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## 6.2 AESTHETICS AND VISUAL RESOURCES

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### INTRODUCTION

This section describes the existing visual character of Sutter County, including the identification of physical and visual features and conditions, and local scenic resources that give the policy area its unique visual character. The protection of scenic resources and open space areas can provide opportunities for other facilities and services such as passive recreation opportunities, pedestrian and bike access, storm drainage, floodwater conveyance, utility infrastructure, and land use buffering.

No comment letters addressing aesthetics and visual resources were received in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP).

Data for this section was taken from the 2008 *Sutter County General Plan Update Technical Background Report* (TBR), California Department of Transportation, and photographs from a field survey of the policy area.

The TBR is available electronically on the County's website (<http://www.co.sutter.ca.us/pdf/cs/ps/gp/tbr/tbr.pdf>) and on CD at the back of this document.

### ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

The discussion of visual resources included below is presented on a countywide basis. There are no unique issues present in any of the Growth Areas associated with aesthetic or visual issues; therefore, these areas of the county are not specifically discussed in the environmental setting.

### Definitions

"Aesthetic value" refers to the perception of the natural beauty of an area, as well as the elements that create or enhance its visual quality. While aesthetic value is subjective, it is typically included as a criterion for evaluating those elements that contribute to the quality that distinguishes an area. Most communities identify scenic resources as an important asset, although what is considered "scenic" may vary according to its environmental setting.

"Scenic resources" can include natural open spaces, topographic formations, and landscapes. These resources can be maintained and enhanced to promote a positive image in the future. Many people associate natural landforms and landscapes with scenic resources, such as oak woodlands, lakes, rivers, streams, and some historical areas. Scenic resources can also include urban open spaces and the built environment. Examples of

these would include parks, trails, pathways, nature centers, archaeological and historical resources, and architectural features.

“Viewsheds” constitute the range of vision in which scenic resources may be observed. They are defined by physical features that frame the boundaries or context to one or more scenic resources.

### **Scenic Resources**

Visual resources are an important component to the quality of life and identity of any geographic area. When people experience a place, their primary sensory interaction with that place is visual in nature. The scenic resources within the policy area include a variety of elements and viewsheds such as the Sutter Buttes; the Feather, Sacramento, and Bear rivers; and the valley’s orchards and agricultural landscape, all of which contribute to the unique character of Sutter County.

### **Scenic Roadways**

The California State Scenic Roadways Program, established in 1963 by the State legislature, identifies key roadways in California that contribute to the state’s scenic resources by providing viewsheds with aesthetic value. The program establishes the State’s responsibility for the protection and enhancement of California’s natural scenic beauty through regulations pertaining to scenic roadways and their function.

There are no officially recognized scenic roadways in the policy area; however, many of the rural country roads offer unobstructed views of surrounding mountain ranges, expansive agricultural land, and miles of orchards. In a state such as California, with most of the population centered in and around highly urbanized areas, Sutter County offers residents and visitors the natural beauty of the great Central Valley.

### **Views and Vistas**

The policy area (which includes the entire county) is characterized by relatively flat terrain with generally expansive viewsheds and valley elevations ranging from 35 to 80 feet above measured sea level.<sup>1</sup> The one prominent topographic feature within the policy area is the Sutter Buttes. Approximately 75 square miles in size, the Sutter Buttes is a remnant volcano with a peak elevation of 2,000 feet above the surrounding valley floor. Juxtaposed to the vast open farmland, the Sutter Buttes create a dramatic landmark that is visible throughout the County.



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1 Yuba City and Sutter County, Yuba City-Sutter County, California Multi-Hazard Mitigation Plan, prepared by AMEC, October 2007.

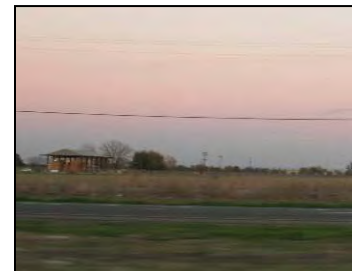
### Views West

Views to the west span across the open valley's rich agricultural land and natural wildlife areas. The western portion of the policy area is predominantly agricultural with miles of green rice paddies and fertile soils supporting row crops and orchards. The Sacramento River borders the western edge of the policy area, creating a viewshed corridor that includes mature trees and views of the river. Looking beyond the valley's farmland and the Sacramento River, the viewshed is back-dropped by the California coastal mountains and native oak trees.



### Views East

Most of the policy area's population is located in the eastern portion of the county, adjacent to the incorporated cities of Yuba City and Live Oak. The eastern side of the policy area is bordered by the Feather River, which is a source of water and is a significant recreational amenity for the region. Just beyond the Feather River are Yuba and Placer counties, which have a similar landscape character, with rolling oak-studded hills and views of the Sierra Nevada Mountain Range.



### Views South

Much like the western part of the policy area, the southern portion is predominantly farmland. Grain fields and state wildlife areas provide refuge for thousands of migratory birds each year. The southern part of the policy area is where the Sacramento and the Feather rivers converge with the Sutter Bypass, a major north-south floodway that extends through Sutter County.



### Views North

Rising out of the base of the valley is the "smallest mountain range in the world," the Sutter Buttes. The Buttes are visible from most areas in the policy area and serve as a statewide destination for tourists, who can access the privately-owned mountain range through guided tours. The landscape of the Sutter Buttes is predominantly characterized by grasslands and oak woodlands, with canyons that support natural drainage ways and riparian vegetation.



## Natural Elements

In addition to the Sutter Buttes, the most visually predominant natural element within the policy area, the policy area also contains the natural elements of the Feather, Sacramento, and Bear rivers. The rivers are significant physical features, which help define the county and provide visual relief from the broad, flat expanse of the valley. The Sacramento River is the largest river in the state and extends for approximately 70 miles along the western border of the policy area. The Feather River extends approximately 45 miles through the policy area, forming part of the eastern policy area boundary.



The Bear River flows along approximately 11 miles of the eastern policy area boundary, entering from Placer County to the east and crossing the policy area boundary at several points. The river flows in a south/southwest direction until it joins the Feather River, approximately one mile north of the town of Nicolaus. Although smaller than either the Sacramento or Feather Rivers, the Bear River also provides recreational opportunities, agricultural irrigation water, and a diverse wildlife habitat.

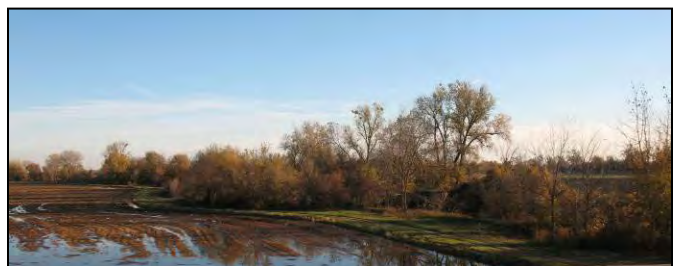


## Open Space

Almost 95 percent of the policy area is designated for agricultural (83 percent) and open space (11 percent) uses, which creates vast viewsheds of undeveloped areas. Open space areas are located along the miles of river corridors, as well as approximately 16,000 acres of wildlife areas that support abundant plant and animal life.

## Manmade Elements

The Sutter Bypass is a major flood control channel with manmade systems (e.g., levees, berms, and weirs) that act as an overflow collector of flood flows and provides water to agricultural lands throughout the policy area. The Bypass is a manmade feature, yet the channel is natural and does not consist of a concrete-lined feature. It consists of a canal that extends from the north, along the western side of the Sutter Buttes, and to the border of Sutter and



Yolo counties. The policy area also contains historic buildings that have been home to the founding families of the region.

Please refer to Section 4.6, Prehistoric and Historic Resources, of the TBR for more specific information pertaining to these structures as well as Section 6.7, Cultural Resources, of this EIR.

### **Sensitive Receptors**

A sensitive receptor is defined as an individual that is especially sensitive to changes in aesthetic qualities, which for example could include changes in lighting, shadows, or surrounding visual character. Uses that accommodate sensitive receptors in the policy area include residential, recreational, and park uses. In general, users of public areas such as parks and trails are considered sensitive receptors to visual resources. The policy area contains over 650 acres of public and private recreation areas and sports facilities, nearly 50,000 acres of the Sutter Buttes, and the Sutter Commuter Bikeway, which is a 6.1-mile paved bicycle and walking path. Residential land uses that serve sensitive receptors are generally located throughout the policy area, with concentrations in the rural planned communities and adjacent to the incorporated cities of Yuba City and Live Oak.

### **Light and Glare**

Light that falls beyond the intended area is referred to as light trespass. Types of light trespass include spill over light and glare. Nighttime lighting is necessary to provide and maintain safe, secure, and attractive environments; however, these lights have the potential to produce spill light and glare, waste energy, and if designed incorrectly, could be considered unattractive.

Spill over light can adversely affect light sensitive uses, such as residential neighborhoods at nighttime. Light dissipates with increased distance from the source. Glare results when a light source directly in the field of vision is brighter than the eye can comfortably accept. Squinting or turning away from a light source is an indication of glare. The presence of a bright light in an otherwise dark setting may be distracting or annoying, referred to as discomfort glare, or it may diminish the ability to see other objects in the darkened environment, referred to as disability glare.

The policy area includes a wide variety of visual characteristics, which include various light and glare levels. A moderate amount of artificial light and glare from urban uses already exists in the policy area within the Yuba City and Live Oak spheres of influence. The outlying agricultural and residential areas have a lower concentration of artificial light and reflective surfaces that produce glare.

## REGULATORY CONTEXT

### Federal

There are no applicable federal regulations.

### State

#### **California Scenic Highway Program**

In 1963, the State legislature established the California Scenic Highway Program through Senate Bill 1467. This Senate Bill added Section 260 et seq. to the Streets and Highway Code. In these statutes, the State proclaims its intent to:

...establish the State's responsibility for the protection and enhancement of California's natural scenic beauty. After it is determined that a proposed highway satisfies the qualifications for Scenic Highway designation, the local jurisdiction, with support of its citizens, must adopt a program to protect the scenic corridor. The zoning and land use along the highway must meet the State's minimum requirements for scenic highway corridor protection. The five legislatively required standards for scenic highways under Section 261 of the Streets and Highways Code are:

- Regulation of land use and density of development (i.e., density classifications and types of allowable land uses),
- Detailed land and site planning (i.e., permit or design review authority and regulations for the review of proposed developments),
- Prohibitions of off-site outdoor advertising and control of on-site outdoor advertising,
- Careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping (i.e., grading, ordinances, grading permit requirements, design review authority, landscaping and vegetation requirements), and
- The design and appearance of structures and equipment (i.e., placement of utility structures, microwave receptors, etc.).

As stated in Section IV of Caltrans' "Guidelines for the Official Designation of Scenic Highways," a Scenic Corridor is the area of land generally adjacent to and visible from the highway and is usually limited by topography and/or jurisdictional boundaries.

### Local

#### **Sutter County Ordinance Code**

##### Sutter Buttes Overlay Zone Ordinance

The Sutter Buttes Overlay Zone (Chapter 15, Zoning, Sections 1500-6010 through 1500-6040) reinforces and is coterminous with the Sutter Buttes Overlay. The intent of the zone is to

preserve the cultural, historic, geologic, and visual values of the Sutter Buttes. Structures within the Overlay Zone that are visible from public roads or adjacent residences are subject to development and siting standards that address landscaping, screening, grading, tree removal, roof areas and materials, building colors, roads and driveways, lighting, and other factors, and require approval of a zoning clearance. Specific development and siting standards are included in the ordinance for ridgelines (i.e., the crest of a ridge formed by a hillside/drainage divide), on hillsides (i.e., area either between a ridgeline and a valley floor or between ridgelines), and on the valley floor (i.e., consists of nearly level to gently sloping areas on alluvial fans).

### **Sutter County 2015 General Plan**

The County's 2015 General Plan contains policies and implementation measures relevant to the preservation and protection of aesthetics and visual resources. The 2015 General Plan included policies focusing on the preservation and protection of visual and scenic resources with requirements on new development to use vegetation for screening of structures and to incorporate design and development standards to protect views of the Sutter Buttes. Upon approval of the proposed General Plan, all policies and implementation measures in the 2015 General Plan would be superseded. Therefore, they are not included in this analysis.

## **IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES**

### **Methods of Analysis**

The analysis of impacts associated with aesthetics and visual resources is based on a review of available information within the TBR, aerial maps, and photographs of the policy area. Impacts were evaluated using the thresholds of significance listed below. The proposed General Plan was analyzed to determine if implementation of the goals and policies could result in a substantial adverse effect to a scenic vista or result in development that may create a new source of substantial light or glare, which could cause a public hazard, annoyance, or adversely affect an existing viewshed. These types of impacts would be the greatest in areas where more development is proposed (i.e., growth areas) or in currently undeveloped areas; therefore, these are the areas that the impact analysis is focused on.

The impact analysis analyzes buildout of the proposed General Plan under both the adjusted buildout scenario as well as full buildout.

### **Proposed Sutter County General Plan Goals and Policies**

Goals and policies from the proposed General Plan that are relevant to aesthetics and visual resources within the entire policy area are listed below.



## LAND USE ELEMENT (LU)

### Countywide Land Use

**Goal LU-1 Promote the efficient and sensitive use of lands to protect and enhance Sutter County's quality of life and meet the needs of existing and future residents and businesses.**

#### Policies

LU 1.7 **Commercial and Industrial Buffers.** Require new commercial and industrial development to incorporate, as appropriate, buffers, landscape setbacks, masonry screening walls, berms, building setbacks and placement, performance standards, and other measures that mitigate visual and operational impacts to adjacent uses in compliance with the Sutter County Design Guidelines and project environmental review.

LU 1.15 **Views from Rural Roadways and Highways.** Prohibit new projects and activities that would obscure, detract from, or negatively impact the quality of views from the County's rural roadways and highways. Limit off-site advertising along County roadways and highways.

LU 1.16 **Sutter Butte Views.** Require that new development along Highway 20, North Butte Road, West Butte Road, East Butte Road, South Butte Road, and Pass Road incorporate design and development standards that protect views of the Sutter Buttes.

LU 1.17 **Garden Highway.** Require that new development along Garden Highway not distract from the quality of views to adjacent agricultural and open space areas and retain a rural character. For the corridor extending north from Highway 99, acknowledge its visual importance as an entry to Yuba City including consideration of design guidelines and standards as appropriate.

### Rural Communities

**Goal LU 3 Protect the character of the County's unincorporated rural communities while allowing appropriate opportunities for new growth.**

#### Policies

LU 3.11 **Gateways.** Require new development at entries to rural communities to be designed to include elements such as signage, landscaping, and appropriate architectural detail to help create gateways and enhance identity for the communities.

### Growth Areas

**Goal LU 4 Facilitate orderly, well planned, sustainable, and efficient growth that balances aesthetic, functional, resource, and economic considerations.**

Policies

- LU 4.8 **Quality New Development.** Require high quality, efficient, and well designed new development.
- a. Use significant natural, historic, and visual site features to guide site planning and design, and incorporate such features as focal points when feasible.
  - b. Enhance scenic views to the Sutter Buttes, rivers, agricultural lands, and other visual resources through project siting and design.
  - c. Provide for a mix of interconnected uses and a compact development form that makes efficient use of the land.
  - d. Facilitate non-automobile transportation modes.
  - e. Screen visually obtrusive activities and facilities from roadways and other public spaces through the use of landscaping, walls, building orientations, and other methods.
  - f. Design and locate lighting to avoid spillage and glare on adjacent properties and protect the rural night sky.
- LU 4.22 **Aesthetic Appearance.** Require that the Sutter County Design Guidelines be applied to all industrial and commercial areas to improve the aesthetic appearance of those developments.
- LU 4.23 **Commercial and Industrial Development.** Promote well designed and articulated new commercial and industrial development.
- a. Consider the relationship and orientation of commercial and industrial buildings to arterials and other major roadways to enhance street frontages.
  - b. Ensure commercial and industrial development provides pedestrian access to surrounding neighborhoods where feasible and within the development itself.
  - c. Ensure the scale, massing, and architectural detail of commercial and industrial buildings compliments adjacent residential uses.
  - d. Create visually interesting and consistent commercial and industrial projects by utilizing consistent design elements and materials throughout individual centers/complexes. Consider variations of wall planes, rooflines, and building forms, and articulating all building elevations visible from streets and other public spaces.
  - e. Reduce the perceived scale of large scale commercial and industrial uses through modulating building mass, façade articulation, well defined entries, use of different colors and materials, landscaping, and other similar techniques.
  - f. Screen utilities, HVAC units, waste collection and other similar areas from public view.
  - g. Provide for consistent sign types, materials and graphics within commercial and industrial centers/complexes that compliment project design and are appropriately scaled to the buildings.

- h. Incorporate transit facilities such as turnouts, drop-offs, and shelters within and/or adjacent to commercial and industrial development when supported by transit services.
- i. Minimize the visual impact of parking areas from roadways and other public spaces.
- j. Encourage shared access and reciprocal parking between adjacent commercial and industrial parcels to reduce curb cuts along streets.
- k. Provide flexibility in commercial and industrial development standards to allow opportunities for mixed-use development and unique uses.

### Rural Planned Communities

**Goal LU 6 Provide for the consideration of new Rural Planned Communities within/ adjacent to the existing Rural Communities of Sutter and East Nicolaus/Trowbridge.**

#### Policies

LU 6.10 **Community Identity.** Promote the incorporation of a mixed-use town center/focal point, and visually attractive gateways, to help define a distinct identity for each Rural Planned Community.

LU 6.11 **Sutter Buttes.** Ensure that the Specific Plan for the Sutter Rural Planned Community incorporates land use and design measures to protect the Sutter Butte's natural, historic, cultural, and visual resources and implements/expands upon the Sutter Buttes overlay zone.

### Industrial/Commercial and Employment Corridor

**Goal LU 7 Provide for the consideration of appropriately planned and designed new Industrial/Commercial and Employment Corridor uses along the Highway 99 and Highway 70 corridor.**

#### Policies

LU 7.2 **Quality Design.** Ensure that projects within Industrial/Commercial and Employment Corridor areas provide high quality site design, architecture, screening, buffering, landscaping, signage, lighting, and other design elements, in particular along the Highway 99 corridor, in accordance with the Sutter County Design Guidelines and applicable General Plan policies.

### Implementation Programs

LU 1-A Complete a comprehensive review of the Sutter County Design Guidelines and amend as appropriate to:

- Minimize land use conflicts between uses;
- Define Agricultural buffers;
- Define Industrial and Commercial buffers;
- Incorporate Landscape Design measures from the Climate Action Plan;

- Discourage strip development along key roadways and highways;
- Enhance the design of development located along roadways and highways to protect quality views;
- Ensure compatible new development in agricultural areas;
- Preserve and protect local landmarks and significant natural resources within rural communities;
- Define appropriate design standards to enhance rural communities;
- Define gateways to rural communities;
- Require high quality, efficient, and well designed new development;
- Promote well defined, diverse and distinct residential neighborhoods and housing;
- Address street frontages, pedestrian access, compatibility with surrounding uses, architectural design, scale and massing, screening, sign design, transit facilities, visual impact of parking areas, and shared access and parking or new commercial and industrial uses;
- Ensure compatible design of public facilities; and,
- Establish Industrial Commercial and Employment Corridor buffers.

LU 1-B Complete a comprehensive review of the Sutter Zone Code and amend as appropriate to:

- Promote long term Agricultural and Open Space conservation;
- Prohibit isolated uses within agricultural or other resource areas;
- Prohibit new Agriculture Rural Community and Ranchette uses;
- Allow for the Commercial Recreation Overlay;
- Limit new Estate Residential development;
- Allow mixed use developments;
- Promote and preserve community centers or downtowns in rural communities;
- Allow higher intensity uses within areas that can be annexed by existing cities or where incorporation of a new City can occur;
- Direct new urban and suburban development to defined growth areas;
- Prohibit new growth areas that are discontinuous to existing cities and/or rural communities;
- Require high quality, efficient, and well designed new development;
- Allow infill housing that is compatible with existing development;
- Allow for the development of second residential units in appropriate zones;
- Allow employee-serving businesses within industrial areas;
- Provide for consistent signage and flexible development standards for new commercial and industrial uses;

- Regulate the type and intensity of Industrial/Commercial and Employment Corridor development based upon the availability of infrastructure and services;
  - Encourage reuse and revitalization of structures within the Industrial/Commercial and Employment Corridor; and,
  - Provide for expedited Design Review processing within the Employment Corridor.
- LU 3-A Consider preparing and adopting a Community Plan for each rural community to supplement the policies of General Plan. The Community Plan for each rural community may address: assignment of land uses and development patterns; land use compatibility; infill development and community expansion; infrastructure and services; economic development opportunities; community character and design; and other issues relevant to each community.
- LU 4-H Supplement the Sutter County Design Guidelines to ensure cohesive and unified design for Industrial/Commercial and Employment Corridor projects along the Highway 99 and Highway 70 corridor. Design requirements shall reflect the scenic and functional importance of Highways 99 and 70 in Sutter County. Design Guidelines for Employment Corridor uses north and south of Yuba City shall acknowledge the visual importance of this corridor as an entry to Yuba City, and shall consider consistency with the City's design guidelines and standards. Design elements to be addressed include, but are not limited to, grading, streetscapes, landscaping, site design, vehicular and pedestrian access, screening, building architecture and design, lighting, and signage. (New)

## ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES ELEMENT (ER)

### Visual Resources

#### Goal ER 7 Preserve the visual and scenic resources that define Sutter County.

##### Policies

- ER 7.1 **Scenic Resources.** Protect views of Sutter County's unique scenic resources including the Sutter Buttes, wildlife and habitat areas, the Sacramento, Feather, and Bear Rivers, and other significant resources.
- ER 7.2 **Scenic Roadways.** Enhance the visual character along the County's key transportation corridors, in particular Highways 99 and 20, through application of consistent design and landscape standards.
- ER 7.3 **Visually Complimentary Development.** Require new development adjacent to the County's scenic resources to be sited and designed to visually complement the natural environment, topography, and aesthetic viewsheds.
- ER 7.4 **New Development.** Apply design, development, and landscaping standards to new industrial and commercial developments to ensure a quality visual appearance. Screening of parking, ancillary features, storage yards, and other similar elements shall be required.

ER 7.5 **Lighting.** Support practices that reduce light pollution and preserve views of the night sky including the design and sighting of light fixtures to minimize glare and light on adjacent properties.

#### **Implementation Programs**

ER 7-A Review and amend the Sutter County Design Guidelines to include direction for all residential and non-residential uses to address: the protection of unique scenic resources; siting and design to visually compliment the natural environment, topography, and aesthetic viewsheds; and reduction of light pollution in the night sky.

ER 7-B Develop design standards and criteria for new development located along Highway 20 and 99, and Garden Highway to protect views of the County's scenic resources including the Sutter Buttes, wildlife and habitat areas, the Sacramento, Feather, and Bear Rivers, and other significant resources. The standards shall include a combination of landscaping use, screening of outdoor storage, building height limitations and setbacks.

### **Standards of Significance**

For the purposes of this EIR, impacts to aesthetics and visual resources are considered significant if the proposed General Plan would:

- have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista; or
- create a new source of substantial light or glare that would cause a public hazard or annoyance for a sustained period of time or adversely affect an existing viewshed.

### **Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

#### **6.2-1 Implementation of the proposed General Plan could adversely affect scenic vistas.**

Approximately 92 percent of the policy area is designated for agricultural and open space uses, which creates vast viewsheds of undeveloped areas. With the exception of the Sutter Buttes at a peak elevation of 2,000 feet above the surrounding valley floor, the topography of the policy area is characterized by relatively flat terrain with generally expansive viewsheds. In addition to the Sutter Buttes being the most visually predominant natural element within the policy area, the viewsheds of the Feather, Sacramento, and Bear rivers also provide visual relief.

Under the proposed General Plan, future development is designated in Growth Areas, which include much of the southeastern portion of the policy area within the Sutter Pointe Specific Plan area, the area within the East Nicolaus/Trowbridge Rural Planned Community area, the northern portion of the policy area within the Sutter Rural Planned Community, south of the Sutter Buttes, and the eastern policy area adjacent to the cities of Yuba City and Live Oak. Although new roadways and public facilities may provide additional access

to these areas and thus more opportunities for long distant views of the coastal mountains, Sutter Buttes, and Sierra Nevada mountains, that same development and associated landscaping could further obstruct and diffuse views of the Sierra Nevada mountains, coastal range, and Sutter Buttes. Due to the distance from the Sierra Nevada and coastal mountain ranges and the existing diffused nature of existing views, opportunities to view these scenic vistas are already limited.

Future development and redevelopment activities adjacent to the Sutter Buttes; wildlife and habitat areas; and the Sacramento, Feather, and Bear rivers, would be required to comply with proposed policy ER 7.1, which protects views of these unique scenic resources to ensure no significant degradation of the scenic viewsheds would result. Proposed policy ER 7.3 requires new development adjacent to the County's scenic resources be sited and designed to visually complement the natural environment, topography, and aesthetic viewsheds. Policy ER 7.4 requires the application of design, development, and landscaping standards (e.g., screening of parking, ancillary features, storage yards, and other similar elements) for new industrial and commercial development to ensure a quality visual appearance. Policy LU 1.16 requires that new development along Highway 20, North Butte Road, West Butte Road, East Butte Road, South Butte Road, and Pass Road incorporate design and development standards that protect views of the Sutter Buttes. In addition, the Sutter Buttes Overlay Zone Ordinance preserves the visual values of the Sutter Buttes. Structures within the overlay zone that are visible from public roads or adjacent residences are subject to development and siting standards that address a number of factors including screening, grading, lighting, building colors, and roof areas and materials. Policy LU 1.17 requires new development along the Garden Highway to maintain the quality of views to adjacent agricultural and open space areas.

Compliance with the proposed General Plan policies and the Sutter Buttes Overlay Zone Ordinance would ensure that new development would be designed and located to preserve and protect existing scenic resources and viewsheds. Therefore, future development proposed consistent with the growth areas designated in the proposed General Plan would not result in a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista. This is a ***less-than-significant impact***.

### Full Buildout Analysis

Under the full buildout scenario, the same effects would occur as discussed above. The change in scenic vistas assumed full buildout conditions. However, additional growth that could occur under full buildout would go beyond 2030 and future planning efforts and environmental analysis would address this additional growth and the potential implications of this growth.

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### Mitigation Measure

*None required.*

#### **6.2-2 Implementation of the proposed General Plan could result in development that may create a new source of light or glare, which could cause a public hazard, annoyance, or adversely affect an existing viewshed.**

The policy area contains a moderate amount of artificial light and glare from existing urban uses within the Spheres of Influence (SOI) of the cities of Yuba City and Live Oak. The policy area's outlying agricultural and residential areas have a lower concentration of existing artificial light and reflective surfaces that produce glare. Future development under the General Plan could create new sources of light or glare from uses including parking lot lights, structure lights, and reflective building surfaces. These new sources of light and glare in existing undeveloped areas of the county would be more noticeable. As a result, potential new sources of light or glare could affect the day or nighttime views of adjacent land uses. Within the policy area, these adjacent land uses could be considered sensitive receptors if commercial or industrial areas were developed adjacent to residential uses or public spaces where people congregate to enjoy nature.

Daytime glare could be produced by the increased amount of surface area of proposed commercial structures, which could reflect or concentrate sunlight. Nighttime light could be produced by the increased amount of parking lot or building lights, which could create a new source of substantial light, especially if developed in an area where no artificial light currently exists. Proposed policy ER 7.5 supports practices that reduce light pollution and glare including the preservation of views of the night sky with the design and siting of light fixtures to minimize glare and light on adjacent properties. Policy ER 7.4 requires the application of design, development, and landscaping standards (e.g., screening of parking, ancillary features, storage yards, and other similar elements) to new industrial and commercial developments to ensure a quality visual appearance. Policy LU 4.8 requires high quality, efficient, and well designed new development that is sensitive to the design and location of lighting to avoid spillage and glare on adjacent properties and protects the rural night sky. Proposed policy LU 7.2 ensures that projects within the Industrial/Commercial and Industrial/Commercial Reserve areas provide high quality design elements including lighting.

As discussed above, the Sutter Buttes Overlay Zone Ordinance also preserves the visual values of the Sutter Buttes and structures within the overlay zone that are visible from public roads or adjacent residences and are subject to development and siting standards that address a number of factors including lighting. In addition, land use policies in the General Plan address the visual character of development areas as well as compatibility of



adjoining uses, which would indirectly regulate the impact of glare. This is a ***less-than-significant impact***.

### Full Buildout Analysis

Under the full buildout scenario, the same effects would occur as discussed above. The potential increase in light and glare associated with new development assumed full buildout conditions. However, additional growth that could occur under full buildout would go beyond 2030 and future planning efforts and environmental analysis would address this additional growth and the potential implications of this growth.

### Mitigation Measure

*None required.*

### Growth Areas

There are five new growth areas designated in the proposed General Plan. Please see Chapter 3, Project Description for more information on these growth areas. Impacts to visual resources in the growth areas would be the same the countywide impacts, discussed above under both the adjusted buildout as well as full buildout. However, the following discussion explains how the aesthetics and visual resources impact analysis differs for the identified growth area.

## **Rural Planned Communities and Spheres of Influence**

### Sutter and East Nicolaus/Trowbridge

The Sutter rural community is located in the northern portion of the county, south of the Sutter Buttes. Views of the Buttes are predominant to the north. Views to the south and west include open agricultural land, natural wildlife areas, and Sutter Bypass and sloughs. Views to the east are upon smaller and larger scale development associated with the incorporated city of Yuba City. The anticipated growth associated with the Sutter Rural Planned Community is primarily development of residential areas with low densities (i.e., up to four dwelling units per acre) and commercial, industrial, and public uses.

The East Nicolaus and Trowbridge rural communities are located in the southeast portion of the county, east of the Feather River. Immediate views include agricultural land, open space, and state wildlife areas. Longer-range views include the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the east, the California coastal mountains to the west, and the Sutter Buttes to the north. The anticipated growth associated with the East Nicolaus/Trowbridge Rural Planned Community is development of residential areas with low densities (i.e., one dwelling unit per acre or under) and commercial, industrial, industrial/commercial reserve, and public uses.

The proposed General Plan includes goals and policies designed to address future development in rural planned communities. Proposed policy LU 3.11 requires new development at entries to rural communities be designed to include elements such as signage, landscaping, and appropriate architectural detail to help create gateways and enhance identity for the community. Proposed Goal 6 provides for the consideration of new rural planned communities within/adjacent to the existing rural communities of Sutter and East Nicolaus/Trowbridge. Proposed policy LU 6.10 promotes the incorporation of a mixed-use town center/focal point and visually attractive gateways to help define a distinct identity for each rural planned community. Proposed policy LU 6.11 ensures that any future specific plan for the Sutter Rural Planned Community incorporates land use and design measures to protect the Sutter Buttes and implement/expand upon the Sutter Buttes overlay zone. Proposed policy ER 7.2 requires the application of consistent design and landscape standards along the county's key transportation corridors, in particular Highway 20, to enhance the visual character of this area.

### Yuba City – North and South Spheres of Influence

The sphere of influence of Yuba City encompasses 5,886 acres. Beyond the existing SOI, a possible expanded SOI area is under consideration (5,079 acre). Please refer to Chapter 3, Project Description, for more specific information pertaining to the Yuba City SOI growth area. Views from Yuba City's SOI areas include the Sutter Buttes to the northwest, the Feather River to the east, and urban and rural development associated with the incorporated city of Yuba City to the west and south. The anticipated growth associated with the Yuba City – North SOI is development of existing agricultural areas with commercial and industrial uses. The anticipated growth associated with the Yuba City – South SOI is development of residential areas with low densities (i.e., up to four dwelling units per acre) and industrial uses.

The proposed General Plan includes goals and policies designed to address future development of industrial and commercial land uses. Proposed policy LU 4.22 requires that the Sutter County Design Guidelines be applied to all industrial and commercial areas to improve the aesthetic appearance of those developments. Proposed policy LU 4.23 promotes well designed and articulated new commercial and industrial development including items such as the consideration of the relationship to adjacent uses, minimizing the visual impact of parking areas, and creating visually interesting and consistent projects by using consistent design elements and materials throughout individual complexes. Proposed policy ER 7.3 requires new development adjacent to the county's scenic resources (e.g., the Feather River) to be sited and designed to visually complement the natural environment, topography, and aesthetic viewsheds.

## Sutter Pointe Specific Plan Area

The Sutter Pointe Specific Plan Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) found that the project site itself does not provide any aesthetic resources that would be considered scenic vistas because the project site has been developed for agricultural production and other uses (e.g., rural residences) and does not provide views of the local natural landscape.<sup>2</sup> Background views to motorists traveling on nearby roadways and to rural residences of the project site include the city of Sacramento skyline to the south, the Sutter Buttes to the north, the Sacramento River to the west, and the Sierra Nevada range to the east and are visible only on a clear day.

The EIR also concluded that the residential land uses and on-site industrial development within the project area are limited and are not a substantial source of light or glare; however, implementation of the plan would require lighting for roadways; commercial, office, and industrial buildings; parking lots; residences; and other public facilities, such as schools and parks. In addition, nighttime lighting or the presence of reflective surfaces on buildings in the commercial, office, and industrial areas (e.g., reflective window glazing) may result in light and glare shining onto motorists on adjacent roadways and on existing and proposed residences in the vicinity. Mitigation measures included in the EIR would reduce significant impacts associated with effects from new sources of light and glare to a less-than-significant level by establishing lighting standards and preparing and implementing a lighting plan.<sup>3</sup>

## Industrial/Commercial (I/C) and Employment Corridor (EC)

The Industrial/Commercial growth area is located within the community of Tudor, south of the city of Yuba City and west of the Feather River. Immediate views include agricultural land, open space, and state wildlife areas. Longer-range views include the Sierra Nevada Mountains to the east, the California coastal mountains to the west, and the Sutter Buttes to the north. The anticipated growth associated with the Industrial/Commercial is development of industrial and commercial uses along Highway 99.

The Employment Corridor growth areas are located along the Highway 99 corridor, north and south of the city of Yuba City, and along the Highway 70 corridor, within the rural community of East Nicolaus. Views associated with the growth area north of Yuba City include the Sutter Buttes to the west, the Feather River to the east, and agricultural and other lower density development to the north and south. Views associated with the growth area south of Yuba City include smaller and larger scale development associated with the incorporated city of Yuba City to the north, the Sutter Buttes to the west, the Feather River to

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2 Sutter County, Sutter Pointe Specific Plan Draft EIR SCH #2007032157, Prepared by EDAW. Section 3.16, Visual Resources, December 2008, p. 3.16-24.

3 Ibid., pp. 3.16-29–3.16-31.

the east, and agricultural and other lower density development to the south. Views associated with the growth area in East Nicolaus include the Feather River to the west, and agricultural and other low-density development to the north, east, and south. The anticipated growth associated with the Employment Corridor is development of industrial and commercial uses.

The Draft General Plan includes goals and policies designed to address future development of industrial and commercial land uses. Proposed policy LU 1.7 requires new commercial and industrial development to incorporate, as appropriate, buffers and other measures that mitigate visual and operational impacts to adjacent uses in compliance with the Sutter County Design Guidelines and project environmental review. Proposed policy LU 7.2 ensures that projects within the Industrial/Commercial areas provide high quality design elements including site design, architecture, screening, buffering, landscaping, signage, lighting, and other design elements, in particular along the Highway 99 corridor. Policy ER 7.3 requires new development adjacent to the county's scenic resources (e.g., the Sutter Buttes, Feather River, agricultural land, open space, and state wildlife areas) to be sited and designed to visually complement the natural environment, topography, and aesthetic viewsheds. Policy ER 7.2 requires the application of consistent design and landscape standards along the county's key transportation corridors, in particular Highway 99, to enhance the visual character.

### **Cumulative Impacts and Mitigation Measures**

The geographic context for the analysis of cumulative impacts to aesthetics and visual resources is the entire policy area, in addition to the anticipated cumulative future development within northern Sacramento County, western Placer County, Yuba County, and the cities of Marysville and Olivehurst.

#### **6.2-3 Implementation of the proposed General Plan, in combination with future development in the surrounding region, could contribute to cumulative adverse affects to views, viewsheds, or create new sources of light or glare.**

Future urban development in northern Sacramento County, western Placer County, Yuba County and the cities of Marysville and Olivehurst as well as within Sutter County is anticipated to occur over the next 20 years. The future expansion of Sacramento International Airport is underway in northern Sacramento County, along with continued development in the North Natomas area of the city of Sacramento. Western Placer County recently approved several specific plan development projects including Placer Vineyards, Regional University, Sierra Vista, and Placer Ranch. In addition, the Curry Creek Community Plan area in western Placer County is designated as an area to accommodate future growth. The overall impact to viewsheds and the creation of new sources of light and glare

would be a significant cumulative impact associated with future development that is anticipated to occur over the next 20 years within the region.

Sutter County is a rural, agricultural area with over 92 percent of the county area designated for agricultural and open space uses. Development anticipated to occur within the county would primarily be focused within the five new growth areas. The balance of the policy area would remain in open space or would be agricultural in character. As a result, in the context of the larger policy area, the focused growth areas represent a small fraction of the policy area's total acreage, and development in these areas is anticipated to be lower intensity in scale, and generally include lower density development. Views of open space areas, agricultural lands, the Sutter Buttes, river corridors, and wildlife areas are not anticipated to significantly change.

The anticipated change in the overall character as a result of future development within the region would be a considerable impact. However, implementation of the proposed General Plan would not contribute to a significant visual change within the policy area because its contribution is so small in the context of the larger region. The contribution to the visual environment that would result due to full buildout of the General Plan would not result in a considerable contribution to the regional impact. In addition, the General Plan's proposed goals, policies, and implementation programs aimed at the protection and preservation of aesthetic and visual resources would ensure that the project's contribution to the cumulative impact would be less than considerable. Therefore, the cumulative impact would **be less than significant**.

#### Mitigation Measure

*None required.*