

Section 15.2 Scenic Resources

15.2.1 Introduction

This section concerns the protection and preservation of scenic resources in the county. It is a component of the Conservation and Open Space Element. California Government Code Section 65560(b) lists various types of open space lands subject to protection, including "areas of outstanding scenic, historic and cultural value."

The Scenic Resources Section includes policy options to provide scenic resource protection. Scenic resources may be impacted by land use changes caused by development and timber harvesting as well as by open space conservation decisions.

The topic of signs and billboards is addressed in this chapter as well as in Chapter 10 (Community Design). Protection programs and the identification of high-value visual resources are also addressed in this chapter, and elsewhere in the Conservation and Open Space Element.

15.2.2 Background

The range of scenic resources in Humboldt County is broad, and includes extensive forests, agricultural lands and the coastline. Together these "viewsheds" define the region's rural character and contribute to its unique "sense of place."

Deterioration of the scenic qualities of a viewshed can be caused by many factors, including residential, commercial and industrial development as well as large scale logging and road construction. As a result, viewsheds with the highest potential for deterioration are those closest to cities and towns and those in the vicinity of major timber operations.

Forests

Forestland is a prominent component of the visual landscape of Humboldt County, covering more than 80% of the county's total land area. Redwood National Park, Six Rivers National Forest, Redwoods State Park, and King Range National Conservation Area are all significant, protected forests. However, these and other public forested lands total only 26% of the 1.9 million acres of forested land in the county. Forestland in private ownership constitutes the remainder. The scenic value of these natural resources is important to residents, and there is strong public support for protecting working forests and other productive resource lands from conversion to other uses.

Policies in the plan for protecting scenic qualities of forestlands are limited to supporting the continued timber production uses of these lands, and discouraging their conversion to residential, commercial or industrial use. State laws governing timber harvest regulations significantly narrow the scope of scenic protection measures the County may

apply to forest lands. The Forest Resources Chapter of the General Plan provides more comprehensive discussion of this and other forestry-related issues.

Open Space and Agricultural lands

The rural character of the county is defined by the topography and the views afforded as a result of natural landforms. The interspersed heavily vegetated areas (such as forests) with open spaces, agricultural lands and rivers and ocean views, provide a range of vistas that contribute to the scenic beauty of the county. Agricultural land vistas are to many a quintessential characteristic of Humboldt County; agriculture and grazing land uses comprise 15% of unincorporated lands.

Scenic protection of agricultural lands is for the most part accomplished by policies in the Land Use Element encouraging continued agricultural production, and discouraging conversion to residential, commercial or industrial use. The State Coastal Act and Williamson Act, local design review and the purchase of conservation easements are other programs protecting agricultural lands. A new program protects scenic qualities of "heritage landscapes", agricultural lands with particularly important cultural and scenic values in the Arcata and Ferndale Bottoms areas.

Scenic Roads

Scenic views are offered from a multitude of local roadways, where in addition to their transportation function, the roads provide opportunities for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources, landmarks, or points of historic and cultural interest. The Scenic Highway Element goals outlined in the 1984 Framework Plan remain relevant for local scenic roadways:

- To establish a system of scenic routes.
- To conserve scenic views observable from the routes
- To provide multiple recreational uses on publicly owned lands adjacent to the routes.
- To recognize the dual scenic and economic value of lands planned for the growing and harvesting of timber and agricultural products.

Several highways in the County have unique scenic qualities owing to their natural setting. A scenic highway is defined as a highway that in addition to its transportation function provides opportunities for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources. Scenic highways direct views to areas of exceptional beauty, natural resources or landmarks, or historic and cultural interest.

The definition of a "scenic highway" listed above is extremely vague. There is no concrete criteria for determining just what constitutes a "scenic highway". Just as "beauty is in the eye of the beholder", one would have to assume that the county planning staff would be free to designate just about any highway in Humboldt County as "scenic". The State of California has already developed a scenic route program. The details which outline which roads are eligible for designation as "scenic" are already well enumerated in the Caltrans publication: "Guidelines for the Official Designation of Scenic Highways". There is no reason for Humboldt County to "re-invent the wheel"; the county should use Caltrans criteria for designating "scenic highways".

Although no highways in the County are "officially designated" as California State Scenic Highways, several state highways should be considered for official designation:

- Route 36 from Route 101 near Fortuna to the Trinity County line
- Route 96 from Route 299 at Willow Creek north to Siskiyou County
- Route 101 for its entire length in Humboldt County
- Route 254 in the Avenue of the Giants Community Plan Area
- Route 299 from Arcata to Willow Creek

The designation of highway 101 for its entire length in Humboldt County and the designation of route 299 from Arcata to Willow creek., with the staff proposed restrictions on development on either side of a "scenic highway" would impose a massive layer of new regulations on many tens of thousands of acres of property in Humboldt County. This new regulatory burden on private property is unwarranted. Staff needs to focus on those segments of highways in Humboldt County which meet the already well established Caltrans criteria for "scenic highways".

Wild and Scenic Rivers

Portions of several rivers in the county are designated as part of the National and/or California Wild and Scenic River Systems. Sections of the Eel, Klamath, Trinity, and Van Duzen Rivers are designated "wild", "scenic", or "recreational". Policies relating to protection of water resources are found in the Water Resources Chapter.

Other Scenic Areas

Coastal Scenic and Coastal View Areas

Humboldt County's varied and extensive coastline allows for a wide range of scenic vistas from roads and highways, and from beaches, state parks and coastal access points. Considerable work has been done to assess scenic resources in developing the County's Local Coastal Program (LCP). This program relies on a technical study and a detailed inventory of visual resources along the coastline. The scenic qualities of these areas are protected by land use designations that encourage open space, permit review under the LCP, and design review requirements that minimize visual impacts of new development.

Inland Scenic Areas

Many scenic natural features outside of the coastal zone are protected by public lands, Timber Production and Agricultural land use designations, and CEQA review. There are also areas in Shelter Cove and along the Avenue of the Giants with design review requirements to protect natural features.

Scenic resources most vulnerable to visual impacts are those on the outskirts of cities and towns on land planned for residential, commercial or industrial uses; scenic resources occurring on lands in public ownership, and those on lands used for resource production have a lower potential for visual impact.

Proposed plan policies and standards will continue many scenic resource protections already in place, including Timber Production and Agricultural land use designations, design review, and CEQA review.

Community Separators

A sense of community identity can be enhanced by maintaining a visible separation between communities. Open space areas between communities helps to avoid the look of continuous corridor-style urbanization by providing a visible community separator.

They are frequently subject to pressure for development because they are close to developed areas and major roads. A set of goals, policies and programs to retain community separators is presented in this chapter.

Off Premise Billboards

Billboards along scenic roadways and other scenic areas impact the scenic quality by blocking views and introducing a source of outdoor lighting. Policies and standards in the Land Use Element of the Plan minimize these impacts by limiting placement of new billboards to commercial and industrial areas. A policy establishes a 15 year limit for new billboards.

The staff report only proposes additional controls on privately owned outdoor signs; which have diminished in number in Humboldt County over the past two decades. Though only a handful of new outdoor structures have been permitted within the past decade in Humboldt County, far more have been taken down over the past two decades due to highway expansion and the change of ownership in the underlying lands. And while the number of privately owned outdoor signs in Humboldt County has declined over the past two decades, the number of publicly owned and managed billboards---which are rented out to private parties---has increased dramatically. The county does not propose to limit or control the number or placement of billboards that Caltrans has constructed over the past decade. A significant source of "sign clutter" is the increasing number of so-called public purpose signs, i.e. Caltrans, the county and local governments are now in the process of installing several hundred signs which will warn residents of the potential for tsunamis ...as if people in this area did not already know about such subjects. Rather than focusing on privately owned signs, the number of which has not increased over the past two decades, staff should be looking to control the number of public billboards and public purpose signs of questionable value....which clutter up the county's roadways.

Staff's proposal to limit billboards to a fifteen year life is arbitrary and unwarranted. No other local mass media, ie. Radio & tv towers, which is protected by the First Amendment (which billboards are) is proposed for extinction after fifteen years. There is no justification for this idea. Signs structures should be treated as any other conditionally permitted use; if the permit is granted it should be for the life of the project/structure. To limit the life of new billboards to 15 years would establish a new....very troubling....precedent. What other projects would staff then propose be limited to a fixed term?

There are numerous existing billboards in areas not zoned for commercial or industrial use. These billboards are considered "non-conforming". State law prohibits local jurisdictions from requiring removal of existing non conforming billboards without compensation. New policies support efforts of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad to remove billboards from the railroad right of way, and to prioritize enforcement of existing County regulations requiring removal of illegal billboards.

It is inappropriate for the County's general plan to support the Northcoast Rail Authority's efforts to remove signs from its right of way. This is a decision for the NCRA to make. There is no reason or justification to have this in the General Plan.

It is obvious to me that whoever wrote this section of the Scenic Element does not like the privately owned outdoor sign industry, and his/her personal preferences have spilled over into proposed public policy. If the writer had proposed to limit or reduce all signs (both public and private) along the county's major highways, I would have to say...OK at least the writer is even handed---he/she is proposed to limit BOTH public and private signage....but that is not the case.

15.2.3 Goals and Policies

Goals

SR-G1. Scenic Resource Protection. Conserve, enhance, and protect scenic areas to increase the enjoyment of, and opportunities for, recreational and cultural pursuits and tourism in the County.

SR-G2 Community Separators. Preserve the identities of communities by maintaining visible open space areas between cities and communities.

This is a whole new planning concept which would impose a new layer of regulation on private property. Where is the cost/benefit analysis to justify this new burden on private property? This concept should be deleted.

Policies

SR-P1. Development in Scenic Areas. In highly scenic areas, new development shall be subordinate to the character of the area, and natural contours, including slope, visible contours of hilltops and treelines, bluffs and rock outcroppings, shall suffer the minimum feasible disturbance compatible with development of any permitted use.

Just who is going to determine what a "highly scenic area" is? Is staff going to make this determination on its own? Is the Planning Commission going to do this? This whole idea of subordinating new development in "scenic" areas to the character of the surrounding area will lead to endless angst by private property owners, substantial new costs on development and litigation. Any proposed new regulations need to be clear and concise....so everybody knows exactly what the rules are.

SR-P2. Heritage Landscapes. Protect the scenic quality of mapped heritage landscape areas with appropriate land use designations and design review standards to ensure that new development enhances the heritage landscape values of the site.

Who will determine what the definition of "heritage landscape areas" is? Planning staff should not be in a position to arbitrarily determine what areas qualify as "heritage landscape areas.

SR-P3. Scenic Roadway Protection. Protect the scenic quality of designated scenic roadways for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources, landmarks, or points of historic and cultural interest.

SR-P4. Community Separators. The scenic quality of Community Separators shall be protected from degradation by maintaining adequate open space between communities and cities.

SR-P5. Development Within Community Separators. Retain a rural character and promote low intensities of development in Community Separators. Avoid their annexation or inclusion in spheres of influence for sewer and water services. Provide opportunities for consideration of additional development in community separators in exchange for permanent open space preservation and other overriding public benefits

There are no maps showing where staff proposes to create "Community Separators". This idea lacks specificity and should be deleted from consideration in the general plan.

SR-P6. Limit the Term of Off-Premise Billboards. Limit the term of new off-premise billboards with use agreements to provide for their removal.

There is no justification for limiting the term of new off-premise signs when there is no proposed limit to on premise signs or billboards operated by Caltrans which are leased to private parties. The staff needs to treat all signs equally, whether they are on-premise, off premise or publicly /privately owned.

SR-P7. Reduce Scenic Impacts of Billboards in Sensitive Habitat Areas. Limit the location of billboards in industrial zones with mapped sensitive habitat areas.

This idea is totally unwarranted. The construction of new off premise signs in Humboldt County is already regulated by the conditional use permit process. There is no need for yet more regulations. It appears that staff is proposing that a new off premise sign would not be permitted in on an industrial parcel which had any mapped sensitive habitat area. What is the justification for this idea?

SR-P8. Removal or Relocation of Billboards in the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Right of Way. Support efforts of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority to remove or relocate billboards from their right of way between Fields Landing and Arcata.

The General Plan should not be directing the activities of another public agency. The plan should confine itself to those activities under the control of the County of Humboldt.

SR-P9. Removal of Illegal Billboards Petition the State Outdoor Advertising Branch to remove illegal billboards.

This is already state law. Why is the county again proposing, in its General Plan document, to direct a state agency to do what it is already supposed to be doing? If the planning staff wanted the state of California to enforce

existing state laws, why not just ask the Board of Supervisors to send a letter to Caltrans? This issue has no place in the General Plan.

SR-P10. **Wayfarers signage.** Establish a local scenic byways network designed to direct travelers to areas of scenic, cultural and historic interest.

On one hand planning staff proposes to dramatically limit the possibility for private property owners to develop new signs on private property and staff proposes support for the NCRA to remove signs from its right of way, yet staff is now proposing a new publicly owned series of billboards, which staff would call "Wayfarers signage". Since many billboards in Humboldt County are rented by private parties to direct the traveling public to areas of interest, apparently staff proposes to replace privately owned signs with publicly owned signs. The County of Humboldt has no business getting in the outdoor advertising business. In addition, there is no mention of just where the county would put these signs...on Caltrans right of way? On private property?

This "Wayfarers Signage" concept should be dropped from consideration in the General Plan

15.2.4 Standards

SR-S1. **Natural Landform Protection.** Natural contours, including slope, visible contours of hilltops and treelines, bluffs and rock outcroppings, shall suffer the minimum feasible disturbance compatible with development of any permitted use, and the following standards shall at a minimum secure this objective:

- A. Under any permitted alteration of natural landforms during construction, mineral extraction or other approved development, the topography shall be restored to as close to natural contours as possible, and the area planted with attractive vegetation common to the region.
- B. In permitted development, land form alteration for access roads and public utilities shall be minimized by running hillside roads and utility corridors along natural contours where feasible, and the optional waiving on minimum street width requirements, where proposed development densities or use of one-way circulation patterns make this consistent with public safety, in order that necessary hillside roads may be as narrow as possible. (HBAP 3.40 (B)(2), modified)

SR-S2 **Scenic and Visual Quality Protection.** The scenic and visual qualities of scenic areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along scenic areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas shall be subordinate to the character of its setting. (Coastal Act, Section 30251 of the Public Resources Code)

There is no definition of just what constitutes "scenic". Subjective concepts, such as "scenic" have no place in a General Plan. Citizens should be able to read the plan and know, exactly, what they can or cannot do with their private property.

SR-S3 Scenic Roadway Plan Standards. The plan developed for scenic roadway protection should consider the following standards:

Visual Buffer Width. The width of the visual buffer along the road shall not exceed 200 feet from the edge of the traveled roadway.

Earlier in this section, staff proposed to include route 101, for its entire length in Humboldt County as a scenic route. So, presumably, a new --and very costly---layer of development regulations is proposed for both sides of US 101 out to a distance of 200 feet. Where is the cost benefit analysis on this idea?

Permitted Uses. Permitted uses shall be allowed except that within the visual buffer area, measures may be required to protect scenic qualities of the site.

Who would determine what are the "scenic qualities of the site"? Again, the lack of specificity in this concept would lead to endless private property owner angst and litigation.

Site Development. Buildings and landscaping within the visual buffer shall be designed and located on the site to create a harmonious visual relationship with surrounding development and the natural terrain and vegetation.

Who would determine what kind of development would be "harmonious". Staff? The Planning Commission? This would put a potential developer in an impossible position of trying to guess what staff would support. This whole concept would also place way too much discretionary power in unelected members of the planning staff.

- Existing topography, vegetation and scenic features of the site shall be retained to the maximum extent possible and incorporated into the proposed development.
- Structures and signs shall be limited in height, bulk, and siting to be visually compatible with, and subordinate to, the character of surrounding areas.

Again, who would determine how to "subordinate" development to the character of the surrounding areas. This policy places way too much discretionary power in the hands of staff.

Consideration of Views. Structures, signs, and plant materials within the visual buffer shall be constructed, installed and planted to complement, enhance, and retain scenic views. Vegetative screening

shall be used where needed to prevent significant intrusion or degradation of public views.

Who is going to determine just what development will "complement, enhance, and retain scenic views"? Is this determination going to be a staff function? This proposal puts way too much discretionary power in the hands of unelected staff.

Location and Screening of Unsightly Features. Within the visual buffer area, potentially unsightly features such as parking lots, etc. shall be located in areas not visible from the scenic highway. Where it is not possible to locate such features out of view, they shall be screened from view by planting and/or fences, walls, or berms. Screening shall utilize primarily natural materials rather than solid fencing, preferably vegetation in conjunction with low earth berms.

Site Grading. Any grading or earth-moving operation within the visual buffer area shall be planned and executed in such a manner that final contours appear to be consistent with the existing terrain both on, and adjacent to, the site

- Vegetative cover shall be provided within a reasonable time after grading is completed to prevent visible scars remaining on the land from such operations.
- Contours altered by grading should be restored by means of land sculpturing and a cover of top soil in such a manner as to minimize runoff and erosion and prevent ponding of water.
- Finished contours shall be planted with plant materials native to the area, so as to require minimum care and to be visually compatible with the existing ground cover.

Access Roads. The location and design of access roads within the visual buffer area should not detract from the scenic quality of the road.

Utilities. New, relocated or existing utility distribution lines within the visual buffer area should be placed underground whenever feasible. When it is not feasible to place lines underground, they should be located so as to be inconspicuous from the scenic route. Combined or adjacent rights of way and common poles should be used wherever feasible.

This proposed policy essentially would mandate that all new utility distribution lines be underground as anything is "feasible" with enough money. Again, where is the cost benefit analysis to this proposal?

Railroads and Public Facilities. Visual buffers shall exclude railroad rights of way and public facilities.

What is "good for the goose is good for the gander". Why does staff propose to impose new, subjective development standards on private property yet at the same time propose to exempt public projects from

the same standards. All projects, both public and private should be treated similarly.

SR-S4 Development within Community Separators. Unless there are existing design standards adopted for Community Separators, new structures within these areas must meet the following:

1. Site and design structures to take maximum advantage of existing topography and vegetation on order to substantially screen from view from scenic corridors.
2. Minimize cuts and fills on hills and ridges.
3. Minimize the removal of trees and other mature vegetation.
4. Where existing topography and vegetation would not screen structures from view from scenic corridors, install landscaping consisting of native vegetation in natural groupings that fits with the character of the area in order to screen from view.
5. Design structures to use building materials and color schemes that blend with the natural landscape.
6. To the extent feasible, cluster structures on each parcel within existing built areas and near existing natural features.
7. Exempt agricultural accessory structures and telecommunication facilities from these requirements.

SR-S5. Subdivisions in Community Separators. Subdivisions in Community Separators shall:

1. Establish building envelopes for structures and consider use of height limitations if necessary to further mitigate visual impacts.
2. Use clustering to reduce visual impact where consistent with Land Use Element.
3. Locate building sites and roadways to preserve natural features and native vegetation.
4. To the extent possible, require dedication of permanent open space easement at the time of subdivision.

SR-S7. New Off-Premise Billboards. New off-premise billboards shall be restricted to a maximum term of 15 years.

There is no justification for limiting new off premise signs to 15 years. New off premise signs should be treated the same way as any other conditionally permitted development is permitted; it is allowed to remain for as long as it remains functional.

This new concept, of limited life conditional use permits for signs, should be deleted from consideration in the general plan.

15.2.5 Implementation Measures

SR-IM1. General Plan, Zoning and Environmental Review. Implement policies for scenic resource protection and enhancement through General Plan, Zoning and CEQA review.

SR-IM2 Identification and Protection of Heritage Landscapes and Forested Hillslopes. Map heritage landscape areas in the Ferndale and Arcata Bottoms, and the forested hillslopes between Eureka and Arcata and develop protection measures that protect the scenic quality of these areas with appropriate land use designations and design review standards.

Private property owners in Humboldt County do not need...or want...a massive new layer of regulations...which the concept of protecting "heritage landscapes" (whatever they are) would propose.

SR-IM3. Scenic Road Protection Program. Provide staffing and funding to Planning and Public Works staff to develop a program for coordinated protection of scenic roads in concert with the involved public and private agencies.

If the county wishes to protect the scenic character of certain highways in Humboldt County, it should do so by using the already established criteria in the Caltrans publication: "Guidelines for the Official Designation of Scenic Highways"

SR-IM4. Scenic Resource Protection for Community Separators. Protect mapped community separators by requiring design review for new structures.

Staff is again proposing massive new and costly development standards on private property owners. There is no justification for this.

SR-IM5. Off-Premise Billboards. Amend the sign ordinance to limit the term of new billboards to 15 years, and to disallow new billboards in the Resource Dependant Industrial land use designation.

There is no justification for limiting new off premise signs to fifteen years...unless staff proposes to limit all signs, both public and privately owned to a life of fifteen years. All parties, both public and private, should be treated equally under the law. There is no justification for limiting new off premise signs on industrial property.

SR-IM6. Removal of Illegal Billboards. Provide staffing and funding to identify billboards that may have been placed without permits, and through the State Outdoor Advertising Branch, pursue removal of billboards found to be illegally placed .

This is a job for Caltrans. Let them do it.

SR-IM7 Wayfarers signage. Provide staffing and funding to establish a local scenic byways network designed to direct travelers to areas of scenic, cultural and historic interest.

The county has no business getting into the outdoor sign business. This is a job best left to private enterprise.

NOTE: the section below will fall out of the 'final' version found in the GP, but will be critical to the process of review

15.2.6 Staff Analysis and Alternatives

Several issues were raised in the Critical Choices Report that relate to scenic resources:

- *What criteria should be used in identifying high value visual resources?*
- *Are there innovative protection programs that optimize community and private property interests?*
- *Where do billboards belong?*

Forest and Agriculture Lands

Presently, scenic areas in the inland and coastal parts of the County are mostly protected as public lands, and by land use designations such as Timber Production (TPZ) and Agricultural Exclusive (AE) that restrict allowed uses to timber and agriculture. These designations also establish large minimum parcel sizes and low residential densities which limit the number of structures developed on a property, and leave large forest and open space areas. Further protection of forest and agricultural lands is provided by conservation easements and Williamson Act contracts that limit the allowed uses.

Other Scenic Areas

There are a number of coastal areas where design review requirements apply. Shelter Cove, small areas around Humboldt Bay and into McKinleyville, and large parts of the Trinidad Area Plan and the North Coast Area Plan areas are covered by design review standards.

There are two scenic features in coastal areas protected by design review: coastal views and coastal scenic areas. Coastal view areas have setback and height limitations so new development does not entirely block views of the coast from public roads. Coastal scenic areas on the other hand, are protected by measures ensuring new development fits into the surroundings.

In coastal areas, all design review projects require a public hearing by the Planning Commission unless waived by the Planning Director, which often happens when the neighbors are supportive of the proposed construction.

There are also a few inland areas with design review requirements that apply. Shelter Cove, Benbow, Garberville, and the Town Center area of McKinleyville all have design review for new development. Design review in inland parts of the County is mostly concerned with developed areas, ensuring new buildings are compatible with community character. Shelter Cove is unique because it aims to preserve the natural features of the site with new development.

The design review process in inland areas does not trigger a requirement for a public hearing; Design Review Committees are authorized as the decision makers. (The Planning Director is responsible for design review if there is no active committee.)

Scenic Roadways

Policy direction in the Framework Plan was oriented toward attaining federal scenic highway designation for portions of Highway 101. The view protection standards in the proposed Scenic Highway Plan are given great attention and detail, even describing the complex public process for adoption of the Plan.

Note: The plan for a federal scenic highway the length of US 101 in the states of California, Oregon and Washington failed a number of years ago due to opposition by a wide variety of interests who feared a new, and very onerous, layer regulation on private property. .

Billboards

Presently, new off-premise billboards are allowed in the inland parts of the County in commercial zones and the Heavy Industrial zone. In the coastal zone, new billboards are allowed in all commercial and industrial zones, but they excluded from mapped scenic areas. In commercial recreation areas of the coastal zone, performance standards apply to minimize visual impacts. One of the coastal plans, the Humboldt Bay Area Plan (HBAP), prohibits billboards in rural areas.

An implementation measure of the HBAP calls for development of a study of measures to reduce the visual impact of new and existing billboards along Highway 101 between Fields Landing and Arcata, but that was not done.

The Outdoor Advertising Act (beginning with Section 5200 of the Business and Professions Code) preempts some aspects of local control over off-premise billboards. Basically, it requires jurisdictions to compensate owners for removal of billboards unless the billboard is more than 660 feet from the highway right of way and the property is zoned for residential or agricultural use. On-premise signs have a useful life of 15 years in the Act; there is no mention in the Act of the timeframe of a useful life for off-premise signs.

At the federal level, the Highway Beautification Act of 1965 (HBA, P. L. 89-285) controls outdoor advertising along 306,000 miles of Federal-Aid Primary, Interstate and National Highway System (NHS) roads. Signed into law by President Lyndon B. Johnson on October 22, 1965, the HBA (P.L. 89-285) allows the location of billboards in commercial and industrial areas, mandates a state compliance program, requires the development of state standards, promotes the expeditious removal of illegal signs, and requires just compensation for takings. Federal-Aid Primary roads in Humboldt County include Highways 101, 299, 96 and 36.

In recent years, the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority has taken actions to remove billboards in the railroad right of way.

One issue that has not been discussed in earlier phases of the General Plan Update relates to standard practices by local billboard owners to maintain and replace their signs without required building permits. The Building Division has issued numerous “stop work” orders

over the years for such unpermitted repair and maintenance activities; no building permits have yet been filed in response.

Alternative B

Forest and Agricultural Lands: Under Plan Alternative B (the proposed project), scenic areas in both the inland and coastal parts of the County will continue to mostly be protected by policies supporting public lands, and land use designations such as Timber Production (TPZ) and Agricultural Exclusive (AE) restricting allowed uses to timber and agriculture, and establishing large minimum parcel sizes and low residential densities. A new policy protects scenic qualities of heritage landscape areas and forested hillslopes nearby urban study areas, requiring design review of new structures.

Other Scenic Areas: There are a few inland areas with design review requirements that will still apply under Alternative B. Shelter Cove, Benbow, Garberville, and the Town Center area of McKinleyville will all continue to have design review for new development.

In Alternative B the coastal scenic area and scenic view area protection measures will continue to apply. Shelter Cove, small areas around Humboldt Bay and into McKinleyville, and large parts of the Trinidad Area Plan and the North Coast Area Plan areas have design review standards that protect scenic qualities of the area.

Scenic Roadways: Plan Alternative B changes policy direction by supporting adoption of a scenic roadways plan rather than seeking official status as a scenic highway. The goals and policies of the Framework Plan have been reworked to fit into the new policy direction.

Billboards: Under Plan Alternative B, off-premise billboards will continue to be limited to commercial and industrial zones, except they will no longer be allowed in Resource Related Industrial designated areas.

[There is no justification for limiting new off premise signs in commercial and industrial zones. Off premise signs constitute a commercial use and they should continue to be allowed in commercial zones.](#)

Proposed new policies, standards and implementation measures for Plan Alternative B establish a 15 year term limit for new billboards. Alternative B policy also supports the actions of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority to remove billboards in the railroad right of way, and supports existing measures requiring removal of illegal billboards.

[There is no justification for limiting new off-premise signs to a fifteen year life.](#)

Alternative A

Forest and Agricultural Lands: Alternative A provides more protection of the scenic quality of private forestlands and agricultural lands than the other alternatives with policies and land use designations that better protect continued resource production of these lands,

and more strongly discourage conversion to residential, commercial or industrial use. Alternative A also goes further than the other alternatives to support conservation easements and Williamson Act contracts. Plan Alternative A includes the same new policy that protects scenic qualities of heritage landscapes in Plan Alternative B.

Other Scenic Areas: Alternative A includes stricter measures to protect scenic qualities of forested hillslope areas by extending design review of new development to Timber Production lands.

SR-IM3. Scenic Resource Protection for Heritage Landscapes and Forested Hillslopes. Protect scenic qualities of heritage landscapes, and forested hillslopes by requiring design review.

Scenic Roadways: Alternative A includes a wider buffer (400 feet rather than 200 feet in Alternative B), and design review requirements for new signs, which would better protect scenic qualities of the designated highway.

There is no justification, i.e. cost benefit analysis, for the creation of a 400 foot wide buffer the length of US 101 in Humboldt County, as staff proposes. This regulation would impose an unreasonable new burden on already overburdened private property owners.

Standard SR-S1. Scenic Roadway Plan Standards: Visual Buffer Width.

The width of the visual buffer along the scenic highway shall not exceed 400 feet from the edge of the traveled roadway.

As previously mentioned, there is no concise definition of just what would constitute a “scenic highway”. Private property owners should not be subject to regulations which are not clear and concise....which can be understand by most citizens.

Sign Standards. Include a design review process for signs within the foreground and background of designated scenic corridors.

Is staff proposing design review for each and every sign in “scenic corridor” (whatever that would be). Or, is staff just proposing design review for privately owned signs?

Billboards: As in Plan Alternative B, Alternative A continues the existing scenic resource protection measures that apply to billboards, disallows off premise billboards in Resource Related Industrial areas, and supports efforts of the Railroad Authority to remove or relocate billboards from their right of way between Fields Landing and Arcata.

There is no justification for disallowing new offpremise signs on commercial or industrially zoned parcels.

Plan A policies provide further protections than Alternative B by restricting the size of new off-premise billboards to a maximum of 300 square feet, consistent with limits for principally permitted on-premise signs.

The industry size standard for new off premise signs along major highways, i.e. US 101, is a sign fourteen feet high by forty eight feet in length. There is no reason to limit sign size to anything less than what the industry currently uses throughout the nation.

Standard SR-S2. New Off-Premise Billboards. New off-premise billboards shall be restricted to a size of 300 square feet and a maximum term of 15 years.

Plan Alternative A also includes a program for removal or relocation of non-conforming billboards with the requirements of the Outdoor Advertising Act.

Implementation Measure SR-IM6. Off-Premise Billboards. Provide staffing and funding to Planning staff to develop a program for removal of non-conforming billboards consistent with the requirements of the Outdoor Advertising Act.

This is Caltrans job. The County of Humboldt does not need to take on new the responsibility for yet another new "program".

Finally, Plan Alternative A includes a program to prioritize enforcement of building permit requirements for billboards.

Implementation Measure SR-IM7. Building Permit Requirements for Off-Premise Billboards. The County shall prioritize enforcement of building permit requirements for billboards.

Wayfinding Signage: Unique to Alternative A is a program to reduce the visual clutter of signage supporting and encouraging tourist travel in the County. A program is included to establish a consistent set of signs directing travelers to important destinations within the County, including scenic highways, communities, and other attractions.

On one hand staff proposes to curtail the possibility of building new off premise signs on private property , signs which are frequently used in Humboldt County to direct tourists to points of interest, yet on the other hand staff is proposing a whole new set of publicly owned billboards to direct traffic. The county has no business getting into the sign business. This job is best left to private enterprise. In addition, the proposed county owned "wayfarer signs" would just add to the visual clutter posed by numerous publicly owned signs which have questionable value to the vast majority of motorists..

Policy SR-P10. Wayfinding Signage. Establish a wayfinding signage network within the County designed to direct travelers and residents to communities and unique areas in the County.

The county does not need to get into the billboard business. Let private enterprise do this job.

Alternative C

Forest and Agricultural Lands: Alternative C continues to provide protection of the scenic quality of private forestlands and agricultural lands with policies and land use designations that encourage continued resource production of these lands, although to a lesser degree than the other alternatives. It also discourages conversion of agriculture and forest lands to residential, commercial or industrial use, but leaves that decision more in the hands of the property owner. Alternative C also supports conservation easements and Williamson Act contracts, but again not as in the other plan alternatives. Alternative C does not include the heritage landscape protection measures of Alternative B.

Other Scenic Areas: Alternative C continues existing goals, policies and programs to minimize impacts on scenic resources from new development through design review, CEQA review, use permit and coastal permit requirements. Alternative C does not include the forested hillslope protection measures of Alternative B.

Scenic Highways: Alternative C does not include policies to seek official State designation of scenic highway status.

Billboards: Alternative C continues to protect scenic resources by maintaining the same limitations in the coastal zone as the existing coastal plans. It expands the inland areas where billboards may be placed to include other industrial designations as well as the heavy industrial areas they are presently allowed. It does not include provisions for limiting the term or the size of billboards, and supports existing measures to require building permits for the repair and maintenance of billboards.

The county's existing regulations on new offpremis signs have been adequate; very few new off premis signs have been built in Humboldt opver the past decade. In fact, there are fewer privately owned off premise signs in Humboldt County now than there were 20 years ago. There is no need for additonal regulations on signs.

Standard SR-S2. New Off-Premise Billboards. New off-premise billboards shall be allowed in all areas planned for commercial or industrial use.

This makes sense. New signs should be allowed in commercial and industrial areas....signs which direct motorists to commercial and industrial activities.

Implementation Measure SR-IM4.

Off-Premise Billboards. The sign ordinance that applies to inland areas shall be amended to allow off premise billboards in all commercial and industrial areas.

This idea makes sense.

Alternative C also includes a program to create incentives for signage in commercial areas that fits in with the neighborhood character.

What would the incentives be?

Policy SR-P11. Development Bonuses for Appropriate Signage. Provide development bonuses in commercial areas as incentive for appropriate signage.

What would the definition of “appropriate” be?”

Plan Alternatives Comparison Chart

The “Vote” column is provided for the user to indicate a policy preference. Enter a **R**etain, **D**elete or **M**odify.

Table 15.2-2. Plan Alternatives Comparison Chart: Policies, Standards and Implementation Measures					
<i>Plan Alternative</i>			<i>Goals and Policies</i>	<i>Staff Remarks</i>	<i>Vote: R, D, M</i>
A	B	C	Goal SR-G1. Scenic Areas Protection. Conserve, enhance, and protect scenic areas to increase the enjoyment of, and opportunities for, recreational and cultural pursuits and tourism in the County.		<u>D</u>
A	B	C	SR-G2. Community Separators. Preserve the identities of communities by maintaining visible open space areas between cities and communities.		<u>D</u>
A	B	C	SR-P1. Development in Scenic Areas. In highly scenic areas, new development shall be subordinate to the character of the area, and natural contours, including slope, visible contours of hilltops and treelines, bluffs and rock outcroppings, shall suffer the minimum feasible disturbance compatible with development of any permitted use.		<u>D</u>
A	B		SR-P2. Heritage Landscapes. Protect the scenic quality of mapped heritage landscape areas with appropriate land use designations and design review standards to ensure that new development enhances the heritage landscape values of the area.		<u>D</u>
A	B		SR-P3. Scenic Roadway Protection. Protect the scenic quality of designated scenic roadways for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources, landmarks, or points of historic and cultural interest.		<u>D</u>
A	B		SR-P4. Community Separators. The scenic quality of Community Separators shall be protected from degradation by maintaining adequate open space between communities and cities.		<u>D</u>
A	B		SP-P5. Development Within Community Separators. Retain a rural character and promote low intensities of development in Community Separators. Avoid their annexation or inclusion in spheres of influence for sewer and water services. Provide opportunities for consideration of additional development in community separators in exchange for permanent open space preservation and other overriding public benefits		<u>D</u>

Plan Alternative		Goals and Policies	Staff Remarks	Vote: R, D, M
A	B	SR-P6. Limit the Term of Off-Premise Billboards. Limit the term of new off-premise billboards with use agreements to provide for their removal.		<u>D</u>
A	B	SR-P7. Reduce Scenic Impacts of Billboards in Sensitive Habitat Areas. Limit the location of billboards in industrial zones with mapped sensitive habitat areas.	See revised wording for Alt. A	<u>D</u>
A		SR-P8. Removal or Relocation of Billboards in the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Right of Way. Support efforts of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority to remove or relocate billboards from their right of way between Fields		<u>D</u>
A	B	SR-P8. Removal or Relocation of Billboards in the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Right of Way. Support efforts of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Authority to remove or relocate billboards from their right of way between Fields Landing and Arcata		<u>D</u>
A	B	SR-P9. Removal of Illegal Billboards Petition the State Outdoor Advertising Branch to remove illegal billboards.	See revised wording for Alt. A	<u>D</u>
A		SR-P10. Wayfarers signage. Establish a local scenic byways network designed to direct travelers to areas of scenic, cultural and historic interest.		<u>D</u>
Standards				
		SR-S1. Natural Landform Protection. Natural contours, including slope, visible contours of hilltops and treelines, bluffs and rock outcroppings, shall suffer the minimum feasible disturbance compatible with development of any permitted use, and the following standards shall at a minimum secure this objective: Under any permitted alteration of natural landforms during construction, mineral extraction or other approved development, the topography shall be restored to as close to natural contours as possible, and the area planted with attractive vegetation common to the region.		<u>D</u>

<i>Plan Alternative</i>		<i>Standards and Implementation Measures</i>	<i>Staff Remarks</i>	<i>Vote: R, D, M</i>
		<p>SR-S1. Natural Landform Protection (con't) C. In permitted development, land form alteration for access roads and public utilities shall be minimized by running hillside roads and utility corridors along natural contours where feasible, and the optional waiving on minimum street width requirements, where proposed development densities or sue of one-way circulation patterns make this consistent with public safety, in order that necessary hillside roads may be as narrow as possible. (HBAP 3.40 (B)(2), modified)</p>		D
		<p>SR-S2. Scenic and Visual Quality Protection. The scenic and visual qualities of scenic areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance. Permitted development shall be sited and designed to protect views to and along scenic areas, to minimize the alteration of natural land forms, to be visually compatible with the character of surrounding areas, and, where feasible, to restore and enhance visual quality in visually degraded areas. New development in highly scenic areas shall be subordinate to the character of its setting. (Coastal Act, Section 30251 of the Public Resources Code)</p>		D
A	B	<p>SR-S3 Scenic Highway Plan Standards. The plan developed for official scenic highway designation should consider the following standards:</p> <p>Visual Buffer Width. The width of the visual buffer along the scenic highway shall not exceed 200 feet from the edge of the traveled roadway. If additional land is to be included in the buffer, scenic easements shall be negotiated.</p> <p>Permitted Uses. Permitted uses shall be allowed except that within the visual buffer area, measures may be required to protect scenic qualities of the site.</p>		D

A	B	<p>SR-S3 Scenic Highway Plan Standards (con't). Site Development. Buildings and landscaping within the visual buffer shall be designed and located on the site to create a harmonious visual relationship with surrounding development and the natural terrain and vegetation.</p> <p>Existing topography, vegetation and scenic features of the site shall be retained to the maximum extent possible and incorporated into the proposed development.</p> <p>Structures and signs shall be limited in height, bulk, and siting to be visually compatible with, and subordinate to the character of the surrounding area.</p> <p>Consideration of Views. Structures, signs, and plant materials within the visual buffer shall be constructed, installed and planted to complement, enhance, and retain scenic views. Vegetative screening shall be used where needed to prevent significant intrusion or degradation of public views.</p> <p>Location and Screening of Unsightly Features. Within the visual buffer area, potentially unsightly features such as parking lots, etc. shall be located in areas not visible from the Scenic Highway. Where it is not possible to locate such features out of view, they shall be screened from view by planting and/or fences, walls, or berms. Screening shall utilize primarily natural materials rather than solid fencing, preferably vegetation in conjunction with low earth berms.</p> <p>Site Grading. Any grading or earth-moving operation within the visual buffer area shall be planned and executed in such a manner that final contours appear to be consistent with the existing terrain both on, and adjacent to, the site.</p> <p>Vegetative cover shall be provided within a reasonable time after grading is completed to prevent visible scars remaining on the land from such operations.</p> <p>Contours altered by grading should be restored by means of land sculpturing and a cover of top soil in such a manner as to minimize runoff and erosion and prevent ponding of water.</p> <p>Finished contours shall be planted with plant materials native to the area, so as to require minimum care and to be visually compatible with the existing ground cover. subordinate to, the character of surrounding areas</p>	<p>See revised wording for Alt. A</p>	<p>D</p>
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<i>Plan Alternative</i>		<i>Standards and Implementation Measures</i>	<i>Staff Remarks</i>	<i>Vote: R, D, M</i>
A	B	<p>SR-S1 Scenic Highway Plan Standards. (continued)</p> <p>Access Roads. The location and design of access roads within the visual buffer area should not detract from the scenic quality of the scenic highway and should be consistent with the adopted Scenic Route Plan, where practicable.</p> <p>Utilities. New, relocated or existing utility distribution lines within the visual buffer area should be placed underground whenever feasible. When it is not feasible to place lines underground, they should be located so as to be inconspicuous from the scenic route. Combined or adjacent rights of way and common poles should be used wherever feasible.</p> <p>Railroads. Visual buffers shall exclude railroad rights of way.</p> <p>Commercial Traffic. No scenic highways Plan shall regulate or prohibit commercial traffic.</p> <p>Initiation and review of Scenic Highway Plans. Scenic Highway Plans prepared for official State designation shall be initiated and reviewed under the same procedural requirements as general plan amendments.</p>		D
A		<p>SR-S3 Scenic Highway Plan Standards.</p> <p>Visual Buffer Width. The width of the visual buffer along the scenic highway shall not exceed 400 feet from the edge of the traveled roadway. If additional land is to be included in the buffer, scenic easements shall be negotiated. Plans submitted for official designation as a scenic highway shall provide a minimum 400' setback for new structures from the nearest travelway.</p> <p>Sign Standards. Include a design review process for signs within the foreground and background of designated scenic corridors.</p>	<p>Revised wording for Alternative A</p> <p>New standard for Alternative A</p>	D
A				

Plan Alternative		Standards and Implementation Measures	Staff Remarks	Vote: R, D, M
A	B	<p>SR-S4 Development within Community Separators. Unless there are existing design standards adopted for Community Separators, new structures within these areas must meet the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Site and design structures to take maximum advantage of existing topography and vegetation in order to substantially screen from view from scenic corridors. 2. Minimize cuts and fills on hills and ridges. 3. Minimize the removal of trees and other mature vegetation. 4. Where existing topography and vegetation would not screen structures from view from scenic corridors, install landscaping consisting of native vegetation in natural groupings that fits with the character of the area in order to screen from view. 5. Design structures to use building materials and color schemes that blend with the natural landscape. 6. To the extent feasible, cluster structures on each parcel within existing built areas and near existing natural features. 7. Exempt agricultural accessory structures and telecommunication facilities from these requirements. 		D
	B	<p>SR-S5. Subdivisions in Community Separators. Subdivisions in Community Separators shall:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish building envelopes for structures and consider use of height limitations if necessary to further mitigate visual impacts. 2. Use clustering to reduce visual impact where consistent with Land Use Element. 3. Locate building sites and roadways to preserve natural features and native vegetation. 4. To the extent possible, require dedication of permanent open space easement at the time of subdivision. 	See revised wording for Alt. A & Alt. C	D
	B	<p>SR-S6. New Off-Premise Billboards. New off-premise billboards shall be restricted to a maximum term of 15 years.</p>		D

A			SR-S6. New Off-Premise Billboards. New off-premise billboards under Policy SR-P6 shall be restricted to a size of 300 square feet and a maximum term of 15 years in commercial and heavy industrial areas.		<u>D</u>
		C	SR-S6. New Off-Premise Billboards. New off-premise billboards shall be allowed in all areas planned for commercial or industrial use.		<u>OK</u>
A			SR-S7. Existing Off-Premise Billboards. The program for removal or relocation of existing off-premise billboards under Policy SR-P8 shall include fair compensation to the property owners consistent with the requirements of the Outdoor Advertising Act.		<u>OK</u>
<i>Plan Alternative</i>			Implementation Measures	<i>Staff Remarks</i>	<i>Vote: R, D, M</i>
A	B	C	SR-IM1. General Plan, Zoning and Environmental Review. Implement policies for scenic resource protection and enhancement through General Plan, Zoning and CEQA review.		<u>D</u>
	B	C	SR-IM2. Identification and Protection of Heritage Landscapes and Forested Hillslopes. Map heritage landscape areas in the Ferndale and Arcata Bottoms, and the forested hillslopes between Eureka and Arcata and develop protection measures that protect the scenic quality of these areas with appropriate land use designations and design review standards in the Land Use Element.		<u>D</u>
A			SR-IM2. Scenic Resource Protection for Heritage Landscapes and Forested Hillslopes. In the Land Use Element, protect scenic qualities of heritage landscapes in the Ferndale and Arcata Bottoms areas, and forested hillslopes between Eureka and Arcata outside of the coastal zone, by requiring design review.		<u>D</u>
			SR-IM3. Scenic Road Protection Program. Provide staffing and funding to Planning and Public Works staff to develop a program for coordinated protection of scenic roads in concert with the involved public and private agencies.		<u>D</u>
	B		SR-IM4. Scenic Resource Protection for Community Separators. Protect mapped community separators by requiring design review for new structures.	See revised wording in Alt. A & Alt. C	<u>D</u>

	B			SR-IM5. Off-Premise Billboards. Amend the sign ordinance to limit the term of new billboards to 15 years, and to disallow new billboards in the Resource Dependant Industrial land use designation.		<u>D</u>
A				SR-IM5. Off-Premise Billboards. The sign ordinance shall be amended to implement Policies SR-P6, SR-P7 and Standards SR-S2 and S3. The County shall prioritize enforcement of building permit requirements for off-premise signs under policy SR-P6.		<u>D</u>
		C		SR-IM5. Off-Premise Billboards. The sign ordinance that applies to inland areas shall be amended to allow off premise billboards in all commercial and industrial areas.		<u>OK</u>
A	B	C		SR-IM6. Removal of Illegal Billboards. Provide staffing and funding to Planning and Building staff to identify billboards that may have been placed without permits, and pursue removal of billboards found to be illegally placed.		<u>D</u>
A	B	C		SR-IM7. Wayfarers signage. Provide staffing and funding to establish a local scenic byways network designed to direct travelers to areas of scenic, cultural and historic interest.		<u>D</u>
				<i>Existing Plan Goals and Policies</i>		
			D	FRWK 3541.1 Scenic Route Plans. The Scenic Routes System shall be developed and implemented through the adoption of specific Scenic Route Plans. The impetus for preparing Scenic Routes Plans should come from the Board of Supervisors, landowners or interested citizens. Except for Scenic Route Plans initiated by the Board of Supervisors, a petition of support signed by 25% or more of the property owners within the proposed scenic route shall be required to undertake any Route Study.		<u>OK</u>
			D	FRWK 3541.2 Consistency. The Scenic Route System shall be consistent with adopted County and City General Plans, and shall be coordinated with local, state and federal agencies.		<u>D</u>
			D	FRWK 3541.3 Resource Harvesting and Management. When considering Scenic Routes where regulations may have to be applied to productive or potentially productive natural resources, primary consideration shall be given to sound resource harvesting and management.		<u>OK</u>

<i>Plan Alternative</i>	<i>Existing Plan Goals and Policies</i>	<i>Staff Remarks</i>	<i>Vote: R, D, M</i>
D	<p>FRWK 3541.4 Zoning and Design. In both urban and rural areas, uses normally permitted by the General Plan and by zoning shall be allowed in Scenic Routes, except that scenic resources within officially designated Scenic Routes may be preserved and enhanced by supplementing normal zoning regulations with special height, area and setback regulations; by providing architectural and site design review; by regulating billboards, signs not relevant to the main use of the property, obtrusive signs, and automobile wrecking yards and junkyards. Design and location of signs may be regulated to prevent proliferation of unsightly signs along roadsides.</p>		D
D	<p>FRWK 3541.5 Development Controls. Specific development controls for any proposed Scenic Route shall be identified and adopted in the specific Scenic Route Plan for such route. The nature and type of controls may vary from route to route, and specific controls adopted for any one route or route segment do not necessarily apply to other routes within the scenic route system.</p>		D
D	<p>FRWK 3541.6 Scenic Route Plan Compatibility. In regard to proposed development projects, the intent of the specific Scenic Route Plan shall be to render projects as aesthetically pleasing or as compatible with surroundings as possible, but not generally to determine whether or not the project itself should occur.</p>		D
D	<p>FRWK 3542.2 Timber Harvest within Scenic Route. The control and regulation of timber harvesting operations where permitted within an officially adopted Scenic Route shall remain solely under the jurisdiction of the California Department of Forestry. The County shall not require additional permits, nor be otherwise involved in the timber harvest permit process.</p>		OK

Plan Alternative	Existing Plan Goals and Policies	Staff Remarks	Vote: R, D, M
	<p>D FRWK 3542.3 Primacy of Timber and Agriculture along Scenic Routes. Lands planned and/or zoned by the County for the growing and harvesting of timber and agricultural products shall not be limited in their principal permitted uses by the adoption or designation of a Scenic Route. Should such action result in the application of regulations which exceed existing land use regulations, by any governmental body or agency, then the scenic highway or scenic highway route designation shall be withdrawn or terminated.</p>		OK
	<p>D FRWK 3542.4. Site Development. Buildings and landscaping shall be designed and located on the site to create a harmonious visual relationship with surrounding development and the natural terrain and vegetation.</p> <p>A. Existing topography, vegetation and scenic features of the site shall be retained to the maximum extent possible and incorporated into the proposed development.</p> <p>B. Structures and signs shall be limited in height, bulk, and siting to prevent visual competition with or dominance of existing land forms, vegetation, water bodies, or adjoining structures.</p>		D
	<p>D FRWK 3542.5. Consideration of Views. Structures, signs, and plant materials shall be constructed, installed and planted to complement, enhance, and retain scenic views. Vegetative screening shall be used where needed to prevent significant intrusion or degradation of public views.</p>		D
	<p>D FRWK 3542.6. Signs along Scenic Routes. New off-premise signs (billboards) should be limited to selective locations within Scenic Routes and specific dimensional limitations and limits on the number of on-premise and off-premise signs should be formulated as an element of each Scenic Route Plan.</p>		D
	<p>D FRWK 3542.7. Location and Screening of Unsightly Features. Potentially unsightly features such as parking lots, etc. shall be located in areas not visible from the Scenic Route. Where it is not possible to locate such features out of view, they shall be effectively and expediently screened from view by planting and/or fences, walls, or berms. Screening shall utilize primarily natural materials rather than solid fencing, preferably vegetation in conjunction with low earth berms.</p>		D

Plan Alternative	Existing Plan Goals and Policies	Staff Remarks	Vote: R, D, M
D	<p>FRWK 3542.8. Site Grading. Any grading or earth-moving operation in conjunction with a proposed development shall be planned and executed in such a manner that final contours appear to be consistent with the existing terrain both on, and adjacent to, the site</p> <p>A. Vegetative cover shall be provided within a reasonable time after grading is completed to prevent visible scars remaining on the land from such operations.</p> <p>B. Contours altered by grading should be restored by means of land sculpturing and a cover of top soil in such a manner as to minimize runoff and erosion and prevent ponding of water.</p> <p>C. Finished contours shall be planted with plant materials native to the area, so as to require minimum care and to be visually compatible with the existing ground cover.</p>		OK
D	<p>FRWK 3542.9. Access Roads. The location and design of access roads should not detract from the scenic quality of the route and should be consistent with the adopted Scenic Route Plan, where practicable.</p>		OK
D	<p>FRWK 3542.10 Utilities along Scenic Route. New, relocated or existing utility distribution lines should be placed underground whenever feasible. When it is not feasible to place lines underground, they should be located so as to be inconspicuous from the scenic route. Combined or adjacent rights of way and common poles should be used wherever feasible.</p>		D
D	<p>FRWK 3542.11 Railroads along Scenic Route. No Scenic Route Plan shall regulate or interfere with the maintenance or operation of the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Company or the Arcata and Mad River Railroad. The maintenance and operation of North Western Pacific does not include bill boards</p>		D
D	<p>FRWK 3542.12. Commercial Traffic. No Scenic Route Plan shall regulate or prohibit commercial traffic.</p>		OK

Plan Alternative	Existing Plan Goals and Policies	Staff Remarks	Vote: R, D, M
	<p>FRWK 3542.13 Scenic Route Plans. The Humboldt County Board of Supervisors may initiate the preparation of specific Scenic Route Plans. Specific Scenic Route Plans may also be initiated through a formal request to the Board of Supervisors by landowners or interested citizens pursuant to Policy 1 of this element. All such requests should include a completed Scenic Route application and be submitted initially to the Planning Department.</p>		D
	<p>FRWK 3542.14 Scenic Route Study Preparation. The Planning Department will incorporate any requests for preparation of Scenic Route Studies into its annual Plan Implementation Program for Board consideration. Once the program has been approved by the Board of Supervisors, the Planning Department, in cooperation with the California Department of Transportation, shall prepare each Scenic Route Study.</p>		D
	<p>FRWK 3542.16 Scenic Route Study Public Hearing. The Board of Supervisors shall hold a noticed public hearing to consider each Scenic Route Study. At this point, the Board can:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Accept the study and abandon the proposal; or B. Accept the study, order the preparation of a Scenic Route Plan, and may appoint a citizen's advisory committee to make recommendations on the plan. 		D
	<p>FRWK 3542.17 Scenic Route Study Support of Owners. The Planning Commission shall review each proposed Scenic Route Plan at a noticed public hearing and transmit their recommendations to the Board of supervisors. Recommendations by the Planning Commission on a proposed Scenic Route Plan shall be accompanied by a report stating whether or not the proposal has the support of 50% of the property owners and the owners of 60% of the property within the proposed Scenic Route segment.</p>		OK
	<p>FRWK 3542.18 Site Grading. The Board of Supervisors, upon receipt of the Planning Commission report and recommendations, may, by a majority vote, elect to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Not hold a public hearing and deny the proposed plan, or B. Hold a public hearing and take whatever action is deemed proper. 		OK

Plan Alternative				Existing Plan Goals and Policies	Staff Remarks	Vote: R, D, M
			D	FRWK 5-3540.1. Scenic Route Plan Process. Adopt the Scenic Route Plan Process (Standards 3542 13-18) as the exclusive means for implementing the Scenic Highways Element.		<u>D</u>
			D	FRWK 5-3540.2. Scenic Route Application Form. Develop a Scenic Route Application form for the public to use when requesting preparation of a Scenic Route Plan.		<u>OK</u>
			D	FRWK 5-3540.3. Timing of Scenic Route Studies. Refrain from initiating any additional scenic route studies until completion of the Framework General Plan and Community Plans.		<u>OK</u>
			D	FRWK 5-3540.4. Highway 101 Scenic Route Study. Proceed with the Scenic Route Study authorized by the Board of Supervisors on October 23, 1979 for that portion of U.S. Highway 101 from Bald Hills Road to the existing scenic highway.		<u>D</u>

Preliminary Environmental Impact Analysis

Setting

The new Plan encourages the construction of new residential, commercial and industrial development, which may affect scenic vistas, scenic resources, visual character and quality, and create new light and glare that could adversely affect day or nighttime views in the County.

The Natural Resources and Hazards technical background study inventories some of the County's important scenic resources.

A complete discussion of visual quality and community character is contained in the Framework Plan, each of the individual community plans, coastal plans, and the Natural Resources and Hazards Report (Dyett and Bhatia, 2002). These parts of the General Plan are summarized below.

The range of visual resources in the County is wide, varied, and numerous. Views include coastline views, mountains, hills, ridgelines, inland water features, forests, agricultural features, idyllic rural communities, and a combination of all of these features. Views are distant and proximate, panoramic and discrete. There are perhaps very few areas of the County where scenic beauty is not evident.

Coastal Views

The County's varied and extensive Pacific Ocean coastline allows for a wide range of scenic vistas from Highway 101 and from beaches, state parks and Coastal Access points. The County's Local Coastal Program includes a technical study on visual resources, which will be used in evaluating opportunities and constraints within the Coastal Zone. This study, completed in 1979, includes a detailed inventory of local visual resources along the coastline. The study inventories and maps areas of visual concern and identifies areas as "highly scenic" and "visually degraded areas." The extensive inventory includes points offering coastal views in the County.

Forests

Forestland defines the visual landscape of the County. Redwood National Park, Six Rivers National Forest, Redwoods State Park, and Kings Range National Conservation Area are all significant, protected forests within the County. Forestland is abundant well beyond these protected areas. The scenic value of these natural resources, viewed both from within or from outside, is of great importance.

Open Space and Agricultural Lands

The rural character of the county is defined by the topography and the views afforded as a result of those natural landforms. The interspersed of heavily vegetated areas, such as forests, with open spaces and agricultural lands, as viewed from the changing topography, defines the scenic beauty for which the County is known.

Scenic Highways

Several highways in the County have unique scenic qualities because of their natural setting. A scenic road is defined as a roadway that in addition to its transportation function, provide opportunities for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources. Scenic roads direct views to areas of exceptional beauty, natural resources or landmarks, or historic and cultural interest. Although no highways in the County are "officially designated" as California State Scenic highways, several State Highways are eligible for official designation: Route 36 from Route 101 near Fortuna to the Trinity County line; Route 96 from Route 299 at Willow Creek north to Siskiyou County; Route 101 for its entire length in Humboldt County; and Route 299 from Arcata to Willow Creek. Scenic views are also offered from a multitude of County and local roadways.

Wild, Scenic, And Recreational Rivers

Subject to a declaration that rivers with "extraordinary scenic, recreational, fishery, or wildlife values" should be preserved in their free-flowing state as the "highest and most beneficial use,"¹ the California State Legislature created a California Wild and Scenic Rivers System in 1972, now administered by the California Resources Agency. While the U.S. Congress had created a national system designating the same rivers in 1968, the California system is intended to enhance local coordination of riparian management.

Under the California system, rivers were classified as wild, scenic, or recreational, according to the following criteria as stated in the California Public Resources Code §5093.53:

- Wild rivers are those "free of impoundments and generally inaccessible except by trail, with watersheds or shorelines essentially primitive and waters unpolluted."

- Scenic rivers are those “free of impoundments, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped, but accessible in places by roads.”
- Recreational rivers are those “readily accessible by road or railroad, that may have some development along their shorelines, and that may have undergone some impoundment or diversion in the past.”

Sections of rivers in the Klamath-Trinity and Eel River basins were classified as wild, scenic, or recreational by the California State Legislature, as summarized in Table 1-2 and illustrated in Figure 1-2 of the Natural Resources and Hazards Report.

Alternatives Comparison

There are several policies in the Housing Element Technical Background Study that would continue to offer some protection of visual resources in the No Project alternative:

- 1.38 The County shall discourage encroachment of residential subdivisions upon agricultural and other natural resource lands. Subdivisions of resource lands shall be allowed only where the resulting uses will not adversely affect the resource use of the site.
- 1.39 The County shall encourage the preservation of natural features of terrain and vegetation in new subdivisions in residential zones by clustering development, providing common open areas, smaller, more appropriate roads, and other compatible land use innovations in the development of new residential areas.

Plan Alternative A is expected to have fewer visual impacts than the other alternatives outside the urban study areas. Stronger protection measures apply to forest and agricultural lands in Alternative A, so more open space will be maintained and less conversion to residential, commercial or industrial uses will occur.

The focus of Alternative A on a more concentrated development pattern will involve streetscape and landscape visual impacts to existing neighborhoods within urban study areas that maybe would not occur with the other alternatives. These visual impacts are balanced by policies more protective of forest and agricultural land outside communities.

Plan Alternative C is expected to have different impacts; the impacts of Alternative C will likely go the opposite way of Alternative A. Fewer restrictions on development of forest and agricultural land under Alternative C will likely result in more visual impacts outside urban study areas. Within urban study areas, the development pattern under Alternative C will probably be very similar to the future development pattern of the existing general plan. Alternative C will maintain most of the same densities, and therefore will likely have similar impacts on streetscapes and community character as the No Project alternative.

Potential Impacts

The project has a number of potential visual impacts:

- The project may have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- The project may substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

- The project may substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- The project may create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

While development in and of itself does not constitute a significant adverse impact on the visual quality of the environment, impacts on the visual quality and community character of the County could occur due to development encouraged by the new Plan.

In general, implementation of the new Plan could result in impacts on the visual quality and community character of the County through additional residential, commercial and industrial development. Unless carefully sited and designed, this development would have the potential to block or alter views of scenic resources.

The existing Framework Plan, and numerous community plans and coastal plans contain policies and implementation programs designed to minimize visual impacts by fitting new development in with the environmental setting of the County, and fitting new development into the scale and character of existing development.

Implementation of the many existing policies, programs, standards, and requirements which serve to mitigate visual impacts reduces these impacts of each of the project alternatives. These policies, programs, standards, and requirements are more specifically discussed below.

However, the forested hillslopes to the east of Highway 101 is a significant scenic resource that is presently not protected during review of building permits for new construction. Also, off-premise billboards are not limited to specific time frames.

Mitigation Measures and Findings

This section will be developed when policy direction is provided by the Commission