



# **NATOMAS JOINT VISION AREA EXISTING CONDITIONS & PLANNING CONTEXT**

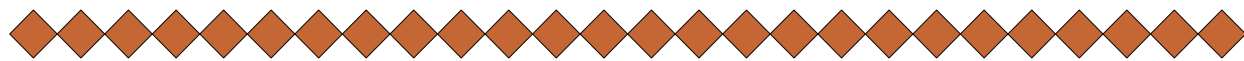
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**Prepared by: City of Sacramento Planning Dept. and  
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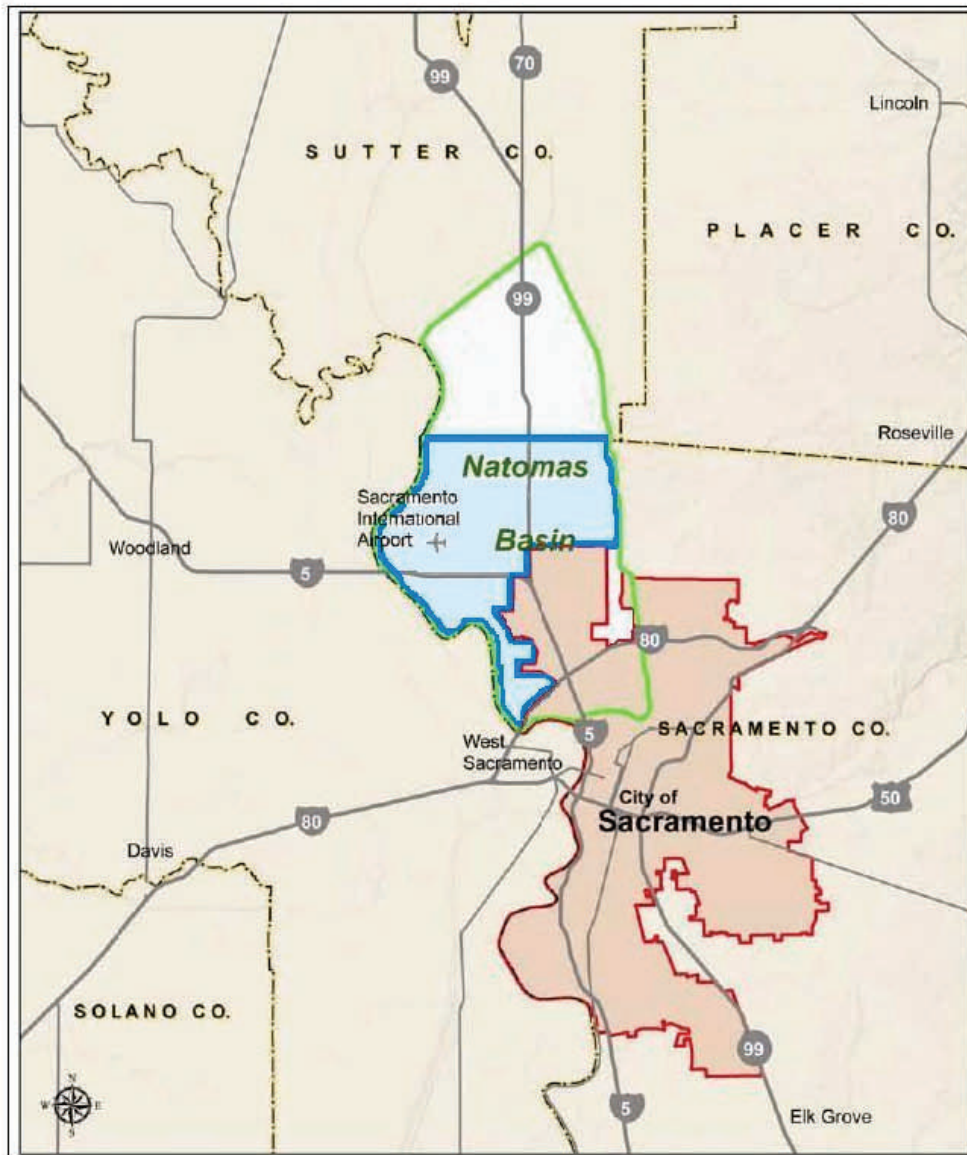


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## PLANNING CONTEXT

The Natomas Joint Vision Project Area covers a contiguous land area of approximately 20,000 acres in the unincorporated northwestern area of Sacramento County within the Natomas Basin. The Basin consists of relatively flat terrain and includes approximately 55,000 acres of which 38,000 are in Sacramento County and the balance in Sutter County. A map of the Project Area is shown below.

Figure 1 – Regional Context



The Project Area is best characterized by large expanses of agricultural fields with cultivated rice, alfalfa, safflower, and other commodities. In addition, a significant amount of lands are managed as marshlands by The Natomas Basin Conservancy. The Sacramento International Airport also controls about 10,000 acres for airport operations and bufferlands.

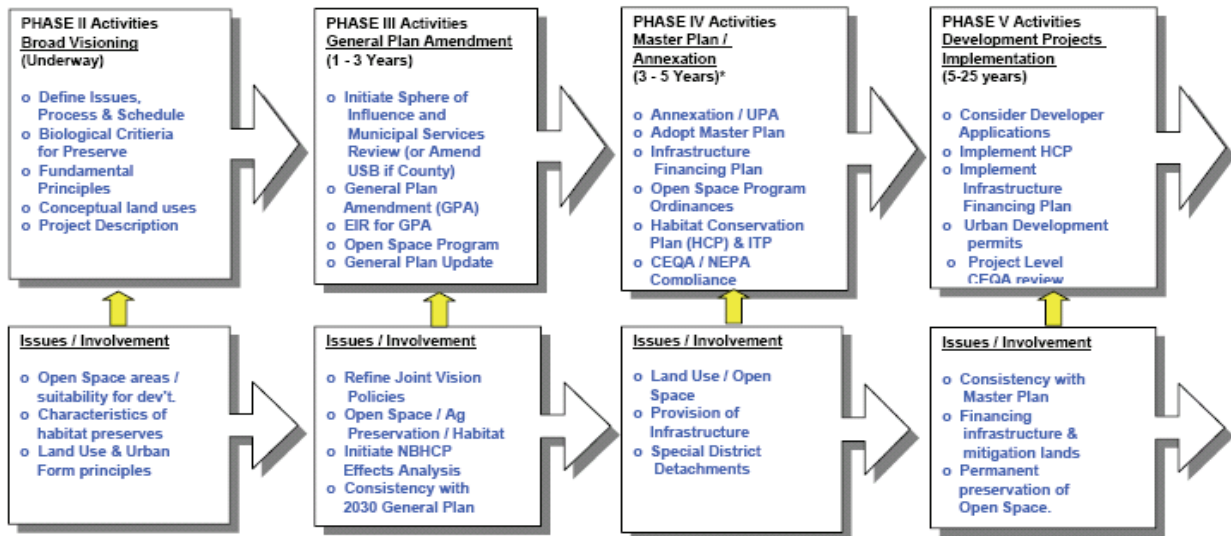
### **Overall Process**

There are five overall phases of work products and approvals that need to be completed and/or approved for the Natomas Joint Vision planning process as follows:

- Phase I, which consisted of the Joint Vision Memorandum of Understanding and the Open Space Program, has been completed.
  - o The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the City and County was adopted in December 2002. The Natomas Joint Vision MOU establishes a collaborative planning process between the City and County with the following key principles:
    - Protecting and maximizing existing and future airport operations
    - Permanent preservation of open space for habitat, agriculture, or other purposes
    - Fair distribution of revenue / revenue sharing principles
    - Proactively influencing the emerging urban form according to the Smart Growth Principles
  - o The Open Space Program report was received and filed by the City Council and Board of Supervisors in February 2008 and May 2008, respectively.
- The Open Space Program Report and MOU are available on the City's and County's websites at
  - <http://www.cityofsacramento.org/planning/projects/natomas-joint-vision/>
  - <http://www.planning.saccounty.net/longrange/city-county.html>
- Phase II - The Broad Visioning, (the current activity).
- Phase III - General Plan Amendments, an amendment to City's Sphere of Influence and related work products (or the County Urban Services Boundary), an Effects Analysis.
- Phase IV - Annexation (or an amendment to County's Urban Policy Area) and the preparation of a new or amended Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan.
- Phase V – Implementation of development projects

At each phase, the City Council and Board of Supervisors will decide whether or not to go forward with the next phase.

Figure 2 – Overall Project Phasing



### Current Phase of the Process

The City and County are embarking on a new visioning effort to jointly plan for both open space and development. This current activity - called the "Broad Visioning" effort - involves the completion of the following work products:

- A set of fundamental principles to address the myriad issues and guide subsequent planning efforts
- Conceptual land use diagrams incorporating both urban and open space areas
- A project description with sufficient detail to (as a part of Phase III):
  - Initiate a General Plan Amendment, prepare a programmatic Environmental Impact Report (EIR), initiate a specific plan process;
  - Prepare a preliminary effects analysis and an agriculture / open space / habitat strategy – including funding mechanisms.

The City of Sacramento and County of Sacramento have engaged several consultants to assist in the Broad Visioning effort. This effort will assess the existing character and potential urbanization of the Project Area to guide and inform future City and County decisions on land uses and policies.

- Potential environmental issues related to the Natomas Joint Vision will be evaluated in the City's Sphere of Influence (SOI) Amendment Environmental Impact Report (EIR) to be prepared by RBF Consultants, Inc.

- Legal assistance on issues relating to the Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan
- Land use planning – contract work with a design principal to guide the working group through issues and to participate in workshops and outreach meetings
- Conceptual conservation strategy for Swainson’s Hawk, Giant Garter Snake, and other listed species, in support of the Broad Vision Project

Both the City of Sacramento and County of Sacramento **draft** General Plans identify the Natomas Joint Vision area as a “**Study Area**”.

## RELEVANT POLICIES FROM THE CITY AND COUNTY DRAFT GENERAL PLANS

### City General Plan Policies for Natomas Joint Vision Area

#### LU 1.1.10 New Growth.

The City shall continue to plan for future expansion and new growth in Special Study Areas to ensure that regional growth is adequately accommodated and served by the City, particularly when it cannot be absorbed in infill areas.

#### Special Study Areas and Planned Development

Policies in this section ensure that areas mostly on the edges of the city are planned through a process that addresses regional, local, and site specific issues. They also provide opportunities for the City to explore possible expansions into adjoining lands or where inter-jurisdictional cooperation is needed with the County and other entities to resolve issues regarding the nature, timing, extent of development, the appropriate mechanism to achieve flood protection and open space preservation, and other related challenges.

Of particular concern is the need to determine the timing and extent of development planned in the Natomas Joint Vision Study Area, including preservation of a one-mile open space buffer.

#### Special Study Areas

The Special Study Areas designation is applied to five potential annexation areas that may become part of the City in the future after additional studies have identified the fiscal and service delivery implications on City functions. These include Arden Arcade Study Area, East Study Area, Fruitridge Florin Study Area, Natomas Joint Vision Study Area, and Town of Freeport Study Area. The future land use and urban form for these areas will include a combination of several land use and urban form designations applied in conjunction with a General Plan amendment. (See Part 3 of the 2030 General Plan for a discussion of these areas.)

#### Planned Development

The Planned Development designation is applied to five areas with pending projects that are in the development review process as of November 2007. These include McKinley Village, Greenbriar, Panhandle, Camino Norte, Railyards, and Delta Shores. Specific land use and urban form designations (i.e., designations outlined in this plan) will be applied to these areas once planning is complete and the City has approved the development.

**Goal LU 10.1**

Growth and Change beyond the Policy Area. Plan comprehensively for growth and change in Planned Development areas consistent with the Regional Blueprint principles and the City's Vision and Guiding Principles, and ensure that annexation and development provide regional and community benefits.

**Policies**LU 10.1.1 Special Study Areas and Interagency Coordination.

The City shall engage in cooperative planning with Sacramento County, school districts, Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), and other public agencies to ensure that mutual benefits can be derived from potential future development of Special Study Areas adjacent to the city's boundaries.

LU 10.1.2 Comprehensive Planning for Special Study Areas.

The City shall require that Special Study Areas be planned comprehensively prior to annexation and development, and subject to the following processes:

- Amendment of the General Plan, including completion of a new Community Plan chapter where applicable
- Approval of a Sphere of Influence amendment by the LAFCo where applicable
- Completion and adoption of Master Plans, Specific Plans and Development Agreements, as appropriate, in order to establish the timing, phasing, costs, and responsible parties associated with development in the area to be annexed

LU 10.1.3 Regional and Community Benefits.

The City shall require that regional and community benefits are achieved as the result of annexations and development approvals in any Special Study Area or Planned Development Area, consistent with the goals and policies outlined in this Plan.

Examples includes, but are not limited to, the following:

- A mix of land uses that results in a full range of jobs, housing, amenities, services, and open space, resulting in complete neighborhoods and dynamic centers that have strong linkages with city and region
- Transportation systems, including transit and roadways that are substantially improved and expanded, in a manner that provides enhanced mobility for all sectors of the community and benefits regional air quality
- Sustainable infrastructure and community facilities, where adequate land is provided for such facilities, and construction and ongoing maintenance are funded by proposed development
- Conservation of open space, including important agricultural lands, sensitive habitat areas and wildlife corridors, and other undeveloped areas that serve as buffers or "greenbelts" for public use



- Net fiscal benefits are achieved by both the City and County, with minimal impacts on special districts

LU 10.1.4 Planned Development.

The City shall require areas designated Planned Development on the Land Use and Urban Form Diagram be developed consistent with the General Plan's Vision and Guiding Principles and obtain a General Plan Amendment to designate the area consistent with the proposed project using the appropriate designations contained in the Land Use and Urban Design Element.

LU 10.1.5 Planned Development Sunset

The City shall not designate any other areas Planned Development beyond those shown on the Land Use and Urban Form Diagram as of December 2008.

## County General Plan Policies

Excerpt from page 14 of Sacramento County General Plan Draft Land Use Element (May 2007)

1. Natomas Joint Vision Area. On December 2, 2002, the City Council and Board of Supervisors adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding principles of land use and revenue sharing between the City and County of Sacramento for the Natomas area, setting the stage for what has come to be known as the “Natomas Joint Vision.” The “Natomas Joint Vision Study Area” overlay on the Land Use Diagram indicates the area addressed by this MOU. The MOU identifies the City as the appropriate agent for new growth and the County as the appropriate agent for preserving open space, agricultural and rural land uses in Natomas. Together, the City and County will forge a leadership role on a regional scale for growth management. The cooperative effort addresses land use, economic development, and environmental opportunities and challenges in Natomas. The result will be quality development balanced with permanent open space preservation systems.

Or

Natomas Joint Vision Area. On December 10, 2002, the City Council and Board of Supervisors adopted a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding principles of land use and revenue sharing between the City and County of Sacramento for the Natomas Joint Vision area, setting the stage for what has come to be known as the “Natomas Joint Vision.” The “Natomas Joint Vision Study Area” overlay on the Land Use Diagram indicates the area addressed by this MOU. The cooperative effort addresses land use, economic development, and environmental opportunities and challenges in Natomas. The result will be quality development balanced with permanent open space preservation systems. Because of this MOU, the County anticipates development in portions of the Natomas Basin within the timeframe of the General Plan. See related policy LU-116 and Implementation Measure C in the “Regional and Local Agency Coordination” section of this element.

Excerpt from page 108-109 of Sacramento County General Plan Draft Land Use Element (May 2007)

#### REGIONAL AND LOCAL AGENCY COORDINATION

**Objective: Coordinate practices and strategies of local planning with goals and objectives of regional governance.**

Intent: Currently, SACOG is the only regional government entity that includes Sacramento County in its jurisdiction. SACOG's services to the County include service as a repository for United States Census data and developing both the Regional Air Quality Plan and the Regional Transportation Plan. SACOG's recently completed Blueprint project is the first regional-scale land use planning effort undertaken for the greater Sacramento metropolitan area. However, implementing the resulting Blueprint Vision land use plan is the choice and/or responsibility of each jurisdiction within the region. As a jurisdiction committed to supporting and implementing the Blueprint's principles and land use patterns, Sacramento County will continue to coordinate with SACOG and other regional bodies to ensure that development within the County is consistent with regional goals.

Regional agency coordination should include local jurisdiction revenue sharing in the funding of regional infrastructure capital improvement projects such as regional transportation systems and wastewater treatment plants.

#### Policies:

LU-114. The County shall coordinate with regional planning agencies setting land use and environmental policies and programs and cooperate in the implementation of programs consistent with General Plan policy.

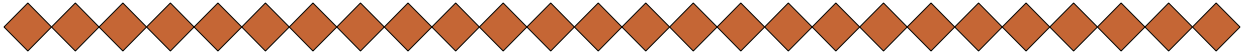
LU-115. The County shall work with SACOG to support implementation of Blueprint's policies and land use objectives.

LU-116. It is the policy of Sacramento County that development and open space preservation in the Natomas Joint Vision Overlay Area occur in a responsible and cohesive manner that best addresses land use, economic development and environmental opportunities and challenges in Natomas.

Implementation Measures:

- A. Coordinate with SACOG to incorporate goals and objectives of the General Plan into plans of member jurisdictions. (MSA -- PLANNING)
- B. Participate in formulating a regional planning body to oversee protection and enhancement of Delta resources including prime soils, wild life habitat, and water quality. (MSA -- PLANNING)
- C. Pursue comprehensive and collaborative planning in the Natomas Joint Vision Overlay Area; either through the continue participation in the Natomas Joint Vision MOU or, if determined appropriate, with the County serving as the lead agency for development and open space preservation. (MSA — PLANNING, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS)

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE NATOMAS JOINT VISION AREA



The County and City have determined that the Joint Vision Area is an area of unique importance to the region, and accordingly desire that land use planning for the Joint Vision Area proceed in a unified and comprehensive fashion, commencing with a Visioning Plan.

The Natomas Broad Visioning Project was conceived as a proactive, City-County-Landowner approach to capitalize on the enormous opportunities offered by the Natomas Joint Vision Area.

### **Unique Opportunity for Extraordinary Development**

The Joint Vision Area presents a unique opportunity for extraordinary development.

- Major infrastructure is, or will be in place, including flood protection, sewer, water, roads, and power.
- If properly planned, the Area can incorporate development, open space, continued farming and important habitat preservation.
- It is minutes from downtown Sacramento.
- The Sacramento River at the western edge of the Joint Vision Area is a natural and cultural amenity for the region.
- Mainly large landowners own property in this area, making comprehensive planning development much easier as compared to an area featuring many land owners.

### Strategically Located

The Natomas Joint Vision Area (NJVA) is strategically located for development. The NJVA is both the northern gateway to Sacramento and the gateway to northern California, and potentially, a portal to the world because:

- It is within 5 miles of one of only five interstate east-west and north-south freeway connections on the west coast, traditionally and historically hubs of local, national and international commerce and business.
- It has one of the fastest growing mid-size international airports in the United States with a growing economic impact on the region (over \$3 billion in 2008).
- It is within 15 minutes of the state capitol, in a state whose economy ranks seventh in the world.
- It is located in the middle of major surrounding developments that over the next 25 years will have a significant impact on the region: Sutter Pointe, Metro Air Park, North Natomas, Placer Vineyards, Elverta Specific Plan.

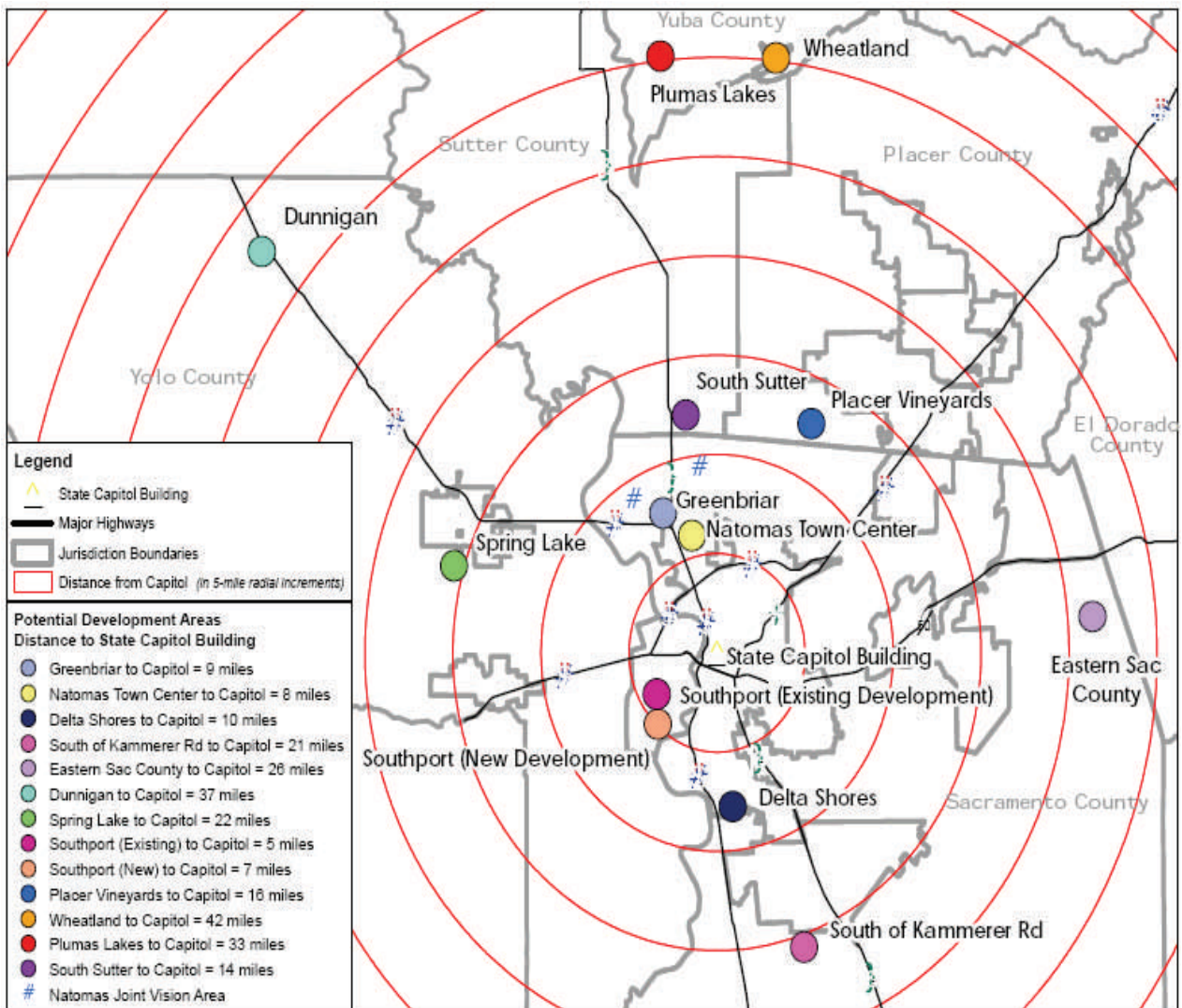
There are billions of dollars of public and private investment proximate to the NJVA:

- Sacramento International Airport Terminal Modernization Program (TMP) -- \$1.6 billion infrastructure, plus \$3 billion annual economic impact
- Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency Natomas Levee Improvement Program--\$600 million
- Metro Air Park (a 1,892-acre master-planned business park)
- Sutter Pointe (a 7,500-acre master planned community including 3,600 acres for office/industrial uses and 2,900 acres of residential uses) located north of the Natomas Joint Vision Area)
- Highway 99/Elverta Interchange (\$19 million), Highway 99/Elkhorn Interchange project in planning stages
- Northwest Sewer Interceptor (a pipeline and pump station project designed to provide sewer service to the expanding northern and western Sacramento County area)

### Adjacent to Existing Urban Area

The NJVA is adjacent to the urban core of Sacramento County. It is located north and west of the existing North Natomas Community Plan area being developed by the City of Sacramento. The NJVA is south of the planned Sutter Pointe development in unincorporated Sutter County. As shown in the attached diagram, this area is a logical choice for urban expansion.

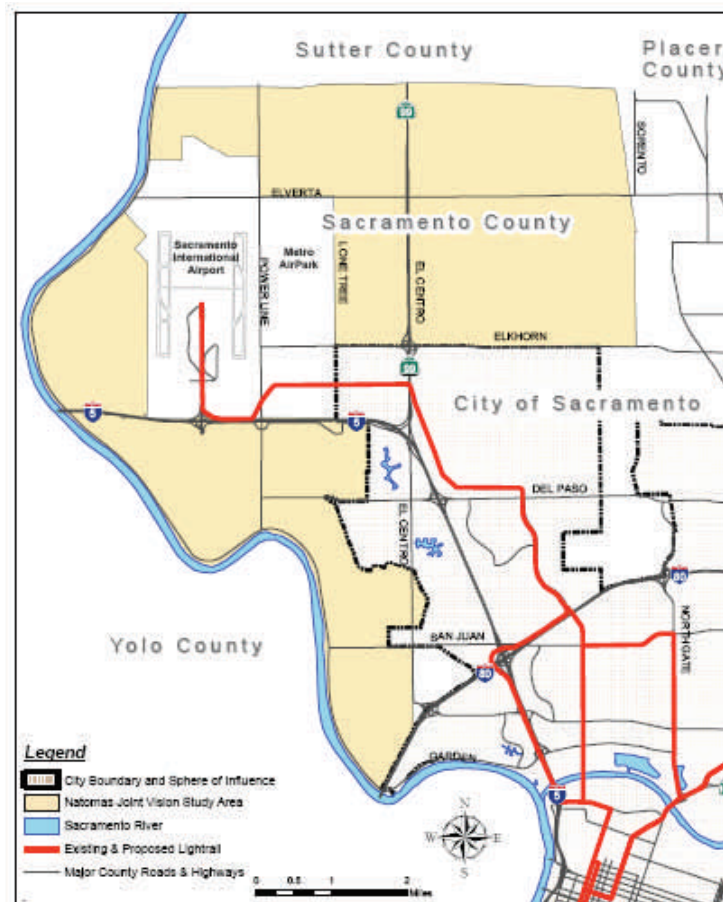
Figure 3 – Proximity to Downtown



### Adjacent to Backbone Transportation Infrastructure

The major transportation infrastructure is already in place in the NJVA including Interstate 5, Interstate 80, US 99/70, El Centro Road, Elkhorn Blvd., and Elverta Road. Regional Transit plans to extend service from downtown Sacramento to the Sacramento International Airport (Downtown / Natomas / Airport line). Phase 1 of this extension will be from the Amtrak station to Richards Boulevard. Later phases will include the construction of a bridge across the American River, through South Natomas and the North Natomas Town Center, across the US99/70 freeway via the Meister Way overpass, through Greenbriar and Metro Air Park, and ending at the airport. Transit services to the Airport are provided by Yolo bus, private limousine, and taxi services. While no bus or light rail service is currently provided to the NJVA or the Sacramento International Airport it is contemplated that major bus lines will serve the area as development occurs.

**Figure 4 – Proximity to Proposed DNA Transit Line**





### **SACOG Regional Blueprint - 2050**

A joint effort by Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) and Valley Vision, the Blueprint Project brought together local officials, civic groups, environmental advocates, the development community, business leaders and the public in a first-ever attempt to guide how the region grows over the next 50 years. The SACOG Board of Directors approved of the Preferred Blueprint Scenario for 2050 in December 2004; the Blueprint was approved by the Board as a voluntary ideology or framework.

This framework included 7 Blueprint Smart Growth Principles.

*Housing Choice & Diversity:* Provide a diversity of housing options (apartments, condominiums, townhouses, and single-family detached homes on varying lot sizes) to create opportunities for the variety of people who need them: families, singles, seniors, and people with special needs.

*Use Existing Assets:* In urbanized areas, development on infill or vacant lands, intensification of the use of underutilized parcels (for example, more development on the site of a low-density retail strip shopping center), or redevelopment can make better use of existing public infrastructure.

*Compact Development:* Creating environments that are more compactly built and that use space in an efficient but aesthetic manner can encourage more walking, biking, and public transit use, and shorten auto trips.

*Natural Resources Conservation:* This principle encourages the incorporation of public-use open space within development projects, over and above state requirements. It also includes wildlife and plant habitat preservation, agricultural preservation and promotion of environment-friendly practices.

*Design for Quality:* The design details of any land use development influence the attractiveness of living in a compact development and facilitate the ease of walking and biking to work or neighborhood services.

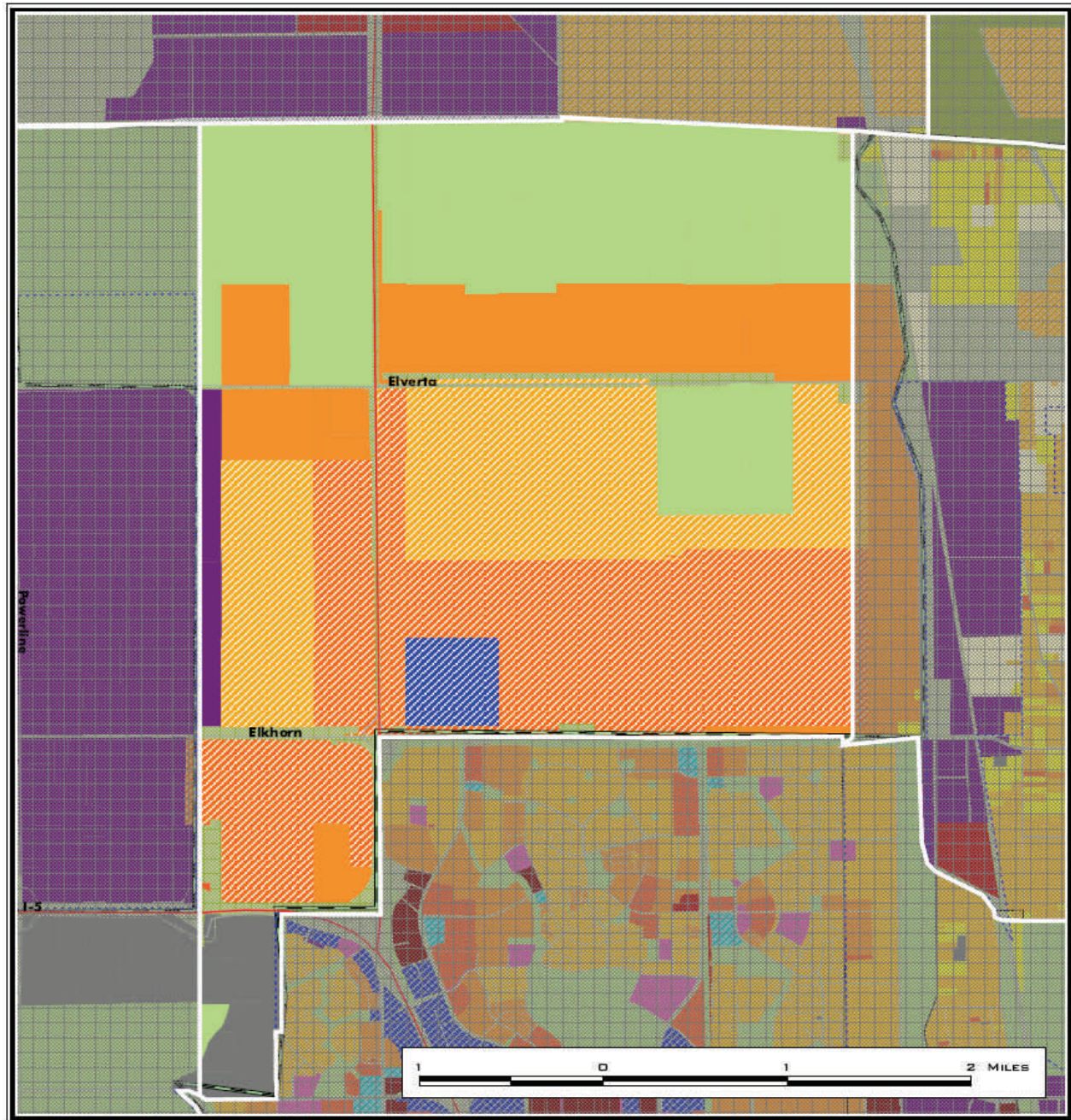
*Mixed Use Development:* A mix of land uses near each other creates active, vital neighborhoods, or villages. Mixed use projects function as local activity centers, contributing to a sense of community, where people tend to walk or bike to destinations and interact more with each other.

*Provide Transportation Choices:* Developments should be designed to encourage people to sometimes walk, ride bicycles, ride the bus, ride light rail, take the train or carpool..

As shown in Figure 5, the Blueprint assumed some level of development in the Natomas Joint Vision Area during the span of the 2050 Blueprint Plan. (Please note: The map does not represent the location of suggested land uses for the Natomas Joint Vision. The configuration is an artifact of the computer software that was used and the large parcel size.)


Figure 5 —SACOG Blueprint

# NORTH NATOMAS JOINT VISION AREA



<p><b>RESIDENTIAL "BUILDING" TYPES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Rural Residential</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Single Family Large Lot</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: lightorange; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Single Family Small Lot</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: darkorange; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Attached Residential</li> </ul>	<p><b>NON-URBAN "LAND USE" TYPES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: lightgreen; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Agriculture</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Forest</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: limegreen; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Open Space</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: lightblue; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Parks</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: cyan; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Water</li> </ul>	<p><b>MIXED-USE "PLACE" TYPES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, blue 2px, blue 4px); border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Low Density Mixed-use Center or Corridor</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, blue 2px, blue 4px); border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Medium Density Mixed-use Center or Corridor</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, blue 2px, blue 4px); border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> High Density Mixed-use Center or Corridor</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background: repeating-linear-gradient(45deg, transparent, transparent 2px, blue 2px, blue 4px); border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Employment Focus Mixed-use Center or Corridor</li> </ul>
<p><b>EMPLOYMENT "BUILDING" TYPES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Retail</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Office</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Industrial</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Public</li> </ul>	<p><b>RESIDENTIAL "PLACE" TYPES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: lightorange; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Medium Density Mixed Residential</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> High Density Mixed Residential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: gray; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Vacant Urban Designated Lands (2050)</li> <li><span style="display: inline-block; width: 15px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black; margin-right: 5px;"></span> Vacant Rural Residential Lands (2050)</li> </ul>

## FLOOD PROTECTION



Historically, the Natomas Basin acted as a floodplain for the American River and the Sacramento River. The Natomas Basin was developed for agricultural purposes in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Levees and internal drainage channels and pump stations were constructed to reclaim the often flooded land for agriculture.

The Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) was formed in 1989 to address the Sacramento area's vulnerability to catastrophic flooding. North Natomas levees were brought into compliance with FEMA standards for urban levees and rated as providing 100-year protection until 2006.

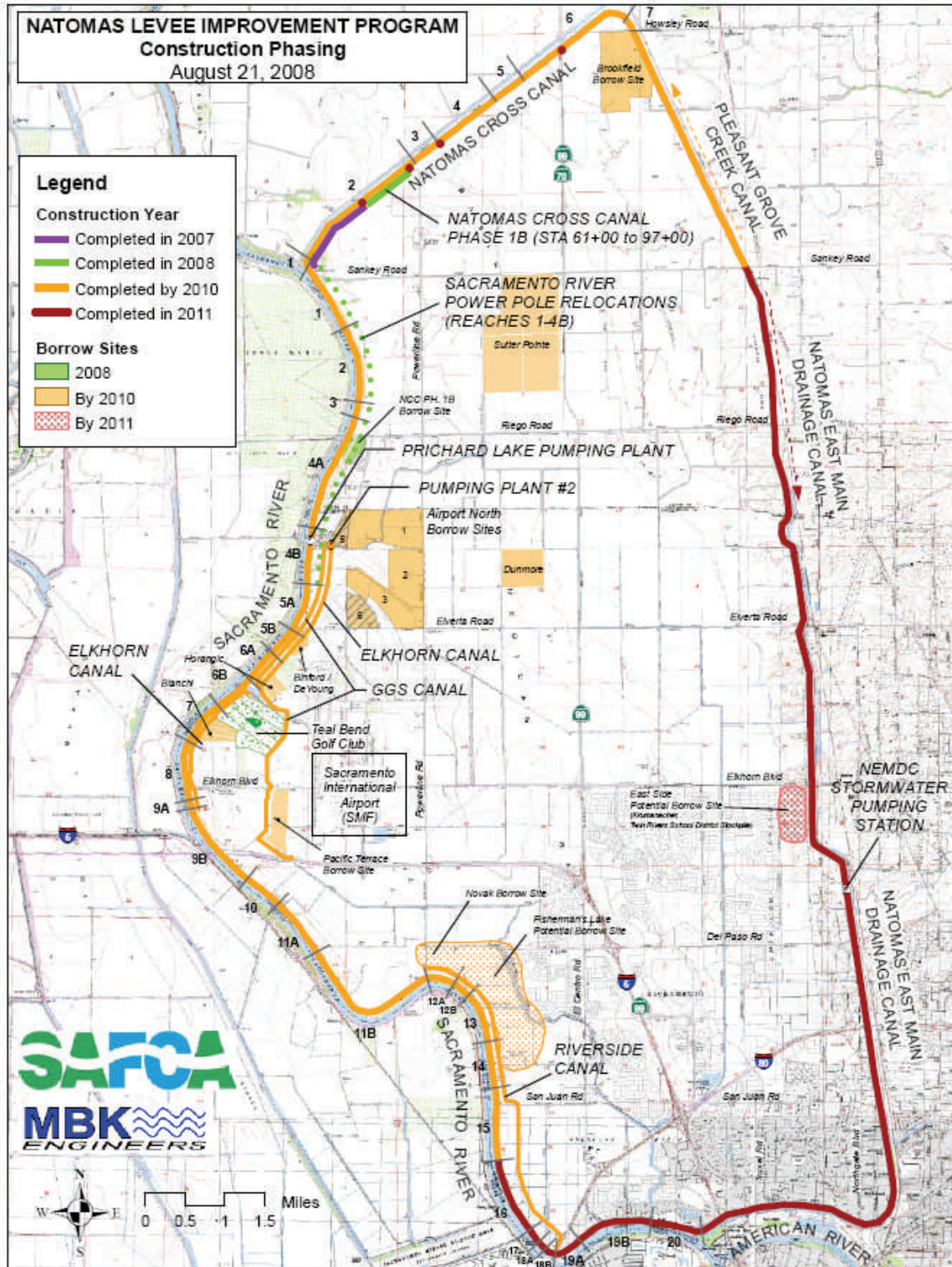
In response to revised levee criteria regarding under seepage established by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, Sacramento Area Flood Control Agency (SAFCA) commissioned the Natomas Levee Evaluation Study which concluded that considerable improvements would be needed along the south levee of the Natomas Cross Canal (NCC), the east levee of the Sacramento River and the north levee of the American River. The study also evaluated the ability of these levee systems to withstand the 100-year flood events. The findings led the U.S Army Corp of Engineers to issue on July 20, 2006 a letter to SAFCA stating they "can no longer support its original position regarding the certification of the levees in the Natomas area."

Effective on December 8, 2008, FEMA will be revising the Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM) within the Natomas Basin, which will result in placing the Natomas Basin within a regulatory Special Flood Hazard Area (SFHA) – the AE flood designation. No new development may occur in the Natomas Basin until 100-year flood protection has been restored.

SAFCA is proceeding with implementation of necessary levee improvements to correct existing deficiencies within portions of the Natomas levee system, which are anticipated to be constructed within the next 3–4 years. The Broad Visioning Process is proceeding under the assumption that the Natomas Levee Improvement Program will be completed and providing flood protection before any new development occurs in the Natomas Joint Vision Area.

The SAFCA program purpose is to provide the Natomas Basin in Sacramento and Sutter Counties with at least 100-year flood protection as quickly as possible, while laying the groundwork to achieve at least 200-year flood protection over time. Improvements necessary to meet this purpose would substantially reduce the risk of an uncontrolled flood in the Natomas Basin which would result in a catastrophic loss of property (estimated at \$7 billion) and a prolonged interruption of commercial activity, including the operation of the Sacramento International Airport and closure of Interstate 5 (I-5), I-80, and State Route 99/70 (SR 99/70).

Figure 6—Natomas Levee Improvement



## AGRICULTURE IN THE NATOMAS BASIN

Sacramento County's portion of the Natomas Basin historically produced a significant amount and variety of agricultural crops. Today crop production is declining in Natomas for a variety of reasons.

### Challenges to the Viability of Profitable and Sustainable Agriculture

- 1. Agronomic factors:** Without any other constraints, agronomic factors such as soil type, drainage conditions, salinity, level of water table, and climate dictate which crops can be successfully grown; soil conditions are not considered as the best for agricultural production (except rice) because soil is not well drained and hard pan limits many other crops. The best soils are within ¼ mile of the American and Sacramento Rivers and generally decline in productive value for all crops the further one moves from the sandy loam adjacent to the rivers to the clay and hard pan north and east. The most productive soils along the river have, or will be removed from agricultural production due to existing development and/or the SAFCA flood control project for 200 year protection and because of the FAA directive regarding orchards and water areas as attractors of waterfowl and contributing to bird strikes.
- 2. Market conditions:** Agronomical-suited crops are generally low value commodity crops; the crop market has a fickle nature, a crop that has high value one year may have low value the following year. Some crops are more costly than others to grow because of the expense of water. The changing crop market and the cost to grow different crops dictate what is profitable and what is not.
- 3. Agricultural Infrastructure:** Off site agricultural production facilities such as processing plants and canning operations (e.g., sugar beets and tomatoes) have moved away from and out of the Sacramento metropolitan area. Transporting agricultural products to these off site production facilities is inconvenient, costly and time consuming.
- 4. Geographic and topographic limitations:** In the southern portion of the NJVA, field sizes are small and limit the use of large scale farm equipment. In other portions of the NJVA, the lack of contiguous parcels also limits large scale and efficient farm equipment use. Natomas farmers have stated that in order to be viable, a minimum of 160 acres of contiguous land is most desirable for a large-scale mechanized farm. Also, agricultural runoff is creating greater problems and making it more difficult to safely use pesticides and herbicides
- 5. Urban edge-farming conflicts:** Agricultural practice constraints such as limitations on pesticide and herbicide use, aerial spraying and seeding, disking and dust generation, hours of operation/night harvesting, restrictions on farm vehicle movement, vandalism, theft, and illegal activity in isolated farming areas make it difficult to farm in NJVA.

6. **Airport conflicts:** Rice production on airport buffer lands is no longer occurring because of the open water needed for rice which act as a waterfowl attractor. Orchards are also considered bird attractors and have been removed from the west side of the Airport.

7. **Economic constraints:** Availability/cost of water, fuel, energy, fertilizer, and equipment; processing and transport costs; and land rent all impact the viability of farming.

8. **Habitat factors:** The 2003 NBHCP and work completed recently by The Natomas Basin Conservancy provides information regarding what crops will and will not work for species protection. Many potentially profitable crops that might work in the Basin such as wine grapes, strawberries, kiwi or melons do not provide habitat for any of the covered species.

9. **Dynamics of land use change:** The City and County Draft General Plans show the Joint Vision as a study area for future development; the County Board of Supervisors has stated the Area is important to the Region and signature development is desirable and important; and the SACOG Blueprint further recognizes the Joint Vision as an important growth area.

10. **Primogeniture:** There is a decline in subsequent generations continuing to work the family farm.

Interviews with NJVA farmers and other agricultural experts have identified what they consider to be the ingredients necessary for productive and profitable farming:

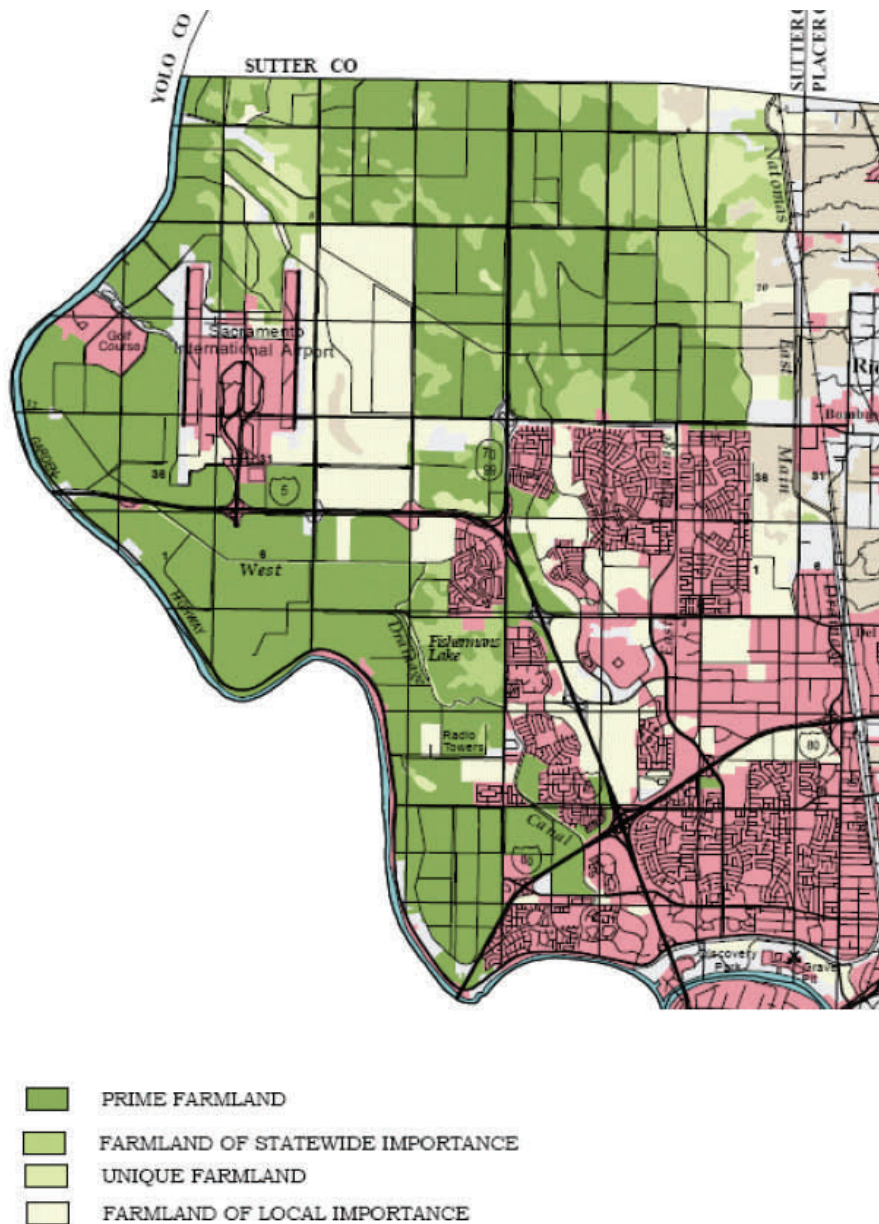
Market preferred crops; contiguous and relatively large parcels; dependable and inexpensive water; reasonable fuel and energy costs; portability of equipment; best farming practices; flexibility in crop types used for habitat; buffers from other uses; and law enforcement assistance with nuisance and vandalism issues all in concert with a good market.

Other key findings were the notions that agricultural viability in the Joint Vision Area is equal to agricultural profitability and farming on a large scale will not work without removing many of the noted challenges and possibly not without a significant subsidy. However, changing agricultural trends may lead to an increased need for locally grown crops.

- As fuel costs rise, there will be a growing need for fresh produce grown in close proximity to urban areas.
- The local food movement is a lifestyle choice and a way of eating that is more sustainable. It is a global, grassroots movement with thousands of members around the world that links the pleasure of food with a commitment to community and the environment.
- Create a connection between farming & urban folk through farm tours / field trips

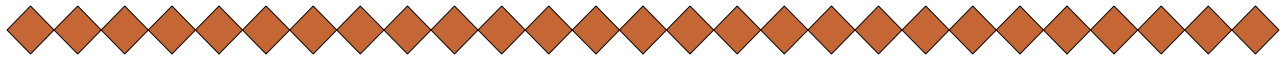
The State of California Department of Conservation classifies a substantial amount of the Natomas Basin as Important Farmland. The soil types which predominate in the Natomas Basin are typically unsuitable for a number of agricultural crops, but excellent for rice production, which currently provides a higher economic return for landowners and farmers than other crops.

**Figure 7 – Natomas Basin Important Farmland**



Source: California Department of Conservation - 2006

## HABITAT IN THE NATOMAS BASIN



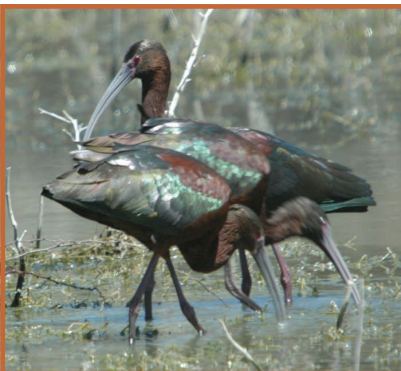
### Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan

To develop the North Natomas community in the Natomas Basin, the City of Sacramento is required to comply with the Federal Endangered Species Act and the California Endangered Species Act. Because a number of species of concern are known to inhabit the Natomas Basin, the City was required to obtain an incidental take permit (ITP) from both the US Fish and Wildlife Service and California Department of Fish and Game.

In 1997, the City was issued incidental take permits, based on the operating conservation strategy in the habitat conservation plan (HCP) and its execution of an Implementation Agreement between the City and the wildlife agencies. The 1997 ITP and HCP were challenged in both federal and state court. Federal court ruled in favor of the plaintiffs and state court ruled in favor of the defendants.

Subsequent to the federal ruling, the City, working with Sutter County, revised the 1997 HCP and obtained a new federal ITP, base on a new 2003 HCP and implementation agreement.

To obtain an ITP, the wildlife agencies must find, among other findings that, with the implementation of the HCP, the survival of the covered species will not be jeopardized. The incidental take permit supported by the 2003 HCP and Implementation Agreement was challenged and upheld in both federal and state court.



The **White-faced Ibis** (*Plegadis chihi*) is a wading bird with a long decurved beak. This species breeds colonially in marshes, usually nesting in bushes or low trees. Breeding adults have a pink face bordered with white, a grey bill, and reddish legs and red eyes.



**Giant Garter Snake** (*Thamnophis gigas*) feeds primarily on aquatic fish, frogs and tadpoles. Rice fields and irrigation ditches, which are both flooded in summer, are now providing good habitat for this snake.



**Swainson's Hawk** (*Buteo swainsoni*) mainly hunt mice, ground squirrels, rabbits, birds, and reptiles during the breeding season. Habitat includes open grasslands and farmlands with adjacent nesting trees.



The Natomas Basin Habitat Conservation Plan (NBHCP) for the North Natomas Basin was adopted in 1997 and updated in 2003. The challenge for the Natomas Joint Vision Area is to prepare a new or amended habitat conservation plan that will enhance the objectives of the NBHCP.

The mission of The Natomas Basin Conservancy (TNBC) is to promote biological conservation along with economic development and the continuation of agriculture in the Natomas Basin. The NBHCP establishes a multi-species conservation program to mitigate the expected loss of habitat values and take of protected species that would result from urban development, operation of irrigation and drainage systems, and rice farming. The goal of the NBHCP is to preserve, restore, and enhance habitat values in the Natomas Basin while allowing urban development to proceed according to local land use plans.

TNBC receives mitigation fees paid by developers and others when permits are obtained to build within the Basin. The funds are used to acquire lands for habitat preserves, to design and construct wildlife reserves and sanctuaries, and to manage the lands.

NBHCP fees have been paid on a total of 7,000 acres. Since 1999, TNBC has acquired a total of 4,172 acres as of November 4, 2008. Approximately 42% of these land holdings are in Sacramento County, with the balance in Sutter County.

The NBHCP is designed to create a system of reserves, with both wetland and upland components, that would support viable populations of the giant garter snake, Swainson's hawk, and other Covered Species. Creating preserves according to a regional plan prevents the habitat fragmentation that can occur with haphazard mitigation. The planned approach also provides cost-effective habitat creation and management.

Key conservation objectives for maintaining the Natomas Basin giant garter snake (GGS) population include:

- Developing a network of habitat reserves with restored marsh habitat and adjacent rice fields linked by water supply canals;
- Developing habitat reserves of 400 acres or more; and
- Maintaining at least 50 percent of mitigation lands in rice production and 25 percent in managed marsh.

Table 1—NBHCP Covered Species

Habitat and Species	Federal Status	State Status
Aleutian Canada goose <i>Branta canadensis leucopareia</i>	Species of Concern (de-listed)	NA
Bank swallow <i>Riparia riparia</i>	NA	Threatened
Burrowing owl <i>Athene cucularia</i>	Species of Concern	Species of Special Concern
Loggerhead shrike <i>Lanius ludovicianus</i>	Species of Concern	Species of Special Concern
Swainson's hawk <i>Buteo swainsoni</i>	NA	Threatened
Tricolored blackbird <i>Agelaius tricolor</i>	Species of Concern	Species of Special Concern
White faced ibis <i>Plegadis chihi</i>	Species of Concern	Species of Special Concern
Giant garter snake <i>Thamnophis gigas</i>	Threatened	Threatened
Northwestern pond Turtle <i>Clemmys marmorata marmorata</i>	Species of Concern	Species of Special Concern
California tiger salamander <i>Ambystoma californiense</i>	Candidate	Candidate Protected Amphibian
Western spadefoot toad <i>Scaphiopus hammondi</i>	Species of Concern	Protected Amphibian
Valley elderberry longhorn beetle <i>Desmocerus californicus dimorphus</i>	Threatened (under consideration for delisting 2007)	NA
Mid-valley fairy shrimp <i>Branchinecta mesovallensis</i>	NA	NA
Vernal pool tadpole shrimp <i>Lepidurus packardii</i>	Endangered	NA
Boggs Lake hedge-hyssop <i>Gratiola heterosepala</i>	NA	Endangered
Colusa grass <i>Neostapfia colusana</i>	Threatened	NA
Delta tule pea <i>Lathyrus jepsonii ssp. Jepsonii</i>	Species of Concern	NA
Legenere <i>Laganere limosa</i>	Species of Concern	NA
Slender Orcutt grass <i>Orcuttia tenuis</i>	Threatened	Endangered
Sacramento Orcutt grass <i>Orcuttia vlsida</i>	Endangered	Endangered
Sanford's arrowhead <i>Sagittaria sanfordii</i>	Species of Concern	NA

### **Challenges to the 2003 NBHCP and Key Considerations for a New HCP**

The basic premise of the 1997 NBHCP was that agricultural uses in the Natomas Basin, as they were identified at that time, would continue in perpetuity outside of the permitted areas. For the NBHCP to continue to protect the identified species in the Basin, the “baseline” condition—continued farming, maintenance of drainage and irrigation canals, and existing habitat (rice, marsh, trees and habitat friendly crops)—must remain. This basic premise was modified in the 2003 NBHCP – which introduced the concept of “adaptive management” to allow for the adjustment of future conservation management actions. The fundamental assumptions of continued farming and continued irrigation are being challenged by the dynamics of land use changes occurring in the city and county of Sacramento.

### **Issues Today that Further Challenge the 2003 NBHCP**

The fundamental assumptions in the NBHCP of continued farming and irrigation are being challenged by the dynamics of land use changes occurring in the City and County of Sacramento. Large scale projects in the Joint Vision Area such as the airport expansion, SAFCA levee improvement program, and other public agency and private projects, have the potential to change the baseline condition of the NBHCP.

1. Airport land use management practices include: no open water or trees in airport buffer lands which eliminates GGS and Swainson’s Hawk habitat on and around the airport.
2. Natomas Central Mutual Water Company issues: availability, quality, and cost of water. If the cost of water becomes too expensive, farmers may allow land to go fallow thus potentially eliminating habitat.
3. Changing agricultural practices and volatility of the agricultural market: rice, a key habitat crop for the GGS, may or may not be profitable in any given year. The continuous flooding of fields for rice production, creates habitat and potentially creates a higher need (ratio) for mitigation land if rice is taken out of production and the land is destined for development.
4. Geographic limitations on mitigation land (in Basin vs. out of Basin or out of Sacramento County portion of Natomas Basin)
5. Autonomous and independent approach by both public and private interests to deal with habitat issues impact the baseline condition.

### **Necessary Ingredients for a New HCP**

The Natomas Basin Conservancy (TNBC) model for habitat management has worked. Any new HCP should model or tier off what TNBC has successfully done and improve upon the successes in the 2003 NBHCP.

1. A new HCP should be comprehensive and all inclusive, enveloping all public and private projects. One new comprehensive HCP is needed for the Basin.
2. The development of a new HCP should be interactive, cooperative and collegial involving proactive participation of: the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, CA Department of Fish and Game, U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, City, County, and Development interests, and other stakeholders.
3. A new HCP should be performance and science based, based on the quality of mitigation land and how it performs, not only the quantity.
4. Necessary ingredients: biology/species based preserve design, consolidated preserves, water corridors, dedicated crop type, dependable and inexpensive water delivery system (canals, wells, lakes); science based ground management to promote species (rice/vetch), adequate buffers, biological monitoring, and adaptive management based on experience.

### **Additional Considerations for a New HCP**

1. Flexibility in the location of mitigation lands: explore locating a portion of mitigation lands “out of county” (Yolo, Sutter); mitigation lands in some cases should satisfy multiple purposes— open space, airport buffer, SAFCA flood control improvements, farm land, etc.
2. Tangible Open Space: design an open space system that recognizes the combined benefit of habitat, buffer, agricultural lands, view corridors, waterways, etc. and integrates open space to create synergy and provide tangible enhancements and/or serve as a buffer to habitat mitigation lands.

The 2003 NBHCP is being challenged and threatened on a number of fronts. The base line condition in Natomas has changed and will continue to be dynamic. A new look at habitat needs is both important and critical if the threatened species are to continue to be preserved and protected.



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