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## 12. LAND USE AND PLANNING

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This EIR chapter describes the existing mix of agricultural, residential, and other land uses within and surrounding the Middle Green Valley plan area, applicable Solano County General Plan and other land use policies and regulations, the potential effects of the proposed Specific Plan on these land use characteristics, and any mitigation measures warranted for incorporation into the Specific Plan to address identified significant adverse land use impacts.

### 12.1 SETTING

#### 12.1.1 Countywide Land Use Context

(a) General Land Use Breakdown. Solano County comprises 910 square miles (582,255 acres), including about 830 square miles of land and about 80 square miles of water. The county land area is described in the Solano County General Plan as divided into two topographic sections: a western quarter, which includes the Middle Green Valley plan area, extends into the foothills of the coastal range, and is characterized by steep slopes, which become more gently rolling in the eastern portion; and the remainder of the County, which is part of the Sacramento Valley and characterized by generally level topography, with some isolated areas of low rolling hills.

The unincorporated area of the county includes approximately 773 square miles (494,437 acres), or approximately 86 percent of the total land area. The incorporated area includes approximately 81,678 acres, or 14 percent of the total land area, including the cities of Benicia, Dixon, Fairfield, Rio Vista, Suisun City, Vacaville, and Vallejo. The County has historically required that development requiring water and sewer service be incorporated within one of the County's cities. Because of this commitment to focus development within urban areas, most residential, commercial and industrial development in the county has occurred within the incorporated areas. In 2000, about 95 percent of the county's population lived in the incorporated cities, and only 19,322 of the county's 394,542 residents lived in the unincorporated area.

Table 12.1 provides a break down of the 2006 existing land uses in Solano County.

(b) Agricultural Land. Over 329,000 acres of land comprising approximately 70 percent of the total unincorporated land area in the county are in agricultural use. Agricultural land is concentrated in the eastern portion of the county and in smaller areas scattered throughout the county, including Middle Green Valley.

(c) Residential Land. Residential land uses in the unincorporated areas occupy approximately 6,878 acres, mostly at rural residential densities of one dwelling unit per 2.5 or more acres. Unincorporated rural residential development has been concentrated in the area north of Vacaville in the English Hills, Allendale and Olive School areas, along Leisure Town Road east of Vacaville, in the Tolenas area of unincorporated Suisun City, and in the area north

Table 12.1  
EXISTING COUNTYWIDE LAND USE DISTRIBUTION (2006)

| <u>Land Use Categories</u>              | <u>Total</u>   | <u>Percentage of Total</u> |
|---|----------------|----------------------------|
| Water                                   | 51,092         | 8.8%                       |
| Park and Recreation                     | 791            | 0.1%                       |
| Marsh                                   | 64,731         | 11.1%                      |
| Watershed                               | 36,575         | 6.3%                       |
| Agriculture                             | 329,076        | 56.5%                      |
| Public/Quasi-Public                     | 1,517          | 0.3%                       |
| Residential                             | 6,878          | 1.2%                       |
| Commercial                              | 640            | 0.1%                       |
| Industrial                              | 2,125          | 0.4%                       |
| Vacant Land                             | 1,011          | 0.2%                       |
| <b>TOTAL Unincorporated Area</b>        | <b>494,437</b> | <b>84.9%</b>               |
| <b>TOTAL Incorporated Area</b>          | <b>81,678</b>  | <b>14.0%</b>               |
| Existing Roadway/Railroad Right of Ways | 6,140          | 1.1%                       |
| <b>TOTAL County</b>                     | <b>582,255</b> | <b>100.0%</b>              |

SOURCE: 2008 Solano County General Plan, Land Use chapter, page LU-5.

of Fairfield adjacent to the Middle Green Valley plan area--i.e., the north and south Green Valley areas. Residential estate use at densities of one unit per ¼ to 1 acre exist in these two Green Valley areas and in the Rockville Corners, Willotta Oaks, Old Town Cordelia, Elmira, Birds Landing and Collinsville areas. A small amount of the unincorporated county land is used for more suburban and urban density residential single family including portions of upper Green Valley (suburban density) and unincorporated areas of Vallejo (suburban and urban density residential as well as and multifamily development including apartment buildings, duplexes, triplexes and similar housing types).

(d) Other Land Uses. Some small commercial developments are also located in unincorporated county areas to serve the needs of local residents and visitors. Highway-oriented commercial development represents the predominant commercial land use in the unincorporated area with the majority located along Interstate 80. Most of the existing industrial development in the county is within cities. Industrial land uses account for about 2,125 acres of land area in the unincorporated county.

Other uses of land in the county include public (such as schools, cemeteries, and federal lands), accounting for about 1,517 acres, park and recreation land (791 acres) and vacant land (1,011 acres).

### **12.1.2 Existing Middle Green Valley and Vicinity Land Use**

Figure 12.1 provides an aerial photograph of the plan area and vicinity. The General Plan describes Middle Green Valley as "located north of the Fairfield city limits along Green Valley Road... [and] nestled on the edge of the western hills with a mixture of cultivated agricultural land on the valley floor and grazing land in the hills, sandwiched between residential developments in upper Green Valley and the city of Fairfield." The General Plan also states that "The area is valued for its rural character and scenic qualities."

The Middle Green Valley plan area is comprised of a predominantly rural valley near the hilly western boundary of Solano County, south of upper Green Valley subdivisions and the Green Valley Country Club; west of Suisun Valley and the Rockville Hills; north of I-880, Jameson Canyon and the Fairfield's Hidden Meadows subdivision; and northwest of Fairfield's hillside East Ridge subdivision.

## **12.2 PERTINENT PLANS AND POLICIES**

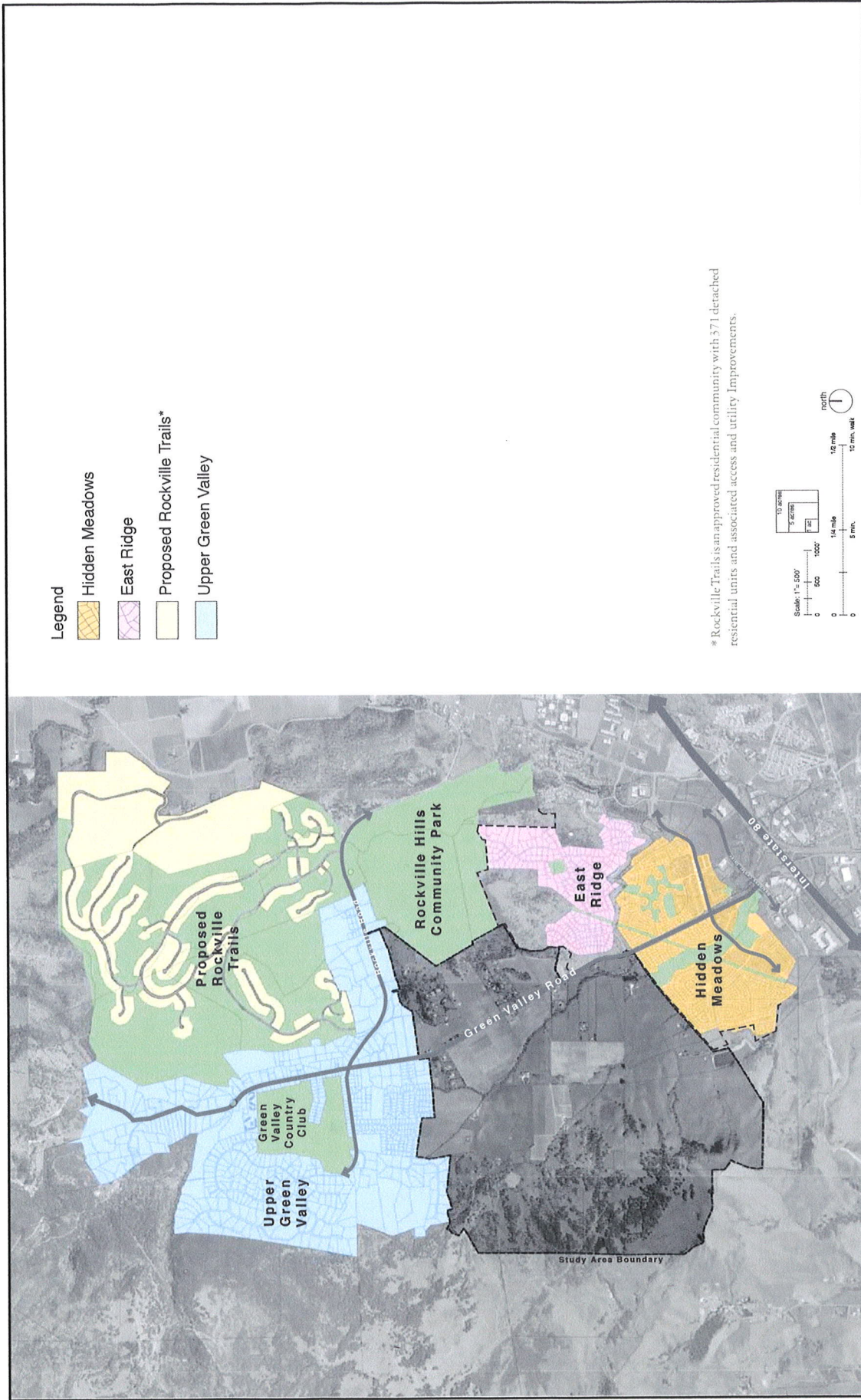
CEQA requires an EIR to identify the plan and policy setting within which the project is proposed and discuss any inconsistencies between the proposed project and these applicable plans and policies [CEQA Guidelines section 15125(d)]. CEQA also indicates that this plan and policy consistency discussion should be limited to the context of evaluation and review of environmental impacts [CEQA Guidelines section 15124(b)].

### **12.2.1 Solano County General Plan**

Those policies and implementation programs from the 2008 Solano County General Plan that are pertinent to consideration of proposed Specific Plan and its potential land use impacts are listed below. Where any proposed Specific Plan land use and development policy or standard has been found in this EIR to be potentially inconsistent with one or more of these County-adopted land use goals, policies or implementation programs, a potentially significant environmental impact and one or more associated mitigations has been identified for incorporation into the Specific Plan to reduce the impact and better implement the General Plan. Otherwise, the proposed Specific Plan is considered consistent with the land use goals, policies and implementation programs listed below.

The primary land use goal identified by community participants in the series of six County-conducted Middle Green Valley Special Study Area Workshops (see section 2.2, Specific Plan Background, in EIR chapter 2) was to maintain the rural character of Middle Green Valley while allowing some opportunities for compatible residential development. Land use tools such as clustering and transfer of development rights were identified for this purpose in the Workshops, and are described in the 2008 Solano County General Plan Land Use chapter (General Plan page LU-54) as possible measures to limit the effects of residential development on the rural character of the valley.

(a) Countywide Land Use Diagram. The General Plan land use goals, policies and implementation programs for Solano County guide the manner in which areas of the county may grow and how resources will be conserved through 2030 and beyond. The General Plan includes a land use diagram graphically representing the planned distribution of land uses



SOURCE: Hart Howerton, Planners and Architects

Figure 12.1

# EXISTING LAND USES SURROUNDING THE PLAN AREA

throughout the county. The diagram retains the majority of Solano County's unincorporated land in agricultural or open-space designations.

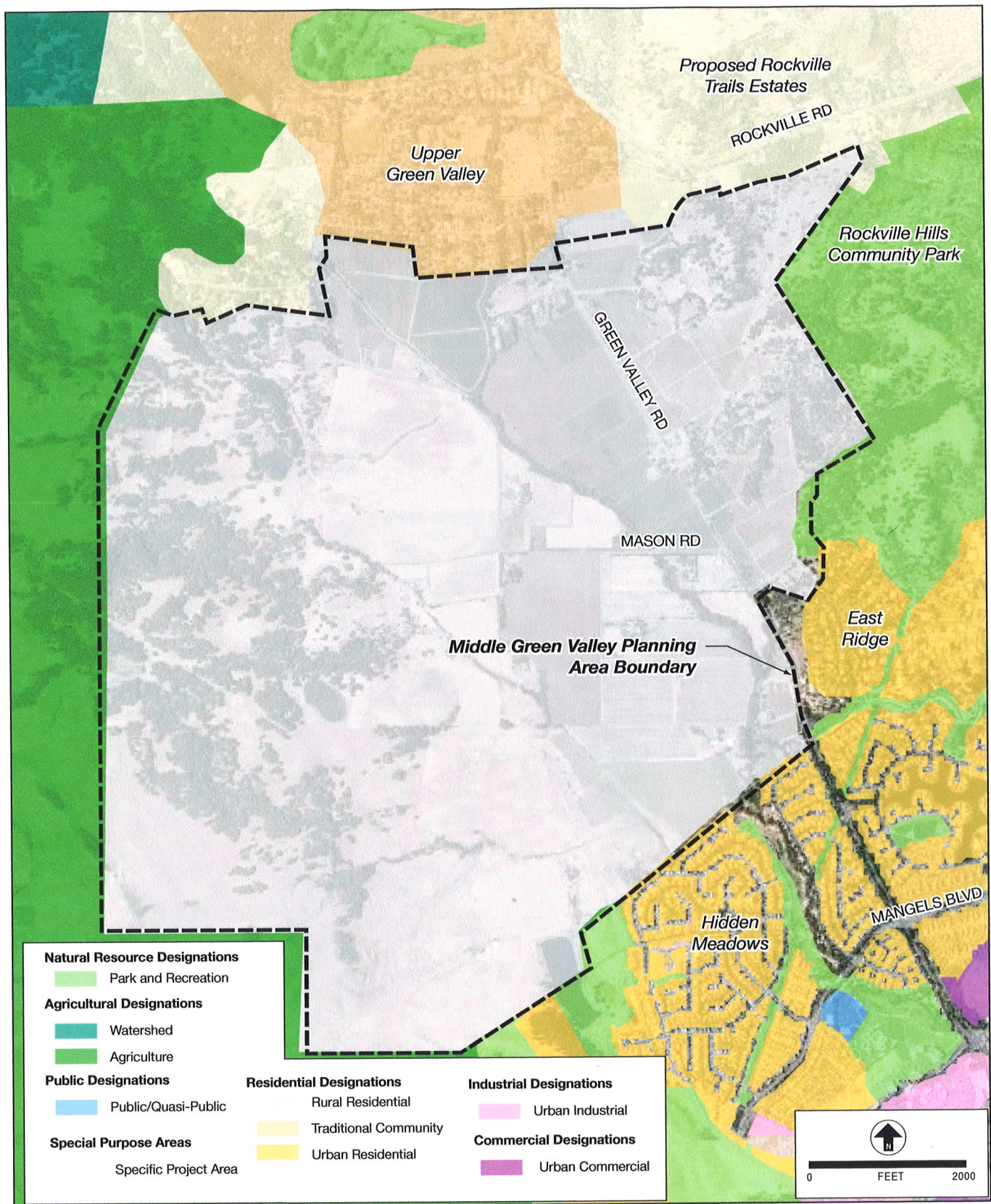
Figure 12.2 shows County General Plan land use designations in the plan area and vicinity.

(b) Pertinent Countywide General Plan Land Use Goals, Policies and Implementation Programs. The following countywide goals, policies and implementation programs included in the General Plan Land Use chapter are pertinent to formulation of a Specific Plan for Middle Green Valley and consideration of Specific Plan land use impacts:<sup>1</sup>

- Preserve and protect the current development pattern of distinct and identifiable cities and communities. (Goal LU.G-1)
- Encourage a development pattern that first seeks to maintain existing communities, second to develop vacant lands within existing communities presently served by public services, and third to develop lands immediately adjacent to existing communities where services can easily be provided. (Goal LU.G-2)
- Encourage land use development patterns and circulation and transportation systems that promote health and wellness and minimize adverse effects on agriculture and natural resources, energy consumption, and air quality. (Goal LU.G-4)
- Encourage the annexation of urbanized unincorporated communities within municipal service areas as long as annexation is not contrary to the wishes of a majority of the affected residents. (Policy LU.P-8)
- Within municipal service areas, work with cities to protect and maintain designated urban-agricultural buffers within city jurisdiction compatible with adjoining agricultural uses. (Policy LU.P-11)
- Establish rural residential development in a manner that preserves rural character and scenic qualities and protects sensitive resources including agricultural lands, creeks, native trees, open spaces, and views. (Policy LU.P-14)
- Phase future residential development, giving first priority to those undeveloped areas zoned and designated for rural residential use and where rural residential development has already been established; second priority to undeveloped areas designated but not zoned for rural residential use and where rural residential development has already been established; and third priority to those undeveloped areas designated for rural residential use. (Policy LU.P-15)
- Encourage clustering of residential development when necessary to preserve agricultural lands, natural resource areas and environmental quality, to provide for the efficient delivery of services and utilities, and to mitigate potential health and safety hazards. (Policy LU.P-17)

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<sup>1</sup>General Plan Land Use chapter.



SOURCE: 2008 Solano County General Plan

Figure 12.2  
**GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DIAGRAM  
 FOR PROJECT AREA AND VICINITY**

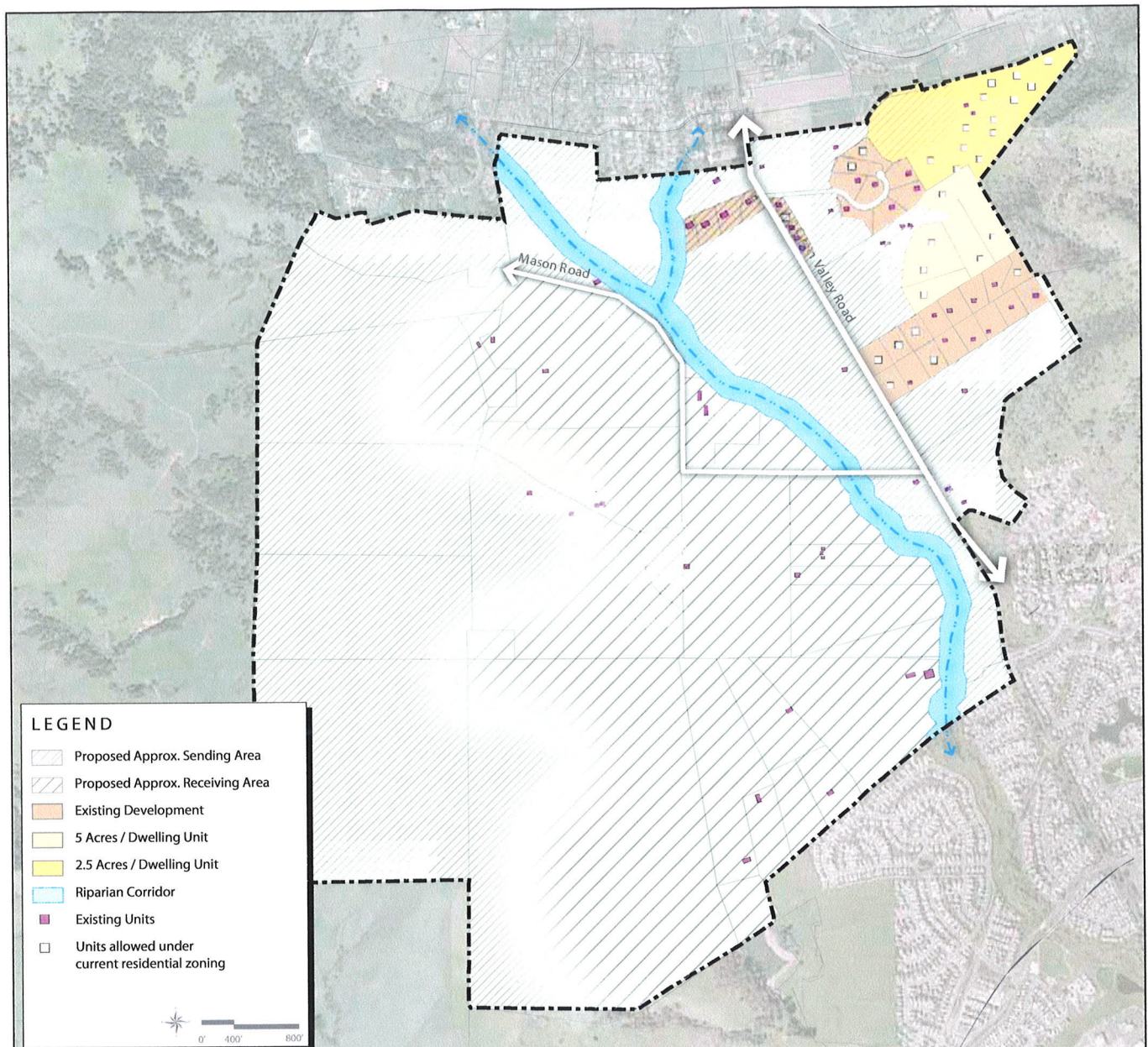
- Provide for detailed land planning through the Specific Project Area land use designation and subsequent planning process. Where specific plans and policy plan overlays are required before development in these areas, these plans shall determine:
  - resource or hazard areas to be avoided by development;
  - techniques to ensure that development is compatible with the character of the surrounding area;
  - the amount of land that will be preserved for agriculture and other resources and the methods by which such preservation will be accomplished; and
  - plans describing how the proposed development will be provided with adequate levels of water and wastewater service. (Implementation Policy LU.I-6)

(c) Middle Green Valley Land Use Plan--Goals, Policies and Implementation Programs. As shown on Figure 12.3, Middle Green Valley has been identified on the Solano County General Plan Land Use diagram as a Special Project Area. As part of the General Plan update process, special community participation programs were conducted in four special study areas. These four areas (Middle Green Valley, Suisun Valley, Old Town Cordelia, and Collinsville) are described in the Solano County as facing unique planning issues. The process of planning for special study areas has been designed to focus attention on each area's particular issues and concerns. General Plan goals and policies have then been established for each area based on the input from the community.









Six public workshops were held during the spring and summer of 2007 as part of a resident-driven planning process for the Middle Green Valley Special Study Area. During the six workshops, input from residents was used by County staff to develop goals and policies, and draft a *Middle Green Valley Land Use Plan* which was subsequently reviewed by the Citizens' Advisory Committee, Planning Commission and the Board of Supervisors.

The community participation process in Middle Green Valley focused on finding solutions that would resolve several issues, including maintaining the Valley's rural character, serving development with water and wastewater services, protecting Valley resources, and keeping agriculture viable while deciding how or whether to grow and maintain equality among landowners and residents. Specific issues, questions and concerns identified and discussed in the community workshops are summarized below:

- the importance of maintaining the unique "rural character" of Middle Green Valley;
- should new development in the area be served by wells and septic systems or by public water and sewer services?;
- if additional development is considered, valued resources in the area should be protected, including habitat areas, views of the hills, agricultural land in the valley, good farming soil, and water;



**LEGEND**

-  Proposed Approx. Sending Area
-  Proposed Approx. Receiving Area
-  Existing Development
-  5 Acres / Dwelling Unit
-  2.5 Acres / Dwelling Unit
-  Riparian Corridor
-  Existing Units
-  Units allowed under current residential zoning



SOURCE: Solano County

Figure 12.3

**2008 SOLANO COUNTY GENERAL PLAN  
LAND USE CONCEPT FOR MIDDLE GREEN VALLEY**



- the viability of farming and ranching in the Middle Green Valley area should be addressed, including the quality of farmland, the ability of producing economically sustainable yields of crops, and how to aid farmers to continue farming;
- should Middle Green Valley accommodate more development and how much development (opinions ranged widely)?; and
- landowners property rights, and equitable consideration of those rights, should be an important planning concern.

The ultimate goal established for the special study area was to maintain the rural character of Middle Green Valley while allowing some opportunities for compatible residential development. Land use tools such as clustering and transfer of development rights were proposed to limit the effects of residential development on the rural character of the valley, including viewsheds, wildlife habitat and corridors, and agricultural activities. Figure 12.5 shows the proposed approximate sending and receiving areas for possible transfer of development rights in the Middle Green Valley through establishment of a Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program. The General Plan stipulates that a future **specific plan** will be developed to refine the preferred plan for the area.

The following set of goal, policies and implementation program have been formulated for the Middle Green Valley plan area based on the vision expressed in the community workshops. The goal, policies and implementation program provide a framework for implementing the future vision of a rural community with compatible residential development.

- Protect and maintain the rural character of Middle Green Valley while allowing opportunities for compatible residential development to occur. (Goal SS.G-1)
- Maintain the rural character of Middle Green Valley while still allowing development to be guided into areas screened from Green Valley Road because of natural contours in the land, woodland vegetation, and/or riparian vegetation. Locate upland development in areas screened by landforms or vegetation. (Policy SS.P-1)
- Balance the protection of resources in Middle Green Valley (e.g. view sheds, oak woodlands, riparian habitat, sustainable agricultural use) while allowing development to occur. (Policy SS.P-2)
- Allow for the migration and movement of wildlife. (Policy SS.P-3)
- Provide a variety of incentives and techniques to encourage property owners to preserve natural and visual resources, in addition to the transfer of development rights. (Policy SS.P-4)
- Encourage cluster residential development through incentives to property owners in hillside and valley floor areas that can support residential uses with least affect on resources, steep slopes, or very high wildfire hazard areas. (Policy SS.P-5)
- In accordance with balancing the protection of resources described in these policies, adopt a program that provides residential development credits to property owners who voluntarily

forego or limit development on their lands. The transfer of development rights program should focus incentives on land in areas to be preserved. (Policy SS.P-6)

- Adopt a specific plan or master plan to implement these policies for Middle Green Valley. (Policy SS.P-7)
- Create additional methods to assist landowners who choose to continue farming, such as, but not limited to:
  - enforcing the right-to-farm act and educating residents on the act; and
  - investigating mechanisms for providing farmers with economic assistance to ensure agricultural viability. (Policy SS.P-8)
- Adopt a plan (either a specific plan or master plan) to implement these policies for Middle Green Valley. That plan should specify:
  - the area covered by the plan;
  - techniques to ensure development is compatible with the rural character of Middle Green Valley and surrounding areas. Such techniques should include design guidelines and development standards;
  - guidelines for cluster development, including minimum and maximum lot sizes, development standards, and density bonus credits for clustered development;
  - the details of a transfer of development rights program (with an implementing ordinance), including: the designation of areas where development is preferred, creating appropriate and equitable re-zoning, clustering of housing, and determining the ratio of credits to property owners who voluntarily forego development;
  - the number of units and/or credits, with or without clustering, that will provide incentives for all landowners in the area to participate in a market driven transfer of development rights program, based on 400 units, subject to further study;
  - the location and dimensions of a wildlife corridor (“green corridor”);
  - the maximum number of units any property owner can develop, with or without clustering;
  - the techniques to be applied voluntarily by property owners that ensure permanent protection and maintenance of resources/views on lands to remain undeveloped; and
  - the details of how the development would be served with water and wastewater service. Attempt to secure public water and wastewater service through a cooperative effort of property owners, residents, the County, and the City of Fairfield.
  - Property owners shall receive a minimum development credit for the number of primary dwelling units that would be allowed under the land use designations under the 1980 General Plan. For land designated as Agriculture, the number of units/credits would be

one per 20 acres and for land designated Rural Residential the number of units/credits would be one per 5 acres. (Implementation Program SS.I-1)

### **12.1.2 Solano County Zoning Ordinance**

The Solano County zoning ordinance provides a precise plan for land use and development standards within Solano County. The zoning ordinance establishes and designates zoning districts as a means of implementing Solano General Plan land use goals and policies. The various zoning districts include specific land use and development requirements, including permitted and conditionally-permitted land uses, building setbacks, building height limits, and other development standards. Under state planning law, the zoning ordinance must be consistent with the General Plan. Amendments and updates to the General Plan require corresponding zoning ordinance changes.

### **12.1.3 Solano LAFCO**

Solano LAFCO is responsible for coordinating changes in local governmental boundaries, including city, agency, and special district boundaries and spheres of influence. This includes establishing boundaries and spheres of influence for each city and special district within Solano County. LAFCO's efforts are directed toward seeing that services are provided efficiently and economically while agricultural and open-space lands are protected.

### **12.2.4 ABAG's Regional Land Use Policy Framework**

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) has been established as the regional planning agency and council of governments for the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area responsible for addressing in a regional context such intraregional issues as land use, housing, environmental quality, and economic development. The most recent regional land use policy document adopted by ABAG is entitled A Proposed Land Use Policy Framework for the San Francisco Bay Area, adopted by the ABAG Executive Board in July 1990. The document is described as a regional policy framework for future land use decisions in the Bay Area. The ABAG Land Use Policy Framework respects the need for strong local control, but also recognizes the importance of regional comprehensive planning for issues of regional significance. The document contains policies that (1) direct growth where regional infrastructure (e.g., freeways, transit, water, solid waste disposal, sewage treatment) is available and natural resources will not be overburdened; (2) encourage development that discourages long-distance commuting; (3) call for the establishment of firm growth boundaries; and (4) encourage provision of housing at all levels.

## **12.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **12.3.1 Significance Criteria**

Based on Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines,<sup>1</sup> the proposed Draft Specific Plan and associated growth scenario would be considered to have a significant adverse land use impact if they would:

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<sup>1</sup>CEQA Guidelines, Appendix G, Items II(a), II(c), IX(a), and IX(b).

- (a) Disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of the community;
- (b) Be incompatible with existing land use in the vicinity;
- (c) Conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the project (including, but not limited to the City of Stockton General Plan, zoning ordinance, etc.) adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect;
- (d) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, result in a safety hazard for people residing or working in the project area; or

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**Division of Established Communities/Land Use Compatibility.** Potential project direct and indirect impacts on farmland are addressed in chapter 4, Agricultural and Mineral Resources. The Specific Plan-proposed four neighborhood development areas are located in a rural valley well separated from each other and from the closest existing "communities" in the area--i.e., the Upper Green Valley subdivision areas to the north and the City of Fairfield Hidden Meadows and East Ridge subdivisions to the south and southeast. As a result, the Specific Plan would not "disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of the community" and, beyond the potential direct and indirect impacts on farmland identified in section 4.3 of this Draft EIR, would not otherwise be "incompatible with existing land use in the vicinity" (see criteria [a] and [b] in section 12.3.1, "Significance Criteria," above--i.e., would have a *less-than-significant* impact on established communities and land use compatibility.

**Mitigation:** No impact has been identified; no mitigation is required.

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**Consistency with Applicable Land Use Plans, Policies and Regulations.** Those policies and implementation programs from the 2008 Solano County General Plan that are pertinent to consideration of proposed Specific Plan and its potential land use impacts are listed in section 12.2.1 of this chapter. Where any proposed Specific Plan land use and development policy or standard has been found in this Draft EIR to be potentially inconsistent with one or more of these County-adopted land use goals, policies or implementation programs, a potentially significant environmental impact and one or more associated mitigations has been identified for incorporation into the Specific Plan to reduce the impact and better implement the General Plan. Otherwise, the proposed Specific Plan is considered consistent with County General Plan land use goals, policies and implementation programs. Consistent with the County General Plan, the Draft Specific Plan land use and circulation framework and associated development standards and design guidelines have been formulated to limit the effects of development on the valued rural character of the valley, including viewsheds, wildlife habitat and corridors and agricultural activities. The Specific Plan effectiveness in achieving these General Plan-based objectives, and additional mitigation measures determined to be necessary to ensure realization of these objectives, are described in chapters 3 (Aesthetics), 4 (Agricultural and Mineral Resources) and 5 (Biological Resources) of this Draft EIR.

The land use and development standards of the adopted Specific Plan would supersede the standards, land use designations public works standards and other applicable regulations found

in the current County Zoning Ordinance, as well as other applicable County regulations, for the plan area. The Specific Plan states that, to the extent that standards or regulations are not specified in this Specific Plan and do not conflict with the implementation of the Specific Plan, the Zoning Ordinance shall prevail (DSP page 2-2).

The Specific Plan content modifies some definitions and defines additional land uses not found in the Zoning Ordinance. These modifications or amendments made to the Specific Plan would be implemented through standard County procedures for zoning amendments.

As a result, the Draft Specific Plan, in combination with the aesthetic, agricultural, air quality, biological resource, climate change, cultural and historic resources, geology and soils, hydrology and water quality, noise, public health and safety, public services and utilities, and transportation and circulation mitigations identified in this Draft EIR, would not conflict with any applicable land use goal, policy or regulation, including the Solano County General Plan and Solano County Zoning Ordinance.

**Mitigation:** No significant additional impact related to project consistency with applicable land use plans and regulations has been identified in this land use chapter; no additional mitigation is required.

