

## 4.1 AESTHETICS

This section includes an explanation of the criteria and methods used to evaluate the significance and quality of aesthetics and visual resources in, and viewable from Yuba County; a description of existing visual resources; and an evaluation of how implementation of the 2030 General Plan would affect visual resources.

### 4.1.1 REGULATORY SETTING

#### FEDERAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

No federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws pertaining to visual resources are applicable.

#### STATE PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND LAWS

##### California Scenic Highway Program

The California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) manages the California Scenic Highway Program. The goal of the program is to preserve and protect scenic highway corridors from changes that would affect the aesthetic value of land adjacent to highways. For designated highways, Caltrans requires that local jurisdictions implement a monitoring program that reviews and enforces scenic-corridor protection measures to preserve scenic views. The local agency is required to report to Caltrans once every 5 years on the success and continued enforcement of the protection measures. Caltrans requires developers of projects located adjacent to a state scenic highway to consult with the agency to determine whether the project would constitute a minor, moderate, or major intrusion to the scenic quality of the corridor, defined as follows.

- ▶ A **minor** intrusion is one that either is complementary to the landscape or is recognized for its cultural or historical significance (e.g., widely dispersed buildings with visual screenings).
- ▶ A **moderate** intrusion is one that is integrated into the landscape and does not degrade or obstruct scenic views (e.g., orderly and well-landscaped developments with or without roadway screening).
- ▶ A **major** intrusion is one that dominates the landscape and degrades or obstructs views (e.g., dense and continuous development that dominates the view).

There are not any designated scenic highways in or within view of Yuba County. State Route (SR) 49, which is located in the eastern portion of the County, is an Eligible State Scenic Highway (Caltrans 2009).

#### REGIONAL AND LOCAL PLANS, POLICIES, REGULATIONS, AND ORDINANCES

Other than the 1996 General Plan, which would be comprehensively revised by the 2030 General Plan, there are no regional or local policies, regulations, or ordinances that apply to visual resources.

### 4.1.2 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

#### VISUAL CHARACTER OF YUBA COUNTY

Yuba County has three physiographic regions. The Sacramento Valley makes up the western part of the County, the Sierra Nevada foothills comprise the central part, and the Sierra Nevada Mountains are in the eastern part. The visual character of each region is described below.

Urban development that has occurred in the County has placed structures between viewpoints and distant views, effectively obstructing these views – whether of the Sutter Buttes, the Coastal Range, the Sierra Nevada Mountain

range, or other prominent visual features. Urban development creates an existing, prominent source of daytime glare and nighttime lighting. There are bridges, agricultural structures, and other private structures scattered throughout other valley portions of the County. But, other than Linda, Olivehurst-Plumas Lake, Camp Far West, and Beale Air Force Base, there is limited development in the unincorporated valley areas. In the foothill and mountain areas, rural communities and rural subdivisions intrude on views of natural vegetation and topographic features. Some aspects of the built environment, however, provide visual interest. Historic structures from the early era of mining and ranching provide points of visual interest within the County (Refer to Section 4.5 “Cultural Resources”).

## **Valley**

One of the most prominent visual features in the northern Sacramento Valley is the Sutter Buttes, a small, isolated mountain range that rises out of the valley floor to an elevation of approximately 2,000 feet above sea level. Although the Sutter Buttes are located in Sutter County (west of Yuba County), this mountain range is a distinctive visual feature visible from many developed and undeveloped areas of the County, including both valley and foothill areas.

Most of the northern Sacramento Valley is flat, agricultural land. From many viewpoints within the valley, the Coastal Range to the west and the Sierra Foothills in the east are visible in the distance. From the valley floor, undeveloped lands provide views that are dominated by agricultural and open space lands. Annual grassland, common in the on the valley floor (i.e., below 2,500 feet) in the western region of the County, provide views of open expanses. Vernal pools, found in the western portion of the County, occur in mosaics with annual grassland on low mounding hill topography. In the spring, wild flowers bloom in abundance among the vernal pools and grasslands. Riparian forest and woodland habitats exist as scattered remnant patches along Feather, Yuba, and lower Bear rivers and other watercourses in the valley. These watercourses provide views of dense closed-canopied, multi-layered forest dominated by cottonwood, sycamore and willow, and open woodlands dominated by valley oak.

Many viewpoints in western and central Yuba County are terminated by the Sutter Buttes. Distant views to the east are terminated by the Sierra Nevada foothills and mountains. Most of the County’s developed areas are in the valley floor along the major transportation routes, including State Routes (SR) 65, 70, and 20. Developed areas include the incorporated cities of Marysville and Wheatland, as well as the unincorporated communities of Olivehurst-Plumas Lake and Linda and Beale Air Force Base. Visual character of these communities is dominated by urban development and infrastructure. Rural residential development in the foothills of the County is not noticeable from the valley floor.

## **Foothills**

Blue-oak woodland and blue oak-foothill pine woodland are the dominant vegetation types in the foothills of Yuba County. Woodlands range in structure from open savanna to dense forest, with riparian forests along the tributaries and main stems of the Yuba and Bear Rivers. County roadways and state highways provide views of these diverse natural areas, which are interspersed with rural residential subdivisions, orchards, and small rural communities. From certain public viewpoints in foothill and mountain areas, there are distant views of the valley floor below, with the Sutter Buttes in the distance. On clear days, the Coastal Range is visible further to the west, as are the Cascades, Mt. Lassen, and Mt. Shasta to the north.

## **Mountains**

Coniferous forest habitats dominate the eastern portion of Yuba County above 2,500 feet in elevation. These forests are composed of mixed conifer forest (hardwood and conifers) between 2,500 -6,000 feet in elevation; Douglas fir forest at higher elevations; and ponderosa pine forest at elevations of 4,000-7,000 feet. These forest types intermix depending upon topographic and environmental factors such as elevation, soil types, and slope aspect. Views of these forests are provided by county roads and State Routes 20 and 49. Rural communities and

mountain subdivisions are interspersed among the coniferous forests. The eastern portion of the County surrounding New Bullards Bar Reservoir is public land where there are uninterrupted views of mixed conifer and Douglas fir forests.

## **VIEWER GROUPS AND VIEWER SENSITIVITY**

Yuba County is characterized by landscapes that are marked by transitions, including topographic transitions from valley to foothills to mountains, and land use transitions from agricultural to rural residential to urban density. Viewer awareness is usually heightened in areas of transition, and travelers would be aware of their surroundings and sensitive to changes in the landscape in these areas.

The main viewer groups that have views of scenic areas consist of travelers on roadways located in the County, including SR 49, SR 20, SR 65, SR 70, and county roadways. Other viewer groups would be composed of people engaged in recreational activities such as sight-seeing, boating or fishing on reservoirs and rivers, hiking and camping, and bicycling on roadways or trails. Travelers could be residents of the County or visitors engaged in business or recreational travel. Residents of an area tend to have a higher concern and awareness of visual change taking place near to where they live. People engaged in recreational pursuits such as sight-seeing, fishing, boating, hiking or bicycling would have a heightened awareness of their surroundings and would be sensitive to changes in the visual environment. People engaged in work related activities tend to focus on their immediate visual environment, rather than distant views.

### **4.1.3 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

#### **METHODOLOGY**

This analysis evaluates the visual changes that would occur with implementation of the 2030 General Plan. Existing, on-the-ground visual resources and scenic resources are compared to the visual environment under buildout of the 2030 General Plan. Visual impacts were compared against the County's thresholds of significance, which are listed below.

The process used for this analysis is derived from established procedures for visual assessment developed by federal agencies. Criteria developed by the Federal Highway Administration (USDOT 1988), which are used in this analysis, include the concepts of vividness, intactness, and unity. All three factors are considered in determining visual quality, and are defined as follows:

- ▶ “Vividness” is the visual power or memorability of landscape components (landform, vegetation, and built environment) as they combine in striking and distinctive visual patterns.
- ▶ “Intactness” is the visual integrity of the natural and built landscape and its freedom from encroaching elements.
- ▶ “Unity” is the visual coherence and compositional harmony of the landscape considered as a whole and the degree to which all visual elements combine to form a coherent, harmonious visual pattern. One aspect of unity can be the unity between natural and human-built elements.

The evaluation also identifies major viewer groups and viewer sensitivity. Viewer sensitivity is defined as the relative importance of views to members of the viewing public. Using the factors of *visual quality* and *viewer sensitivity*, the impact analysis qualitatively evaluates the visual resource change that would occur for selected viewpoints after implementation of the proposed project.

## THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Based on Appendix G of the State CEQA Guidelines, an impact on visual resources is considered significant if the proposed project would:

- ▶ have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; or
- ▶ substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway; or
- ▶ substantially degrade the existing character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- ▶ create a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

## IMPACT ANALYSIS

**IMPACT 4.1-1** *Adverse Impacts on Scenic Vistas. Yuba County contains varying topography and land cover that provides many different types of views and scenic vistas. Prominent aesthetic resources visible within Yuba County include the Sutter Buttes, Sierra Nevada foothills and mountains, the valley floor, expansive agricultural lands, rivers and river valleys, and lakes and reservoirs. Future development anticipated under the General Plan could potentially block or result in changes to certain scenic views. This impact would be **potentially significant**.*

Yuba County contains many areas with significant unique and picturesque views. From the valley floor, there are views of the expanses of agricultural lands crossed by rivers and canals, and the Sierra Nevada foothills to the east. The mountainous areas provide scenic views of peaks, forests, rivers, and lakes. The most prominent scenic vista in the region is experienced from the foothills, along east-west highways and roads where there are sweeping views of the valley below, with distant views of the Sutter Buttes. Highway 20, Hammonton-Smartsville Road and other roadways in the foothills provide views of the Valley and Sutter Buttes. There are local-scale scenic views of the Feather, Yuba and Bear rivers at bridge crossings and where roads parallel these rivers.

For westbound travelers on SR 20, rural community development in the Browns Valley area could intrude upon and potentially block scenic vistas of the Sutter Buttes, which are located in the Sacramento Valley in Sutter County. New development could introduce structural elements such as signage, utility poles and buildings that would reduce the vividness or memorability of scenic vistas or reduce intactness and unity of views. Travelers on SR 20 could have heightened sensitivity to visual change because of the transition between valley and foothills, and because this route is often used by recreational travelers.

Development in the rural communities adjacent to the Bear and Yuba Rivers could potentially block scenic views of these visual resources. Buildings, signage, paving would detract from intactness and unity of natural views. Residents in these communities would have heightened sensitivity to visual change in the vicinity of their place of residence. Recreational visitors would also have high sensitivity to the visual environment because of their engagement with the environment. Development would intrude upon scenic views provided by agricultural, grazing, forests lands and other open space lands in unincorporated areas of the County.

## Relevant Policies and Actions of the 2030 General Plan

The 2030 General Plan includes the following policies and actions that are intended to reduce adverse impacts on scenic vistas in Yuba County:

- ▶ **Policy NR9.1:** New developments near the Yuba, Bear, and Feather Rivers ~~shall~~should be designed and located in a way that retains or enhances scenic views of these important visual resources.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.2:** New plans and projects in western Yuba County should be designed to provide view corridors to the Sutter Buttes, where practical.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.3:** Development in Rural Communities should be designed to preserve important scenic resources, landmarks, and icons that positively contribute to the rural character.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.4:** New buildings in areas of natural and scenic beauty should be placed and designed in a way that preserves scenic vistas available from public rights-of-way, parks, and other public viewing areas.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.5:** The County supports the designation of State Route 49 as a State Scenic Highway, and will guide land use change in areas visible from this highway in a way that preserves important aspects of the visual character.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.6:** Grading and drainage for new developments in foothill and mountain areas should preserve and take advantage of the natural landforms and vegetation (see Exhibit Natural Resources-8).
- ▶ **Policy NR9.7:** New construction should be designed to avoid excessive cut and fill shall by following the natural contour of the subject site.
- ▶ **Policy NR10.1:** Building placement, grading, and circulation should be planned to retain as much ~~of the~~ existing native vegetation as feasible, with a priority on preserving existing oak trees that have a diameter at breast height (dbh) of 6 inches or greater and all other trees that have a dbh of 30 inches or greater and other native and large trees. The County's policies and standards for fire safety may override consideration of retaining existing vegetation in certain circumstances.
- ~~▶ **Policy NR10.2:** New developments shall be designed to preserve all native oaks with a diameter at breast height (dbh) of 6 inches or greater and all other trees that have a dbh of 30 inches or greater, to the maximum extent feasible.~~
- ▶ **Policy NR10.32:** The County will encourage the preservation of healthy, attractive native vegetation during land development. Where this is not ~~possible~~feasible, the County will require site landscaping that uses appropriate native plant materials.
- ▶ **Action NR10.1:** Oak Woodlands and Tree Preservation. Following adoption of the 2030 General Plan, the County will adopt and implement a tree preservation and mitigation ordinance. This ordinance will implement state requirements for oak woodlands mitigation (as required by Public Resources Code Section 21083.4, including certain exemptions). The tree preservation ordinance will address native oak trees measuring 6 inches or more in diameter at breast height (dbh) and all other trees greater than 30 inches dbh. The ordinance will describe the process by which the County determines the significance of impacts related to tree removal. For oak woodlands, mitigation can occur through: conservation easements; planting (up to 50% of mitigation requirement); restoration; contribution to the Oak Woodlands Conservation Fund; or equally effective mitigation formulated by the County during development of this ordinance.
  - Related Goals: Goal NR4, Goal NR5, Goal NR9, Goal NR10, Goal HS7
  - Agency/Department: Community Development and Services Agency

- Funding Source: General fund
- Time Frame: Adopt ordinance by 2015

- ▶ ~~Policy NR11.1: New developments in historic districts and in areas with a substantial number of important historic features should be designed to be compatible with architectural styles of surrounding structures or traditional local historic architectural styles (Exhibit Natural Resources-9).~~
- ▶ **Policy NR11.21:** New developments ~~in foothill and mountain portions of the County~~ are encouraged to include architectural styles that complement local historic styles including, but not limited to gold rush, agrarian, craftsman, bungalow, American cottage, mountain or rustic styles, and other appropriate styles (Exhibit Natural Resources-9).
- ▶ **Policy NR11.32:** In new development areas, service, utility, loading areas, roof-mounted equipment, and noise-generating equipment shall be screened, designed, and located to reduce visibility, odor, and noise ~~to as~~ experienced at surrounding properties and pedestrian areas.
- ▶ **Policy NR11.43:** New utilities should generally be placed underground, where feasible. New utilities in rural areas outside the Valley growth Boundary shall avoid ridge lines and blocking expansive views from public viewing locations, where feasible.
- ▶ **Policy NR11.65:** The County will review and condition nonresidential, multi-family, large single-family projects, and projects located in historically significant areas for compliance with General Plan policy and design guidelines, once guidelines are developed. Large single-family projects are those that propose more than 10 units.

## Conclusion

The 2030 General Plan policies listed above would ensure that urban development is limited to areas within the County's Valley Growth Boundary, which would help to maintain sweeping views of agricultural lands currently available from foothill and mountain areas. The policies would also ensure that new development is designed to take advantage of and protect visual resources with the least amount of interference with existing views as feasible. While this approach would reduce adverse impacts on scenic vistas, development associated with implementation of the 2030 General Plan would still result in the permanent degradation of some of the County's scenic views, both partially and wholly. Therefore, this impact is considered **potentially significant**.

## Mitigation Measure

No additional feasible mitigation beyond that included as policy under the 2030 General Plan is available to reduce this impact. The proposed project's purpose is to provide a framework governing development of long-term development in Yuba County.

Implementation of policies in the 2030 General Plan would ensure that subsequent projects are designed so that they do not interfere with and, where feasible, they enhance scenic views available in the County. However, development would permanently change the visual character and scenic vistas. No feasible mitigation measures or policies are available that could fully preserve the existing views of scenic vistas while also providing for long-term growth needs. This impact would remain **significant and unavoidable**.

**IMPACT 4.1-2** **Damage to Scenic Resources within a State Scenic Highway.** *There are no officially-designated State Scenic Highways in Yuba County, although SR 49 is an eligible highway. There would be **no impact**.*

There are no officially designated state scenic highways located within Yuba County. SR 49, located in the eastern portion of the County is eligible for such a designation, according to Caltrans. As part of the 2030 General

Plan, the County would pursue designation of this highway. With this designation, the County would review proposed development projects and public investments with a higher level of scrutiny regarding visual impacts along this future-designated scenic route. The County's review and conditioning of projects and public investments would dictate certain approaches to the design and location of buildings within the SR 49 corridor to reduce adverse visual impacts from public viewing locations.

### Relevant Policies and Actions of the 2030 General Plan

The 2030 General Plan includes a policy to promote the designation of SR 49 as a State Scenic Highway and protect visual resources along that roadway, as well as policies designed to preserve aesthetic resources, including those that may be available for viewing along SR 49:

- ▶ **Policy NR9.5:** The County supports the designation of State Route 49 as a State Scenic Highway, and will guide land use change in areas visible from this highway in a way that preserves important aspects of the visual character.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.3:** Development in Rural Communities should be designed to preserve important scenic resources, landmarks, and icons that positively contribute to the rural character.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.4:** New buildings in areas of natural and scenic beauty should be placed and designed in a way that preserves scenic vistas available from public rights-of-way, parks, and other public viewing areas.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.6:** Grading and drainage for new developments in foothill and mountain areas should preserve and take advantage of the natural landforms and vegetation (see Exhibit Natural Resources-8).
- ▶ **Policy NR9.7:** New construction should be designed to avoid excessive cut and fill by following the natural contour of the subject site.
- ▶ **Policy NR10.1:** Building placement, grading, and circulation should be planned to retain as much of the existing native vegetation as feasible, with a priority on preserving existing oak trees that have a diameter at breast height (dbh) of 6 inches or greater and all other trees that have a dbh of 30 inches or greater and other native and large trees. The County's policies and standards for fire safety may override consideration of retaining existing vegetation in certain circumstances.
- ~~▶ **Policy NR10.2:** New developments shall be designed to preserve all native oaks with a diameter at breast height (dbh) of 6 inches or greater and all other trees that have a dbh of 30 inches or greater, to the maximum extent feasible.~~
- ▶ **Policy NR10.32:** The County will encourage the preservation of healthy, attractive native vegetation during land development. Where this is not possible feasible, the County will require landscaping that uses climate-appropriate plant materials.
- ▶ **Action NR10.1:** Oak Woodlands and Tree Preservation. Following adoption of the 2030 General Plan, the County will adopt and implement a tree preservation and mitigation ordinance. This ordinance will implement state requirements for oak woodlands mitigation (as required by Public Resources Code Section 21083.4, including certain exemptions). The tree preservation ordinance will address native oak trees measuring 6 inches or more in diameter at breast height (dbh) and all other trees greater than 30 inches dbh. The ordinance will describe the process by which the County determines the significance of impacts related to tree removal. For oak woodlands, mitigation can occur through: conservation easements; planting (up to 50% of mitigation requirement); restoration; contribution to the Oak Woodlands Conservation Fund; or equally effective mitigation formulated by the County during development of this ordinance.

- Related Goals: Goal NR4, Goal NR5, Goal NR9, Goal NR10, Goal HS8
- Agency/Department: Community Development and Services Agency
- Funding Source: General fund and/or fees
- Time Frame: Adopt ordinance by 2015

~~► **Policy NR11.1:** New developments in historic districts and in areas with a substantial number of important historic features should be designed to be compatible with architectural styles of surrounding structures or traditional local historic architectural styles (Exhibit Natural Resources-9).~~

► **Policy NR11.21:** New developments ~~in foothill and mountain portions of the County~~ are encouraged to include architectural styles that complement local historic styles including, but not limited to gold rush, agrarian, craftsman, bungalow, American cottage, mountain or rustic styles, and other appropriate styles (Exhibit Natural Resources-9).

► **Policy NR11.32:** In new development areas, service, utility, loading areas, roof-mounted equipment, and noise-generating equipment shall be screened, designed, and located to reduce visibility, odor, and noise ~~to as~~ experienced at surrounding properties and pedestrian areas.

► **Policy NR11.54:** To the maximum extent feasible, ~~N~~ew developments shall avoid adverse light and glare effects on adjacent roads, neighboring properties, and pedestrian areas through careful location of on-site lighting, use of non-reflective paint and building materials, screening or shielding light at the source, use of vegetation screening, use of directional lighting, use of lower intensity lighting, use of timing devices or sound/motion-controlled lighting, or other equally effective means.

► **Policy NR11.65:** The County will review and condition nonresidential, multi-family, large single-family projects, and projects located in historically significant areas for compliance with General Plan policy and design guidelines, once guidelines are developed. Large single-family projects are those that propose more than 10 units.

► **Policy NR11.76:** The County's standards for installation of telecommunications facilities will ensure an efficient permitting process, as well as encourage locations and designs that ~~are not prominently take into consideration visibility~~ visible from public rights-of-way, co-location, ~~and~~ blending with the visual environment, and aviation safety where feasible.

As noted previously, if SR 49 does in the future receive a State Scenic Highway designation, the County would prepare and implement a monitoring program designed to preserve and protect the corridor from changes that would affect the aesthetic value of the corridor. Caltrans would require developers of projects located adjacent to a state scenic highway to consult with the County to determine whether the project would constitute a minor, moderate, or major intrusion to the scenic quality of the corridor.

## Conclusion

There are no officially designated state scenic highways within the County, but SR 49 is an eligible highway and other roadways may be suitable to be designated as local scenic routes. However, since there are currently no designated scenic highways, there would be **no impact** associated with adverse impacts on visual resources within a state scenic highway.

## Mitigation Measure

No mitigation is required.

**IMPACT**    **Degradation of Visual Character.** *Implementation of the 2030 General Plan would substantially alter the visual character of the unincorporated communities in Yuba County through conversion of agricultural and other open space lands to developed urban uses. This impact would be **potentially significant**.*

4.1-3

Prominent visual resources visible from unincorporated areas include agricultural landscapes of the valley, oak woodlands and rolling topography of the foothills, and forested mountainous areas. Implementation of the 2030 General Plan would accommodate development that would change the visual character of some of these important visual resources. Development under the General Plan would place structures in areas of scenic beauty, would potentially alter the existing topography and obscure rock outcroppings or other prominent visual resources, and increase light and glare. The effects of the General Plan would be particularly widespread in valley portions of the County, where most development will be focused. Expansion of urban and rural development in unincorporated valley communities would occur primarily along SR 65 and SR 70. Urban and rural development would be anticipated to include construction of large buildings, housing, parks, schools, parking lots, and visible infrastructure improvements, such as roadways and open drainage conveyances. Development allowed under the 2030 General Plan could degrade the visual character of these areas.

Views for travelers along SR 70 just north of the southern county line would be altered by the expansion of low density residential development in the Plumas Lake Specific Plan. Low-density residential development would result in fragmentation of open space, and introduce elements, such as houses, fences, roads and utilities that would intrude upon agricultural open space, reducing the intactness and unity of the views. Views for travelers along SR 65 would be altered by the development of jobs-producing land uses in an area that is currently agricultural. Surrounding lands would remain in agriculture; the contrast between agricultural and industrial land uses would reduce the unity and intactness of the views provided by agricultural open space. Viewer sensitivity to these changes would be moderate since travelers along these routes would be engaged in driving and views would be peripheral in many cases.

Limited development allowed under the 2030 General Plan could substantially change views of important aesthetic resources in foothill and mountain communities including Challenge, Brownsville, Rackerby, Browns Valley, Loma Rica, Oregon House, Dobbins, Camp Far West, and the Smartsville area. The visual character of these areas would be degraded by topographic modification, soil disturbance, vegetation removal and construction of structures that would detract from unity and intactness of the views. Residents would have a heightened sensitivity to visual changes within their communities.

Since rural development would be focused around “Rural Centers,” the location of structures and design of developments in these areas will be important for preservation of important positive elements of the visual environment.

### **Relevant Policies and Actions of the 2030 General Plan**

The 2030 General Plan includes the following policies and actions that are intended to reduce adverse impacts on visual character in Yuba County:

- ▶ **Policy NR9.1:** New developments near the Yuba, Bear, and Feather Rivers ~~shall~~should be designed and located in a way that retains or enhances scenic views of these important visual resources.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.2:** New plans and projects in western Yuba County should be designed to provide view corridors to the Sutter Buttes, where practical.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.3:** Development in Rural Communities should be designed to preserve important scenic resources, landmarks, and icons that positively contribute to the rural character.

- ▶ **Policy NR9.4:** New buildings in areas of natural and scenic beauty should be placed and designed in a way that preserves scenic vistas available from public rights-of-way, parks, and other public viewing areas.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.5:** The County supports the designation of State Route 49 as a State Scenic Highway, and will guide land use change in areas visible from this highway in a way that preserves important aspects of the visual character.
- ▶ **Policy NR9.6:** Grading and drainage for new developments in foothill and mountain areas should preserve and take advantage of the natural landforms and vegetation (see Exhibit Natural Resources-8).
- ▶ **Policy NR9.7:** New construction should be designed to avoid excessive cut and fill shall by following the natural contour of the subject site.
- ▶ **Policy NR10.1:** Building placement, grading, and circulation should be planned to retain as much ~~of the~~ existing native vegetation as feasible, with a priority on preserving existing oak trees that have a diameter at breast height (dbh) of 6 inches or greater and all other trees that have a dbh of 30 inches or greater~~and other native and large trees. The County's policies and standards for fire safety may override consideration of retaining existing vegetation in certain circumstances.~~
- ~~▶ **Policy NR10.2:** New developments shall be designed to preserve all native oaks with a diameter at breast height (dbh) of 6 inches or greater and all other trees that have a dbh of 30 inches or greater, to the maximum extent feasible.~~
- ▶ **Policy NR10.32:** The County will encourage the preservation of healthy, attractive native vegetation during land development. Where this is not possible/feasible, the County will require landscaping that uses climate-appropriate plant materials.
- ▶ **Action NR10.1:** Oak Woodlands and Tree Preservation. Following adoption of the 2030 General Plan, the County will adopt and implement a tree preservation and mitigation ordinance. This ordinance will implement state requirements for oak woodlands mitigation (as required by Public Resources Code Section 21083.4, including certain exemptions). The tree preservation ordinance will address native oak trees measuring 6 inches or more in diameter at breast height (dbh) and all other trees greater than 30 inches dbh. The ordinance will describe the process by which the County determines the significance of impacts related to tree removal. For oak woodlands, mitigation can occur through: conservation easements; planting (up to 50% of mitigation requirement); restoration; contribution to the Oak Woodlands Conservation Fund; or equally effective mitigation formulated by the County during development of this ordinance.
  - Related Goals: Goal NR4, Goal NR5, Goal NR9, Goal NR10, Goal HS7
  - Agency/Department: Community Development and Services Agency
  - Funding Source: General fund and/or fees
  - Time Frame: Adopt ordinance by 2015
- ~~▶ **Policy NR11.1:** New developments in historic districts and in areas with a substantial number of important historic features should be designed to be compatible with architectural styles of surrounding structures or traditional local historic architectural styles (Exhibit Natural Resources-9).~~
- ▶ **Policy NR11.21:** New developments ~~in foothill and mountain portions of the County~~ are encouraged to include architectural styles that complement local historic styles including, but not limited to gold rush, agrarian, craftsman, bungalow, American cottage, mountain or rustic styles, and other appropriate styles (Exhibit Natural Resources-9).

- ▶ **Policy NR11.32:** In new development areas, service, utility, loading areas, roof-mounted equipment, and noise-generating equipment shall be screened, designed, and located to reduce visibility, odor, and noise ~~to~~ as experienced at surrounding properties and pedestrian areas.
- ▶ **Policy NR11.43:** New utilities ~~should generally be constructed within the Valley Growth Boundary~~ shall be placed underground, where feasible. New utilities in rural areas outside the Valley Growth Boundary shall avoid ridge lines and blocking expansive views from public viewing locations, where feasible.
- ▶ **Policy NR11.65:** The County will review and condition nonresidential, multi-family, large single-family projects, and projects located in historically significant areas for compliance with General Plan policy and design guidelines, once guidelines are developed. Large single-family projects are those that propose more than 10 units.

## Conclusion

Policies of the 2030 General Plan are intended to maintain or improve the visual character of Yuba County and promote compact development around existing developed areas, thereby preserving visual character of open space and natural visual landscapes in the unincorporated county. However, the purpose of the 2030 General Plan is to accommodate long-term development needs. It is inevitable that structures developed under the General Plan to accommodate long-term population and employment growth will result in changes to the visual character of the County. There are no feasible policies or actions that could maintain existing visual resources (e.g., agricultural lands, open spaces) while also accommodating long-term population and employment growth. This impact is considered **potentially significant**.

## Mitigation Measure

The proposed project's purpose is to provide a framework governing long-term development within the unincorporated county. No additional feasible mitigation beyond 2030 General Plan policies and actions is available to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level while also addressing the basic purpose of the General Plan.

Views of important visual resources from publicly accessible areas would change as a result of full buildout of the 2030 General Plan. The 2030 General Plan includes policies intended to maintain and improve visual character in the unincorporated county, and reduce the impact to change in visual character, where feasible. But, there is no mechanism to allow implementation of development projects while also avoiding the conversion of agricultural land uses, other types of open spaces to urban development. This impact would remain **significant and unavoidable**.

**IMPACT 4.1-4** **Increase in Nighttime Lighting and Daytime Glare.** *Development projects would require nighttime lighting and could include construction of buildings with reflective surfaces that inadvertently cast light and glare toward motorists the County's highways and roadways. Development under the 2030 General Plan would increase the amount of daytime and nighttime light and glare and would introduce a new source of nighttime lighting in an existing rural area. This impact would be **potentially significant**.*

Developed areas of Yuba County (e.g., the cities of Marysville and Wheatland, and the unincorporated communities) generate sources of light, glare, and light trespass into the night sky. Most development under the 2030 General Plan is adjacent to existing developed communities, where the addition of new light sources would not create drastically noticeable differences in nighttime views. However, there are undeveloped areas that could be the subject of development projects under the General Plan. The impact could depend on the type of development – large parking lots with lots of lighting or large structures can change the visual character and add substantial daytime and nighttime lighting and glare, for example.

Development of greenfield areas, such as the Highway 65 corridor, the area south of Erle Road and east of Highway 70, and certain portions of Rural Communities would add substantial sources of light and glare compared to current conditions. New sources of nighttime light and glare (e.g., lighting of roadways, parks, schools, and other facilities) would be located in an area currently void of significant sources of nighttime lighting.

### Relevant Policies and Actions of the 2030 General Plan

The 2030 General Plan includes the following policies that are intended to reduce impacts from lighting and glare in Yuba County:

- ▶ **Policy NR11.54: To the maximum extent feasible,** New developments shall avoid adverse light and glare effects on adjacent roads, neighboring properties, and pedestrian areas through careful location of on-site lighting, use of non-reflective paint and building materials, screening or shielding light at the source, use of vegetation screening, use of directional lighting, use of lower intensity lighting, use of timing devices or sound/motion-controlled lighting, or other equally effective means.

A substantial increase in the amount of nighttime light and glare could result from development of urban land uses throughout Yuba County, potentially obscuring views of stars and other features of the nighttime sky. Lighting and reflective surfaces on buildings (e.g., reflective window glazing) in planned development areas could result in light and glare shining onto motorists traveling along highways and roadways.

Policies of the 2030 General Plan focus on reducing impacts from lighting and providing proper buffers to ensure light intrusion does not cause adverse lighting and glare issues.

Development anticipated under the 2030 General Plan would require substantial new lighting and could result in construction of buildings with reflective surfaces that could cast glare toward motorists on local roadways. The 2030 General Plan anticipates development of currently undeveloped areas, such as croplands and grazing lands that are currently void of substantial lighting sources. Development of urban land uses identified in the 2030 General Plan would introduce substantial new light sources adjacent to existing urban communities and new lighting sources in rural portions of Yuba County. This could potentially cause light trespass into the night sky and would create new sources of skyglow. Development under the General Plan could obscure views of stars and other features of the nighttime sky, as viewed from some portions of the unincorporated County. This impact is considered **potentially significant**.

### Mitigation Measure

The proposed project's purpose is to provide a framework governing long-term development within the unincorporated county. No additional feasible mitigation beyond General Plan policies and actions is available to reduce this impact to a less-than-significant level while also addressing the basic purpose of the General Plan.

With implementation of policies in the 2030 General Plan, potential light and glare impacts of future development projects would be reduced to the maximum extent practicable. Although implementation of policies in the 2030 General Plan would reduce impacts related to light and glare, new urban development under the plan would permanently add daytime glare and nighttime lighting into areas that are currently relatively void of daytime glare and nighttime lighting. No mitigation measures beyond the policies and programs of the General Plan are feasible that would fully preserve existing nighttime views while at the same time allowing urban development. Therefore, this impact would be **significant and unavoidable**.