

## SECTION 5: ALTERNATIVES TO THE PROPOSED PROJECT

### 5.1 - Introduction

In accordance with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6, this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) contains a comparative impact assessment of alternatives to the proposed project. The primary purpose of this section is to provide decision makers and the general public with a reasonable number of feasible project alternatives that could attain most of the basic project objectives, while avoiding or reducing any of the project's significant adverse environmental effects. Important considerations for these alternatives analyses are noted below.

As stated in CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6:

- An EIR need not consider every conceivable alternative to a project;
- An EIR should identify alternatives that were considered by the lead agency, but rejected as infeasible during the scoping process;
- Reasons for rejecting an alternative include:
  - Failure to meet most of the basic project objectives;
  - Infeasibility; or
  - Inability to avoid significant environmental effects.

### Significant Unavoidable Impacts

The proposed project would result in the following significant unavoidable impacts:

- **Aesthetics:** Sacramento Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) acknowledges that expansion of the Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundary would result in future urbanization (at an undetermined time) of the project area. In addition, the City of Elk Grove estimates that 6,327 acres would be required outside the existing city boundaries to accommodate future growth. Therefore, future urbanization may have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista, and may significantly alter the existing visual character of the proposed Sphere of Influence Amendment (SOIA) Area.
- **Agricultural Resources:** Sacramento LAFCo acknowledges that expansion of the SOI boundary would result in future urbanization (at an undetermined time) of the project area. More than 90 percent (7,360 acres) of the SOIA Area is designated as Important Farmland. The City of Elk Grove estimates that 6,327 acres would be required outside the existing city boundaries (within the proposed SOIA Area) to accommodate future growth. Therefore, urbanization of agricultural lands may result in permanent loss of prime agricultural lands, conflict with Williamson Act contracts, and involve other changes in the existing environment,

which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use.

- **Air Quality:** Sacramento LAFCo acknowledges that expansion of the Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundary could result in future urbanization (at an undetermined time) of the project area. In addition, the City of Elk Grove estimates that 6,327 acres would be required outside the existing city boundaries to accommodate future growth. Therefore, future urbanization may conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan and result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of a criteria pollutant.
- **Biological Resources:** Sacramento LAFCo acknowledges that expansion of the Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundary could result in future urbanization (at an undetermined time) of the project area. In addition, the City of Elk Grove estimates that 6,327 acres would be required outside the existing city boundaries to accommodate future growth. Therefore, future urbanization may have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on special-status wildlife species.
- **Land Use Plans, Policies, and Regulations:** Since approval of an SOIA by LAFCo indicates that the Commission has designated the revised SOIA Area for future urbanization, impacts related to potential conflict with applicable habitat conservation plan or natural community conservation plan and conversion of open space resources, as defined by Sacramento LAFCo, to urban uses would be significant and unavoidable.
- **Noise:** Sacramento LAFCo acknowledges that expansion of the SOI boundary could result in future urbanization (at an undetermined time) of the project area. Urbanization of the SOIA Area may result in an increase in traffic noise from 0 to 13 dB  $L_{dn}$  relative to existing conditions. No feasible mitigation measure is available; therefore, impacts would remain significant and unavoidable.
- **Traffic and Transportation:** Should the proposed SOIA be fully developed in the future, it would generate vehicle trips that would contribute to unacceptable levels of service (LOS) on various roadway and freeway segments under Existing Plus Project conditions as well as Cumulative conditions. Mitigation is proposed that would require the applicant to contribute fees to fund necessary improvements; however, there is uncertainty regarding actual implementation of the improvements. As such, the residual significance of this impact is significant and unavoidable.
- **Utilities and Service Systems:** Sacramento LAFCo acknowledges that expansion of the SOI boundary could result in future urbanization (at an undetermined time) of the project area. Urbanization of the SOIA Area could result in the generation of a demand for increased water services over that which is currently produced in the area and may require or result in the

construction of new water and wastewater treatment facilities or expansion of existing facilities.

### 5.1.1 - Alternatives to the Proposed Project

Any alternative boundary adopted by LAFCo for the SOIA Area that establishes a SOI that is both within the proposed SOIA Boundary and smaller than the approximately 7,900 acres in the City of Elk Grove's application would not create any new impacts or make any impacts more severe than those analyzed in connection with the proposed project. The analysis of the impacts of the proposed project in this EIR is, therefore, sufficient for any boundary established by LAFCo pursuant to its authority under the CKH Act, as long as the boundary is within the approximately 7,900-acre area analyzed in connection with the proposed project.

The three alternatives to the proposed project analyzed in this section are as follows:

- **No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative:** The project site would remain in its existing condition and no Sphere of Influence application would be submitted. The Sphere of Influence boundaries would be limited to the existing City of Elk Grove City limits. The SOIA Area is anticipated to continue to develop under the existing Sacramento County General Plan.
- **Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative:** The Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative would entail the expansion of the City of Elk Grove's SOI to the northeast of the existing City limits and would encompass an area that is larger than the currently proposed SOI area. This Alternate SOI Boundary modification is aimed to encompass an unincorporated area of the County that would allow the City meet its objectives of future growth and expansion but focus on areas adjacent to the City that are currently processing specific plans and development applications. As such, the alternate SOI boundary would include the North Vineyards Station Specific Plan (1,590 acres); the Vineyard Springs Comprehensive Plan (2,650 acres); and an area west of these specific plans that includes 6,500 acres bounded by Eagle Nest Road to the east, Elder Creek Road to the north, Calvine Road to the south, and Grant Line Road to the southeast. The Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative is illustrated in Exhibit 5-1. Similar to the proposed SOIA Area, the land use designations for the 6,500 acres is General Agriculture-20: most of the land (about 90 percent) is grazing land, according to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program (FMMP). This alternative would also avoid extension of the SOIA Area into or near the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

**Enhanced Regional Alternative:** The Enhanced Regional Alternative would entail the expansion of the City of Elk Grove's SOI over 2,775 acres immediately to the south of the current City limits, generally 0.5 mile north of Eschinger Road, in the area between State Route 99 (SR-99) and Franklin Boulevard and approximately 1,575 acres in the area east of SR 99 that is currently within the County General Plan Urban Services Boundary, for a total of 4,350 gross acres. This alternative is illustrated

in Exhibit 5-2. The Enhanced Regional Alternative would be located within portions of the area identified by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Blueprint Preferred Scenario for Elk Grove as a Medium Density Residential place type, and as Vacant Urban Designated Lands (2050) and it incorporates areas east of SR 99 within the County's Urban Services Boundary. This alternative aims to encompass an unincorporated area of the County that would allow the City to meet many of its objectives for future growth and expansion but would focus on siting that growth in areas that meet regional as well as City objectives, as set forth in regional transportation and air quality planning documents (e.g. Sacramento Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS)). By encouraging more compact urban development, the alternative would reduce potential environmental impacts to air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, and the loss of agricultural and biological resources as well. This alternative would also largely avoid FEMA designated floodplains and extension of the SOIA Area near the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

Two alternatives to the proposed project are analyzed below. These analyses compare the proposed project and each individual project alternative. In several cases, the description of the impact may be the same under each alternative when compared with the CEQA Thresholds of Significance (i.e., both the project and the alternative would result in a less than significant impact). The actual degree of impact may be slightly different between the proposed project and each alternative, and this relative difference is the basis for a conclusion of greater or lesser impacts.

---

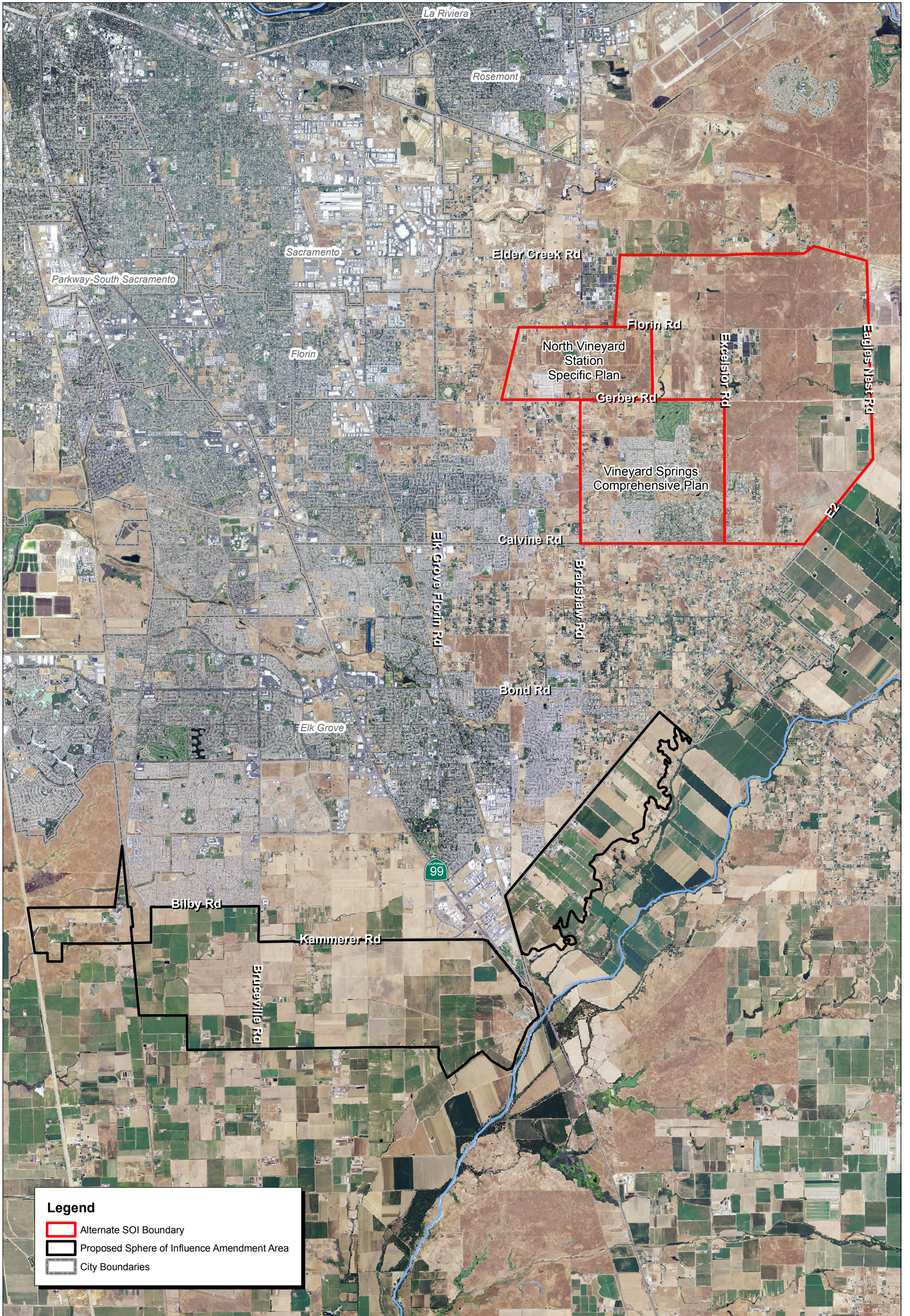
## **5.2 - Project Objectives**

---

As stated in Section 2, Project Description, the objectives of the proposed project are to:

- Amend the Sphere of Influence (SOI) boundary beyond the existing Elk Grove city limits to accommodate orderly and sustainable growth consistent with the City's General Plan.
- Implement the Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act of 2000 consistent with public service conditions present or reasonably foreseeable in the proposed SOIA Area.
- Establish a logical boundary within which future and timely annexation requests by the City of Elk Grove may be considered.
- To establish an SOI for the City of Elk Grove that will facilitate the protection of important environmental, cultural, and agricultural resources.
- Provide sufficient land to accommodate a jobs-housing ratio for the City of Elk Grove that provides for sufficient residential and employment-generating lands uses to minimize the need for commuting to or from other jurisdictions.





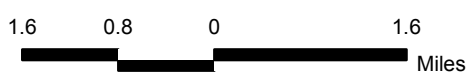
**Legend**

- Alternate SOI Boundary
- Proposed Sphere of Influence Amendment Area
- City Boundaries

Source: Sacramento County NAIP, 2009.



32330002 • 09/2011 | 5-1\_alternative\_1.mxd

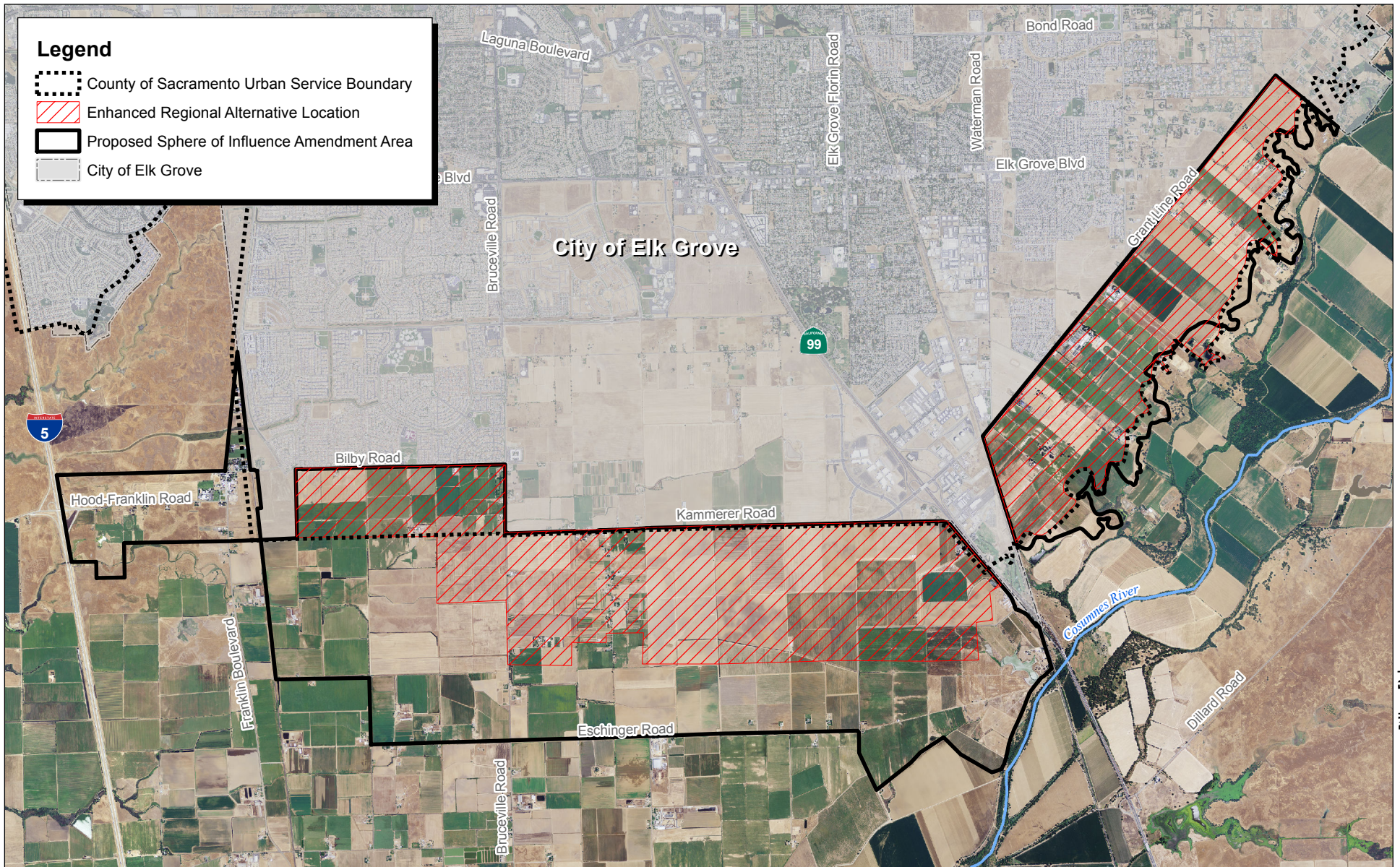


**Exhibit 5-1  
Alternate SOI Boundary Location**







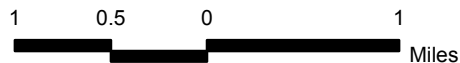


Source: Sacramento County NAIP, 2009, County of Sacramento, City of Elk Grove, 2009.



Michael Brandman Associates

32330002 • 09/2011 | 5-2\_enhanced\_alternative.mxd



## Exhibit 5-2 Enhanced Regional Alternative Location Map

SACRAMENTO LAFCo • ELK GROVE SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AMENDMENT  
RECIRCULATED DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT







---

## 5.3 - Alternative 1 – No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative

---

Under the No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative, the project site would remain unchanged and no future annexation to and urbanization in the City of Elk Grove would occur. The project site would remain primarily agricultural for the foreseeable future. The Sacramento County General Plan designations and Zoning Ordinance designations that establish agricultural designations for more than 90 percent of the project site would be maintained.

### 5.3.1 - Impact Analysis

#### Aesthetics

This alternative would maintain agricultural uses on the project site. The proposed project's visual character and scenic vista impacts were found to be significant and unavoidable from potential future urbanization of the SOIA Area under the proposed project. Therefore, this alternative would reduce impacts to less than significant, as development would occur under the existing County General Plan that would result in a reduced development conforming to existing agricultural designations. Therefore, this alternative would have more reduced impacts on aesthetics than the proposed project.

#### Agricultural Resources

As discussed in Section 3.2, Agricultural Resources, the potential development of the SOIA Area would result in significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the loss of Important Farmlands, conflict with Williamson Act contracts and involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use. The No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would not result in loss of farmland, as any future activity would conform to the existing Agricultural designations. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer impacts on agricultural resources than the proposed project.

#### Air Quality

Future annexation and development under the proposed project would result in significant and unavoidable air quality impacts that could not be fully mitigated to less than significant levels. The No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would result in substantially reduced development in conformance with the existing County General Plan. This would result in fewer air quality impacts than the potential future urbanization of the SOIA Area. Therefore, this alternative would have less impact than the proposed project.

#### Biological Resources

Development under No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would maintain continuation of agricultural activities within the SOIA Area. The County General Plan identifies the project site as suitable foraging habitat for Swainson's hawk. Development under this alternative would allow continuation of agricultural activities, thereby avoiding any disturbance to the foraging habitat for Swainson's hawk. No impacts would occur to special-status species. In addition, no urbanization

would occur that would have the potential to impact existing wetlands. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer impacts than the proposed project.

### **Cultural Resources**

The proposed project identified impacts to cultural resources that were less than significant. Continuation of agricultural activities and limited development under the existing General Plan would have the same potential to unearth cultural resources and would be subject to similar regulations protecting cultural resources. Since the No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would result in limited development under the existing primarily agricultural designations, impacts would be less than those of the proposed project.

### **Geology, Soils, and Seismicity**

As described in Section 3.6, Geology and Soils, future annexation and development activities under the proposed project could expose residences and structures to unstable soil conditions. Since the No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would result in limited development under the existing primarily agricultural designations, impacts would be less than those of the proposed project.

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

This alternative would result in fewer greenhouse gas emissions relative to the proposed project. While the proposed project's greenhouse gas emissions were found to add no considerable amounts to global greenhouse gas emission concentrations, this alternative would still result in fewer overall emissions through the reduction of vehicle trips and overall development intensity. Therefore, this alternative would have less impact than the proposed project.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

This alternative would result in continuation of agricultural activities that would dominate the project site. The proposed project would not create any significant hazards or hazardous materials impacts requiring mitigation. As such, this alternative would have impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials similar to the proposed project.

### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

The proposed SOIA Area is currently covered with largely pervious surfaces and very few structures. Therefore, the amount of surface runoff associated with No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would be substantially less than the level of runoff associated with the proposed project. In addition, no development would occur in a flood zone. As such, this alternative would have fewer hydrology and water quality impacts than the proposed project.

### **Land Use and Planning**

The existing land use and zoning designations for both the proposed project and the No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative conform to the County designations. However, approval of the



SOIA could result in future annexations and land use planning by the City of Elk Grove. The proposed project's land use impacts relating to conflict with applicable habitat conservation plan and conversion of open space resources were found to be significant and unavoidable. Under the No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative, future development to accommodate the City's job housing balance would not occur. The No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would require the City to look for alternate lands to accommodate future growth consistent with the City's General Plan. This would indirectly result in more impacts related to land use and planning. However, since City has no land use authority over the SOIA Area, direct impacts to land use and planning would be similar to the proposed project.

### **Mineral Resources**

Under this alternative, impacts to Mineral Resources would be similar to those of the proposed project, as no significant mineral resources were found in the project area.

### **Noise**

As discussed in Section 3.12, Noise, the proposed project could result in significant and unavoidable noise impacts associated with future annexation and development activities within the SOIA Area. The No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would result in a substantially lower-density land pattern than the proposed project. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer noise impacts than the proposed project.

### **Population and Housing**

This alternative would result in very low-density development on the project site in place of high-density urban development consisting of residential and employment generating land uses. The new employment opportunities created by the proposed project were not found to have the potential to cause indirect growth inducement. Under this alternative, population and housing growth would be consistent with the County's General Plan. Therefore, this alternative would have impacts on population, housing, and employment less than the proposed project.

### **Public Services**

The No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would result in substantially lower intensity development than the proposed project that would be primarily associated with agricultural activities. Therefore, this alternative would not generate an increased demand for public services beyond what is anticipated in the Sacramento County General Plan. As such, this alternative would have less impact on public services than the proposed project.

### **Transportation and Traffic**

Section 3.15, Transportation and Traffic identifies significant and unavoidable impacts to local roadways and freeways associated with the proposed project. The No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would not cause a traffic increase in the proposed SOIA Area and surrounding areas,

because development would occur consistent with the Sacramento County General Plan, which is primarily agriculture. This alternative would not have substantial traffic- or transportation-related impacts resulting from buildout of the vacant parcels in the proposed SOIA Area; therefore, the No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would have fewer impacts related to traffic and transportation than the proposed project.

### **Utilities and Service Systems**

The No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would result in substantially reduced development than the proposed project primarily associated with agricultural activities. Therefore, this alternative would not generate an increased demand for public utilities beyond what is anticipated in the Sacramento County General Plan. Annexation into service districts such as Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA) and Sacramento Area Sewer District (SASD) is not anticipated. As such, this alternative would have less impact on public services than the proposed project.

### **5.3.2 - Conclusion**

The No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative would avoid all of the proposed project's significant unavoidable impacts and would have less impact on all environmental topical areas. However, this alternative would not advance any of the project objectives. Furthermore, this alternative would not realize the project benefits associated with City's objectives of orderly and sustainable growth in accordance with the City's General Plan and would not achieve job-housing balance.

---

## **5.4 - Alternative 2 – Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative**

---

The Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative would entail the expansion of the City of Elk Grove's SOI to the northeast of the existing City limits and would encompass an area that is larger than the currently proposed SOI Area. This Alternate SOI Boundary modification aims to encompass an unincorporated area of the County that would allow the City to meet its objectives of future growth and expansion, but focus on areas adjacent to the City that are currently processing specific plans and development entitlements with Sacramento County. As such, the Alternate SOI boundary would include the North Vineyards Station Specific Plan (1,590 acres); the Vineyard Springs Comprehensive Plan (2,650 acres); and area west of these specific plans that includes 6,500 acres bounded by Eagle Nest Road to the east, Elder Creek Road to the north, Calvine Road to the south, and Grant Line Road to the southeast. The Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative is illustrated in Exhibit 5-1. Similar to the proposed SOIA Area, the land use designations for the 6,500 acres is General Agriculture-20; most of the land (approximately 90 percent) is grazing land according to FMMP designations. This alternative would also avoid extension of the SOIA Area into or near the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.



This alternative would result in similar land use assumptions made for the proposed project to accommodate future growth envisioned by the City of Elk Grove. This alternative would require similar discretionary approvals for future annexation and development activities, including General Plan Amendment, rezone, planned development adoption, subdivision map, development agreement, and Williamson Act cancellation.

#### **5.4.1 - Impact Analysis**

##### **Aesthetics**

Under this alternative, future annexation and development activities would occur on the northeast of the existing Elk Grove city limits. The proposed project's visual character and scenic vista impacts were found to be significant and unavoidable from potential future urbanization of the SOIA Area under the proposed project. Future urban growth under this alternative would be similar to the proposed project. As shown in Exhibit 5-1, the Alternate SOI Boundary includes specific plans that have been developed as urban uses and is close to urban development in the cities of Rancho Cordova and Sacramento. Therefore, this alternative would reduce visual impacts to less than significant, since development would occur in an area that is currently undergoing urbanization, and any future development would continue to exhibit similar visual characteristics associated with urban growth. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer impacts on aesthetics than the proposed project.

##### **Agricultural Resources**

As discussed in Section 3.2, Agricultural Resources, the potential development of the SOIA Area would result in significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the loss of Important Farmlands, conflict with Williamson Act contracts and involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use. The Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative would not result in loss of Important Farmland, as most of the land is identified as grazing land. Agricultural activities may exist on vacant lands that would be impacted by future urbanization; however, mitigation measures such as payment of fees for loss of farmland would reduce those impacts. Furthermore, this alternative contains approximately 2,100 acres of active Williamson Act land, which is less than the 2,474 acres of active and 548 acres of non-active Williamson Act land in the proposed SOIA. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer impacts on loss of Important Farmland and conflict with Williamson Act contracts than the proposed project.

##### **Air Quality**

Future annexation and development activities and development intensity would be similar to the proposed project under the Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative. Therefore, this alternative would have air quality impacts similar to the proposed project.

### **Biological Resources**

The Alternate SOI Boundary area is zoned AG-20 by the County Zoning Map. As a baseline, the Department of Environmental Review and Assessment (DERA) assumes that properties zoned AG-40 and larger have 100 percent habitat value and AG-20 properties have 75 percent habitat value. Therefore, impacts to Swainson's hawk's foraging habitat would be less significant under this alternative than the proposed project. Similar mitigation measures would be required to reduce impacts. The Alternate SOI Boundary contains both freshwater emergent wetlands and freshwater ponds. Impact to wetlands would be worse than the proposed project as it would extend into areas northeast of the City that have been identified as having good wetland and vernal pool habitat identified in the South Sacramento Habitat Conservation Plan effort. However, this alternative would avoid extension of the SOIA Area into or near the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer impacts related to biological resources than the proposed project.

### **Cultural Resources**

The proposed project was found to have less than significant impacts on historical resources, archaeological resources, paleontological resources, and burial sites. Because this alternative would result in similar potential to unearth cultural resources and would be subject to similar regulations protecting cultural resources, it would have impacts on cultural resources similar to the proposed project.

### **Geology, Soils, and Seismicity**

This alternative would accommodate the same amount of future growth as envisioned by the City of Elk Grove and would be developed in the future with urban uses similar to the proposed project. The same regulations related to site preparation and the construction of buildings, including the California Building Code, which provides minimum standards for building design throughout California, would apply under this alternative. Therefore, this alternative would have impacts on geology, soils, and seismicity similar to the proposed project.

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

This alternative would accommodate the same amount of future growth envisioned by the City of Elk Grove and therefore would be developed with urban uses similar to the proposed project in the future. As such, this alternative would have impacts on greenhouse gas emissions similar to the proposed project.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

This alternative would accommodate the same amount of future growth envisioned by the City of Elk Grove and therefore would be developed with urban uses similar to the proposed project in the future. The proposed project was found to have less than significant impacts associated with hazardous materials from past or present site usage as well as the potential for risk of upset. Construction of subsequent projects under this alternative would be required to comply with applicable building,



health, fire, and safety codes, as described for the proposed project. Because this alternative site has also included historic agricultural use, mitigation identified for the proposed project would also be required for this alternative. Therefore, this alternative would have impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials similar to the proposed project.

### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

This alternative would accommodate the same amount of future growth envisioned by the City of Elk Grove and therefore would be developed with urban uses similar to the proposed project in the future. The proposed project was found to have significant impacts on short-term water quality, long-term water quality, drainage, and flood hazards. Mitigation was proposed to address all of these impacts and would fully mitigate these issues to a level of less than significant. Because this alternative would result in urbanization activities similar to the proposed project, similar impacts would occur. The available areas for future development within the Alternate SOI Boundary are outside 100-year flood zones. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer impacts on hydrology and water quality than the proposed project.

### **Land Use and Planning**

The alternative would require a General Plan Amendment, rezone, subdivision map, and other discretionary approvals for future annexation and development activities similar to the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would be required to be consistent with the City of Elk Grove General Plan, the Elk Grove Municipal Code, and Sacramento LAFCo annexation policies. However, this alternative would avoid extension of the SOIA Area into or near the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, thereby resulting in a lesser impact to conflict with applicable habitat conservation plans. Therefore, this alternative would have less land use impacts than the proposed project.

### **Mineral Resources**

There are currently no mineral extraction activities occurring in the Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative area. The Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative impacts to Mineral Resources would be similar to those of the proposed project; no significant mineral resources were found in the project area.

### **Noise**

As discussed in Section 3.12, Noise, the proposed project would result in significant and unavoidable noise impacts associated with future annexation and development activities within the SOIA Area. This alternative would accommodate the same amount of future growth as envisioned by the City of Elk Grove and would be developed with urban uses similar to the proposed project in the future. Therefore, this alternative would have impacts on noise similar to the proposed project.

### **Population and Housing**

This alternative would result in similar land use assumptions as the proposed project to accommodate future growth envisioned by the City of Elk Grove. Therefore, this alternative would have impacts on population, housing, and employment similar to the proposed project.

### **Public Services**

This alternative would accommodate the same amount of future growth as envisioned by the City of Elk Grove and would require demand on public services similar to those identified for the proposed project. Therefore, this alternative would have impacts on public services similar to the proposed project.

### **Transportation and Traffic**

Section 3.15, Transportation and Traffic identifies significant and unavoidable impacts to local roadways and freeways associated with the proposed project. The Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative would cause a traffic increase similar to the proposed project, as most of the area available for development under this alternative contains rural roads similar to the proposed project. Therefore, although the traffic impacts would occur in a different location, this alternative would generate a similar amount of traffic that would have impacts on levels of service similar to the proposed project.

### **Utilities and Service Systems**

The Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative would include development potential similar in nature to the proposed project. The area under the Alternate SOI Boundary is served by the Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA). No sewer service is currently available to the area. The proposed project would require annexation by a sewer service provider. Under this alternative, annexation by SCWA would not be required, since the alternative area is currently undergoing urbanization. Therefore, this alternative would have slightly less impact than the proposed project.

### **5.4.2 - Conclusion**

The Alternate SOI Boundary Alternative would avoid some of the proposed project's significant unavoidable impacts except traffic and noise. In addition, this alternative would lessen the severity of other impacts, including those associated with aesthetics; agricultural resources; hydrology and water quality; land use and planning; and utilities. This alternative would advance most of the project objectives.

---

## **5.5 - Alternative 3 – Enhanced Regional Alternative**

---

The Enhanced Regional Alternative would entail the expansion of the City of Elk Grove's SOI over 4,350 gross acres, with 2,775 acres immediately to the south of the current city limits, generally 0.5 mile north of Eschinger Road, in the area between SR-99 and Franklin Boulevard and 1,575 acres in



the area east of SR 99. This Enhanced Regional Alternative would be located within portions of the area identified by the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Blueprint Preferred Scenario for Elk Grove as a Medium Density Residential place type, and as Vacant Urban Designated Lands (2050) and land that is currently within the County Urban Services Boundary. This alternative aims to encompass an unincorporated area of the County General Plan that would allow the City to meet many of its objectives for future growth and expansion but would focus on siting that growth in areas that meet regional as well as City objectives, as set forth in regional transportation and air quality planning documents. By encouraging more compact urban development, the alternative would reduce potential environmental impacts to air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, and the loss of agricultural and biological resources. This alternative would also largely avoid FEMA designated floodplains and extension of the SOIA Area near the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge.

The City of Elk Grove application (i.e., the proposed project) consists of approximately 7,900 acres. The area encompassed by this Enhanced Regional Alternative is included within that larger area. As a result, the impacts and mitigation measures of the Enhanced Regional Alternative are fully analyzed within the analysis of the impacts and mitigation measures of the proposed project. The Enhanced Regional Alternative, as a project narrower in scope than the proposed project, does not create any new or more severe significant effects than those analyzed in connection with the proposed project.

### **5.5.1 - Impact Analysis**

#### **Aesthetics**

Under this alternative, future annexation and development activities would occur within a smaller footprint located immediately adjacent to the southern City of Elk Grove city limits. The proposed project's visual character and scenic vista impacts were found to be significant and unavoidable from potential future urbanization of the SOIA Area under the proposed project. Future urban growth under this alternative would be similar to the proposed project. Therefore, this alternative would not reduce visual impacts to less than significant, since development would occur in an area that is currently rural, and any future development would continue to exhibit similar visual characteristics associated with urban growth. However, because this alternative would result in less land converted to urban uses, this alternative would have impacts on aesthetics that are less than the proposed project.

#### **Agricultural Resources**

As discussed in Section 3.2, Agricultural Resources, the potential development of the SOIA Area would result in significant and unavoidable impacts associated with the loss of Important Farmlands, conflict with Williamson Act contracts and involve other changes in the existing environment, which due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland to nonagricultural use. The Enhanced Regional Alternative would result in loss of Important Farmland and Williamson Act land, as most of the land is identified as prime farmland or farmland of statewide importance, and some is

identified as under Williamson Act contracts. However, this alternative would affect less acreage of Important Farmland and Williamson Act land than the proposed project. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer agricultural impacts than the proposed project.

### **Air Quality**

Because the Enhanced Regional Alternative includes less land available for development than the proposed project, it would result in less development. In addition, this alternative is based on the SACOG Blueprint Preferred Scenario; therefore, this alternative would have fewer air quality impacts than the proposed project.

### **Biological Resources**

Because this alternative would result in less land converted to urban uses than the proposed project, impacts to Swainson's hawk's foraging habitat would be reduced under this alternative. Similar mitigation measures would be required to reduce impacts. The Enhanced Regional Alternative contains both freshwater emergent wetlands and freshwater ponds, but the proposed SOIA area includes wetlands that would not be affected under this alternative. Therefore, impacts to wetlands would be less than the proposed project. This alternative would also avoid extension of the SOIA Area into or near the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer biological resources impacts than the proposed project.

### **Cultural Resources**

The proposed project would have less than significant impacts on historical resources, archaeological resources, paleontological resources, and burial sites. This alternative would result in similar potential to unearth cultural resources and would be subject to similar regulations protecting cultural resources as the proposed project. However, because this alternative would result in less ground disturbance, it would have impacts on cultural resources less than the proposed project.

### **Geology, Soils, and Seismicity**

This alternative would be developed with similar types of urban uses as envisioned by the City of Elk Grove under the proposed project. The same regulations that apply to the proposed project regarding seismic standards and soil stability would also apply under this alternative. However, because this alternative would result in less ground disturbance, it would have impacts on geology, soils, and seismicity less than the proposed project.

### **Greenhouse Gas Emissions**

This alternative would accommodate more compact future growth than envisioned by the City of Elk Grove under the proposed project, as this alternative is based on SACOG Blueprint Preferred Scenario. However, because the Enhanced Regional Alternative includes less land available for development than the proposed project, it would result in less development. As such, this alternative

would result in less ground disturbance and it would have impacts related to greenhouse gases that are less than the proposed project.

### **Hazards and Hazardous Materials**

This alternative would accommodate more compact growth than envisioned by the City of Elk Grove under the proposed project, but would be developed with similar types of urban uses. However, because the Enhanced Regional Alternative includes less land available for development than the proposed project, it would result in less development. The proposed project was found to have less than significant impacts associated with hazardous materials from past or present site usage as well as the potential for risk of upset. This alternative would have impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials similar in nature to the proposed project, but because this alternative would result in less ground disturbance, it would have impacts related to hazards and hazardous materials that are less than the proposed project.

### **Hydrology and Water Quality**

This alternative would accommodate more compact growth than envisioned by the City of Elk Grove under the proposed project and be developed on less land. Although the proposed project would have significant impacts on short-term water quality, long-term water quality, drainage, and 100-year flood hazards, mitigation proposed to address all of these impacts would fully mitigate these issues to a level of less than significant. Because this alternative would result in less ground disturbance than the proposed project, fewer impacts related to changes in hydrology would occur. The available areas for future development within the Enhanced Regional Alternative are outside 100-year flood zones. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer impacts related to hydrology and water quality than the proposed project.

### **Land Use and Planning**

This alternative would require a General Plan Amendment, rezone, subdivision map, and other discretionary approvals for future annexation and development activities similar to the proposed project. Similar to the proposed project, this alternative would be required to be consistent with the City of Elk Grove General Plan, the Elk Grove Municipal Code, and Sacramento LAFCo annexation policies. However, this alternative would avoid extension of the SOIA Area into or near the Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge, thereby resulting in a lesser impact related to potential conflicts with applicable habitat conservation plans. Therefore, this alternative would have less land use impact than the proposed project.

### **Mineral Resources**

There are no Prime Aggregate Resource Areas or locally important mineral resource recovery sites in the project area. Therefore, the Enhanced Regional Alternative mineral resources impacts would be similar to those of the proposed project.



## **Noise**

As discussed in Section 3.12, Noise, the proposed project would result in significant and unavoidable noise impacts associated with future annexation and development activities within the SOIA Area. This alternative would accommodate more compact growth than envisioned by the City of Elk Grove's proposed project. This alternative would be developed with similar urban uses, but because this alternative would include less development than the proposed project, it would generate less traffic, so traffic noise would be reduced compared to the proposed project. Therefore, this alternative would have less severe noise impacts than the proposed project.

## **Population and Housing**

This alternative would result in less urbanization than the proposed project, and it would accommodate less future growth than envisioned by the City of Elk Grove's proposed project. In addition, this alternative is based on SACOG Blueprint Preferred Scenario. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer impacts on population, housing, and employment than the proposed project.

## **Public Services**

This alternative would accommodate less future growth than envisioned by the City of Elk Grove's proposed project and would generate less demand on public services than those identified for the proposed project. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer impacts on public services than the proposed project.

## **Transportation and Traffic**

Section 3.15, Transportation and Traffic identifies significant and unavoidable impacts to local roadways and freeways associated with the proposed project. The Enhanced Regional Alternative would generate less traffic than the proposed project, as the developable area is substantially smaller than the proposed project. Therefore, this alternative would have fewer traffic impacts than the proposed project.

## **Utilities and Service Systems**

The Enhanced Regional Alternative would include less development potential than the proposed project. Sacramento County Water Agency (SCWA) serves the Enhanced Regional Alternative area, although no sewer service is currently available to the area. The proposed project would require annexation by sanitary sewer service providers. Because this alternative would generate less demand for utilities and service systems, this alternative would have slightly less impact on utilities and service systems than the proposed project.

## **Conclusion**

The Enhanced Regional Alternative would avoid some of the proposed project's significant unavoidable impacts except impacts from aesthetics, agriculture, biological resources, noise, and traffic. This alternative would reduce the severity of other impacts, including those associated with

aesthetics, agricultural resources, air quality, biological resources, cultural resources, greenhouse gases, hydrology and water quality, land use and planning, noise, population and housing, public services, transportation, and utilities. This alternative would advance most of the project objectives.

## 5.6 - Environmentally Superior Alternative

The qualitative environmental effects of each alternative in relation to the proposed project are summarized in Table 5-1.

**Table 5-1: Summary of Alternatives**

Environmental Topic Area	No Project/Existing General Plan	Alternate SOI Boundary	Enhanced Regional Alternative
Aesthetics	Less Impact	Less Impact	Less Impact
Agricultural Resources	Less Impact	Less Impact	Less Impact
Air Quality	Less Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Biological Resources	Less Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Cultural Resources	Less Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Geology, Soils, and Seismicity	Less Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Less Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Hazards and Hazardous Materials	Less Similar Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Hydrology and Water Quality	Less Impact	Less Impact	Less Impact
Land Use and Planning	Similar Impact	Less Impact	Less Impact
Mineral Resources	Similar Impact	Similar Impact	Similar Impact
Noise	Less Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Population and Housing	Less Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Public Services	Less Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Transportation	Less Impact	Similar Impact	Less Impact
Utilities and Service Systems	Less Impact	Less Impact	Less Impact

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126(e)(2) requires an EIR to identify an environmentally superior alternative. If the No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, the EIR must also identify an environmentally superior alternative from among the other alternatives.

The No Project Alternative is the environmentally superior alternative, as the project site would remain in its existing condition, thereby avoiding any potentially adverse environmental impacts.

As stated above, if the No Project Alternative is environmentally superior, the EIR must also identify another environmentally superior alternative among the remaining alternatives. The Enhanced

Regional Alternative would be environmentally superior because it would reduce the severity of the proposed project's significant unavoidable impacts associated with aesthetics, agricultural resources, air quality, biological resources, geology, soils, and seismicity, hazards and hazardous materials, land use and planning, transportation and utilities.

---

## **5.7 - Alternatives Rejected From Further Consideration**

---

CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.6(c) states that an EIR should identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency, but were rejected as infeasible during the scoping process. Below is the alternative that was initially considered but rejected because of infeasibility.

### **5.7.1 - Reduced Agriculture Impacts/Smaller Footprint Alternative**

A common practice in alternatives evaluation is to consider a smaller project site footprint or reduced development of the proposed project. The project site's FMMP designations and soil characteristics were evaluated to identify areas most suitable for agricultural production and thereby remove it from the proposed SOIA boundary. However, the soils underlie the site in a non-uniform matrix with no specific type of soil encompassing a large, contiguous area that can be logically separated from the proposed boundary. Although the Enhanced Regional Alternative would result in a smaller footprint of potential urbanization, it does not remove all suitable agricultural land from the alternative. Removal of any suitable agricultural area would result in a non-contiguous SOI boundary and would create islands that are against LAFCo policy for SOI expansions. Therefore, this alternative was rejected.