Visual Impact Assessment Memorandum

Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail (Sylvan Road to Stock Ranch) Extension Project

District 3—SAC
CRP 5475 (053)

Prepared by: _____ **Date:** 5/6/26
Dorienne Mendoza
Associate Environmental Planner, Dokken Engineering

Concurred by: _____ **Date:** 5/06/2026
T. Chris Johnson, PLA, CA License #5102 Landscape Architect
District 3 North Region Local Assistance

Statement of Compliance: Produced in compliance with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requirements, as appropriate, to meet the level of analysis and documentation that has been determined necessary for this project.

Per Exhibit D, Article XVIII, Section A. (1) of the contract: (c) 2020 California Department of Transportation.

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List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AVE	Area of Visual Effect
Caltrans	California Department of Transportation
CCTP	Creek Corridor Trail Project
CEQA	California Environmental Quality Act
City	City of Citrus Heights
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
Handbook	*Caltrans 2023 VIA Handbook*
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
Project	Visual Impact Assessment Memorandum for the Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail (Sylvan to Stock Ranch) Extension Project
VIA	Visual Impact Assessment

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose of Report and Assessment Methodology

The purpose of this Visual Impact Assessment (VIA) memorandum is to document potential visual change in the Area of Visual Effect (AVE). This memorandum follows the guidance outlined in the publication *Guidelines for the Visual Impact Assessment of Highway Projects*, published by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) in January 2015. The formatting of this template is aligned with the directions and examples included in the *Caltrans 2023 VIA Handbook* (*Handbook*), available at: https://dot.ca.gov/programs/design/lap-visual-impact-assessment.

2 Establishment Phase

The Establishment Phase consisted primarily of a desk assessment of available data about the Project and establishment of basic visual attributes of the Project and its surroundings. The scoping Questionnaire was completed, and the level of VIA report determined; the Scoping Questionnaire is attached as **Appendix A**.

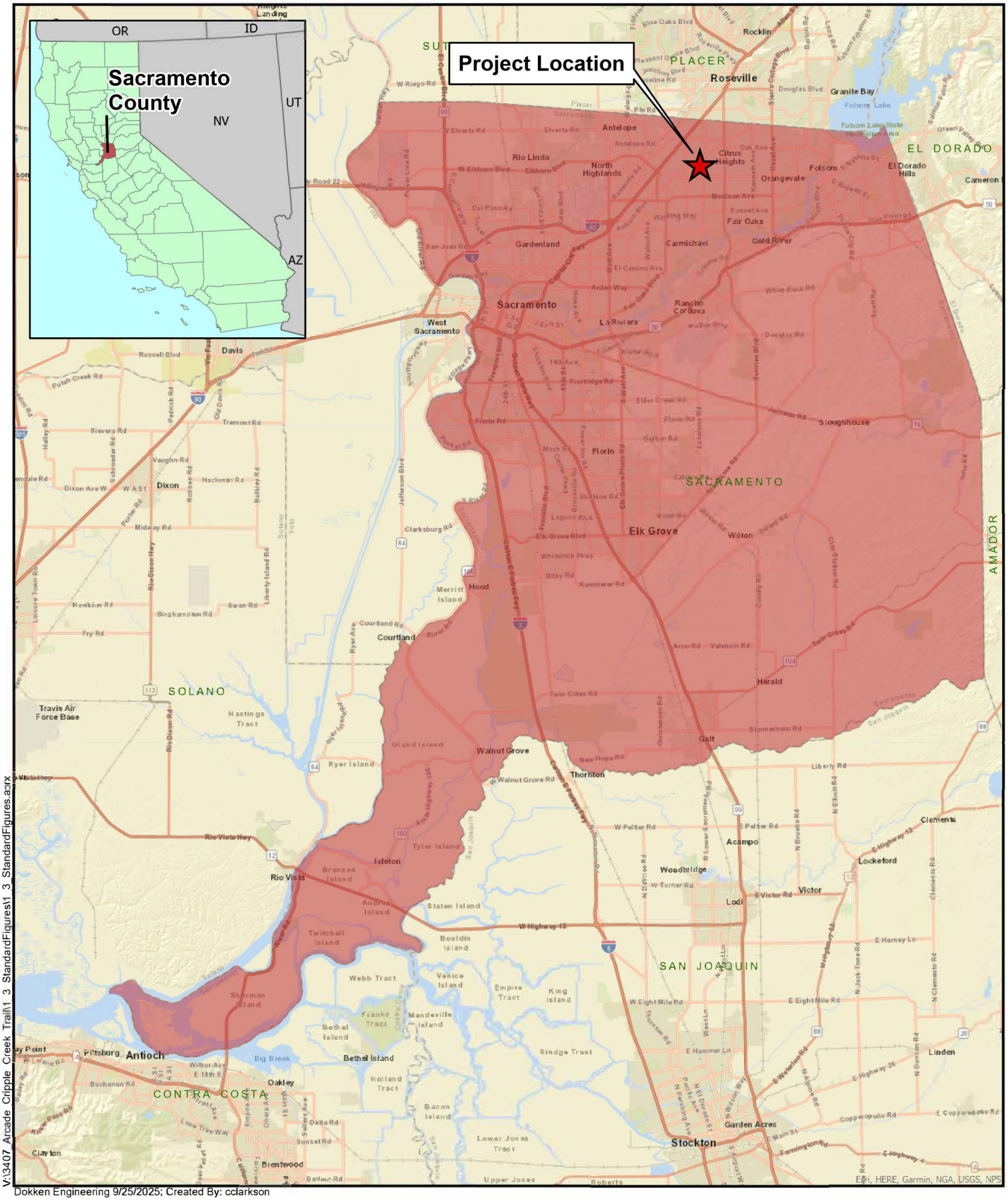
2.1 Project Location and Setting

The Arcade-Cripple Creek (Sylvan to Stock Ranch) Extension Project (Project) location and setting provide context for determining the type of changes to the existing visual environment. The proposed Project will extend east from the existing Stock Ranch Trail behind the Costco/Walmart shopping center to Sylvan Road in the City of Citrus Heights (City) in Sacramento County, California (**Figure 1. Project Vicinity** and **Figure 2. Project Location**). The Project is in the Sacramento Valley Floristic Province of California. As the Project is in the Sacramento Valley, the landscape is mostly flat with no significant landforms. Land cover within the Project area consists of urban, perennial stream channel (Arcade Creek) and unnamed tributary, water quality/detention basins, annual grassland, oak woodland and riparian woodland habitats. Urban areas include Sylvan Road and commercial/residential development surrounding the Project area. Natural land cover is present in the undeveloped areas, located primarily adjacent to the proposed trail alignment.

2.2 Project Description

The City of Citrus Heights (City) proposes to construct a 0.5-mile addition to the planned 16-mile Creek Corridor Trail Project (CCTP) as part of the proposed Project. The Project is funded through the federal Carbon Reduction Program and therefore requires compliance with both the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The lead agency for CEQA compliance is the City and the federal lead agency for NEPA compliance is the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans).

As described previously, the Project is located in the City and will extend east from the existing Stock Ranch Trail behind the Costco/Walmart shopping center to Sylvan Road. The proposed alignment begins south of the Walmart property boundary and proceeds



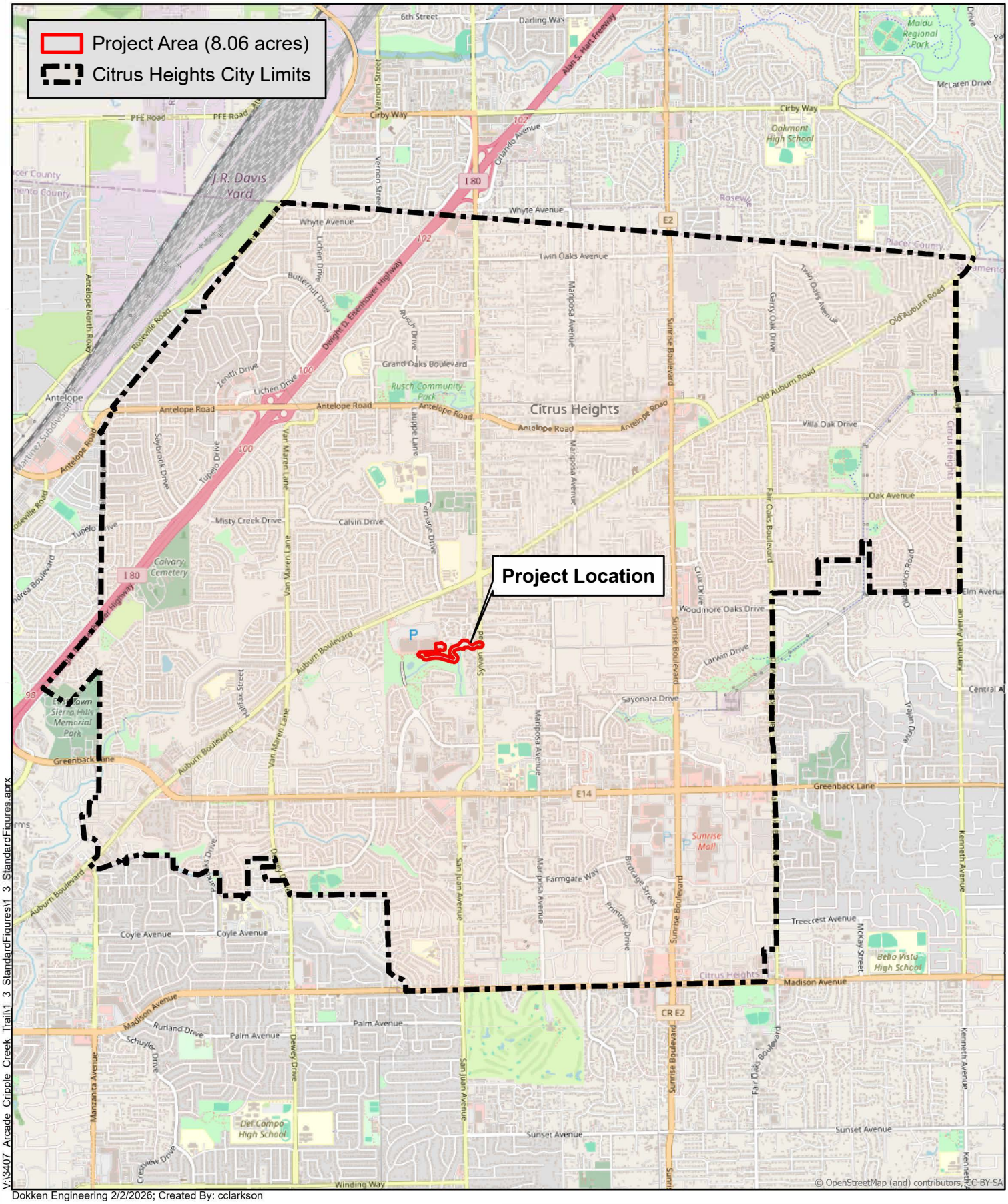
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Dokken Engineering 9/25/2025; Created By: cclarkson

0 3.5 7 Miles

Figure 1
Project Vicinity

CRP 5475(053)
Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail (Sylvan to Stock Ranch) Extension Project
Citrus Heights, Sacramento County, California



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Dokken Engineering 2/2/2026; Created By: cclarkson

0 1,750 3,500
Feet

Figure 2
Project Location
CRP 5475(053)
Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail (Sylvan to Stock Ranch) Extension Project
Citrus Heights, Sacramento County, California

east through the Stock Ranch Nature Preserve, curving south around Walmart's water quality detention basin. The alignment continues north, crossing a tributary of Arcade Creek, and traverses along the south side of the Huntington Square Apartments complex prior to connecting to Sylvan Road. The alignment terminates east of Sylvan Road at the location of a planned future trail extension segment from Sylvan Road to Mariposa Avenue. The Project has independent utility and would function as a stand-alone improvement.

Proposed facilities include a paved trail, a new prefabricated bridge across the unnamed creek tributary, solar lighting, bank protection along a segment of Arcade Creek, and an at-grade signalized pedestrian crossing at Sylvan Road (**Figure 3. Project Features**). Construction activities will involve grading to achieve ADA-compliant slopes, installing the creek crossing, paving the trail, erecting the solar lighting, constructing bank protection, and adding pedestrian signal infrastructure with minor utility adjustments as needed.

To accommodate construction, right-of-way (ROW) acquisitions will be required from several parcels. These include a permanent easement and permit to enter (PTE) from the Sunrise Recreation & Park District and a TCE from Walmart. An existing trail easement exists across the Huntington Square Apartments property and there is potential for this permanent easement to be modified to best incorporate the trail alignment with the physical site features.

Construction access will be provided primarily through the Walmart parking lot under a TCE, as well as a permit to enter for access from the Huntington Square Apartments parcel. These provisions will allow safe and efficient construction of the trail and its associated improvements.

2.3 Description of Area of Visual Effect

The Area of Visual Effect (AVE) for the Project was developed based on perspective views of the road and from the road and the location of proposed Project features. **Figure 4. Area of Visual Effect** presents a map showing the AVE.

2.4 Visual Resources and Scenic Resources

Scenic resource and visual resource identification during the Establishment Phase was conducted based on a desktop search of available maps, regional and local plans, and other databases. In the context discussed in this memorandum, "scenic resources" are those officially designated by federal, state, regional, tribal, or local authorities; "visual resources" are those that exist in the Project AVE without being officially recognized.

National Scenic Byway Designation

The Project area does not contain or have views of any officially designated National Scenic Byways (FHWA 2026).



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Source: Dokken Engineering 2/4/2026; Created By: kjacobson

0 75 150 Feet

Figure 3
Project Features
CRP 5475(053)
Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail (Sylvan to Stock Ranch) Extension Project
Citrus Heights, Sacramento County, California



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Source: Dokken Engineering 3/17/2026; Created By: ahale

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Figure 4
Area of Visual Effect
Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail (Sylvan to Stock Ranch) Extension Project
Citrus Heights, Sacramento County, California

State Scenic Highway Designation

The Project area does not contain or have views of any state scenic highways (Caltrans 2026).

Classified Landscaped Freeway

The Project area does not reside within a classified landscaped freeway (Caltrans 2026).

Local Scenic Resources

The City General Plan was adopted in August 2011 and most recently amended in August 2020. Section 4.12 Aesthetics of the General Plan Update and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan Final Environmental Impact Report (EIR) describes the visual character of the City as primarily suburban and largely developed with medium to high-density residential and commercial land uses located adjacent to major transportation corridors. Generally, low density residential uses can be found in the north-central portion of the City, characterized by rural, small-scale hobby farming/ranching with limited curb, gutter, and sidewalks. Undeveloped, natural habitats are predominantly limited to riparian areas along creeks and undeveloped grassland and oak savanna scattered throughout the City. Chapter 3 Resource Conservation of the General Plan describes the City's oak tree, wildlife habitat, creeks and riparian areas as unique, visual resources that stand apart from the urban environment (City 2020). In most areas, long-range views are limited to the immediate neighborhood because of the relatively flat topography. An exception is the northwest planning area, which may provide views of the Sierra Nevada Mountains on clear days. There are no areas within the City that provide views of any scenic vistas that are considered significant by the City (City 2011).

3 Inventory Phase

3.1 Description of Landscape Visual Character

The existing visual character of the AVE is dominated by the natural environment with moderate views of the surrounding urban areas including Sylvan Road and commercial/residential development.

As described previously in Section 2.1, the natural environment consists of the perennial stream channel (Arcade Creek) and unnamed tributary, water quality/detention basins, annual grassland, oak woodland and riparian woodland habitats. The existing lines in the natural environment are irregular and the form is heterogeneous. The vegetation in this area varies from deep greens to browns depending on the season and the texture is rough. Within the AVE, the cultural environment consists of residential housing, Sylvan Road, Huntington Square Apartments complex, Walmart parking lot, fences and ornamental plantings. Outside of the AVE, the cultural environment consists of other commercial developments adjacent to Walmart within the larger commercial center and medium to high density residential development. The residential houses, Huntington Square Apartments complex and

Walmart contain horizontal and vertical lines and neutral coloring. The ornamental plantings, which are planted south of Walmart's parking lot, are green and spherical shaped.

Lastly, the AVE consists of the segment of Sylvan Road between the residential streets of Sylvan Valley Way and Sylvan Creek Court, utility poles, street lighting, roadway signs and sidewalk on either side of Sylvan Road. Sylvan Road has straight lines, is colored gray with yellow and white lines to delineate the road as necessary and is made of smooth-textured concrete. Sylvan Road has two lanes going northbound, two lanes going southbound and a center turn lane. Sylvan Valley Way and Sylvan Creek Court are located north and south of the Project area; respectively. The utility poles contain vertical lines and contain brown coloring as well as grey coloring. The utility lines that connect the utility poles are thin horizontal lines with grey and/or black coloring. The existing roadway signs vary in shape and are supported by thin gray cylindrical forms made of galvanized steel with smooth texture. The signs vary in color, either yellow, green, or red and are also made of galvanized steel with smooth texture. Lastly, the undeveloped land within the project site contains the same visual character described for the natural environment.

Existing lighting in the area consists of streetlights along Sylvan Road and the residential streets as well as lighting from residential houses and commercial developments. Signage for street names and Arcade Creek are attached to light poles on either side of Sylvan Road.

The Project will be retaining dominant linear features in the area but will also introduce new linear features including the paved trail, a new prefabricated bridge across the unnamed creek tributary, bank protection along a segment of Arcade Creek, and an at-grade signalized pedestrian crossing at Sylvan Road. The Project will positively influence the Project environment by introducing an aesthetically pleasing pedestrian multi-use trail and prefabricated bridge but will negatively influence the natural environment by introducing human made features into a partially undeveloped natural area.

3.2 Description of Landscape Visual Quality

Vividness of the overall landscape is considered memorable as the dominant visual element is the natural environment, which consists of annual grassland, Arcade Creek and its unnamed tributary, riparian and oak woodlands. The cultural environment consists of the developed land within the AVE, specifically the Walmart commercial center, Huntington Square Apartments and medium-density residential development, including Sylvan Road and associated features. Intactness is moderate since the Walmart commercial center and high to medium-density residential developments disrupt the landscape character. Unity is also moderate as there is generally a filtered view of the Walmart commercial center and surrounding residential development which creates disruptions in viewing continuity from the proposed trail alignment.

3.3 Viewers

There are two major types of viewer groups: neighbors and travelers.

Neighbors are people who have views *to* the trail. For this Project, neighbors include:

- Residents
- Institutional viewers (workers/patrons at the commercial businesses in the vicinity)

Travelers are people who have views *from* the trail. For this Project, travelers include:

- Bicyclists
- Pedestrians

As previously described, the Project will include a paved trail, a new prefabricated bridge across the unnamed creek tributary, solar lighting, and bank protection along a segment of Arcade Creek within a natural environment, which may be considered of local scenic value. Both viewer sensitivity and viewpoint sensitivity is considered moderate, neighbors (people with views *to* the transportation project), travelers (people with views *from* the transportation project), and viewpoints will be affected by the proposed Project. See below for an analysis regarding viewer and viewpoint sensitivity.

Viewer Sensitivity

To determine viewer sensitivity, three attributes for viewer exposure (proximity, extent or number of viewers, and duration) and three attributes for viewer awareness (attention, focus, and protection) were evaluated.

The neighbors viewer groups would have moderate viewer exposure since they are in proximity to the Project features. The extent would be moderate as a moderate number of individuals would have direct views of the Project features, and duration would be high due to their fixed position. For the neighbors viewers group, viewer awareness is moderate as individuals in this viewer group would be observant of the proposed changes and are likely to value the natural environment that covers most of the Project area; however, neighbors would have a broad and general view of the area, resulting in less sensitivity to visual changes.

For the traveler viewer group, viewer exposure would be considered moderately low due to the limited available viewpoints, primarily from the proposed pedestrian signal crossing and the broad views from Walmart's rear parking lot, which is predominantly occupied by large delivery trucks. The duration of exposure would range from moderately low to low, as travelers are typically passing through the area rather than remaining stationary. Viewer awareness would be moderately low since individuals in this viewer group would be preoccupied with other activities, have a broad and general view of the area, but are likely to value the natural setting of the proposed Project.

Overall viewer sensitivity for neighbors and travelers is moderate.

Viewpoint Sensitivity

Viewpoint sensitivity is a judgment of the scenic importance of a viewpoint and whether it is part of an identified scenic resource. Sensitive viewpoints can be scenic or visual resources, vistas, landscape, or ocean views important to neighbors or travelers.

The natural environment containing Arcade Creek is considered a local scenic resource according to the Citrus Heights General Plan. However, filtered views of the Walmart commercial center and adjacent high to medium-density residences distracts from this resource. Therefore, viewpoint sensitivity is considered moderate.

3.4 Viewpoints

Viewpoints can be vistas, open landscape views, ocean views, views of important mountains, views of historic or attractive buildings, rock outcrops, heritage trees, tree groves etc. The importance of each viewpoint is determined by the level of scenic resource designation, the distance of the scenic or visual resource, and the visual quality of the scenic or visual resource. As stated above in Section 3.3 Viewpoint Sensitivity, the natural environment containing Arcade Creek is considered a local scenic resource according to the Citrus Heights General Plan.

4 Analysis Phase

4.1 Evaluation of Visual Impact

Visual impact is determined by combining visual change and visual sensitivity, both of which are analyzed below:

Visual Change

After analyzing visual compatibility and visual contrast as it relates to the proposed Project, it was determined that the overall visual change in the existing natural, cultural and Project environments created by the proposed Project will be moderately adverse. See **Tables 4-1** and visual compatibility and contrast analyses below for more information.

Table 4-1 Visual Change without Environmental Commitments

Visual Compatibility	Visual Contrast	Visual Change
Slightly Adverse	Moderately Adverse	Moderately Adverse

Visual Compatibility

The proposed Project's visual compatibility is analyzed by comparing the fit of the Project's visual character, intactness, lighting and glare with the same attributes of the natural, cultural and existing Project environments.

The existing visual character within the Project area is dominated by the natural environment; however, there are views of the Walmart commercial center and high to

medium-density residential that surrounds the Project area, including direct views of Sylvan Road at the proposed pedestrian signal crossing. Due to the construction of the proposed trail, installation of the prefabricated bridge over the unnamed tributary of Arcade Creek and the bank stabilization, the Project would remove 0.20 acre of annual grassland, 0.02 acre of oak woodland, and 0.01 acre of perennial stream channel and 0.20 acre of riparian woodland habitat. In total, the Project would remove approximately 0.42 acre of vegetation and 0.01 acre of waters. Therefore, the Project will exhibit a decrease in vegetation colors and textures and an increase grey color and human-made textures. Within the Project area, these habitats comprise 12.66 acres; thus, removal of 0.42 acre of vegetation and 0.01 acre of waters would impact a small percentage of the natural environment that contributes to the visual character of the area. Temporary impacts to these habitats due to construction activities, such as the cut and fill areas, etc. are also anticipated; however, visual change would be minimized with implementation of **BIO-2, BIO-5 and BIO-6** from the 2026 Natural Environment Study. The prefabricated bridge over the unnamed tributary of Arcade Creek would introduce a large horizontal element to the natural environment in addition to the proposed paved trail. However, these Project features would minimally obstruct views of the natural environment. To further minimize visual change, aesthetic treatments will be applied to all Project features to complement the visual character of the area, per **VIS-1**.

The Project would also have a slightly adverse effect on intactness since it would introduce human-made features to an undeveloped open area. Lastly, the proposed Project would install solar lighting along the length of the trail. This lighting is not anticipated to result in substantial new light and glare impacts as the lights would be downcast to minimize glare, per **VIS-2**. Additionally, surrounding light from adjacent developed areas would still dominate the area.

Although the environmental commitments listed above would minimize visual change, visual compatibility of the proposed Project with the existing natural, cultural, and Project environments would remain slightly adverse with and without implementation of the environmental commitments since the surrounding area is highly urbanized and a small percentage of vegetation that contributes to the visual character of the area would be removed or impacted by Project.

Visual Contrast

The proposed Project's visual contrast is analyzed by comparing the fit of the Project's vividness and unity with the same attributes of the natural, cultural and existing Project environments.

Currently, vividness of the overall landscape is moderate as the dominate visual element is the natural environment, and unity is moderate since the Walmart commercial center, high to medium-density residential and the natural environment are not balanced or in scale with each other. Applying aesthetic treatments on the prefabricated bridge, per **VIS-1**, will increase vividness by providing a memorable structure that compliments the natural environment. Although the removal of 0.42 acre of vegetation would impact a small percentage of vegetation in the area, vividness of the area would be decreased as a result of the Project. As such, **BIO-2, BIO-5** and **BIO-**

6 would be implemented to minimize visual change related to the removal of vegetation. Lastly, unity of the natural environment would decrease since the Project would introduce new human-made features. Overall, the visual contrast of the proposed Project with the existing natural, cultural, and Project environments will have a moderately adverse effect, as construction of the proposed trail and prefabricated bridge without aesthetic treatments would decrease vividness of the area.

With implementation of environmental commitments (**BIO-2**, **BIO-5**, **BIO-6**, **VIS-1** and **VIS-2**), the visual contrast of the proposed Project with the existing natural, cultural and Project environments will have a slightly adverse effect.

Visual Sensitivity

As discussed in Section 3.3, the overall visual sensitivity to the proposed Project in the existing natural, cultural, and Project environments will be moderate.

Visual Impact

After analysis of visual change and visual sensitivity, the visual impact was determined based on visual change and visual sensitivity descriptions, in accordance with Table 4-6 in the *Handbook*. Without implementation of the environmental commitments, the overall visual impact of the proposed Project on the existing natural, cultural, and Project environments will be moderately low adverse, see **Table 4-2**.

As visual change and sensitivity are of equal importance, with implementation of the environmental commitments, the overall visual impact of the proposed Project on the existing natural, cultural, and Project environments will be very low adverse, see **Table 4-3**.

Table 4-2 Visual Impact without Environmental Commitments

Visual Change	Visual Sensitivity	Visual Impact
Moderately Adverse	Moderate	Moderately Low Adverse

Table 4-3 Visual Impact with Environmental Commitments

Visual Change	Visual Sensitivity	Visual Impact
Slightly Adverse	Moderate	Very Low Adverse

CEQA Checklist Aesthetics questions:

Would the project:

a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

According to the General Plan Update and Greenhouse Gas Reduction Plan Final EIR, there are no areas within the City that provide views of any scenic

vistas that are considered significant by the City (City 2011). Therefore, there would be no impact.

b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?

The Project area does not contain or have views of any state scenic highways (Caltrans 2026). Therefore, there would be no impact.

c) In nonurbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

The Project is located in the City of Citrus Heights, which is an urbanized area. Zoning within the Project area is a mixture of Open Space, General Commercial, and Medium Density Residential designations. The Project would construct a 0.5-mile addition to the planned 16-mile CCTP. As such, the proposed Project would be consistent with the existing zoning. Additionally, per **VIS-1**, aesthetic treatments would be applied to all Project features to minimize aesthetic impacts, ensuring that the Project would not conflict with regulations governing scenic quality, including the City of Citrus Heights Design Guidelines.

d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

The solar lighting along the trail would be downcast to minimize glare per measure **VIS-2**. Impacts to Aesthetics under CEQA will be less than significant.

5 Mitigation Phase (Environmental Commitments)

5.1 Recommendations for Environmental Commitment Measures

Environmental commitments have been proposed to lessen the visual impact of the Project, which may also help generate public acceptance of a Project. Environmental commitments will be designed and implemented by the City of Citrus Heights.

The following environmental commitments, identified in the 2026 Natural Environment Study, are proposed to avoid or minimize the Project's adverse visual effects as a result of vegetation removal and to enhance visual character and aesthetic quality:

BIO-2: Prior to the start of construction activities, the Project limits adjacent to the Arcade Creek, the Arcade Creek tributary and the riparian woodland habitat will be marked with flagging, staking, or high visibility fencing to ensure construction will not further encroach into adjacent sensitive resources.

BIO-5: Native vegetation removal will not exceed what is shown on the plans without prior approval from the Project biologist. If trees will be trimmed rather than removed, trimming must comply with ANSI A300 pruning standards and must not:

- leave branch stubs
- make unnecessary heading cuts
- cut off the branch collar (not make a flush cut)
- top or lion's tail trees (stripping a branch from the inside leaving foliage just at the ends)
- remove more than 25 percent of the foliage of a single branch
- remove more than 25 percent of the total tree foliage in a single year
- damage other parts of the tree during pruning
- use wound paint
- climb the tree with climbing spikes.

BIO-6: Following the completion of construction, all temporary effects to riparian woodland, annual grassland and oak woodland habitat will be recontoured and re-seeded at a 1:1 ratio, to allow for the habitat to return to its previous function. All temporarily disturbed areas will be seeded with a Project biologist-approved native seed mix. Any trees removed from the riparian woodland and oak woodland habitat will be appropriately mitigated for through replanting or other methods in coordination with CDFW and the City of Citrus Heights.

As a result of the analysis described above, the following environmental commitments are also proposed to avoid or minimize the Project's adverse visual effects and to enhance visual character and aesthetic quality:

VIS-1: Aesthetic treatments on the new paved trail and prefabricated bridge over Arcade Creek will be consistent with other trails and bridges along the CCTP.

VIS-2: Lighting along the trail will be downcast to minimize glare. The Project's lighting design must be consistent with the City Citrus Heights lighting guidelines and standards.

6 Conclusions

The proposed Project will extend east from the existing Stock Ranch Trail behind the Costco/Walmart shopping center to Sylvan Road in the City of Citrus Heights in Sacramento County, California. There would be no substantial impacts on scenic highways, scenic vistas, or eligible or listed historic structures.

The overall visual impact of the proposed Project without implementation of the environmental commitments, listed in Section 5, will be moderately low adverse. However, with implementation of **BIO-2, BIO-5, BIO-6, VIS-1** and **VIS-2**, visual impacts will be minimized. As part of the Project, aesthetic treatments will be applied to the paved trail, prefabricated bridge, and at-grade signalized pedestrian crossing at Sylvan Road. With implementation of the environmental commitments, visual impact was determined to be very low adverse.

7 References

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FHWA. National Scenic Byways & All-American Roads. 2026. Available at: <https://fhwaapps.fhwa.dot.gov/bywaysp/States/Show/CA>

Appendix A: Scoping Questionnaire

Landscape Architecture Scoping Questionnaire to Determine Visual Impact Assessment Level

August 2023

Introduction

This questionnaire assists the qualified visual impact assessment (VIA) preparer (i.e., California Licensed Landscape Architect) in determining whether a VIA report is needed, in estimating the potential visual impacts of a proposed project on the environment, and in understanding the degree and breadth of the possible visual impact issues. The goal is to develop VIA documentation that is appropriate to the scale of the project and is thorough, concise, and defensible.

Enter basic information about the project and its visual context, visual resource regulatory context, and the expected visual change and sensitivity in the Baseline Information Form and then consider each of the 12 questions below. The resulting score will serve as a guide to help determine the appropriate level of VIA documentation for the project. For some projects with no or minimal visual impact, this questionnaire is all that is necessary. Both capital and maintenance projects should be reviewed. Select the response that most closely applies to the proposed project. The score is automatically computed at the bottom of the questionnaire. The total score should be matched to one of the four groups of scores at the end of the questionnaire that include recommended levels of VIA documentation (i.e., this completed questionnaire, VIA memorandum, standard VIA report, and advanced VIA report) and reference to associated annotated outlines for these documents.

Use the scoring system as a preliminary guide rather than a substitute for professional analysis on the part of the preparer. Although the total score may recommend a lower level of VIA document, circumstances associated with any one of the 12 questions may indicate the need to elevate the VIA to a greater level of detail. For projects on the State Highway System, the District Landscape Architect should be consulted when scoping the VIA level and provide concurrence on the findings of this questionnaire.

Preparer Qualifications

The Standard Environmental Reference, Volume I: Chapter 27-Visual & Aesthetics Review (website link) lists preparer qualifications for conducting the visual impact assessment process:

“Scenic Resource Evaluations and VIAs are performed under the direction of licensed Landscape Architects. Landscape Architects receive formal training in the area of visual resource management with a curriculum that emphasizes environmental design, human factors, and context sensitive solutions. When recommending specific visual mitigation measures, Landscape Architects can appropriately weigh the benefits of these different measures and consider construction feasibility and maintainability.”

This questionnaire shall be prepared by, or under the direct supervision of a California Licensed Landscape Architect. It shall be signed and stamped by that Landscape

Architect, and written concurrence shall be provided by the District Landscape Architect (for projects on State Highway System).

Project and Visual Context Baseline Information

Project and visual context baseline information is gathered early in the Establishment Phase of the VIA process to identify key information and issues applicable to the preparation of the VIA Scoping Questionnaire. Should the baseline information change in the course of the project, the questionnaire should be updated accordingly.

Gathering of the baseline information may be accomplished through desktop research, field reconnaissance, coordination with the Caltrans environmental and project development teams, and consultation with key stakeholders. The Caltrans VIA Handbook (website link) includes further information about the Establishment Phase.

Complete the following Baseline Information Form to document the baseline project and visual resource information that was available at the time of preparation of the questionnaire:

Project and Visual Context Baseline Information Form

Project Name:	Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail (Sylvan Road to Stock Ranch) Extension Project
EA or EFIS Number	CRP 5475(053)
Project Location (Dist-Co-Rte-PM):	3-SAC
Questionnaire Preparer Name and CA LA License Number:	Amy Bakker, Senior Environmental Planner
District Landscape Architect (DLA) Providing Concurrence, CA LA Lic. #:	
Visual Features of Project and its Alternative(s).	Proposes to construct the Arcade-Cripple Creek Trail (Sylvan to Stock Ranch) Extension Project, a 0.5-mile addition to the planned 16-mile Creek Corridor Trail Project (CCTP). The purpose of this project is to close a gap in the existing trail system by replacing dirt and narrow concrete paths with an ADA-compliant Class I multi-use trail and pedestrian crossing over a tributary to Arcade Creek.. This extension will enhance pedestrian and bicycle connectivity, provide a safe recreational facility, and improve access through the Arcade Creek greenbelt. The project is located within an urban setting with residential structures and riparian vegetation. Vegetation removal is necessary to construct the project, but the low profile and narrow swath of the paved trail represents a minimal interruption to the creek riparian setting, which already contains a gravel path and paved roadways. **Form & Line**: Gently curving trail alignment following the creek's contours; linear elements could include signage. **Color**: Black paved surface with decomposed granite shoulders, muted greens and browns from surrounding vegetation, grays from bridge infrastructure, blacks from the roadway. **Texture**: Smooth paved surface, rough natural terrain, and vegetative softness.

	Scale: Human-scale infrastructure; low vertical profile. **Vertical Elements**: Bridge structure overhead, possible retaining walls or railings, signage posts, rock slope protection.
Additional Visual Context Remarks:	The project exhibits visual coherence through: • Consistent trail design standards. • Integration with existing trail, sidewalk, and urban infrastructure. • Landscaping that transitions naturally between natural and urban. • Use of materials and forms that reflect both natural and urban contexts.

Regulatory Framework

Potential Agencies that may have to be Involved:	☒ Federal ☒ State ☒ Local ☒ Tribal ☐ Other Notes: Caltrans (on behalf of FHWA): City of Citrus Heights

Visual Change and Sensitivity

Landscape Observations:	☒ Water ☐ Visually dominant landforms ☒ Natural vegetation ☐ Visually Appealing Structures ☐ Other features of interest Notes: Arcade Creek is present throughout the project area.
Impact of Project on Natural, Cultural, and Existing Project Environments:	☒ Highly compatible ☐ Moderately compatible ☐ Not compatible ☐ Other Notes: The proposed work would connect to an existing trail segment within an urban setting that is adjacent to a creek.
Landscape Context and Development Patterns:	☒ Natural/Undeveloped ☐ Rural ☐ Suburban ☒ Urban Notes: The Project Area of Visual Effect contains an existing gravel trail, riparian corridor, Arcade Creek, paved roadways, curb/gutter, recreational park and residential homes.

Scenic, Visual and Historic Resource(s) within the Area of Visual Effect:	☐ Officially designated State Scenic Highway ☐ Eligible Scenic Highway ☒ Visual resources ☐ Federally (or otherwise) designated historic, scenic resource Notes: The creek and adjacent riparian vegetation are natural components set within a very urbanized setting.
Expected Agency Involvement:	City of Citrus Heights, Caltrans, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, US Army Corps of Engineers, Regional Water Quality Control Board, Native American Groups
Expected Public Feedback:	☐ Scenic resources identified as important ☒ Not important ☐ No public feedback Notes: The City received positive public feedback in favor of filling in gaps within the existing City trail network during the public outreach conducted for the overall 16-mile Creek Corridor Trail Project.

□

Regulatory Context

1. Does the project's aesthetic approach appear to be consistent with applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, policies, or standards?

   Although the State is not required to comply with regional and local planning ordinances and other regulations, these documents are critical in understanding the importance that communities place on visual resources. The Caltrans Environmental Planning branch may have copies of the planning documents that pertain to the project. If not, this information can be obtained by contacting the local planning department.

   Select a Response (Score)

   - Low Consistency (4 Points)
   - Moderate Consistency (3 Points)
   - High Consistency (2 Points)
   - Not Applicable (1 Point)

   2

- **Assumptions/Issues: Adheres to all current Caltrans, City, and State applicable laws, ordinances, regulations, policies, or standards, including the City's General Plan.**

2. Will permits be required by outside regulatory agencies (i.e., federal, state, or local)?

   Permit requirements can have an unintended consequence on the visual environment. Anticipated permits, as well as specific permit requirements may be determined by talking with the project Environmental Planner and Project Engineer. Note: coordinate with the Caltrans representative responsible for obtaining the permit prior to communicating directly with any permitting agency.

   Select a Response (Score)

   - Yes, both federal and state, or multiple permits required (4 Points) — 4
   - Yes, either federal, or state, or federal and local, or state and local (3 Points)
   - Yes, local or multiple local only (2 Points)
   - No (1 Point)

- **Assumptions/issues: To construct the project, impacts to a tributary of Arcade Creek will occur due to grading and rock slope protection installation. Permitting through the US Army Corps of Engineers, California Department of Fish and Wildlife, and Regional Water Quality Control Board will be obtained.**

Visual Change

3. Will the project character be compatible with the visual character of the existing landscape?

   Consider the types of adverse changes to the scenic integrity of the landscape caused by the project. Evaluate the scale and extent of the project features compared to the surrounding scale of the community. Is the project likely to give an urban appearance to an existing rural or suburban community?

   Select a Response (Score)

   - No Compatibility (4 Points)
   - Low Compatibility (3 Points)
   - Moderate Compatibility (2 Points)
   - High Compatibility (1 Point)

   1

- **Assumptions/issues: The proposed work, a paved trail segment, would connect to an existing trail system within an urban setting that crosses a creek. The urban setting includes an existing gravel path, recreational park, Arcade Creek, paved roadways, curb/gutter, and residential homes.**

4. Will the project contrast adversely with the memorability (vividness), natural harmony and/or cultural order (unity) of the existing landscape?

   Evaluate the scale and extent of the project features compared to the scale of the visual elements within the surroundings. Is the project likely to change the appearance in a way that is contrasting with the line, color, form, and texture of the existing landscape visual character?

   Select a Response (Score)

   - High Adverse Contrast (4 Points)
   - Moderate Adverse Contrast (3 Points)
   - Low Adverse Contrast (2 Points)
   - No Contrast (1 Point)

   2

   Assumptions/issues:

   Memorability (Vividness)

   The trail's visual features will be memorable due to the contrast and harmony between natural and urban elements:

   Form & Line: Gently curving trail alignment following the creek's contours; linear elements could include signage.

   Color: Black paved surface with decomposed granite shoulders, muted greens and browns from surrounding vegetation, grays from bridge infrastructure, blacks from the roadway.

   Texture: Smooth paved surface, rough natural terrain, and vegetative softness.

   Scale: Human-scale infrastructure; low vertical profile.

   Vertical Elements: Bridge structure, possible retaining walls or railings, signage posts, rock slope protection.

   Coherence (Unity)

   The project exhibits visual coherence through:

   -Consistent trail design standards.

   -Integration with existing trail, sidewalk, and urban infrastructure.

-Landscaping that transitions naturally between natural and urban.

-Use of materials and forms that reflect both natural and urban contexts.

5. Will the project, when viewed together with other past or foreseeable projects, result in a cumulative adverse change in the visual quality or character of the existing landscape?

   Identify any projects in the area (both Caltrans' and others') that have been recently constructed and/or are reasonably foreseeable and/or currently planned for future construction. The window of time and the extent of area applicable to possible cumulative impacts should be based on a reasonable anticipation of the viewing public's awareness of cumulative change.

   Select a Response (Score)

   - Project may result in substantial adverse cumulative visual impacts (4 Points)
   - Project will result in noticeable adverse cumulative visual impacts (3 Points)
   - Project is unlikely to result in noticeable adverse cumulative visual impacts (2 Points)
   - Project will not result in cumulative impacts (1 Point)

   1

- **Assumptions/issues: No. The proposed trail would connect to an existing trail system along Arcade Creek. Additionally, trail segments, including trail segments along creeks, are ubiquitous throughout the City of Citrus Heights.**

6. Will the project produce a new source of substantial light or glare, which will adversely affect daytime or nighttime views within the area?

   Identify new sources of lighting and glare and how day- and nighttime visual conditions may change.

   Select a Response (Score)

   - High potential for adverse effects (4 Points) 1
   - Moderate potential for adverse effects (3 Points)
   - Low potential for adverse effects (2 Points)
   - No potential for adverse effects (1 Point)

- **Assumptions/issues: No. Lighting is not a component of this project.**

Visual Sensitivity

7. What is the potential that the project proposal will be controversial within the community?

   Assess the level of public concern by talking with local agency management and staff familiar with the affected community's sentiments as evidenced by past projects and/or current information.

   Select a Response (Score)

   - High Potential that project will be controversial (4 Points) 2
   - Moderate Potential that project will be controversial (3 Points)
   - Low Potential that project will be controversial (2 Points)
   - No Potential that project will be controversial (1 Point)

- **Assumptions/issues: The City received positive public feedback in favor of filling in gaps within the existing City trail network.**

8. How sensitive are potential viewer groups likely to be regarding visible changes proposed by the project?

   Consider among other factors who the viewer groups represent, the number of viewers within the group, probable viewer expectations, activities, viewing duration, and orientation. The expected viewer sensitivity level may be scoped by applying professional judgment, and by soliciting information from other Caltrans staff, local agencies and community stakeholders familiar with the affected community's sentiments and demonstrated concerns.

   Select a Response (Score)

   - High Sensitivity (4 Points)
   - Moderate Sensitivity (3 Points)
   - Low Sensitivity (2 Points)
   - No Sensitivity (1 Point)

   1

- **Assumptions/issues: The project area vicinity contains an existing gravel trail, recreational park, Arcade Creek, paved roadways, curb/gutter, and residential homes. The proposed project would connect to the existing trail system along Arcade Creek. Viewer groups would have no sensitivity as the proposed work would offer consistency with existing infrastructure. The narrow width of the trail and low profile would also not interrupt views of the creek and riparian areas within/adjacent to the creek. The new segment of trail would also be partially hidden from motorists' views due to the dense riparian vegetation within/adjacent to the creek that would remain after construction of the project. Additionally, viewer groups have expressed support for the project as a way for them to better interact with the natural environment within an urban setting.**

9. What level of local concern is there for the types of specific project features (e.g., bridge structures, large excavations, sound barriers, or median planting removal) and construction impacts that are proposed?

   Certain project improvements can be of special interest to local citizens, causing a heightened level of public concern, and requiring a more focused visual analysis.

   Select a Response (Score)

   - High Level of Concern (4 Points) 2
   - Moderate Level of Concern (3 Points)
   - Low Level of Concern (2 Points)
   - No Concern (1 Point)

- **Assumptions/issues: The City received positive public feedback in favor of filling in gaps within the existing City trail network.**

10. Are there federally, state, locally designated scenic or historic resources, or other visual resources within the project area of visual effect (i.e., viewshed)?

    For example: protected viewsheds, visually sensitive public use areas, national historic/scenic trails, historic sites or structures, scenic designated viewpoints, wild and scenic rivers, state scenic highways or federal scenic byways, or potential visual resources such as stands of trees, rock outcroppings, etc.

    Select a Response (Score)

    - Multiple designated scenic resources (4 Points) 2
    - Multiple potential visual resources or a single designated scenic resource (3 Points)
    - One potential visual resource (2 Points)
    - No identifiable scenic resources (1 Point)

- **Assumptions/issues: While there is a visual resource, Arcade Creek and its riparian corridor, it would connect to an existing paved trail in addition to other urban features including sidewalk, paved roadways, curb/gutter, and residential homes.**

Design Process Considerations

11. Will the project sponsor or public benefit from a more detailed visual analysis in order to help reach consensus on a course of action to address potential visual impacts?

    Consider the proposed project features, possible visual impacts, and probable environmental commitments.

    Select a Response (Score)

    - High Benefit (4 Points) 1
    - Moderate Benefit (3 Points)
    - Low Benefit (2 Points)
    - No Benefit (1 Point)

- **Assumptions/issues: No. The City received positive public feedback in favor of filling in gaps within the existing City trail network.**

12. Will the project likely require design changes to reduce the extent of visual resource impacts?

    Consider design changes and enhancements such as realignment, additional alignment alternatives, vertical profile adjustments, extensive landscaping, architectural treatment, color and texture treatments and/or lighting of aboveground structures.

    Select a Response (Score)

    - Extensive changes and/or redesign (4 Points) 1
    - Some redesign or minimization measures (3 Points)
    - Minimal design changes (2 Points)
    - No design changes (1 Point)

Assumptions/issues: No. The trail maintains environmental and community integrity by:

- **Following existing natural and built corridors (creek, bridge, paved roadways, and sidewalk).**

- **Minimizing disruption to existing vegetation due to the narrow trail width and low profile.**
- **Enhancing connectivity without introducing incongruent infrastructure.**

Highlight the number below and press FN+F9 to calculate the final project score.

20

Project Score:

Store a copy of this completed questionnaire in the project file.
Attach a copy of this completed questionnaire to the VIA report.

Project Score

Select an Outline Based on Project Score

The total score will indicate the recommended VIA level for the project. In addition to considering circumstances relating to any one of the 12 questions that would justify elevating the VIA level, also consider any other project factors that would influence level selection.

Score 12-18 – VIA Questionnaire

No visual resource related regulatory requirements. No or negligible visual changes to the environment are proposed. None or minimal public concern has been identified. This **Questionnaire** with rationale for selected responses to questions in the available spaces after each question along with a statement of no visual resource impact is appropriate and provides a sufficient rationale why a technical study is not required.

Score 19-28 –VIA Memorandum

Very limited visual resource related regulatory requirements. Minor visual changes to the environment are proposed. Minor public concern from the public may be expected. A **VIA Memorandum** is appropriate in this case. The VIA Memorandum should briefly describe project features, impacts and any environmental commitment measures. Visual simulations are not necessary. Go to the Directions for using and accessing VIA Memorandum Annotated Outline (website link).

Score 29-38 – Standard VIA Report

Several visual resource related regulatory requirements. Moderately noticeable visual changes to the environment are proposed. Moderate public concern may be expected. A fully developed **Standard VIA Report** is appropriate. The report should describe in detail the project's visual attributes, its visual impact and potential environmental commitment measures. Visual simulations are recommended. This report will likely receive public review. Go to the Directions for using and accessing the Standard VIA Annotated Outline (website link).

Score 39-48 – Advanced VIA Report

Extensive visual resource related regulatory requirements and clearly noticeable changes to the environment are proposed. Moderate to high public concern may be expected. A fully developed **Advanced VIA Report** is appropriate. The report should describe in detail and numerically score the project's visual change and sensitivity, its visual impact and any environmental commitments proposed. Visual simulations are required. It is appropriate to alert the Project Development Team to the potential for highly adverse impacts and to consider project alternatives to avoid those impacts. This

technical study will receive close public review. Go to the Directions for using and accessing the Advanced VIA Annotated Outline (website link).