

5.1 AESTHETICS

This chapter describes the regulatory framework and existing conditions on the project site related to aesthetics, and the potential impacts of the project on aesthetics.

5.1.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

5.1.1.1 REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

This section summarizes key State and County regulations and programs related to aesthetics in Butte County.

State Regulations

California Building Code

The 2019 Edition of the California Building Code, Part 2 of Title 24 in the California Code of Regulations (CCR), is based on the 2018 International Building Code and combines three types of building standards from three different origins:

- Building standards that have been adopted by State agencies without change from building standards contained in the International Building Code.
- Building standards that have been adopted and adapted from the International Building Code to meet California conditions.
- Building standards, authorized by the California legislature, which constitute extensive additions not covered by the International Building Code that have been adopted to address particular California concerns.

The California Building Code also includes standards for outdoor lighting that are intended to improve energy efficiency, and to reduce light pollution and glare by regulating light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls.

California Scenic Highway Program

California's Scenic Highway Program was created by the State legislature in 1963. Its purpose is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors through special conservation treatment. The State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code, Sections 260 through 263.

When a city or county nominates an eligible scenic highway for official designation, it must identify and define the scenic corridor of the highway. Scenic corridors consist of land that is visible from the highway right-of-way and consists primarily of scenic and natural features. Topography, vegetation, viewing distance, and/or jurisdictional lines determine the corridor boundaries. The city or county must also adopt ordinances, zoning, and/or planning policies to preserve the scenic quality of the corridor or document such regulations that already exist in various portions of local codes. These ordinances and/or policies make up

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the Corridor Protection Program. The status of a proposed State scenic highway changes from “eligible” to “officially designated” when the local governing body applies to the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) for scenic highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a Scenic Highway.

Local Regulations

Butte County General Plan 2030

The following policies are included in the existing General Plan regarding aesthetics. The numbering is from the existing General Plan (see web address to existing plan) and therefore may not be consecutive.

Land Use Element

- Goal LU-3 Create communities where there is a sense of well-being where families and neighbors can socialize, interact, and play.
 - LU-P3.1 The County shall encourage connectivity and a sense of community in all newly developed neighborhoods.
 - LU-P3.2 Newly developed neighborhoods shall include parks and recreation facilities. Sidewalks, bike paths, and other routes shall provide circulation to surrounding areas.
 - LU-P3.3 Newly developed neighborhoods shall create a safe environment by providing adequate lighting and clearly marked crosswalks.

Conservation and Open Space Element

- Goal COS-17 Maintain and enhance the quality of Butte County’s scenic and visual resources.
 - COS-P17.1 Views of Butte County’s scenic resources, including water features, unique geologic features, and wildlife habitat areas, shall be maintained.
 - COS-P17.2 Ridgeline development near scenic resources shall be limited via the adoption of specific development guidelines in order to minimize visual impacts.
- Goal COS-18 Protect and enhance scenic areas adjacent to and visible from highways for enjoyment by residents and visitors.
 - COS-P18.1 The County shall designate scenic corridors based on careful consideration of the following factors:
 - a. Relationship to the scenic highway system, including proximity to urban population centers, gateways, integration with other highways and scenic highways and access to major recreation areas.
 - b. Safety characteristics, including road surface and alignment, shoulder width, traffic levels, number of intersections, access points, turnouts, and rest areas.
 - c. Scenic characteristics, including vista points, geologic resources, native plant and animal species, waterways, historic resources and agricultural, timber and recreation uses.

- d. Government policies, including public lands, eligibility for State scenic highway designation, and consistency with other Butte County General Plan 2030 elements.
- e. Economic impacts on properties affected by a scenic highway designation.
 - o COS-P18.2 To enhance safety on scenic highways, the County shall limit access, using existing access where feasible, and limit encroachment permits.
 - o COS-P18.3 The County shall require utility companies to choose the least conspicuous locations for distribution lines, so as to avoid impacts to scenic corridors where there is reasonable choice.

Butte County Outdoor Lighting Standards

Chapter 24, Zoning, of the Butte County Municipal Code establishes the Butte County Zoning Ordinance, which includes standards for outdoor lighting in residential areas to reduce light trespass and glare, to protect the health, property, and well-being of County residents and visitors. Section 24-67, Standards, requires that all outdoor lighting in residential areas “be located, adequately shielded, and directed such that no direct light falls outside the property line, or into the public right-of-way.”

5.1.1.2 EXISTING CONDITIONS

Butte County possesses numerous scenic resources, many of which are found in the natural areas within the unincorporated county. These resources enhance the quality of life for Butte County residents and are a significant attraction that brings tourists to the region. This section reviews and summarizes Butte County’s key scenic resources, which are mapped on Figure 5.1-1, *Scenic Resources*.

Natural Scenic Resources

Butte County encompasses an outstanding variety of natural vistas and landscapes. The following section describes the significant scenic resources found in the county, as appeared in the existing Butte County General Plan. These various resources are mapped in Figure 5.1-1 and include the following:

- **Table Mountain Spring Floral Area.** The lava flow that now tops Table Mountain brings an explosion of color each year in the form of native wildflowers. Over 3,300 acres of North Table Mountain is protected as an ecological reserve by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- **Central Buttes.** Rising from the valley floor, these geologic features are remnants of the surrounding landform that eroded around them over the millennia. Many of these buttes are visible from State Routes 99, 149, and 70.
- **Sacramento River and its Riparian Corridor.** Some of the county’s richest habitat and most beautiful views are found along the Sacramento River and its associated riparian corridor. State and federal agencies have acquired significant portions of the riparian corridor to help protect this resource.

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- **Butte Creek Canyon.** The Skyway provides views to a dramatic and panoramic display of the topographic and geologic features of Butte Creek Canyon. A portion of this canyon is protected as an ecological reserve by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife.
- **Lake Oroville.** Lake Oroville provides many scenic vistas from several highways that traverse its shores, while providing an assortment of recreational activities for residents and visitors.
- **Philbrook Lake.** Pacific Gas and Electric Company owns the Philbrook Reservoir, a tranquil mountain lake nestled between several scenic mountain outcroppings.
- **Feather Falls Scenic Area Features.** The Feather Falls Scenic Area, part of the Plumas National Forest, includes granite domes, such as Bald Rock, and waterfalls, such as Feather Falls and Seven Falls.
- **Seasonal Scenic Resources.** Many tourists visit the orchards in the valley areas of Butte County during the early spring when almonds and other trees are blossoming.

Scenic Water Resources

Butte County has an abundance of water resources that contribute to the county's visual character. These include both linear waterways and surface water bodies. While some of these resources are included among those described in the Natural Scenic Resources Section, this section provides additional information on those and other important scenic water resources in the county.

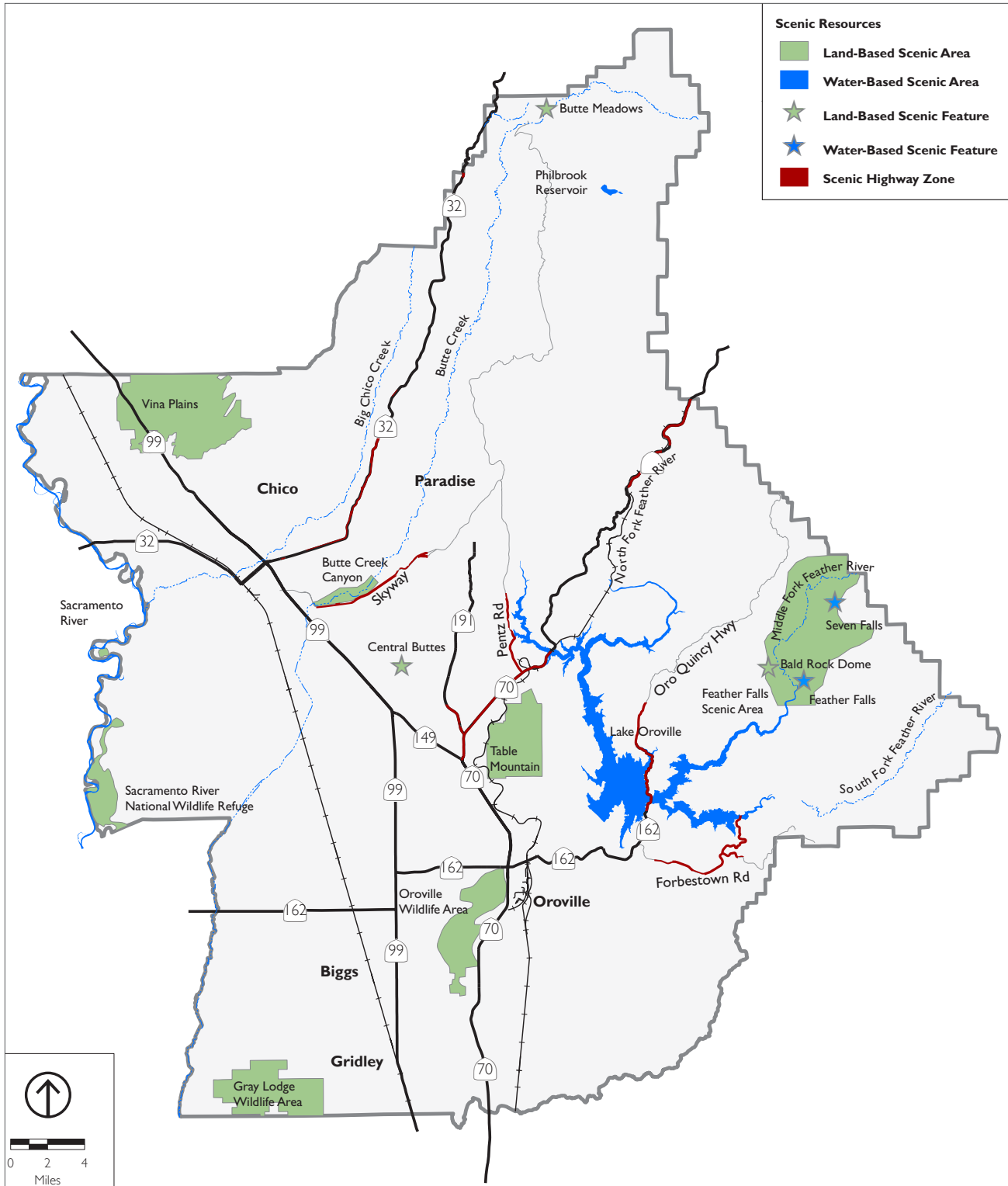
Rivers, Streams, and Creeks

Butte County is part of the Sacramento River watershed and is bounded by the Sacramento River on its west side. Numerous streams and rivers drain runoff from the Sierra Nevada and Cascade Mountains southwesterly across the county into the Sacramento River. Of these waterways, the most significant are Butte Creek; Big Chico Creek; and the North, Middle, and South Forks of the Feather River. These rivers pass through rugged terrain, which often obstructs visual access to the water. Nevertheless, they are significant visual features within the county. A 77.6-mile portion of the Middle Fork of the Feather River has federal Wild and Scenic River status (NWSRS 2021).

Surface Water Bodies

Also, significant as visual features are Butte County's lakes and reservoirs. Few natural lakes exist in the county, although numerous reservoirs have been built to provide domestic and irrigation water, hydroelectric power, recreation, flood control, and watershed management. The most visually significant of the county's water bodies are Lake Oroville, which covers over 15,500 surface acres and has 167 miles of shoreline, along with Thermalito Forebay and Afterbay. Other important reservoirs in the county include Concow Reservoir, Paradise Lake, Magalia Reservoir, Philbrook Lake, Lake Madrone, Ponderosa Reservoir, and Lake Wyandotte. Figure 5.10-4, *Surface Water Features*, in Section 5.10, *Hydrology and Water Resources*, maps the locations of these water bodies.

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Source: PlaceWorks, Butte County General Plan 2030 Setting & Trends Report, 2007.
 Butte County Geographic Information Systems; US Forest Service.

Figure 5.1-1
 Scenic Resources

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Scenic Highways

This section describes various scenic highways and corridors, which are considered so either by virtue of their official designation by the State, through their identification as a County Scenic Highway in the General Plan 2030 Conservation and Open Space Element, or through application of the Scenic Highway (-SH) Overlay Zone.

Some of the scenic highways and corridors in Butte County traverse State-owned lands, where development poses little threat to the viewshed. Others pass through areas that are privately held, such as portions of the following: Forbestown Road east of Lake Oroville above 2,000-foot elevation; Highway 162 on the south side of Lake Oroville and north of the North Fork of the Feather River; Highway 70 north of Oroville and west/north of Table Mountain; and Highway 149 south of the Central Buttes and west of Table Mountain.

State Scenic Highways

Although there are no officially designated State Scenic Highways in Butte County, Highway 149 near Highway 70, and Wicks Corner is considered an eligible State Scenic Highway.

County Scenic Highways and Corridors

The General Plan 2030 Conservation and Open Space Element recognizes Highway 70 north of the Highway 149 intersection and a portion of Highway 32 south of Forest Ranch as county scenic highways.

Scenic Highway (-SH) Zoning

The Butte County Zoning Ordinance uses the Scenic Highway Overlay Zone (-SH) to establish standards to preserve the natural aesthetic qualities of areas visible from roadways designated as scenic highways by the State of California or the Butte County Board of Supervisors. Roads subject to the -SH overlay zone are illustrated on Figure 5.1-1. As shown on the figure, these include portions of Highway 32 north of Chico; Highway 70 north of the Highway 149 intersection; the Skyway with its expansive views of the Northern Sacramento Valley and Coast Range; the southern portions of Highway 191 and Pentz Road; the portion of Highway 162 along Lake Oroville; Forbestown Road; and Lumpkin Road.

The -SH Overlay Zone allows the same permitted and conditionally permitted uses as the base zone, subject to the requirements of the Overlay Zone, including development standards and findings for approval. Development within the -SH Overlay Zone is intended to feature high-quality architectural design, preserve views from the highway, and maintain existing topographic features on the site. When approving a development within the -SH Overlay Zone, the review authority considers the architectural design of the proposed structures and how the project will maintain existing views of scenic resources as viewed from the public right-of-way. The review authority also considers how the site will be graded to preserve natural features on the site and whether the landscaping associated with the project complements the scenic qualities of the site and surrounding areas.

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Light and Glare

Light pollution refers to all forms of unwanted light in the night sky, including glare, light trespass, sky glow, and overlighting. Views of the night sky are an important part of the natural environment and are particularly important for a rural to semi-rural area, such as Butte County. Excessive light and glare can also be visually disruptive to humans and nocturnal animal species, and often indicate an unnecessarily high level of energy consumption. Current sources of light in Butte County include exterior lighting on residential and commercial buildings, streetlights, and billboards and other signage.

Current occurrences of glare are a result of the sun or street lighting reflecting off of large expanses of concrete or other light-colored surfaces, such as parking lots, wide streets, and warehouse rooftops. Glass and other reflective surfaces on buildings can also be a source of glare.

5.1.2 STANDARDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The proposed project would result in a significant aesthetic impact if it would:

1. Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
2. Substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
3. Substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings. (Public views of the site are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point). If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?
4. Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.
5. In combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, result in cumulative impacts with respect to aesthetics.

5.1.3 PROPOSED GENERAL PLAN POLICIES

The following relevant policies and actions of the Butte County General Plan Update may reduce the potential impacts on aesthetics as a result of implementation of the proposed project.

Conservation and Open Space

- **COS-P18.1:** Views of Butte County's scenic resources, including water features, unique geologic features, and wildlife habitat areas, shall be maintained.
- **COS-P18.2:** Ridgeline development near scenic resources shall be limited via the adoption of specific development guidelines to minimize visual impacts.
- **COS-A18.1:** Adopt development guidelines that mitigate the impacts of ridgeline development near scenic resources.

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- **COS-P19.1:** The County shall designate scenic corridors based on careful consideration of the following factors:
 - a. Relationship to the scenic highway system, including proximity to urban population centers, gateways, integration with other highways and scenic highways and access to major recreation areas.
 - b. Safety characteristics, including road surface and alignment, shoulder width, traffic levels, number of intersections, access points, turnouts, and rest areas.
 - c. Scenic characteristics, including vista points, geologic resources, native plant and animal species, waterways, historic resources and agricultural, timber, and recreation uses.
 - d. Government policies, including public lands, eligibility for State scenic highway designation, and consistency with other Butte County General Plan 2030 elements.
 - e. Economic impacts on properties affected by a scenic highway designation.
- **COS-P19.2:** To enhance safety on scenic highways, the County shall limit access, using existing access where feasible, and limit encroachment permits.
- **COS-P19.3:** The County shall require utility companies to choose the least conspicuous locations for distribution lines, to avoid impacts to scenic corridors where there is reasonable choice.
- **COS-A19.1:** Review the scenic highways program, considering the potential designation of new scenic highways, removal of existing scenic highway designations, and modifications to the scenic highway standards.

Land Use

- **LU-P2.3:** The County shall support planning efforts in unincorporated communities by providing knowledge, time, and materials to community efforts.
- **LU-P2.4:** As resources become available, the County shall engage willing and interested unincorporated communities in community planning processes to set a community vision and develop Area Plans. Urban growth boundaries, community boundaries, and spheres of influence may be developed as part of such processes.
- **LU-P4.1:** The integrity and stability of existing residential neighborhoods shall be promoted and preserved.
- **LU-P14.2:** New urban development shall be primarily located in or immediately adjoining already urbanized areas.
- **LU-P13.1:** Maintain the Chico Area Greenline, which shall be located as shown on Figure LU-7.
- **LU-P13.2:** Should a dispute arise, or ambiguity appear as to the exact location of the Chico Area Greenline, apply the following rules in determining the exact location of such line:
 - a. The Greenline is specific; large scale maps certified by the Development Services Director shall be consulted in the event of a dispute.

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- b. Where the Greenline is indicated as approximately following a street, alley, railroad right-of-way, creek or channel lines, the centerline of such street, alley, railroad right-of-way, creek or channel lines shall be construed to be the location of the Greenline.
 - c. Where the Greenline is indicated as approximately following a lot line, such lot line shall be construed to be the location of the Greenline.
 - d. With respect to property that is not subdivided, and where the Chico Area Greenline bisects a lot or parcel, the location of the Greenline, unless the same is indicated by dimensions shown upon the Official Chico Area Greenline Map, shall be determined by the use of the scale appearing on the Official Chico Area Greenline Map.
- **LU-P13.3:** Recognize the Chico Area Greenline as the boundary between the “Urban Side of the Chico Area Greenline” and the “Agricultural Side of the Chico Area Greenline.”
 - **LU-P13.4:** Allow residential land uses on the Agricultural Side of the Chico Area Greenline only within those areas designated for Very Low Density Residential and Rural Residential use on the Official Chico Area Greenline Map shown in Figure LU-7.
 - **LU-P13.5:** Except as provided for in Policy LU-P13.4, require that all land use on the Agricultural Side of the Chico Area Greenline consist solely of agricultural land uses as provided by the “Agriculture” and “Agriculture Services” designations.
 - **LU-P13.6:** Guide land uses on the Urban Side of the Chico Area Greenline by the policies of the Land Use Element and the applicable urban land use designation as contained in the Land Use Element.
 - **LU-P13.7:** Conserve and protect for agricultural use the lands in the Chico area that are situated on the Agricultural Side of the Chico Area Greenline
 - **LU-P13.8:** Accommodate future urban and suburban growth that occurs in the Chico area of Butte County on lands situated in the Urban Side of Chico Area Greenline.

5.1.4 IMPACT DISCUSSION

AES-1	The proposed project would not have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista.
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General Plan 2040

Development allowed by the proposed project could occur within areas that would affect scenic vistas. In particular, development in valley and foothill areas that are visible parts of vistas from various vantage points within the County could adversely affect scenic vistas. The only land use changes associated considered with the proposed project are in the Upper Ridge Community Plan, as shown in Figure 3-4 proposed Upper Ridge Community Plan land use changes.

The proposed project includes goals and policies intended to protect scenic resources, direct new development to urbanized areas, and preserve agriculture and open spaces areas.

Conservation and Open Space Goal COS-18 is to maintain and enhance the quality of Butte County's scenic and visual resources. In support of this goal, Policy COS-P18.1 requires that views of Butte County's scenic resources, including water features, unique geologic features, and wildlife habitat areas, be maintained. Policy COS-P18.2 limits development along scenic ridgelines in Butte County for the purpose of protecting and enhancing the aesthetic qualities of ridgeline areas, and to preserve natural features that contribute to the county's scenic resources and unique sense of place.

The land use map in the General Plan 2040 Land Use Element, as well as its supporting policies under Goal LU-1, conserve large areas for open space and agricultural uses and focus development within existing urbanized areas and unincorporated communities. Policy LU-P14.2 requires that new urban development be primarily located in or immediately adjoining already urbanized areas. In addition, Goal LU-13 and its supporting policies maintain the Chico Area Greenline, which acts as an urban growth boundary and limits urban development from extending westward from the Chico area. More detailed information about the preservation of open space and agricultural land in its existing character is provided in Section 5.2, *Agriculture and Forestry Resources*, of this environment impact report (EIR).

Together, these goals and policies would reduce potential scenic vista impacts from the proposed project to a less-than-significant level.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: AES-1 would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Upper Ridge Community Plan

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the Upper Ridge Community Plan would increase development potential in the Upper Ridge community with 28 parcels redesignated from Retail and Office to Mixed-use land uses in the Old Magalia and Magalia Center neighborhoods.

The Upper Ridge Community Plan Area consists of open spaces, which serve as a scenic resource. Most notably would be Paradise Lake and Magalia Reservoirs (County of Butte 2022). The General Plan Update includes goals, policies, and actions in the Conservation and Open Space Element and Land Use Element, which would protect scenic resources. Specifically, Policy COS-P18.1 requires that views of Butte County's scenic resources, including water features, unique geologic features, and wildlife habitat areas, be maintained. As well as Policy LU-P14.2 requires that new urban development be primarily located in or immediately adjoining already urbanized areas.

Together, these goals and policies would reduce potential scenic vista impacts from the proposed project to a less-than-significant level.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: AES-1 would be less than significant.

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Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

AES-2	The proposed project would not substantially damage scenic resources, including, but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway.
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General Plan 2040

There are no State-designated scenic highways in Butte County; however, a portion of Highway 70 is designated as an eligible scenic highway (Caltrans 2022). Highway 70 would be maintained as County-designated scenic highways under the General Plan Update.

Development under the General Plan Update could occur within areas that would affect County-designated scenic highways. The County's Municipal Code Section 24-42, Scenic Highway Overlay Zone, development within 350 linear feet of a scenic highway would be covered by development standards. Furthermore, the General Plan Update includes goals, policies, and actions that would preserve the views from scenic highways into the future.

In addition, Conservation and Open Space Element Goal COS-19 would protect and enhance scenic areas adjacent to and visible from highways for enjoyment by residents and visitors. This goal is supported by Policy COS-P19.1 and Action COS-A19.1, which instruct the County to review its scenic highways program and consider designating new scenic corridors based on a consideration of factors such as an area's scenic characteristics, including vista points, geologic resources, native plant and animal species, waterways, historic resources, agricultural, timber, and recreation uses. Furthermore, Policy COS-P19.3 requires utility companies to choose the least conspicuous locations for distribution lines, so as to avoid impacts to scenic corridors where there is reasonable choice.

Together, these goals and policies in the General Plan Update and the regulations in the County's Municipal Code would reduce potential scenic vista impacts from the proposed project to a less-than-significant level.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: AES-2 would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

Upper Ridge Community Plan

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the Upper Ridge Community Plan would increase development potential in the Upper Ridge community with 28 parcels redesignated from Retail and Office to Mixed-use land uses in the Old Magalia and Magalia Center neighborhoods.

According to the California Scenic Highway Mapping System, administered by Caltrans, there are no state-designated scenic highways within the Upper Ridge Community Plan (Caltrans 2022). The nearest designated state scenic highway is Highway 70, which is approximately seven miles east of the Upper Ridge Community Plan Area. Given the distance, varying topography, and existing development, implementation of the proposed project would not degrade views of Highway 70, and no impact would occur.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: AES-2 would have no impact.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

AES-3	The proposed project would not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings. The proposed project would alter but not conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality.
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General Plan 2040

Butte County's existing visual character comes from its varied topography, open space areas, waterbodies, and unique landforms, as well as the character of its agricultural uses and rural, suburban, and urban neighborhoods. Implementation of the General Plan Update would allow ongoing growth and redevelopment in Butte County's established community areas, as well as development in areas that are currently vacant and undeveloped.

There are two primary ways in which the General Plan Update could influence the future visual character and quality of Butte County. First, development on a significant amount of land that is currently undeveloped could result in a significant change to the visual character and quality of the County. The second way that the General Plan Update could affect the visual character and quality of Butte County is through a change in the form and appearance of new development within existing neighborhoods.

The General Plan Update includes a range of goals and policies that seek to direct growth into already-urbanized areas, support the visual qualities and character of the County, and achieve a balance between allowing new development and preserving Butte County's valued open spaces and scenic resources.

As discussed, Conservation and Open Space Goal COS-18 and its supporting policies work to maintain and enhance the quality of Butte County's scenic and visual resources. In addition, the land use map in the Land Use Element, its supporting policies under Goal LU-1, Policy LU-P 14.2, and Goal LU-13 and its supporting policies preserve large areas for open space and agricultural uses and focus development within existing urbanized areas and unincorporated communities.

Development under the General Plan Update would avoid significant impacts on the visual character of existing communities due to Policy LU-P4.1, which requires that the integrity and stability of existing residential neighborhoods be promoted and preserved. In addition, the Land Use Element supports community planning efforts that would preserve the character of these communities through Policy LU-

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P2.3, which supports planning efforts in unincorporated communities by providing knowledge, time, and materials to community efforts, and Policy LU-P2.4, which engages unincorporated communities in community planning processes to set a community vision, develop Area Plans, and potentially urban growth boundaries, community boundaries, and spheres of influence (SOIs).

Upper Ridge Community Plan

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the Upper Ridge Community Plan would increase development potential in the Upper Ridge community with 28 parcels redesignated from Retail and Office to Mixed-use land uses in the Old Magalia and Magalia Center neighborhoods.

The Upper Ridge Community Plan Area is composed of eight distinct neighborhoods with open spaces within and adjacent to the neighborhoods. Each neighborhood in the Plan Area has a unique community character influenced by a variety of factors such as access points, geography, land uses, building types, development densities, and street characteristics. These eight neighborhoods include Old Magalia, Lower Pines, Central Skyway, Carnegie Colter, Coutlenc, Fire Haven, Steiffer, and De Sabla, Humbug, and Niemshew. Open Space and Recreation areas include Paradise Lake, Coutolenc Park, Magalia Reservoir, Lake De Sabla, Magalia Community Park, and Paradise Pines Property Owners Association (POA) recreation center. The residential zones proposed in the Upper Ridge Community would not substantially change the existing visual character in the Old Magalia and Magila Center currently contain some residential and commercial uses, the proposed plan would increase residential areas.

The General Plan Update includes goals, policies, and actions in the Conservation and Open Space Element and Land Use Element, which would protect the existing visual character when introducing new development. Conservation and Open Space Goal COS-18 and its supporting policies work to maintain and enhance the quality of Butte County's scenic and visual resources. Specifically, Policy COS-P18.1 states views of Butte County's scenic resources, including water features, unique geologic features, and wildlife habitat areas, shall be maintained. In addition, Policy LU-P4.1 ensures the integrity and stability of existing residential neighborhoods shall be promoted and preserved.

Together, these goals and policies set a framework that would balance open space preservation with new development allowed under the General Plan Update and would ensure that new development preserves the visual character and quality of Butte County. The impact to visual character and quality would therefore be less than significant.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: AES-3 would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

AES-4 The proposed project would not create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

General Plan 2040

Development under the General Plan Update could increase the amount of light and glare through the installation of exterior lighting on new residential and commercial development. However, the Butte County Building Code and Zoning Ordinance regulate light power and brightness, shielding, and sensor controls, and require light fixtures to be designed and sited so as to minimize light pollution, glare, and light trespass into adjoining properties.

Upper Ridge Community Plan

As discussed in Chapter 3, *Project Description*, the Upper Ridge Community Plan would increase development potential in the Upper Ridge community with 28 parcels redesignated from Retail and Office to Mixed-use land uses in the Old Magalia and Magalia Center neighborhoods.

The redesignation of the 28 parcels would not substantially increase sources of light or glare as the current designations are retail and office already produce light and glare. Due to the existence of light and glare from the existing commercial and office uses of the parcels, and the commercial and residential uses surrounding the project site, the Upper Ridge Community Plan would not significantly add to the creation of nighttime light and glare. Moreover, Butte’s Municipal Code, Section 24-64, New development, sets requirements for new development regarding outdoor lighting. Section 24-66, Compliance with lighting standards, sets light fixture requirements in buildings.

Therefore, the General Plan Update would have a less-than-significant impact related to light and glare.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: AES-4 would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

5.1.5 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

AES-5 The proposed project, in combination with past, present, and reasonably foreseeable projects, would not result in less-than-significant cumulative impacts with respect to aesthetics.

General Plan 2040 and Upper Ridge Community Plan

The General Plan Update could result in changes to the visual character and quality of Butte County through development of undeveloped areas and/or changes to the character of existing communities. However,

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goals, policies, and actions in the proposed General Plan Update, combined with other State and local regulations, would reduce project-level aesthetic impacts to a less-than-significant level.

When combined with the overall growth trends within Butte County and adjacent counties, the conversion of the region's visual quality from a rural, agricultural character to a more urban feel could result in a cumulatively significant aesthetic impact. However, within the timeframe of the General Plan Update, it is unlikely that the Butte County region would be significantly converted from agricultural land and open space to urban uses. Furthermore, the other counties in the Butte County region, where conversion from open space and agricultural land to urban uses is of most concern, have adopted General Plan policies that direct growth to existing urbanized areas and/or protect agricultural land. For instance, Yuba County's 2030 General Plan includes Goal NR3, which calls for the preservation of agricultural operations.

In addition to local policies to avoid urbanization of open space and agricultural lands, State, and local scenic highway programs would mitigate potential impacts along scenic corridors by preserving views and open space land.

Light pollution has the potential to become an issue of increasing concern in the region as new development contributes additional outdoor lighting installed for safety and other reasons. Butte County may be adversely affected not only by light pollution from development within the unincorporated area, but also from sky glow associated with the ongoing urbanization of cities within Butte County and in surrounding areas, such as Yuba City. However, future development in all jurisdictions will be subject to the California Building Code standards that would prevent potential impacts associated with light and glare.

Overall, the cumulative aesthetic impact would be less than significant.

Level of Significance Before Mitigation: AES-5 would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.

5.1.6 REFERENCES

Butte, County of. 2022. *Butte County Upper Ridge Community Plan*.
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