

This section provides an overview of the visual character, scenic resources, views, scenic highways, and sources of light and glare that are encountered on the project site and the surrounding area. This section concludes with an evaluation of the impacts and recommendations for mitigating impacts. Comments were received during the public review period or scoping meeting for the Notice of Preparation regarding this topic from the following: BJ Klosterman (April 10, 2012) and Pam Nieberg (April 11, 2012). Each of the comments related to this topic are addressed within this section. Information in this section is derived primarily from the following:

- *City of Davis General Plan* (City of Davis, May 2001, Amended through 2013)
- A site visit completed by De Novo Planning Group (July 25, 2012)

### 3.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### REGIONAL SETTING

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The City of Davis' planning area is located 11 miles west of Sacramento and approximately 79 miles northeast of San Francisco. The planning area consists of approximately 160 square miles, and is characterized by agricultural/open space landscapes to the north, west, and south; highly developed urban landscapes within the City Limits; and open space lands, including the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area to the east. Views from agricultural fields are enclosed on the west by the Coast Range hills. Views to other directions are open to the horizon, although the Sierra Nevada Mountains, Sutter Buttes, and Mount Diablo can be seen on clear days. The UC Davis campus is located adjacent to the southwest corner of the City and occupies a total of 2,900 unincorporated acres. General Plan land uses within the planning area include Residential (low, medium, and high density); Neighborhood Retail; Community Retail; General Commercial; Business Park; Industrial; Public/Semi-Public; Parks and Recreation; Urban Agriculture Transition Areas; Agriculture; and Natural Habitat.

The planning area has no officially designated scenic highways, corridors, vistas, or viewing areas (Davis General Plan Update EIR, p. 5A-1). Landscapes in and near the City are predominantly urban, with the core area of the community having more established neighborhoods and urban landscaping. Newer developed areas on the edges of the community are more noticeable from a distance due to the immaturity of the landscaping. The City's planning area buffers the City on all sides by extending into areas that are dominated by agricultural uses, and views in this area are open and rural in nature.

#### PROJECT SITE AND SURROUNDING AREA

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The project site is generally a slanted rectangle with boundaries defined by East Covell Boulevard on the south, an existing Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) line and the F Street open drainage channel on the west and agricultural lands on the north and east. Residential neighborhoods are located west of the UPRR line and F Street Channel. Multi-family residential (Cranbrook Apartments) and office uses are located south of the project site, across East Covell Boulevard. Adjacent lands to the north and east are currently zoned Limited Industrial (M-L) under the jurisdiction of Yolo County, and are seasonally farmed with rotating annual crops.

## 3.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

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There are no buildings, residences, or other habitable structures located on the project site. The only above-ground man-made structures on the project site consist of a City-owned groundwater well and pumping structure, which is located in the southwest corner of the site, and an old water tower located near the center of the site, which is leftover from the previous cannery operations. Most of the structures, buildings and facilities associated with the previous cannery operations have been demolished and removed. Concrete building pads and paved parking areas cover much of the ground area within the southern half of the project site. Native and non-native tree species line the western, eastern and southern boundaries of the southern half of the site, and various trees are interspersed throughout portions of the southern half of the site where the parking lot from the former cannery operations is located.

The northern half of the project site is vacant, and consists of tilled lands currently void of vegetation. This portion of the project site has been farmed recently, but was not under active agricultural production at the time the NOP was issued.

### VIEWES OF THE PROJECT SITE

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Views of the project site are most prominent from East Covell Blvd., along the project site's southern boundary. A thick hedgerow of established Oleanders exists along the project site's southern boundary, which provides visual screening and obstructs views of most of the interior portions of the site from pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles travelling along East Covell Blvd.

Views of the project site from the residential areas to the west of the site, including vehicles, bicyclists, and pedestrians travelling along F Street, are largely obstructed by a thick corridor of established trees within the F Street Drainage Channel corridor.

Lands to the north of the project site consist of agricultural lands. While there are largely unobstructed views of the site from the north, there are no proximate public roadways, residential areas or commercial areas to the north of the project site. As such, there are limited opportunities to view the project site from the north.

The project site is visible from residential areas east of the project site, including homes along Pole Line Road and residential areas east of Pole Line Road. Views of the site from these areas include the former Covell Village project site in the foreground, with the project site located in the background of the viewshed.

### Scenic Highways and Corridors

A scenic highway is generally defined by Caltrans as a public highway that traverses an area of outstanding scenic quality, containing striking views, flora, geology, or other unique natural attributes. As described in the Davis General Plan EIR, there are no Officially Dedicated California Scenic Highway segments, corridors, vistas, or viewing areas in the Davis Planning Area.

### Light and Glare

There are two typical types of light intrusion. First, light emanates from the interior of structures and passes out through windows. Secondly, light projects from exterior sources such as street

lighting, security lighting, and landscape lighting. “Light spill” is typically defined as the presence of unwanted and/or misdirected light on properties adjacent to the property being illuminated.

Street lighting is provided within the developed areas of the City, either by the City or through private ownership, such as PG&E. In new developments, the City itself does not install streetlights. Rather, the City requires developers to install lights and dedicate them to the City. Light introduction can be a nuisance to adjacent residential areas and diminish the view of the clear night sky, and, if uncontrolled, can disturb wildlife in natural habitat areas.

Glare is the sensation produced by luminance within the visual field that is significantly greater than the luminance to which the eyes are adapted, which causes annoyance, discomfort, or loss in visual performance and visibility.

There are no existing sources of light or glare located on the project site. The segment of East Covell Blvd., which runs along the southern edge of the project boundary, has elevated roadway lights, which enhance safety for pedestrians, bicyclists, and vehicles travelling this roadway at night.

### 3.1.2 REGULATORY SETTING

#### STATE

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##### **California Scenic Highway Program**

The intent of the California Scenic Highway Program is “to protect and enhance California’s natural scenic beauty and to protect the social and economic values provided by the State’s scenic resources.” Caltrans administers the program, which was established in 1963 and is governed by the California Streets and Highways Code (§260 et seq.). The goal of the program is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would diminish the aesthetic value of the adjacent land. Caltrans has compiled a list of state highways that are designated as scenic and county highways that are eligible for designation as scenic.

Scenic highway designation can provide several types of benefits to the region. Scenic areas are protected from encroachment of inappropriate land uses, free of billboards, and are generally required to maintain existing contours and preserve important vegetative features. Only low density development is allowed on steep slopes and along ridgelines on scenic highways, and noise setbacks are required for residential development.

As described above, there are no designated Scenic Highway Corridors in the vicinity of the project site.

#### LOCAL

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##### **City of Davis General Plan**

The following applicable goals and policies related to aesthetics are taken from the Urban Design and Neighborhood Preservation Element of the City of Davis General Plan.

## 3.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

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**Goal UD 1:** Encourage community design throughout the City that helps to build community, encourage human interaction, and support non-automobile transportation.

**Policy UD 1.1:** Promote urban/community design which is human-scaled, comfortable, safe, and conducive to pedestrian use.

**Goal UD 2:** Maintain an aesthetically pleasing environment and manage a sustainable community forest to optimize environmental, aesthetic, social, and economic benefits.

**Policy UD 2.1:** Preserve and protect scenic resources and elements in and around Davis, including natural habitat and scenery and resources reflective of place and history.

**Policy UD 2.2:** Maintain and increase the amount of greenery, especially street trees, in Davis, both for aesthetic reasons and to provide shade, cooling, habitat, air quality benefits, and visual continuity.

**Policy UD 2.3:** Require an architectural “fit” with Davis’ existing scale for new development projects.

**Policy UD 2.4:** Create affordable and multi-family residential areas that include innovative designs and on-site open space amenities that are linked with public bicycle/pedestrian ways, neighborhood centers, and transit stops.

**Policy UD 2.5:** Ensure attractive functional signs.

**Goal UD 3:** Use good design as a means to promote human safety.

**Policy UD 3.2:** Provide exterior lighting that enhances safety and night use in public spaces, but minimizes impacts on surrounding land uses.

**Goal UD 4:** Create an urban design framework that would strengthen the physical form of the city.

**Policy UD 4.1:** Develop an urban design framework plan to consolidate and clarify the relevant design concepts in this chapter and other chapters to promote a positive and memorable image for the city and to reinforce the functional systems of the city such as land use, circulation, and open space.

**Goal UD 5:** Create and enforce clear and reasonable design guidelines that operationalize the relevant goals, policies, and actions of this general plan.

**Policy UD 5.1:** Develop and implement new design guidelines, which are reviewed periodically.

**Goal UD 6:** Strengthen the city’s neighborhoods to retain desirable characteristics while allowing for change and evolution, promoting public and private investments, and encouraging citizen involvement in neighborhood planning.

**Policy UD 6.1:** Recognize the existence of individual neighborhoods with general boundaries and facilitate the development of neighborhood strategies in partnership with residents and property owners. The strategies should recognize the unique characteristics of the individual neighborhood and the potential for change, within the context of a well-planned city. The strategies should be directed toward solving unique neighborhood problems and implementing neighborhood priorities and enhancing livability.

### **Outdoor Lighting Control Ordinance**

The City enacted the Outdoor Lighting Control Ordinance in 1998. The ordinance, commonly referred to as the City's "Dark Sky Ordinance," provides standards for outdoor lighting in an effort to minimize light pollution, glare, and light trespass caused by inappropriate or misaligned light fixtures, while improving nighttime public safety, utility, security, and preserving the night sky as a natural resource and thus facilitating people's enjoyment of stargazing. This ordinance does not apply to interior lighting, including lighting at greenhouse facilities. Single-family and duplex properties are exempted.

## **3.1.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Consistent with Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines, the proposed project will have significant impact on aesthetics if it will:

- 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;
- Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; and/or
- Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### **IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

#### **Impact 3.1-1: Potential to result in substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas or substantially damage scenic resources within a State Scenic Highway (No Impact)**

As described in the Draft Program EIR for the City of Davis General Plan Update (2000), there are no established scenic vistas within the City of Davis. Additionally, as described in greater detail in the Environmental Setting section above, there are no designated State Scenic Highways in the City of Davis or the vicinity of the project site.

Given that there are no established scenic vistas or Scenic Highways on or adjacent to the project site, the proposed project would have **no impact** related to this environmental topic. No mitigation is required.

### **Impact 3.1-2: Potential to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings (Less than Significant)**

Project implementation would result in the development of a mixed-use residential and commercial/office project on a site that is currently void of structures and development. While the site was historically used as a tomato cannery, the cannery facilities have been demolished and removed. The northern half of the project site currently has the appearance of being rural and undeveloped in nature, which is consistent with the appearance of lands to the north and east of the site. The southern half of the project site contains large areas of concrete and asphalt at ground level, which are remnants of the building foundations and parking lot areas from the past cannery uses on the site.

The project site is most visible from the south and the east. Views of the site from the west are largely obstructed by the existing vegetation and trees located to the west of the rail lines and F Street Canal, west of the site. While the project site is visually unobstructed from the north, there are no land uses or public roadways to the north of the site that provide opportunities for area residents or visitors to view the site from the north.

The project site's southern boundary is immediately adjacent to East Covell Blvd. Views of the site from this roadway are currently obstructed by a mature hedgerow of Oleanders and numerous native and non-native trees located along the project's southern boundary. This existing vegetation would be removed during site grading and preparation activities, which would increase the site's visibility from East Covell Blvd. The project site is also visible from residential areas located to the east of Pole Line Road, east of the project site.

The proposed project includes plans for extensive landscaping and tree planting throughout the entire site, particularly along the perimeter areas of the site. Along the project's west edge, a 100-foot multi-use area would accommodate a sloped, naturalized bio-swale feature with water quality functions, habitat area and greenbelt. The bio-swale would capture and treat stormwater runoff from the site and convey flows to the detention basin in the northern portion of the site. The bio-swale would be vegetated with native species. The greenbelt on the east edge of the buffer (along the upper bench of the sloped swale) would include landscaping and a ten-foot multi-use path. A safety fence would be located along the length of the railroad right-of-way. Tree plantings would be installed between the railroad and the west edge of the Project to create a visual and sound screen. Additionally, as described under Alternative Alignment Option 2 in the Project Description, the project may include a bike trail that would begin at the bike/pedestrian trail paralleling Loop C (west), approximately 1,100 feet north of East Covell Boulevard. The trail would extend southerly to a landing area where the bike trail would turn westerly. The trail would cross over the on-site bio-swale, the UPRR tracks, and the F Street Channel to a second landing. The trail would turn south and westerly to tie into the existing bike trail (Figure 2-13).

Along the project's north edge, a 150-foot agricultural buffer is proposed. The buffer would include a stormwater detention basin area with water quality functions, habitat area and a greenbelt. The detention basin would be designed to receive flows from the bio-swale on the west

side of the project and, in storm events, detain and treat stormwater flows. The basin would be heavily naturalized with vegetation and gentle side slopes. On the south side of the detention basin, a greenbelt would include natural and edible landscaping and a 10-foot wide multi-use path with seating and interpretive exhibits. Landscaping and the multi-use path would separate the detention area from rear yards of adjacent single-family residential lots. Views from the multi-use path would be through the vegetated basin area to existing agricultural uses north of the site.

Along the project's east edge, a 150-foot agricultural buffer is proposed, consisting of a 100-foot buffer and a 50-foot urban/agricultural transition area. North of Loop C (North), the 150-foot agricultural buffer would include a portion of the stormwater detention basin, habitat areas and a greenbelt. The greenbelt would include shade trees, natural and edible landscaping and a 10-foot wide multi-use path with seating and interpretive exhibits. North of Loop C (North), the 10-foot wide multi-use path would be located along the west edge of the 50-foot urban/ag transition area. Southeast of Loop C (North), the eastern 120 feet of the buffer area would contain the 7.4-acre Cannery Farm including a small barn, cooler, packing shed and equipment. South of Loop C (North), the 50-foot urban/ag transition area would contain the 10-foot bioswale, 10-foot multi-use path and 7-foot landscape parkway with parallel parking along east edge of Loop C (East). Farm operations would extend east to the property line.

Extensive tree plantings and landscaping is proposed along the project's southern edge, adjacent to East Covell Blvd. Two primary access points to the project site would be located along East Covell Blvd.

Project implementation would result in the construction of two and three-story buildings throughout the mixed-use portion of the project site, and residential buildings up to four stories in height throughout areas of the site designated Residential High Density. The project would be developed as a Planned Development, as provided by Article 40.22 of the City of Davis Municipal Code. Project-specific design guidelines and development standards would be developed and must be approved by the City of Davis, prior to the construction of any buildings on the site.

As described in Article 40.22.010 of the Davis Municipal Code, the purpose of the planned development district is to allow diversification in the relationship of various buildings, structures and open spaces in order to be relieved from the rigid standards of conventional zoning. A planned development district shall comply with the regulations and provisions of the general plan and any applicable specific plan and shall provide adequate standards to promote the public health, safety and general welfare without unduly inhibiting the advantages of modern building techniques and planning for residential, commercial or industrial purposes. The criteria upon which planned development districts shall be judged and approved will include the development of sound housing for persons of low, moderate and high income levels, residential developments which provide a mix of housing styles and costs, creative approaches in the development of land, more efficient and desirable use of open area, variety in the physical development pattern of the city and utilization of advances in technology which are innovative to land development.

The development standards and design guidelines being prepared for the proposed project are described in greater detail below.

## 3.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

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- **Development Standards.** Development standards will describe applicable zoning and development standards for the project and identify specific, customized development standards for proposed housing types.
- **Design Guidelines.** Design guidelines will address project architecture and design, building materials, consistent neighborhood themes, consistent quality in design of public realm areas and an allowance for custom approach to development and innovation. The design guidelines will address design considerations of each of the project elements (i.e. building form and materials, architecture, greenbelts, open spaces, streetscape, landscaping, pathway, land use interfaces, lighting and fencing).

The City of Davis General Plan includes goals and policies designed to protect visual resources and promote quality design in urban areas. The proposed project must be developed to be consistent with the policies and goals of the Davis General Plan.

While development of the proposed project would change and alter the existing visual character of the project site, these changes would not degrade the visual quality of the site or the surrounding areas. The extensive use of landscaped and naturalized buffers around the perimeter of the project site would partially shield views of the interior areas of the site from the surrounding viewsheds. Extensive greenbelts and landscaped areas would provide for visually pleasing amenities throughout the site. The project also includes a comprehensive network of bicycle and pedestrian trails and pathways.

Various temporary visual impacts could occur as a result of construction activities as the project develops, including grading, equipment and material storage, and staging. Though temporary, some of these impacts could last for several weeks or months during any single construction phase. Because impacts would be temporary and viewer sensitivity in the majority of cases would be slight to moderate, significant impacts are not anticipated.

Adherence to the design guidelines developed for the project, and the extensive use of landscaping and greenbelt improvements proposed throughout the project site would result in a development that is cohesive, well-designed, and visually pleasing. This EIR acknowledges that project implementation would alter the existing visual character of the project site; however, this alteration would not substantially degrade the visual quality of the project site. The newly proposed urban components of the project would be consistent with the City of Davis General Plan, and would adhere to the design requirements of the planned development zoning district. Therefore, this is considered a **less than significant** impact, and no additional mitigation is required.



**Impact 3.1-3: Project implementation may result in light and glare impacts (Less than Significant with Mitigation)**

Implementation of the proposed project would introduce new sources of light and glare into the project area. New sources of glare would occur primarily from the windshields of vehicles travelling to and from the project site and from vehicles parked at the site. The parking areas are located within the interior of the project site, and are not immediately adjacent to any of the light sensitive land uses in the project vicinity (the residential areas to the south and west, as well as residences located east of Pole Line Road). Additionally, as described above, the project includes plans for extensive landscaping and setback areas around the perimeter of the site, which would provide visual screening and block potential windshield glare to areas surrounding the project site. Due to the distance between the sources of glare and the nearest sensitive receptors, impacts from vehicle windshield glare would be **less than significant**.

Glare may also be generated from buildings proposed on-site, primarily in the mixed-use business park component. The use of reflective building materials, including polished steel and reflective glass could increase daytime glare for sensitive receptors in the vicinity of the project site. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

The project would introduce new sources of nighttime lighting, which may result in increased nighttime lighting in the project vicinity. A detailed lighting plan has not been prepared for the project, but for the purposes of this analysis, it has been conservatively assumed that exterior lighting would be located throughout most of the outdoor areas of the project site. This includes, but is not necessarily limited to: street lighting in the residential areas; exterior lighting on homes and residences; lighting for the interior and perimeter multi-use trail network; park lighting; parking lot lighting in the mixed-use business area; and security lighting around commercial and office buildings within the mixed-use business area.

Light sources from the proposed development may have a significant adverse impact on the surrounding areas, by introducing nuisance light into the area and decreasing the visibility of nighttime skies. Additionally, on-site light sources may create light spillover impacts on surrounding land uses in the absence of mitigation. This is considered a **potentially significant** impact.

**MITIGATION MEASURES**

**Mitigation Measure 3.1-1:** *In order to reduce the potential for glare from buildings and structures within the project site, the Design Guidelines developed for the project shall prohibit the use of reflective building materials that have the potential to result in glare that would be visible from sensitive receptors located in the vicinity of the project site. The City of Davis Department of Community Development and Sustainability shall be responsible for ensuring that the approved project has adequate measures in place to prohibit the use of reflective building materials that may cause a glare nuisance to off-site receptors.*

## 3.1 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

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**Mitigation Measure 3.1-2:** *In order to reduce potential for nighttime lighting impacts, the project applicant shall prepare and submit a detailed lighting plan for review and approval by the City of Davis Community Development and Sustainability and Public Works Departments. The lighting plan shall include standards for street lighting and for all exterior light fixtures in public, mixed-use, and multi-family areas of the project site. The lighting plan shall comply with Chapter 8 of the Davis Municipal Code- Article 8.17I: Outdoor Lighting Control. The lighting plan may be included in the project’s Design Guidelines, or may be submitted as a stand-alone document. The lighting plan shall be approved by the City of Davis Community Development and Sustainability and Public Works Departments prior to issuance of the first building permit, and shall apply to all phases of project development.*

### SIGNIFICANCE AFTER MITIGATION

Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-1 would ensure that reflective building materials are not used within the project, which would reduce the potential for daytime glare impacts to a less than significant level. Implementation of Mitigation Measure 3.1-2 would ensure that all exterior lighting associated with the project is properly shielded and directed downward in order to eliminate light spillage onto adjacent properties, and reduce impacts to “dark skies” to the greatest extent feasible, consistent with the City of Davis’ Outdoor Lighting Control Ordinance. Mitigation Measure 3.1-2 would reduce this impact to a **less than significant** level.