

## 9.1 Overview

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The natural undeveloped character of the Sierra Vista Specific Plan (SVSP) area consists of relatively flat to gently rolling terrain situated at an elevation of approximately 75 to 125 feet above mean sea level. Historical use of the Plan Area included ground disturbance associated with agricultural operations and minimal disturbance through structural development and associated grading activities. However, there are areas of natural habitat with the potential for wildlife diversity.

Annual grassland is the dominant vegetation community within the Plan Area, with herbaceous weed species interspersed with the non-native annual grasses. Wetland features are dispersed throughout the site. Curry Creek flows from east to west within the Plan Area, entering from the southeast, then continuing south of Baseline Road and re-entering the SVSP in the southwest corner of the Plan Area. Clusters of seasonal wetlands, including vernal pools and seasonal drainages, are also embedded in the grassland areas. A number of trees are present in the southwest portion of the site, primarily along the Curry Creek corridor, most of which are cottonwoods and willows, with approximately six interior live oaks.

The SVSP is consistent with the goals of City of Roseville General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element. The SVSP establishes contiguous open space areas that are formed to protect some of the Plan Area's most prominent natural resource areas. The form of Sierra Vista's Open Space Plan, and the resource preservation areas within it, has been guided by input received during early consultation with appropriate federal and state resource agencies. The resource management approach is designed to be consistent with the Pleasant Grove Wastewater Treatment

Plant (PGWWTP) Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) from May 2000, which addresses annexation projects proposed on the City's western boundary, such as the SVSP. In addition, the SVSP and related off-site preservation and restoration efforts are intended to complement larger-scale regional conservation strategies, such as the proposed Placer County Conservation Plan, the County's proposed habitat conservation plan. Coordination with other agencies and conservation efforts is a fundamental principle and key objective of the SVSP resource management approach. In addition to resource protection, the open space areas help define the visual character of Sierra Vista and provide for passive recreation opportunities, pedestrian and bike access, storm drainage, flood water conveyance, utility infrastructure, and land use buffering.

Based on the characteristics of the Plan Area, the resource management approach in the Specific Plan focuses on wetland resources, vegetation and wildlife, and cultural and historic resources. Additional resources are further addressed in the Sierra Vista Specific Plan EIR.

## 9.2 Wetland Resources

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### A. Pre-Development Conditions



Several types of wetland features exist throughout the Plan Area. The most prominent of these is Curry Creek, a perennial drainage that flows year round as a result of upstream urban runoff and that supports riparian and emergent marsh vegetation. In addition to Curry Creek, there are small swales and drainages throughout the SVSP that carry water briefly during winter rainfall. Outside of the creek and swales, vernal pools and seasonal wetlands are found primarily within grassland areas. A total of 37.4 acres of verified wetlands or "other waters" of the United States occur within the Plan Area in its pre-development condition. Table 9-1 identifies the types of wetland features found throughout the Plan Area.

**Table 9-1: Jurisdictional Wetland Summary**

| Wetland Type        | Pre-Development Acreage | Impacted Acreage <sup>1</sup> |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Ephemeral Stream    | 0.0625 ac.              | 0.0415 ac.                    |
| Intermittent Stream | 6.0172 ac.              | 0.7978 ac.                    |
| Perennial Stream    | 2.15 ac.                | 1.433 ac.                     |
| Pond                | 2.067 ac.               | 1.0450 ac.                    |
| Perennial Marsh     | 0.859 ac.               | 0.8483 ac.                    |
| Seasonal Wetland    | 7.7677 ac.              | 5.0613 ac.                    |
| Wetland Swale       | 19.7014 ac.             | 17.9587 ac.                   |
| Vernal Pool         | 11.3461 ac.             | 7.0460 ac.                    |
| <b>TOTAL</b>        | <b>49.9709 ac.</b>      | <b>34.2316 ac.</b>            |

<sup>1</sup> These impacts do not include off-site impacts to wetlands. Refer to SVSP EIR for additional information for off-site impacts.

## B. Avoidance and Mitigation Strategies

The Sierra Vista development plan is the result of extensive planning and its design is influenced by the desire to reduce impacts on wetlands and habitat for endangered species. The Open Space plan, as illustrated on Figure 9-1, is configured to minimize impacts on Curry Creek and to provide buffers for habitat protection. Details regarding impacted and avoided wetlands, including mitigation strategies, are provided in the SVSP Environmental Impact Report.

Sierra Vista avoids resource impacts to the degree feasible; however, mitigation is required to offset impacts on wetland features. Sierra Vista's mitigation strategy has two primary objectives: 1) To create no net loss of wetland functions and values, and 2) To offset impacts on federally listed species. These objectives will be accomplished through a combination of on-site preservation and off-site preservation, restoration, and creation.

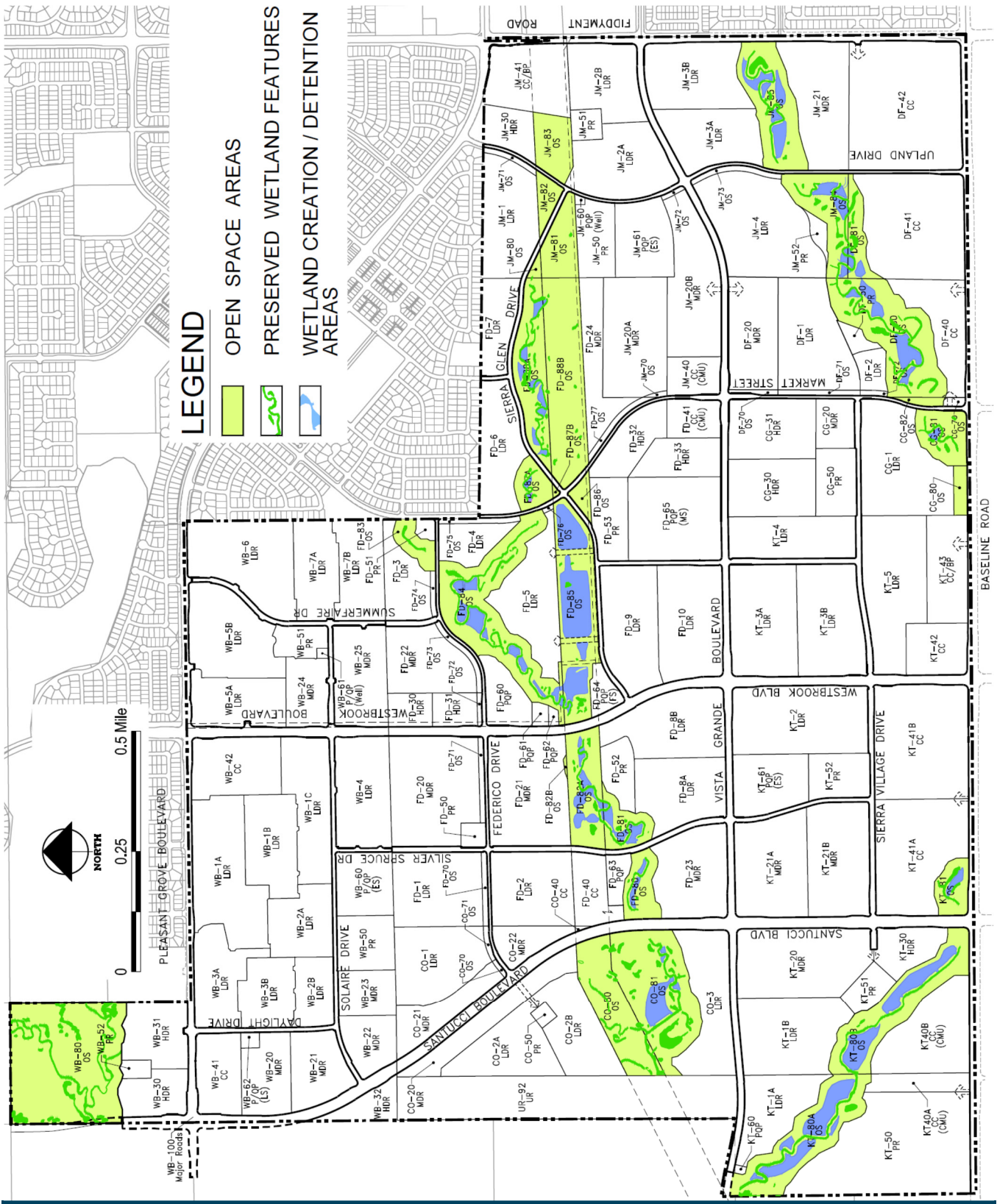
Development of the SVSP will be subject to the appropriate approvals from state and federal resource agencies including the USFWS, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), the California Regional Water Quality Control Board and California Department of Fish and Game (CDFG). Prior to submittal of an application for the SVSP, the City and SVSP property owners initiated regular meetings with representatives from various federal and state agencies. The SVSP mitigation program has involved early consultation with the resource agencies to ensure compliance with the Clean Water Act and Endangered Species Act.

### **On-Site Resource Preservation, Creation and Management**

Wetland features within the Plan Area's Open Space system will be preserved in perpetuity, with on-site Preserves ultimately dedicated to the City for management and maintenance. To ensure these features are maintained, grading and drainage plans in development areas will be designed to minimize impacts on the open space areas' existing hydrology. Approximately 45 acres of wetlands will be constructed on-site within the preserved open space. An on-site mitigation plan will be prepared describing the wetlands to be created along with the monitoring protocol and performance criteria. It is anticipated that Long-term maintenance and management of Sierra Vista's Preserves will be conducted in accordance with the City of Roseville Open Space Preserve Overarching Operations and Management (O&M) Plan as discussed further in Section 9.4 below.

### **Off-Site Mitigation**

Where biological resources cannot be avoided within Sierra Vista's development areas or mitigated on-site within the open space Preserves, off-site mitigation is required to offset impacts on wetlands and associated habitat. In order to meet the resource preservation objectives outlined above, the mitigation program includes the preservation of resource areas on off-site lands and mitigation banks. Mitigation sites have been identified in Western Placer County and are described in the 404 permit application. These sites will provide areas for preservation, restoration, and creation of wetland features. In addition, some mitigation will be provided as habitat credits in previously established and agency-approved mitigation banks located in Placer County. The use of off-site lands and habitat credits as mitigation to satisfy the on-site impacts on wetland resources will be assessed by the appropriate federal and state resource agencies and subject to various permit approvals prior to development activity within the Plan Area.



**RESOURCE MANAGEMENT**

**Figure 9-1: Open Space Preserve Areas**

## 9.3 Vegetation and Wildlife



Annual grassland is the dominant vegetation community within the Plan Area. It is comprised primarily of non-native annual grasses and herbaceous weed species. The most common species found within Sierra Vista include medusa-head (*Taeniatherum caput-medusae*), soft brome (*Bromus hordeaceus*), wild oat (*Avena fatua*), ryegrass (*Lolium multiflorum*), and mouse barley (*Hordeum murinum*). Other species that exist throughout the Plan Area include yellow star thistle (*Centauria solstitialis*), filaree (*Erodium botrys*), sticky tarweed (*Holocarpha virgata*), common tarweed (*Hemizonia pungens*), and bull thistle (*Cirsium vulgare*). In addition, Dwarf downingia (*Downingia pusilla*), a special-status, California Native Plant Society List 2 plant species, is located in parts of the northern portion of the Plan Area.

Sierra Vista's grassland habitat supports a number of wildlife species. These include waterfowl, wading birds, shorebirds, and several amphibian species that use the wetland areas in the winter and spring. In addition, the grassland habitat supports several raptor species, including Swainson's hawk, by providing foraging habitat. Swainson's hawk is a state-listed threatened species and is protected pursuant to the California Endangered Species Act. One nest has been documented in the southwestern portion of the Plan Area. Several prey species have also been documented on the site, including pocket gopher, meadow vole, and black-tailed jackrabbit.

Grassland habitat will be preserved as part of Sierra Vista's open space system. The largest Preserve areas include the open space parcels associated with the Curry Creek and Western Area Power Authority (WAPA) corridors. Active management of tall grasses by mowing, harvesting, discing, or grazing is anticipated to provide prey opportunities for wildlife species. Preservation and management of the grassland areas will be regulated by the Operations and Management Plan, as outlined in sub-section 9.4 below. Active management of the grassland is an important component of Sierra Vista's mitigation strategy to offset wildlife impacts, which is outlined in the Sierra Vista EIR.

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## 9.4 Operations & Management Plan

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An O&M Plan will be implemented in accordance with the applicable 404 permits to continually monitor, report, and correct disturbance, if any, to the open space/ Preserve areas. This document will ultimately be approved by the regulatory agencies and will specify the permitted activities and features within Sierra Vista's open space Preserves. For the SVSP, it is anticipated that Preserve areas will be managed in accordance with the City of Roseville Open Space Preserve Area Overarching O&M Plan. At the time of Specific Plan approval, the Overarching O&M Plan was nearing completion. When complete, it will replace several individual O&M Plans that govern management of other City-owned Preserve areas, which will result in a more consistent application of Preserve management strategies throughout the City.

At a minimum, the O&M Plan will address fire/fuel modification zones, mowing activities, grading/ construction activities, pedestrian/bikeway paths, storm drainage systems (including outfall locations and the transfer of storm water to receiving waters), and other permitted and prohibited activities. In addition, standards will be established in the O&M Plan to minimize potential future impacts on vernal pools from sources of pollution, including urban runoff and neighboring land uses. Following habitat creation and completion of success monitoring by the property owners, on-site open space Preserves will be dedicated to and managed by the City in accordance with the Preserve Area Overarching O&M Plan. Funding for the management of on-site Preserve areas will be provided by an annual tax levy via creation of a Community Facilities District (or other funding mechanism).

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## 9.5 Cultural and Historic Resources

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Much of the Sierra Vista site has been modified in the past to accommodate agricultural activities. A cultural resources report was prepared that evaluated the potential for significant resources. Seven historical cultural resources were identified as part of this analysis, which generally included residential structures, and equipment and buildings associated with agricultural activities dating back to the late 1800's. The analysis concluded that the buildings, structures, and deposits in the Plan Area do not appear to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) or the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR).

The Sierra Vista Specific Plan EIR provides a detailed analysis of the Plan Area's cultural and historic resources, including mitigation and direction

for further analysis of project-related impacts on cultural and historic resources, and how to proceed if any previously undiscovered or sub-surface archaeological artifacts or historical sites are discovered in the Plan Area. Potential actions include further surveying, disclosure, and documentation.