties. Furthermore, as described in the standards of significance above and Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, Farmland of Local Importance is not defined as Important Farmlands and the loss of Farmland of Local Importance is not considered a significant impact. Therefore, the proposed Project would result in **no impact** associated with the conversion of farmland.

IMPACT 4.5: Conflict with Williamson Act Contract

As previously mentioned, the Project site is not subject to any Williamson Act contracts or Farmland Security Zone contracts. Furthermore, there are no active Williamson Act contracts or Farmland Security Zone contracts in the immediate vicinity of the Project site. Therefore, the proposed Project would have **no impact** relative to lands subject to a Williamson Act contract and no mitigation is required.