

## 3.16 Scenic Resources

This section provides background information regarding scenic resources within the County, the regulations and programs that provide for their protection, and an assessment of the potential impacts to scenic resources from implementing the proposed General Plan Update. Existing scenic resource conditions are described in Chapter 8, Scenic Resources, of the *Natural Resources and Hazards Report*, September 2002 (Appendix D), which includes a discussion of Humboldt County scenic resources and viewsheds. This report, which is available for review at the Planning Division public counter at 3015 H Street in Eureka during normal business hours, or for download at <http://humboldt.gov/571/Background-Reports>, is incorporated by reference herein, and summarized below. Where any discrepancies may exist between the referenced material and the material presented here, the material presented here should be considered as the most up to date and is to be relied upon for the environmental setting and analyses.

### 3.16.1 Scenic Resources - Environmental and Regulatory Setting

#### Scenic Resources in Humboldt County

Humboldt County contains a wide range of scenic or visual resources. Views include coastline, mountains, hills, ridgelines, inland water features, forests, agricultural features, and rural communities in various combinations. Views are distant and proximate, panoramic and discrete. There are perhaps very few areas of the County where scenic resources are not evident.

#### *Coastal Views*

Humboldt County's varied and extensive Pacific Ocean coastline allows for a wide range of scenic vistas from State Route 101, and from beaches, state parks and coastal access points. The County's Local Coastal Program includes a technical study on visual resources, which evaluates opportunities and constraints within the Coastal Zone. This study, completed in 1979, includes a detailed inventory of local visual resources along Humboldt's coastline, such as vantage points that offer coastal views. The study inventories and maps areas of visual concern and identifies areas as "highly scenic" or "visually degraded."

#### *Forests*

Forestland is the dominant visual landscape of Humboldt 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 greatly valued.

#### *Open Space and Agricultural Lands*

The rural character of the County is also defined, in part, by its topography and the views afforded by the natural landforms. The interspersed heavily vegetated areas, such as forests, with open spaces and agricultural lands, as viewed from the changing topography, characterizes another one of the County's important scenic resources.

### **Scenic Roads**

Many roads in Humboldt County have unique scenic qualities because of their natural settings. Scenic roads provide opportunities to enjoy natural and scenic resources in addition to their transportation functions. Scenic roads offer views of areas of beauty, natural resources or landmarks, or areas of historic and cultural interest.

Chapter 8, Scenic Resources, of the 2002 *Natural Resources and Hazards Report*, contains a qualitative evaluation of local viewsheds that analyzes eight key viewpoints along roads in the County using the County's GIS database. The eight key viewpoints represent a sample of Humboldt County viewpoints that were selected for this viewshed analysis because they represent Humboldt County views in general, and based on the quality of their views inland and to the coast, views of developable rural residential land, and the presence of parkland and public land in the viewshed. The evaluation provides a useful comparison of susceptibility to change in scenic character based on the surrounding land use types and area of the viewshed. The following are descriptions of federal and state programs that could be used to protect scenic routes.

**National Scenic Byways Program.** The National Scenic Byways Program was established as part of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 as a means to maintain the scenic, historic, recreational, cultural, archeological, and natural qualities of scenic byways. The National Scenic Byways Program provides procedures for state designation of National Scenic Byways, in cooperation with local jurisdictions, as well as the designation of All-American Roads and Federal Agency Scenic Byways. Federal Agency Scenic Byways are roads or highways located on lands under Federal ownership which have been officially designated by the responsible federal agency as a scenic byway. In Humboldt County, the Bigfoot Scenic Byway is a USDA Forest Service Scenic Byway that begins in Willow Creek and follows State Route 96 north through Hoopa, Weitchpec, and Orleans to Happy Camp in Siskiyou County. State Route 299 is also a Forest Service Scenic Byway between Arcata and Redding.

**State Scenic Highway Program.** Several state highways in the County have unique scenic qualities owing to their natural setting and, in addition to transportation functions, provide opportunities for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources. Although no state highway in the County is "officially designated" as a State Scenic Highway, the following state highways are listed in Sections 263.1 through 263.8 of the California Streets and Highways Code as eligible for designation (specific California Streets and Highways Code references are listed below):

- *Route 36 from Route 101 near Fortuna to the Trinity County line (§263.3)*
- *Route 96 from Route 299 at Willow Creek north to Siskiyou County (§263.1)*
- *Route 101 for its entire length in Humboldt County (§263.6)*
- *Route 254 in the Avenue of the Giants Community Plan Area (§263.1)*
- *Route 299 from Arcata to Willow Creek (§263.8)*

In order to be officially designated, state highways must be nominated according the State Scenic Highways Program Guidelines and protective measures must be adopted by the County, including the regulation of land use, control of outdoor advertising, and site grading and design review standards. The Streets and Highways Code also contains provisions for the designation of county highways that are believed to have outstanding scenic values (Streets and Highways Code §154). The designation of county scenic highways pursuant to the State Scenic Highway Guidelines follows the same process and has the same requirements as State Scenic Highways but does not require action by the State Legislature.

### ***Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers***

The National Wild and Scenic Rivers Act was established in 1968 to maintain the natural beauty, biology, and wildness of designated “wild,” “scenic,” or “recreational” rivers that are potentially threatened by the construction of dams, diversions and canals. The Act seeks to preserve these designated rivers in their free-flowing condition, as well as to protect their immediate environments for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.

In addition, the California State Legislature created a California Wild and Scenic Rivers System in 1972, administered by the California Resources Agency. While the U.S. Congress created a national system designating the same rivers in 1968, the California system is intended to enhance local coordination of riparian management.

The California and federal system classifies rivers as wild, scenic, or recreational in a similar manner. The state criterion is nearly identical to the federal and is specified 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.”

In Humboldt County, the Klamath, Trinity, Eel, and Van Duzen Rivers were classified as wild, scenic, or recreational under the Federal and State Wild and Scenic Rivers Acts. Table 3.16-1, State Designated Wild and Scenic Rivers in Humboldt County, below shows the State of California Wild and Scenic River and Recreational designation by river reach for each river in Humboldt County. The 2002 *Natural Resources and Hazards Report* (Table 1-2 and Figure 1-2) provides additional information regarding wild, scenic, and recreational river designations in Humboldt County pursuant to the State and federal Acts.

**Table 3-16.1. State Designated Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers in Humboldt County.**

<b>River</b>	<b>River Section</b>	<b>Designation</b>
Klamath River, Main Stem	From the Humboldt County line to the Pacific Ocean	Recreational
Trinity River, South Fork	From the point where the river first touches the Humboldt County line to Todd Ranch in Section 18 T5N R5E	Wild
Trinity River, South Fork	From Todd Ranch in Section 18 T5N R5E to the confluence with the main stem	Scenic
Trinity River, Main Stem	From the confluence of the South and Middle Forks to the west boundary of Section 2 T8N R4E	Recreational
Trinity River, Main Stem	From the west boundary of Section 2 T8N R4E to the river mouth at Weitchpec	Scenic

River	River Section	Designation
Van Duzen River	From the Dinsmore Bridge to the power line crossing above Little Larabee Creek	Scenic
Van Duzen River	From the power line crossing above Little Larabee Creek to confluence with the Eel River	Recreational
Eel River, Middle Fork	Humboldt County line to confluence with South Fork	Recreational
Eel River, South Fork	Humboldt County line to confluence with Middle Fork	Recreational
Eel River, Main Stem	South and Middle Fork confluence to Pacific Ocean	Recreational

Source: Section 5093.545 of the California Public Resources Code.

### ***Community Areas***

Many Humboldt County communities were originally established as logging camps, rail and wagon stops, and dairy centers due to their proximity to natural resources and transportation routes. The character of these communities has been preserved to varying degrees by the presence of working resource lands (e.g. timberland or grazing lands) at their edges, which continue to serve as an urban/rural boundary. Factors that have contributed to the maintenance of these community separators include the continuing viability of timber and agricultural operations within these buffer lands, the 1984 Framework General Plan development timing policies, and LAFCo policies discouraging the conversion of agricultural lands. However, development pressure to convert resource lands adjacent to existing communities has increased over recent years. Conversion of such resource lands would affect both the character of the communities and the views of surrounding undeveloped lands.

### ***Existing Light and Glare***

Most of the Humboldt County land area is rural in character without urban type development and without the streetlights, nightlights, interior lighting, and paved areas that create sky glow and light trespass (commonly referred to as light pollution). Sky glow is defined as the added sky brightness caused by the scattering of light into the atmosphere. The term light trespass describes light that strays from its intended target and illuminates adjacent properties. Such excessive lighting can significantly change the character of rural and natural areas by making the built environment more prominent at night and creating visual clutter. Section 8, Street Lights, of the 2008 *Community Infrastructure and Services Technical Report*, identifies the areas within the County that are served by street light providers as well as discusses street lighting standards and light pollution.

## **3.16.2 Scenic Resources - Standards of Significance**

This analysis uses the significance criteria from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Appendix G. The proposed General Plan Update would result in a significant impact on scenic resources (aesthetics as listed in the CEQA Guidelines Appendix G checklist) if it would:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.

- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
- c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.
- d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

Items "a" and "b" are discussed in Impact 3.16.3.1, Scenic Vista. Item "c" is discussed in Impact 3.16.3.2, Visual Character. Item "d" is discussed in Impact 3.16.3.3, Sources of Light and Glare.

### 3.16.3 Scenic Resources - Impacts and Mitigation Measures

#### Impact 3.16.3.1: Adverse effect on Scenic Vistas and Scenic Resources

Implementation of the General Plan Update would allow additional development and changes in land use, and contains new policies that could lead to damage or destruction of scenic resources and vistas.

This impact analysis addresses items "a" and "b" of the significance standards listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines as provided in Section 3.16.2 above. Pursuant to these standards, the proposed County General Plan Update would have a significant impact if it would:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.

3.16 Potential impacts could include land use map changes or new policies that would lead to the destruction of scenic resources and vistas, such as the conversion of timber or agricultural lands adjacent to communities or along candidate scenic highways or roadways, or allow the construction of structures that would block coastal views or damage scenic vistas.

Aesthetic and visual resources are subjective by nature. In addition, specific development proposals that could take place under the proposed General Plan Update are currently unknown. As a result, site-specific impacts resulting from allowable development cannot be determined until it is proposed and undergoes design review and/or environmental review. Consequently, the visual resource analysis in this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) is qualitative, assessing the potential aesthetic implications of the General Plan Update to degrade the existing visual character of the County. The analysis evaluates the land use diagram and policies of the General Plan Update to determine the extent to which policies protect existing aesthetic resources and minimize the degradation of visual quality.

Important scenic vistas and resources in Humboldt County include those that are visible from major public roadways and public areas those that contain views of the coast, forests, open space or agricultural lands, as well as views of historic districts, landmarks, and cultural sites (see Section 3.13.1, Cultural Resource Setting, for a listing of historic and cultural resources). To date, scenic resources in Humboldt County have not been mapped.

Adverse changes to scenic resources resulting from the implementation of the proposed General Plan Update could result from a number of circumstances. These include dramatic large and small-scale shifts from one land use to another, such as the change from open space to urban use, or project-specific impacts such as construction of large homes on hillsides or

ridgelines. Such changes may also be caused by an incremental change over time, such as the trend towards residential use in areas where the existing principal land use is timber or grazing.

It is estimated that 1,721 housing units will be needed to accommodate the peak population in the unincorporated area in 2028, and 3.1 million square feet of commercial and industrial building to accommodate projected new employment by 2040. Although new construction would be distributed across the unincorporated area, over 90 percent of housing units, and of commercial and industrial square footage, is projected to be developed within the more urbanized community plan and coastal zone areas. Over 60 percent of new housing units are projected to be located within the communities in the Humboldt Bay area, including the residential areas of Cutten, Ridgewood, and McKinleyville. Almost 50 percent of commercial and industrial square footage is projected to be located within the communities around Humboldt Bay, two-thirds of which would occur in the industrial areas along the Samoa Peninsula and Fields Landing.

Land uses that could affect scenic vistas and scenic resources visible from major roadways or other public areas include currently undeveloped land planned for urban levels of development and existing developed land for which a significant change in use is planned, such as the reuse of former industrial sites. The following is a discussion of the potential visual resource impacts involving significant land use changes that could occur as a result of the implementation of the General Plan Update land use diagram.

### ***Industrial Site Reuse***

The General Plan Update encourages the reuse of former industrial sites, including mill sites. Several such large industrial sites are visible from candidate scenic roads as identified in the setting section above. The following sites are described below because the reuse of the former industrial site could substantially alter views from scenic roads.

**Carlotta.** The former Pacific Lumber mill in Carlotta contains remnant mill structures, is planned for industrial uses, and is proposed to be redesignated Mixed Use (MU). This former mill site is visible from State Route 36.

**Orick.** A former mill site in Orick is located along State Highway 101 and adjacent to Redwood National Park land. The mill site contains only remnants of mill buildings and paved areas, and is proposed to be redesignated Commercial Recreation (CR).

The former industrial sites listed above are currently unused or are significantly underutilized. Implementation of the proposed land use diagram would involve the reuse of these sites and could result in a substantial change to scenic views along candidate scenic roadways. Development could involve the construction of new residences at a density of at 16 dwelling units per acre for land designated MU, with the addition of non-residential development at a floor to area ratio of 3, depending upon the availability of water and sewer service. Where former mill buildings have been removed and industrial land is sitting idle, reuse at these urban levels of residential and commercial development could substantially alter views. Where reuse would involve the replacement of vacant industrial buildings, viewshed changes would include new and different types of structures, likely at higher density. Such development could represent a substantial change to the viewshed from these candidate scenic highways. However, development consistent with the land use diagram could also be considered an improvement from the current blighted condition.

### ***New Development in Undeveloped Areas***

Several currently undeveloped areas that may be visible from candidate scenic highways have been, and continue to be, planned for urban uses, the development of which could change scenic vistas. The most prominent undeveloped area that is planned for urban levels of development is the Barry property, which is located on Humboldt Hill and is visible from portions of State Highway 101 and numerous coastal access points. This area contains open fields interspersed with trees and shrubs, and is currently planned Residential Low Density (RL). The General Plan Update land use diagram maintains this land use designation. This land could be developed as planned during the period of the plan. Development of this site would involve the construction of homes at a density of 3 to 8 dwelling units per acre, site serving roads and utilities, and streetlights. Such development would represent a substantial change to the viewshed from State Route 101 and other public areas.

In addition to the potential scenic resource impacts that could occur as a result of industrial site reuse and new urban development along candidate scenic roadways, the development of new residences within resource lands could also result in scenic resource impacts. As indicated in Chapter 8, Scenic Resources, of the *Natural Resources and Hazards Report*, the amount of public land in a viewshed contributes to the potential for preservation of the viewshed because public land is more easily protected from development than private land. Development would be expected to occur on privately owned timber and agricultural land that is within the viewsheds of candidate scenic roadways and many other important County roads. Such development could include homes and accessory structures, roads, and new interior and exterior sources of lighting. Development in these areas, even at low densities, could result in potentially significant scenic resource impacts.

### ***Analysis of Relevant General Plan Update Policies***

Coastal Area Plans contain policies to ensure that new development does not block coastal views to the detriment of the public and to protect areas that are mapped as scenic. Local Coastal Programs also contain policies to protect natural landforms, such as natural contours, including slope, visible contours of hilltops and tree lines, bluffs and rock outcroppings, which have informed proposed new policies in the General Plan Update.

The General Plan Update land use diagram largely maintains existing resource and open space land use designations, which would serve to limit the development of forested and agricultural open space lands. In addition, in Conservation and Open Space Element, Scenic Resources, Policy SR-P1, Development in Identified Scenic Viewsheds, in combination with Implementation Measure SR-IM1, Mapping of Scenic Areas and Scenic Highways, would identify and map scenic areas and allow development within such lands only in a manner consistent with natural slopes and contours. Scenic viewsheds are not currently identified or mapped, and would be mapped as part of a public process as an implementation of the General Plan Update. Standard SR-S1, Development in Mapped Scenic Areas, requires that discretionary and ministerial development avoid visual disturbance of natural contours, hilltops, tree lines, forest landscapes, bluffs and rock outcroppings, to the maximum extent feasible. It further requires that roads and public utility corridors be as narrow as feasible and follow natural contours, natural features disturbed by construction be restored as close to natural condition as feasible, and prohibits new off-premise billboards.

The General Plan Update acknowledges the importance of existing resource and open space lands between communities. Conservation and Open Space Element, Open Space, Policy CO-P4, Community Separation, requires that separation of urbanized communities be maintained

through appropriate land use designations and zoning density, and requires avoidance of the merging of urban development boundaries of adjacent communities. Policy CO-P4X, Development Within Community Separation Areas, in combination with Standards CO-S6, Development in Community Separation Areas, and CO-S7, Subdivisions in Community Separation Areas, would establish development standards to minimize the view of new development within community separators and establish tools such as the permanent dedication of open space and clustering of development that would preserve to the greatest extent possible such community separator lands, while allowing some development compatible with surrounding properties, especially those used for agricultural pursuits.

In addition, one of the goals of the General Plan Update as stated in Conservation of Open Space Goal (CO-G1) is open spaces that distinguish and showcase the County's natural environment, including resource lands, without impacting livelihoods, profitable economic returns and ecological values.

As indicated above, there are several local candidate scenic highways specified in the California Streets and Highways Code, but no scenic highways are officially designated in Humboldt County. Policy SR-P3, Scenic Highway Protection, would establish a policy to protect the scenic quality of designated Scenic Highways, with standards for protection provided through the implementation of SR-S3, Scenic Highway Standards.

Although the General Plan Update would provide general policies and standards for development projects, it does not specifically identify the design elements that would be included in such standards (e.g., landscape earth forms, building architecture, façade treatments, or lighting fixtures), or the effectiveness of the design elements in reducing the potential visual impacts of the development. Policies in the General Plan Update require urban development to implement features that would reduce the potential impacts on views of scenic vistas; however, the development envisioned in the General Plan Update could permanently alter views, partially or wholly. In addition, the General Plan Update would allow development, subject to development standards, within community separators, which could permanently alter scenic views.

### ***Conclusion***

The policies, standards, and implementation measures described above would reduce impacts to scenic vistas and damage to scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock and outcroppings. A total of 1,721 housing units and 3.1 million square feet of commercial and industrial buildings are projected to be constructed countywide during the General Plan Update planning period. The majority of new residential, commercial, and industrial development projected to occur during the General Plan Update planning period is projected to occur within already urbanized areas or areas that been planned for urbanized development in the Humboldt Bay region as part of existing community or coastal plans. Implementation of scenic resources policies in the General Plan Update would ensure that projects are designed in a manner that would lessen significant impacts to scenic views in the County. Development could permanently change views of scenic vistas throughout Humboldt County. In addition, scenic roadways have not yet been identified and as a result, development consistent with the General Plan Update that permanently affects such roadways could occur prior to the development of a program for coordinated protection of scenic roads. Therefore, this impact is potentially significant.

### **Mitigation**

**Mitigation 3.16.3.1.a.** Standard SR-SXXX, Scenic Highway Map , shall be added to the General Plan Update to reduce potential adverse impacts to scenic highways that could be caused by ministerial projects until SR-IM1, Mapping of Scenic Areas and Scenic Highways, is implemented:

***SR-SXXX. Scenic Highway Map.** Until such time as a General Plan Scenic Highway Roadway Map is prepared and adopted, Humboldt County Highways listed in Sections 263.1 through 263.8 of the California Streets and Highways Code shall be considered to be Scenic Highways pursuant to Policy SR-P3, Scenic Highway Protection, and the County shall address the potential for significant impacts to scenic resources during ministerial and discretionary permit review.*

Implementation this mitigation measure would lessen impacts to some scenic resources resulting from development consistent with the General Plan Update; however, because scenic resources including Highways and viewsheds have not been mapped and are therefore not specifically identified, such impacts would remain **significant and unavoidable**.

### **Impact 3.16.3.2: Visual Quality and Community Character**

Implementation of the General Plan Update would result in increased development that could impact the visual quality and community character within the County.

This impact analysis addresses item "c" of the significance standards listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines as provided in Section 3.16.2 above. Pursuant to these standards, the proposed County General Plan Update would have a significant impact if it would:

- c) Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings.

3.16 Implementation of the General Plan Update could result in impacts to the visual quality and community character within the County through the construction of additional residential, commercial and industrial development, and the construction of roads and other infrastructure supporting such development, or the continued use of illegal billboards or the installation of new billboards. Unless carefully sited and designed, this development would have the potential to alter visual character or quality within and around communities.

Development consistent with the land use diagram could affect the visual character of existing communities. The most likely development types that could affect visual character of existing communities would include large subdivisions on undeveloped land or underdeveloped areas that are planned for significantly higher development density.

The following is a discussion of specific changes to community character that could occur as a result of the implementation of the General Plan Update land use diagram. Orick, South Eureka, McKinleyville, and Carlotta are highlighted in this analysis because each of these areas contains vacant land, typically comprised of an old industrial facility, which is planned for more intensive development as part of this General Plan Update. However, other areas within the County could also experience the construction of additional residential, commercial and industrial development that could alter views. However, changes to visual character for the areas evaluated below would likely be substantial.

### ***Orick***

Under the proposed General Plan Update, a 15-acre undeveloped parcel on the north side of the Redwood National and State Parks Thomas H. Kuchel Visitor Center in Orick will be re-designated from Commercial Recreation (CR) to Mixed Use (MU). Although many of the commercial uses allowable in the CR land use designation are also allowable in MU, multi-family residential uses at a density of up to 16 dwelling units per acre would now be allowable, subject to the availability of community wastewater service. The proposed General Plan Update land use diagram would allow for the potential development of this parcel with mixed uses at urban densities. Such development could change the character of this portion of Orick.

### ***South Eureka Urban Development Area***

The South Eureka Urban Development Area includes Cutten, Ridgewood, Bayview, and Rosemont. The Bayview and Rosemont areas have only limited undeveloped land, and new development would be expected to primarily occur as infill. The Ridgewood and Cutten areas contain substantial amounts of undeveloped land that was designated as part of the 1995 Eureka Community Plan for single-family residential use. These sites were identified in the Eureka Community Plan as the Robinson or Robinson-Dunn property (now referred to as the Forster-Gill Property), which consists of forest land located on the north side of Ridgewood Boulevard near Home Drive; McKay Tract (North, Mid, and South), which consists of forest land located east of Walnut Drive between Harris Street to the north and North Ridge Road to the south; Eggert (North and South), which consists of forest land between Ridgewood Drive and Elk River Road on either side of Eggert Road; and Slack and Winzler, which consists of forest land located west of the Forster-Gill Property and north of Westgate Drive.

Development of these parcels consistent with the proposed land use diagram and the 1995 Eureka Community Plan would replace forested areas with urban levels of development. Although gulch areas would be retained as open space, new houses, commercial structures, and roads with attendant utilities and lighting would be developed. The character of this area and the surrounding community would be permanently changed.

### ***McKinleyville Town Center Area***

Under the General Plan Update, approximately 44 acres in McKinleyville west and south of the McKinleyville Shopping Center is proposed to be redesignated from Commercial Services (CS) to MU. This proposed change would not necessarily increase the intensity of urban development in this area, but could change the ultimate mix of uses. The development of the McKinleyville Town Center area would substantially alter the existing visual character of the project site and its surroundings by replacing open fields containing interspersed trees and shrubs visible from adjacent areas with urban development. The McKinleyville Community Plan acknowledged the importance of the Town Center and states that it should contribute to the sense of community character, should respect the community's social, cultural and economic diversity, and should emphasize human scale and pedestrian orientation. The Community Plan established policies to guide the design of mixed-use development within the McKinleyville Town Center area and requires the adoption of a design review ordinance.

### ***Carlotta***

The former Pacific Lumber mill in Carlotta (also analyzed in Impact 3.16.3.1, Scenic Vistas) is currently planned industrial with remnant mill structures and is proposed to be redesignated MU. This former mill site is visible from State Route 36. The General Plan Update land use diagram

would allow the development of this parcel with mixed uses at urban densities. The MU designation would allow many commercial uses; multi-family residential uses at a density of up to 16 dwelling units per acre would now be allowable, subject to the availability of community wastewater service. Such development could change the character of this portion of the Carlotta area.

The General Plan Update encourages development in urban areas and seeks to reduce development within forested and agricultural land located between communities; these lands are referred to as community separators. These areas are subject to pressure to develop due to their proximity to developed areas and infrastructure. Development within community separators would degrade the individual identity of communities, and left unchecked, could create a corridor style of urbanization. However, development would be expected to occur within community separators on privately owned forest and agricultural land between communities. Development within these areas could include homes and accessory structures, roads, and even at low densities, could result in potentially significant impacts to community character.

### ***Analysis of Relevant General Plan Update Policies***

The General Plan Update Land Use Element, Urban Lands Chapter goals UL-G2, Design and Function, and UL-G4, Community Character, call for aesthetically appealing urban development areas that preserve and enhance existing community character and identity. A number of policies within the Urban Lands Chapter serve to lessen impacts to community character. Urban Land Policy UL-P5, Community Identity, directs the County to preserve community features that residents value and encourages new development that compliments or adds to community identity and character. Policy UL-P9, Historic Resources, encourages designated historic resources to be retained and restored to serve as focal points of neighborhoods and communities. The retention of historic resources within communities would serve to preserve the original character of communities; however, this policy is not mandatory because it only encourages, rather than requires, the retention and restoration of historic resources. It should be noted that the Cultural Resources Chapter of the Conservation and Open Space Element contains Policy CU-P1, Identification and Protection, would protect cultural resources found to be significant during ministerial and discretionary project review, including historic structures, from deterioration, loss, or destruction.

Policy UL-P11, Natural Amenities, encourages incorporation of natural amenities such as landmark trees and rock outcroppings, into their design, thereby retaining important features of neighborhoods and communities. However, this policy is not mandatory because it only encourages, rather than requires, the retention of natural amenities. In addition, neither this policy nor other policies or standards sufficiently define natural amenities, especially landmark trees. Policy UL-P12, Design Review, would require that development within designated Design Review overlay zones shall undergo design review consistent with an adopted Design Review Ordinance. In addition, Policy UL-P20, Landscaping, requires that all designs shall use landscaping to enhance the appearance of neighborhoods, control erosion, conserve water, improve air quality and improve pedestrian and vehicular safety. However, this policy does not specify if the intent is to use common species or native species.

Police SR-P1, Development in Mapped Scenic Areas described in Impact 3.16.3.1, Scenic Vistas and Scenic Resources, above is important to the protection of visual character within the unincorporated area. Scenic Resources Goal SR-G1, Conservation of Scenic Resources, calls for the protection of high-value scenic forest, agriculture, river, and coastal areas within the County. Standard SR-S1, Development in Mapped Scenic Areas, specifies that discretionary and

ministerial development shall avoid visual disturbance of natural contours, hilltops, tree lines, forest landscapes, bluffs and rock outcroppings, to the maximum extent feasible; that roads and public utility corridors shall be narrow as possible and follow natural contours; that natural features disturbed for construction purposes shall be restored to as close to natural condition as feasible; and that the construction of new off-premise billboards is prohibited. Conservation and Open Space Element, Open Space, Policy CO-P4X, Development Within Community Separation Areas, in combination with Standards CO-S6, Development in Community Separation Areas, and CO-S7, Subdivisions in Community Separation Areas, identify the need to protect community separators and set forth several development standards such as standards for tree removal, cut and fill, landscaping, building color, and clustering.

Proposed policies, standards, and implementation measures relating to scenic roadways would also limit potential degradation of the visual character or quality within and around communities that could occur because of the implementation of the proposed General Plan Update. Policy SR-P3, Scenic Highway Protection, would establish a policy to protect the scenic quality of designated Scenic Highways. The Scenic Highways would be protected through the implementation of SR-S3, Scenic Highways Standards. Scenic highway standards would establish a visual buffer of not more than 200 feet adjacent to mapped Scenic Highways, within which grading and construction would be required to occur in a manner harmonious with surrounding development and the natural terrain. In addition, utilities shall be placed underground wherever feasible, and potentially unsightly features shall be screened or located in areas not visible from the scenic roads.

The continued use of illegal billboards and the installation of new billboards could also degrade the visual character or quality within and around communities. Policy SR-P6 Term of Off-Premises Billboards and Prohibition, would limit the term of new and existing off-premise billboards by ordinance to provide for removal, and prohibit the construction of new off-premise billboards along mapped Scenic Highways and coastal views. Policies SR-P9, Removal of Illegal Billboards, and SR-P8, **Removal** or Relocation of Billboards on Public Lands and Right-of-Ways in the Northwestern Pacific Railroad Right-of-Way, supports efforts of public agencies, such as the North Coast Railroad Authority and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, to remove or relocate billboards from their right-of-way between Fields Landing and Arcata on lands under their control.

### ***Conclusion***

Implementation of the General Plan Update land use diagram would result in substantial changes to the visual character of developed communities, especially those communities listed above. These areas would experience urban levels of development that would change their appearance and character. While urban uses are planned primarily in areas that already contain urban development, the introduction of additional urban development in these areas would irreversibly alter the visual character of these areas.

The General Plan Update and Community Plans contain policies intended to avoid and minimize adverse impacts to visual character. These policies emphasize land use compatibility and the preservation of resource and open space areas. Nonetheless, implementation of the land use diagram would alter the visual character of urban areas and would be an irreversible consequence of General Plan Update buildout. In addition, while the proposed General Plan Update does discourage the extension of urban services into community separators, it does not prohibit development at higher densities within open spaces between communities, and would therefore allow growth between communities that could diminish the value that these open

spaces provide to community character. Therefore, impacts to visual character or quality of unincorporated communities and their surroundings would be significant.

### ***Mitigation***

**Mitigation 3.16.3.2.a.** The following policy would lessen potential impacts to natural amenities that are important to visual character:

***BR-Px. Landmark Trees.*** *Establish a program to identify and protect landmark trees, including trees that exhibit notable characteristics in terms of their size, age, rarity, shape or location.*

### ***Level of Significance after Mitigation***

The effectiveness of Standards CO-S6 & CO-S7, Development and Subdivisions within Community Separator Areas, would depend on landowner participation, the extent of which cannot be predicted. Consequently, it cannot be determined if this program would be effective in substantially changing the development pattern in community separator areas. Therefore, this impact is significant and unavoidable.

The implementation of the above mitigation measures identified above would lessen impacts to community separators, but not to a less than significant level. No other feasible mitigation measures are available to further reduce impacts to community separators or further reduce impacts to the visual character of existing communities that would result from additional planned urban development that would permanently alter community character. This impact remains **significant and unavoidable**.

### **Impact 3.16.3.3: Sources of Light and Glare**

Implementation of the General Plan Update would result in increased development that would be new sources of light that could have adverse impacts day or nighttime views.

This impact analysis addresses item "d" of the significance standards listed in Appendix G of the CEQA Guidelines as provided in Section 3.16.2 above. Pursuant to these standards, the proposed County General Plan Update would have a significant impact if it would:

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

Urbanized areas of Humboldt County currently generate significant sources of light, glare, or light trespass into the night sky. New urban development planned as part of the General Plan Update would likely be located within or adjacent to these existing urban communities and would increase sources of light, glare, or light trespass into the night sky. In addition, development proposed under the General Plan Update could increase the amount of light in the County due to new street lighting, signage, floodlights, security lighting, private residential lights, automobile lights, and other similar sources.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (previously Department of Fish and Game) submitted a comment letter regarding the General Plan Update Notice of Preparation on July 17, 2007 letter (comment letters are available at the General Plan Update website at <http://www.co.humboldt.ca.us/gpu/documentsdraft1publiccomments.aspx>) indicating that

adverse ecological effects of artificial night lighting can occur to terrestrial and aquatic resources such as fish, birds, mammals, and plants (Comment Letter W-96, Department of Fish and Game, 2007, page 16)). Some of these effects include altered migration patterns and reproductive rates, changes in foraging behavior and predator-prey interactions, altered wildlife species richness and community composition, and phototaxis (attraction and movement towards light). A significant amount of the future development potentially allowed by the General Plan Update could take place on land close to resource areas with significant wildlife habitat values. (Comment Letter W-96, Department of Fish and Wildlife, 2007, page 16).

The General Plan Update would allow development near wetland and other streamside management areas and within forest land and other sensitive habitat areas that support insects, mammals, birds, fish, reptiles, and other wildlife species. Sensitive habitat areas are present in urban and rural areas. New development could introduce new exterior lighting such as street lights, exterior and safety lighting, or aviation hazard/warning lighting that, for example, would be installed on tall structures. Such lighting could have the effect of altering wildlife behaviors, foraging areas, and breeding cycles.

The Humboldt County Zoning Regulations contain general exterior lighting requirements for new development within several combining zones such as the "D" Design Review and Planned Development (P) combining zones, as well as exterior lighting performance standards for several uses such as for Cottage Industry, and industrial uses. These regulations require that new lighting be compatible with the surrounding setting and not be directed beyond the boundaries of the parcel.

### ***Analysis of Relevant General Plan Update Policies***

The General Plan Update includes policies, standards and implementation measures that are intended to reduce impacts from nighttime lighting and glare. The creation and impact of new light sources is addressed as it relates to street lighting in the Community Infrastructure and Services Element. Policy IS-P25, Street Lighting, requires that street lighting be provided if there is a need to improve public safety in urban and suburban areas and Village Centers. Standard IS-S10, Street Lighting, specifies that streetlights be designed to block upward transmission of light, avoid light trespass, and achieve design illumination in prescribed areas with limited scatter. Implementation Measure IS-IM30, Street Lighting, directs the preparation of street lighting standards that allow for community-specific priorities and standards and that specify when streetlights are required based on intersection type and functional classification, and directs the establishment of lighting criteria, considering AASHTO and International Dark-Sky Association guidelines. Conservation and Open Space, Scenic Resources, Standard SR-SX, Light and Glare, requires that new outdoor lighting be compatible with the existing setting, and that exterior lighting fixtures and street standards (both for residential and commercial areas) be fully shielded, and designed and installed to minimize off-site lighting and direct light within the property boundaries.

### ***Conclusion***

Implementation of scenic resources policies in the General Plan Update would ensure that street lighting is installed in a manner that would lessen significant light or glare impacts. For other development, however, light pollution remains an issue. To address this potential adverse impact, additional mitigation will be required. The following mitigation measure addresses the impacts related to light and glare:

### **Mitigation**

**Mitigation 3.16.3.3.a** . In order to minimize light trespass, light pollution, and glare, new development and projects that would make significant parking lot improvements or add new lighting would be required to prepare a lighting plan. The following new program would need to be added to the Scenic Resources Chapter of the Conservation and Open Space Element:

***SR-IMX Lighting Design Guidelines.** Amend the Zoning Regulations to include lighting design guidelines for discretionary projects. Require new development and projects that would make significant parking lot improvements or add new exterior lighting to submit a lighting plan consistent with these guidelines. Lighting design guidelines should address:*

- A. *Intensity – Acceptable standards shall be defined for various land uses and development types specifying the maximum allowable total lumens per acre.*
- B. *Directional Control – Standards shall be developed to minimize the upward transmission and intensity of light at various distances from its source through the use of full-cutoff lighting, downward casting, shielding, visors etc.*
- C. *Signage – Standards with respect to illuminated signs shall be developed that prohibit or limit the size, spacing, design, upward transmission of light, and hours of operation. In addition, signs should be white or light colored lettering on dark backgrounds.*
- D. *Night Lighting – Hours of operation for various uses shall be specified in order to prohibit all night lighting except when warranted for public safety reasons. On demand lighting shall be encouraged.*
- E. *Incentives – The County shall develop incentives for residents and businesses encouraging the conversion of existing lighting sources to compliant ones.*
- F. *Enforcement – These standards shall be incorporated into the County Development Code and design review process for new development.*

### **Level of Significance after Mitigation**

Implementation of the above mitigation measure would reduce adverse changes to scenic resources and ecological impacts to wildlife resulting from additional sources of lighting that would occur from implementation of the proposed General Plan Update. However, because some of the additional sources of lighting could increase as a result of ministerial projects, it may not be reasonable to assume this impact would be reduced to a less-than significant level. Therefore, this would be a **significant unavoidable impact**.