

## 6.2 VISUAL RESOURCES

This chapter evaluates the visual impacts of the proposed City of Fortuna General Plan 2030 (proposed plan), including those related to: (1) scenic vistas; (2) scenic resources; (3) visual character; and (4) light and glare.

For purposes of this chapter: a “scenic vista” is defined as a sweeping horizon view containing one or more scenic resources that are visible by a large number of people; a “scenic resource” is defined as creeks, rivers, forests, bluffs, open space, agricultural areas, scenic roads, historic buildings or neighborhoods, landmarks, and idyllic rural communities; and “visual character” is defined as the predominant existing visual setting of the Planning Area and its surroundings.

### Environmental Setting

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The Planning Area is located on the east side of the Eel River Valley. The central portion of the Planning Area is dominated by the City of Fortuna, the northern and eastern portions by forested hillsides and meadows, and the southern portion by agriculture fields, Rohnerville Airport and the Rohnerville Plateau.

The Planning Area has a mix of diverse physical landforms, cultural elements and urban elements that contribute to a sense of place and to the quality of life valued by its residents. The visual settings of the Planning Area, including scenic vistas, scenic resources, visual character, as well as light and glare conditions, are described below.

#### Scenic Vistas

The Planning Area is not within the County’s designated scenic vista and scenic resource areas (Humboldt County 1984).

Neither HWY 101 nor SR 36 is a state- or county-designated scenic highway (Humboldt County 1984 and 2002; Caltrans 2009). Views from HWY 101, north of the Kenmar Rd. exit are largely obstructed by trees and buildings along the highway. Plateaus, bluffs, and high ground block views from State Route 36 (SR 36). For these reasons, scenic vistas (sweeping horizon views) are not generally available from either highway within the Planning Area. Some scenic vistas can be viewed from HWY 101 south of Kenmar Rd. These include views of forested bluffs and meadows rising above Fortuna to the east, and of agricultural land and hills to the west.

Scenic vistas available within the Planning Area include:

- northerly and easterly views of the forested bluffs and meadows rising above the City of Fortuna from multiple points and roadways in the Planning Area;
- westerly views of the Eel River and the agricultural fields beyond from Riverwalk Drive, the top of the Eel River levee and from River Lodge and the Riverwalk area;
- northerly views of the City of Fortuna, and southerly views of the Van Duzen River and the Eel River Valley, from the Rohnerville Plateau; and
- easterly views of the City, Eel River and Valley from Hillside Drive.

A number of local road in the Planning Area offer good views of scenic resources:

- Riverwalk Drive offers views of the Eel River;
- Main Street in the downtown business district offers views of a quant small-town downtown;
- Carson Woods Road north of Rohner Park offers views of forested hillsides and meadows;
- Hillside Drive offers views of the Eel River Valley;
- parts of Drake Hill Road offer views of the bluffs;
- Mill Street to the golf course and Loop Road in the vicinity of Newburg Road offer views of the bluffs and forested hillsides.

### Scenic Resources - Natural Elements

**Creeks.** Several tributaries to the Eel River flow throughout the City. These tributaries include Palmer Creek, Rohner Creek, Strongs Creek, Jameson Creek, and Mill Creek. Wolverton Gulch, which flows into the Van Duzen River, lies at the southeast corner of the Planning Area. These watercourses include riparian corridors of varying widths lined with trees and vegetation providing visual quality to the City's landscape.

**Rivers.** The Eel River borders the western edge of the City. It is a broad, braided river with wide gravel beds on either side of the main river channel and levees on both banks. The river meanders through the gravel beds during summer and fall low-flow periods, but becomes a single well-defined river occupying the whole of the channel during winter storm events and spring runoff. The river plain beyond the levees to the west contains agricultural fields that extend to the Wildcat Hills to the south and west. Within the proposed Riverwalk Annexation area, a gravel extraction operation along the river includes gravel mounds that obstruct continuous views of the river.

The Riverwalk is a popular access point to the Eel River. The Riverwalk is a paved pedestrian trail on the top of the levee forming the east bank of the river. When viewed from the Riverwalk and River Lodge, the Eel River and environs forms an area of high scenic value with wide, sweeping vistas of the river, river valley, agricultural fields, and surrounding hills.

The Van Duzen River marks the southern boundary of the Planning Area. The river channel, like the Eel's, contains gravel beds that are exposed during low flow summer periods and inundated following periods of heavy rain. At least one gravel extraction operation occurs along this stretch of the river resulting in tall gravel mounds that obstruct continuous views of the river.

**Forests Hillsides, Bluffs, and Meadows.** The forested hillsides and bluffs to the north and east form very distinctive visual features and "edges" in the Planning Area. Forested hillsides and bluffs provide a scenic backdrop to Fortuna that is characteristic of Humboldt County; a mix of undeveloped and partially-cleared timberlands with low ranges of coastal hills, ridges and bluffs intersected by streams, and by local roads that provide access to farms and low-density housing further inland.

The hillsides and bluffs that provide visual enclosure to Fortuna also present development limitations requiring slope and resource protections. This natural landscape limits hillside development and concentrates it in the valley floor and on the Rohnerville plateau.

The foothills within the eastern portion of the Planning Area serve as a transition area between the more densely developed urban center of Fortuna and the hills and mountains to the east. Encroachment by residential development has occurred in the foothills and on the hilltops to the east and southeast of Fortuna. Several large residences sited prominently on cleared ridgelines overlooking Fortuna have partially altered the visual aesthetic quality of the hillsides and bluffs, and changed the visual relationship of natural landforms with its physical surroundings.

**Rohnerville Plateau.** To the south, the Rohnerville Plateau is situated between the city limits and SR 36, is one of the Planning Area's most distinctive natural landforms. The plateau is extraordinarily flat, having been formed by a prehistoric uplifting of the Van Duzen river terrace. The plateau is developed with the Rohnerville Airport, pockets of industrial development and agricultural land. Rohnerville Rd. and Airport Rd. provide vehicular access through the area and establish boundaries within the plateau. The plateau edge and bluff face create a strong visual feature, contrasting the face of the bluff with the lower open agricultural land along the Van Duzen and Eel Rivers.

**Agricultural lands.** Agricultural lands are predominating within the southern and southwestern portions of the Planning Area. Patches of agricultural land can also be found in the eastern portion of the Planning Area, and are key scenic resources providing rural character, visual open space, and a pastoral setting for the City. The flat agricultural plains extending north of the Van Duzen River to SR 36 east and west of the Eel River form part of the broader river valley floodplain. While there are limited areas of agricultural lands within the City limits, agricultural lands in the south of the Planning Area present an important setting and visual gateway to Fortuna for northbound travelers on Highway 101.

**Open Space.** Open space in the City of Fortuna includes approximately 75 acres of designated parkland including community parks (Rohner Park and Newburg Park) and pocket parks (Chamber Park and Overlook Park), the Riverwalk and Eel River environs, agricultural lands, school playing fields, forested hillsides, bluffs, meadows, and riparian areas along creeks. Areas of open space in the City also include spaces formed by building setback areas (e.g., the front garden area of the Veteran's building on Main Street). Open space provides a visual relief in urban areas, and preserves views.

## Scenic Resources - Urban Elements

Urban (man-made) elements with scenic qualities in the Planning Area include Fortuna's downtown buildings and streetscape, the Rohnerville Historic District, and nearly six-dozen buildings eligible for historic status.

**Downtown Fortuna.** Fortuna's Downtown (Main Street between 9<sup>th</sup> Street and Fortuna Boulevard) is representative of a rural small town, with an aesthetic quality enhanced by well maintained one- to three-story commercial buildings and an intact and integrated commercial streetscape. The predominance of locally-owned businesses contributes to its individual character.

**Historic Buildings/Neighborhoods.** The City of Fortuna has strong historical identity and associations with lumber and agricultural industries. This history is reflected in the PALCO lumber mill (closed in 2004) the dominant industrial property surrounded by residential subdivisions of mill-worker housing.

The Planning Area contains multiple historic or potentially historic structures, including:

- Rohnerville State Historic District containing at least eight buildings dating from the late 1800's in the area bordered by Brown, Main, Webber and Trinity Street;
- Gunshaw-Mudgett House, a National Register of Historic Places building located at 820 9<sup>th</sup> Street;
- Fortuna Ranger Unit Headquarters (now CALFIRE), a California Register of Historic Resources building located at 118 South Fortuna Boulevard;
- Northwestern Pacific Depot Building, a locally-designated structure of significant historic and architectural worth located at 4 Park Street; and
- 72 other buildings, roads or sites, many of which date from the late 1800s and may be eligible for listing in the National or State Register (Table 5.4-1).

These, along with Fortuna's downtown, represent visual resources of an historic nature in the Planning Area.

## Visual Character

The visual character of the Planning Area is of a small rural community dominated by forested hillsides, bluffs, the Eel River, the Rohnerville Plateau, agricultural land, and rural residential development in the topographically diverse outskirts, and one- to three-story residential, commercial and industrial development, parks and riparian corridors in the flatter urban core. Within the urban core, the Downtown is representative of a small town main street, while the residential neighborhoods contain a spattering of historic residences, churches and meeting halls with Victorian-era architecture.

## Light and Glare

Outdoor night lighting can interfere with nighttime views, the expectation for privacy, and with prolonged exposure can represent a nuisance. The existing lighted environment of the Planning Area can be characterized as small town in character, with: a lit urban core dominated by Fortuna's downtown and Fortuna Boulevard corridor's commercial uses; northerly and easterly foothills that transition from a scattering of residential light associated with rural residential uses to unlit hillside, forest and meadow areas; and intermittently lit southerly and southwesterly agricultural and airport uses. Existing sources of nighttime outdoor lighting are limited and include, but are not limited to, , business lighting along Main Street in Fortuna's Downtown and portions of Fortuna Boulevard, a light-board at Eel Valley Hydroponics facing the northbound onramp to US 101, and stadium lighting at Fortuna High School during sporting and community events.

Glare can interfere with daytime vision and, with prolonged exposure, can represent a nuisance. The source of glare is most often associated with multi-story glass buildings and metal or light-colored roofs. Glare in the Planning Area's environment is characterized by relatively low-glare conditions given the low-rise nature of the City of Fortuna's urban core and the considerable amount of open space in the northern, eastern and southern portions of the Planning Area. Few buildings in the Planning Area are capable of generating glare. Exceptions include buildings or groups of buildings with metal and/or light-colored roofs including Peterson Tractor and the mini storage business on Alamar Way in the Riverwalk Annexation Area, the used auto dealership on Fortuna Boulevard, and Forbusco Lumber on Smith Lane.

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## Applicable Plans, Policies, Codes and Regulations

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### Federal

**Wild and Scenic Rivers Act.** The Federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act of 1968 (16 U.S.C. 1271-1287) provides federal protection of designated rivers segments and their river environs (e.g., ¼ mile on either bank), for present and future public use.

The Act classifies certain river segments as "wild", "scenic", or "recreational". "Wild" river segments are free of impoundment and generally are inaccessible except by trail, with primitive watersheds or shorelines and unpolluted waters. "Scenic" river segments are free of impoundment, with shorelines or watersheds still largely primitive and shorelines largely undeveloped but accessible in places by roads. "Recreational" river segments are readily accessible by road or railroad, may have some development along their shorelines, and may have been impounded or diverted in the past (BLM 2009).

Protection of designated rivers is provided through voluntary stewardship by landowners and river users and through regulation and programs of federal, state, local, or tribal governments. Designation neither prohibits development nor gives the federal government control over private property - recreation, agricultural practices, residential development, and other uses may continue. However, it prohibits federal support for actions such as the construction of dams, impoundments or other in-stream activities that would harm the river's free-flowing condition, water quality, or outstanding resource values. The classifications are a guide to the level of existing development, not a description of any particular values (BLM 2009).

Both the Eel River and the Van Duzen River segments in the vicinity of the Planning Area are designated as "recreational" under the Act (BLM 2009).

### State

**California Wild and Scenic Rivers System.** The California Wild and Scenic Rivers System (Public Resources Code Section 5093.50 et seq.) reflects closely the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, including classifying designated rivers with the same three classifications ("wild", "scenic", or "recreational"). The California Wild and Scenic Rivers System designates both the Eel and Van Duzen River segments in the vicinity of the Planning Area as "recreational" (Friends 2009).

**California Scenic Highway Program.** The California Scenic Highway Program aims to “...establish the State’s responsibility for the protection and enhancement of California’s natural scenic beauty by identifying those portions of the state highway system which, together with the adjacent scenic corridors, require special scenic conservation treatment.” The Program lists highways that are either eligible for or officially designated state scenic highways.

There are no state-designated scenic highways within the vicinity of the Planning Area. The entire lengths of HWY 101 in Humboldt County, and SR 36 between Fortuna and the Trinity County line, are eligible but have not yet been listed (Caltrans 2009).

**California Building Energy Efficiency Standards – Outdoor Lighting Zones.** The California Building Energy Efficiency Standards, Title 24, Parts 1 and 6, provide outdoor lighting and associated energy efficiency standards. Included in these standards are outdoor lighting brightness standards relative to outdoor ambient light conditions. These set power allowances for new outdoor lighting based on the brightness of surrounding areas. As the eye adapts to dark surroundings less light is needed to see clearly. As the surroundings get brighter, more light is needed to see. The least allowed power is in Lighting Zone 1; increasingly more power is allowed in Lighting Zones 2, 3 and 4. Generating more light than is necessary contributes to interference with nighttime vision by generating glare (CEC 2009).

The California Energy Commission (CEC) defines Lighting Zones based on U.S. Census Bureau boundaries for rural and urban areas as well as for federal- and state-designated wilderness and parks. By default, federal- and state-designated parks are Lighting Zone 1 (dark); rural areas are Lighting Zone 2 (low ambient illumination); and urban areas are Lighting Zone 3 (medium ambient illumination). Lighting Zone 4 (high ambient illumination) is a special use district that may be adopted by a local government for high-activity commercial areas, lit outdoor venues, and uses requiring very bright security lighting. CEC regulations prohibits high intensity lighting in zone 3, medium intensity lighting in zone 2, and low intensity lighting in Zone 1, without tight controls to ensure that such lighting does not directly illuminate adjacent properties or cause substantial nighttime glow. Based on the 2000 U.S. Census, the incorporated City of Fortuna is designated as urban (Lighting Zone 3) while the unincorporated portions of the Planning Area are designated as rural (Lighting Zone 2). And according to the CEC website, the City has not processed any adjustment requests through the CEC to change any portion of the City to Lighting Zone 4 (CEC 2009).

## Methodology

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### Policy Background

The following policy background is used to assess the visual resource impacts of the proposed plan:

- The Planning Area contains scenic vistas of forested hillsides and meadows from multiple locations, and scenic vistas of the Eel River and Eel River Valley from Riverwalk Drive, HWY 101 south of Kenmar Drive, the top of the Eel River levee and from several properties west of HWY 101;

- The Planning Area contains multiple scenic resources, including forested hillsides, meadows, creeks and associated riparian corridors, agricultural fields, the Eel River, Fortuna’s downtown, the Rohnerville Historic District, and 73 historic and potentially historic buildings;
- Segments of the Eel River and Van Duzen River in the vicinity of the Planning Area are designated as “recreational” under the federal Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the California Wild and Scenic Rivers System. Because the proposed plan does not include proposals to construct of dams, impoundments or other in-stream activities that would harm the river's free-flowing condition, water quality, or outstanding resource values, the “recreational” designation does not have implications for the proposed plan;
- There are no state- or County-designated scenic highways in the vicinity of the Planning Area. Therefore, the requirements of California Scenic Highways Program and the Humboldt County General Plan within respect to development in scenic corridors do not apply;
- The Planning Area is not located within a County mapped/designated scenic vista or scenic resource area (Humboldt County 1984);
- The urban core of the Planning Area (e.g., City of Fortuna, Rohnerville Airport) has an urban light environment, while the northern, eastern and southern portions generally have a rural light environment; and
- The Planning Area generally has a low level of glare, with the exception of several buildings or groups of buildings with metal or light-colored roofs that generate a moderate amount of glare.

### **Thresholds of Significance**

The proposed plan will have a significant visual resources impact if it:

- Has a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista;
- Substantially damages natural scenic resources, including, but not limited to, creeks, rivers, forests, bluffs (e.g., rock outcroppings), and agricultural areas;
- Substantially damages urban scenic resources, including, but not limited to, historic or potentially historic buildings;
- Substantially degrades the existing visual character or quality of the site and its surroundings; or
- Creates a new source of substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.

### **Implications of the Draft Land Use Diagram**

The proposed General Plan includes a Land Use Diagram. The proposed Land Use diagram; (1) intensifies land use designations to the proposed annexation areas (e.g., Riverwalk, Strongs Creek, Carson Woods Road and Rohnerville Airport Annexation Areas); (2) designates portions or all of these annexation areas for urban development; (3) changes the designation of portions of the incorporated area from rural to urban uses, or from urban uses to more intensive urban uses

(e.g., Fortuna Boulevard, Downtown, Riverwalk District, Rohnerville and Mill District Focus Areas); and (4) re-designates other parcels from open space and agricultural uses to urban uses. These changes could adversely affect scenic vistas, scenic resources and visual character; and could generate light and glare.

## General Plan Policy Response

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The proposed General Plan includes the following policies and programs relevant to visual resources.

**Policy CD-1.1 Community Character/Identity.** The City shall promote community character and identity and elements that make up “essence of the city as a whole” by:

- Maintaining historic grain and scale of development;
- Encouraging the use of local architecture themes;
- Encourage the use of River Lodge’s architectural design as an anchor for new development design concepts;
- Encouraging the use of historic building forms and materials;
- Maintaining the importance of adaptive reuse of facilities;
- Promoting the attractiveness of the community to pass-through visitors and related economic benefits;
- Promoting the importance of riverfront and the River Lodge;
- Physically and visually reconnecting the west and east sides of Highway 101;
- Honoring the grain of development and continued use of natural separations of creeks and bluffs to help maintain the individuality of the various neighborhoods or districts; and
- Maintaining the specific character and attributes of individual neighborhoods and districts.

**Policy CD-1.2 Form-Based Zoning.** The City shall adopt form-based zoning for selected areas of the City to regulate building size and design so that the historic nature and integrity of distinct districts and neighborhoods is preserved.

**Policy CD-1.4 Design Review.** The City shall require Design Review Board review for all commercial, multifamily housing and planned development projects.

**Policy CD-1.7 Historic Preservation.** The City shall encourage the preservation of historic structures including the conservation and renovation of existing housing.

**Policy CD-1.13 Environmental Conformity.** The City shall require development project design to reflect and consider natural features, noise exposure of residents, visibility of structures, circulation, access, and the relationship of the project to surrounding uses. Residential densities, building intensities, and lot patterns should be determined by these and other factors.

**Policy CD-1.14 Lighting.** The City shall review lighting and landscaping plans to ensure that they are compatible with adjacent uses, respond to public safety concerns, and reduce light emissions into nighttime sky. The City shall also prohibit continuous all night lighting, except for security purposes.

**Policy CD-1.15 Tree Planting.** The City shall encourage and support the planting of trees throughout the City to increase property values and provide habitat for plants, birds, and other animals.

**Policy CD-1.16 Building Spacing.** The City shall require adequate spacing or insulation between buildings so that residents have separation from neighbors and adequate privacy consistent with appropriate neighborhood and building scale and design.

**Policy CD-1.17 Business Improvement District.** The City shall continue to work with the Fortuna Business Improvement District, Downtown merchants, and Chamber of Commerce to provide aesthetic enhancements that contribute to the City's image and identity.

**Policy CD-1.18 Industrial Design and Landscaping.** The City shall require that industrial development (e.g. business park) incorporate landscaping and good design in accordance with Citywide Design Guidelines. The City shall encourage industrial development to have the following features:

- Attractive building frontages that are readily visible from the public street;
- Variation in the roofline;
- Articulation in the walls (insets, projections, canopies, wing walls, trellis);
- Large parking areas with tree coverage separated into a series of smaller parking areas with the use of landscaping and the location of buildings'
- Outdoor service areas, loading bays and outdoor storage areas that are not readily visible to the public;
- Attractive landscaping (e.g. berms) to enhance the business by softening buildings and parking areas; and
- Public art.

**Policy CD-1.20 Glare.** The City shall require that new building exteriors be constructed with non-glare or low-glare materials and paints, and shall minimize the use of reflective glass in exterior facades.

**Policy CD-2.4 Infill Development.** The City shall ensure that infill development respects existing historic structures, block and lot patterns, and landscapes, shall require that it be of compatible scale, style, and character, and shall apply setback standards consistent with the existing neighborhood.

**Policy CD-3.1 Highway Landscaping.** The City shall work with State highway officials concerning landscaping maintenance of State highway property.

**Policy CD-3.2 Corridor Identity.** The City shall require that renovated and new commercial buildings and centers be planned and designed so that the location and shape of the buildings contribute to the corridor's identity and urban design concepts. This includes the orientation of buildings, composition of roof forms, and architectural treatments.

**Policy CD-3.3 Setbacks.** The City shall require that building and parking setbacks be designed as an extension of the urban design concept for the corridor and adjacent neighborhoods. This includes the depth, edge treatment, pedestrian facilities, and landscaping of setback area.

**Policy CD-3.4 Landscape Buffers.** The City shall encourage landscape buffers/planting strips along major corridors and to increase pedestrian safety, enhance neighborhood aesthetics, and provide space for street trees.

**Policy CD-3.5 Street Tree Planting.** The City shall encourage and support the planting of street trees along new and existing arterial and collector streets.

**Policy CD-3.6 Wildflower Seeding.** The City shall use wildflowers as a means to beautify rural roadsides and freeway rights of way.

**Policy CD-3.9 Minimum Building Design Requirements.** The City shall require new development along major corridors comply with the following minimum building requirements:

- All outdoor storage of goods, materials, and equipment, and loading docks areas shall be screened from major roadways;
- Developments with multiple buildings should have a uniform design theme and sign program;
- Earth tones shall be used as the dominant color; colors such as white, black, blue, and red should be used as accents. Building surfaces should have color schemes that reduce their apparent size;
- Metal buildings will be allowed only with enhanced architectural and landscaping treatment (such as use of trim bands, wing walls, parapets, and reveals); and
- All exterior elevations visible from major roadways should have architectural treatment to alleviate long void surfaces. This can be accomplished through varying setbacks, breaking buildings into segments, pitched roof elements, columns, indentations, patios, and incorporating landscaping into architectural design.

**Policy CD-4.2 Gateway Visual Enhancements.** The City shall pursue visual enhancements to identified gateway entry points, which may include a combination of the following:

- Landscaping improvements;
- Streetscape improvements;
- Building orientation and placement near the gateway;
- Attractive signage; and
- Sign and icons at various entrances to the City (i.e., Main Street, 12th Street, and Fortuna Boulevard).

**Policy CD-5.1 Visual Framework.** The City shall emphasize Fortuna’s natural features as the visual framework for new development and redevelopment.

**Policy CD-5.2 Visual Access to Open Space.** The City shall promote community design that incorporates the open space features of Fortuna’s waterways and parks into the travel experience. This includes visual access to open space features and private and public investment that visually frames and complements natural landscapes and parks.

**Policy CD-5.3 Open Space Transitions.** The City shall preserve the visual quality of open space by maintaining transitions between urban and rural areas at the edge of the community. Sound walls and utilitarian edges of developments shall not be allowed as an interface between development and rural landscapes.

**Policy CD-5.4 Hillside Views.** The City shall maintain visual access to hillside views by regulating building orientation, height, and bulk.

**Policy CD-5.5 Hillside-Development.** The City shall respect the natural setting of the hillside area by encouraging hillside development to incorporate natural landscape features.

**Policy CD-5.6 Nighttime Glare Reduction.** The City shall, whenever feasible, require public facilities and new development to use low energy shielded lights to minimize nighttime glare that might impair views of the surrounding hillsides.

**Policy CD-5.9 Native Plants on Slopes.** The City shall encourage the planting of native plants on slopes to control erosion and reduce mowing.

**Program CD-1.** To encourage good building design, the City shall prepare and adopt a form-based zoning code.

**Program CD-2.** The City shall create and maintain a Design Guidelines manual that details specific plans and requirements for all new development, redevelopment, and enhancements throughout the City, including:

- Landscaping requirements;
- Street and sidewalk design standards;
- Lighting standards;
- View corridors and structural setback requirements;
- Energy efficiency and energy conservation design standards; and
- Any other development-related requirements that correspond with the City’s general desire to pursue visual and aesthetic enhancements in Downtown, residential, commercial, and industrial areas.

**Program CD-6.** The City shall require exterior lighting to use the lowest intensity lamp/wattage for security and safety purposes, and be shielded and directed downward so there is no direct illumination of adjacent properties.

**Program CD-11.** The City shall amend the Zoning Ordinance so that it specifies guidelines for development along ridgelines around Fortuna, to preserve the City's view of the surrounding hills and mountains.

## Impacts and Mitigation

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### Impact 6.2-1: Scenic Vistas

*Proposed General Plan implementation could have a substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas.*

#### Discussion

Scenic vistas available within the Planning Area include: (1) northerly and easterly views of the forested bluffs and meadows rising above the City from multiple points and roadways in the Planning Area and from HWY 101 south of Kenmar Road; (2) westerly views of the Eel River and agricultural fields from Riverwalk Drive, HWY 101 south of Kenmar Dr., the top of the Eel River levee, River Lodge and the Riverwalk area; (3) northerly views of the City of Fortuna, and southerly views of the Van Duzen River and the Eel River Valley, from the Rohnerville Plateau; and (4) easterly views of the City, Eel River and the Valley from Hillside Drive.

Under the proposed plan, development will be permitted within the Planning Area that could potentially block vistas from certain locations.

- Main Street between Harlan Way and 6th Street, where the northerly vista of forested hillsides could be blocked by development permitted under the proposed Commercial and Residential Low designations on the north side of Main;
- Ross Hill between Renee Way and School Street, where the easterly vista of forested hillsides could be blocked by development permitted under the proposed Residential Low designation proposed along the east side of Ross;
- Rohnerville Road between Loop Road and Brazil Lane, where the easterly vista of the forested hillsides could be blocked by development permitted under the proposed Residential Medium designation on the east side of Rohnerville; and
- Riverwalk Drive, where the westerly vista of the agricultural land and hills could be blocked by development permitted under the proposed Riverwalk District designation.

While future development could potentially block existing vistas, the plan includes policies and programs that will minimize blockages.

- Program CD-2 requires the City to create and maintain a Design Guidelines manual that details requirements for new development and redevelopment, including but not limited to view corridors and structural setback requirements;
- Policy CD-5.2 requires the City to promote community design that incorporates visual access to existing open space features; and
- Policy CD-5.4 which requires the City to maintain visual access to hillside views by regulating building orientation, height and bulk.

These policies and programs will ensure that view corridors are provided in new development. Furthermore, policies and programs are proposed requiring implementation of form-based zoning (Policy CD-1.2, Program CD-1) and setbacks (Policies CD-1.13, CD-1.16, CD-2.4 and CD-3.3, and Program CD-2), each of which will ensure that new development is compatible in height, size and mass with existing adjacent uses. Finally, the proposed land use designations will limit residential density and non-residential FAR. Developed land in most of the proposed land use districts will limit the footprint of buildings. For example, the proposed Commercial and Industrial designations limit non-residential development to an FAR of 0.35 (i.e., only 35% of each lot can be covered with buildings) leaving 65% as a potential view corridor. Therefore, the proposed General Plan will not have a substantial adverse effect on scenic vistas, and impacts will be less-than-significant.

### **Determination of Level of Significance**

Less-Than-Significant

### **Mitigation**

No mitigation required

### **Impact 6.2-2: Scenic Resources – Natural Features**

*Proposed General Plan implementation could substantially damage natural scenic resources, including creeks, rivers, forests, bluffs (e.g., rock outcroppings), and agricultural areas.*

### **Discussion**

The Planning Area contains or is adjacent to several natural scenic resources, including the forested hillsides and meadows, bluffs, the Eel and Van Duzen Rivers, the creeks and their associated riparian corridors, and the agricultural fields.

The Eel and Van Duzen Rivers are located adjacent to rather than within the Planning Area, and no activities are proposed within the channels of these rivers under the proposed plan. Therefore, the proposed plan would not substantially damage these natural scenic resources. However, development permitted under the proposed Land Use Diagram could intrude into and/or replace some of the natural scenic resources listed above. Examples include: (1) the forested hillsides in the northwest corner of the Planning Area, in the Strongs Creek Annexation Area, and in the southeastern portion of the Planning Area along Wolverton Gulch, each of which would be designated Open Space where timber harvesting is permitted; (2) the area along Strongs Creek, including its riparian corridor, which would be designated with a range of land use designations that permit urban development (e.g., Residential Low, Residential Medium, Corridor Mixed Use, Mill District, Riverwalk District, Industrial, and Public); and (3) agricultural fields in the Strongs Creek and Rohnerville Annexation Areas, which would be designated Residential Low and Industrial, respectively.

While development permitted under the proposed Land Use Diagram would intrude into and/or replace some of the existing natural resources in the Planning Area, policies and programs are included in the proposed plan to minimize and/or avoid such intrusion/replacement.

- Policy CD-1.13 requires development design to reflect and consider natural features;
- Policy CD-5.1 which requires the City to emphasize Fortuna's natural features as the visual framework for new development and redevelopment;
- Policy CD-5.3 requires the City to preserve the visual quality of open space;
- Policy CD-5.5 requires the City to respect the natural setting of the hillside area by encouraging hillside development to incorporate natural landscape features; and
- Program CD-11 requires the City to amend its Zoning Ordinance so that it specifies guidelines for development along ridgelines around Fortuna to preserve the City's view of the surrounding hills.

In addition, although the following policies and programs are not directly aimed at visual resources, they would help to preserve and protect natural scenic resources:

- Policy HS-5.3 prohibits new development on slopes greater than 25%;
- Policies NCR-2.1, -2.2, and -2.13, and Program NCR-14 require City adoption and implementation of Streamside Management Area (SMA) regulations requiring that new development keep out of the creeks and their associated riparian corridors;
- Policy NCR-2.8 requires retention of native trees and vegetation in new development;
- Policy NCR-3.1 requires the City to permit existing agricultural activities to continue (e.g., "right-to-farm");
- Program NCR-19 requires the City to support agricultural land conservation through a series of measures, including but not limited, to promoting infill development and development prior to converting agricultural land;
- Program NCR-21 requires clustering of new development when development of Prime Farmland is unavoidable in order to conserve as much farmland as possible; and
- Policy NCR-3.6 requires the City to encourage timberland retention.

In addition, if new timber harvesting operations occur in areas to be designated as Open Space, such operations will require the preparation of a Timber Harvest Plan (THP) or Non-Industrial Timber Harvest Plan (NTMP) under California Forest Practice Rules. This will require the implementation of measures to ensure the protection of natural habitat and visual resource values. With adherence to this and other applicable federal, state and local regulations, and with implementation of the above-listed policies and programs, implementation of the proposed plan will not substantially damage natural scenic resources, and impacts will be less-than-significant.

## **Determination of Level of Significance**

### **Less-Than-Significant**

## Mitigation

No mitigation required

### Impact 6.2-3: Scenic Resources - Urban Features

*Proposed General Plan implementation could substantially damage urban scenic resources, including Fortuna's downtown, the Rohnerville Historic District, and historic or potentially historic buildings.*

## Discussion

The Planning Area contains multiple urban scenic resources, including Fortuna's Downtown, Rohnerville Historic District, Gunshaw-Mudgett House, Fortuna Ranger Unit Headquarters, Northwestern Pacific Depot Building, and 72 other historic or eligible buildings, roads or sites. Development and redevelopment permitted under the proposed General Plan could intrude into and/or replace some of these resources as described below.

Fortuna's Downtown, representative of a quaint small town downtown with small store fronts, historic buildings and awnings, will be designated Central Business District (CDB) under the proposed Land Use Diagram. This designation "defines an area of visual prominence" that promotes Fortuna's identity, permits retail, office and high-density residential uses as single-uses or vertical mixed-uses, permits a maximum 1.0 for non-residential uses, 2.0 FAR for mixed uses, and 12.0 to 29.0 units per acre for residential uses, and provides for development that "emulates the character and scale of downtown." Based on this description, the proposed CDB designation will permit development and redevelopment of the same types of uses that currently exist in Downtown, and at a similar scale and character. Furthermore, the proposed plan includes policies to ensure that new downtown development and redevelopment is consistent with existing downtown development.

- Policy CD-1.1, requires the City to promote community character in individual districts and focus areas such as the proposed Downtown Focus Area by maintaining historic grain and scale of development, encouraging the use of local architecture themes, encouraging the use of historic building forms and materials, and maintaining the specific character of attributes of the individual districts and focus areas;
- Policy CD-1.2, requires the City to adopt form-based zoning for the proposed districts and focus areas, including Downtown, that regulates building size and design so that the historic nature and integrity of the area is preserved;
- Policy CD-1.17, requires the City to continue to work with business organizations to provide aesthetic enhancements that contribute to the City's image and identity;
- Program CD-2, requires the City to adopt a Design Guidelines manual that details specific landscaping, street and sidewalk, lighting, view corridor, setback, and other development-related standards to provide visual and aesthetic enhancements in Downtown;

- Policy CD-3.2, requires that new and renovated commercial buildings in the City's commercial corridors (including Downtown) be planned and designed to reflect the location and shape of existing buildings;
- Policy LU-1.1, requires the City to strive to preserve its traditional small town qualities and historic heritage;
- Policy LU-11.1, requires the City to encourage adaptive reuse of downtown buildings; and
- Program LU-11, requires the City to develop and adopt an area plan for Downtown to address the unique planning and design needs of the proposed Downtown Focus Area.

With adherence to the proposed plan's definition of the type, density, and character of land uses permitted under the CBD designation, and with implementation of the policies and programs listed above, the proposed plan will not substantially damage the visual integrity of Fortuna's Downtown. Hence, the impact will be less-than-significant.

With respect to the Rohnerville Historic District, Gunshaw-Mudgett House, Fortuna Ranger Unit Headquarters, Northwestern Pacific Depot Building, and the 72 other historic or eligible buildings, roads and sites in the Planning Area, the proposed Land Use Diagram will apply the following land use designations: (1) the historic district as Commercial, Residential Very Low and Residential Low; (2) the site of the Gunshaw-Mudgett House as Residential Low; (3) the site of the Fortuna Ranger Unit Headquarters as Corridor Mixed Use; (4) the site of the Northwestern Pacific Depot Building as Parks, Greenways & Recreation; and (5) the sites of the balance of the historic building, roads and sites in the Planning Areas with a range of designations.

These land use designations do not include the same requirements for consistency with existing land uses as does the CBD land use designation of Downtown, but the policies listed above would still apply. In addition, the proposed plan includes neighborhood conservation/enhancement and historical resources policies and programs meant to preserve and minimize impacts to historic resources.

- Policy LU-5.1, requires the City to ensure that land use and development decisions are not detrimental to the positive character and identity of Fortuna's neighborhoods;
- Policy NCR-7.1, requires evaluation of the consistency of proposed development with applicable state and federal historic resources standards;
- Policy NCR-7.4, requires the City to support public and private efforts to identify, preserve, rehabilitate, and continue the use of historic buildings;
- Policy NCR-7.5, requires the City to discourage demolition of existing buildings without first evaluating whether they contribute to the historic character of the neighborhood, and to consider preserving those found to contribute to such character;
- Policy NCR-7.7, requires the City to designate and preserve significant historic buildings;
- Policy NCR-7.9, requires that the City follow the State Historic Building Code for historic properties;
- Policy NCR-13, requires the City to work with residents and neighborhood groups to develop zoning standards designed to retain historically significant structures;

- Programs NCR-29 and -30, require the City to establish a program to designate buildings having historical value as local Historic Landmarks, and to protect these buildings from demolition and inappropriate alteration; and
- Program NCR-37, requires that historic building preservation efforts conform to applicable Secretary of the Interior's Standards for preservation.

The above policies and programs will function to: preserve listed historic resources; require evaluation of eligible historic resources for significance and require the preservation of any resources found to be significant; require that modification of historic resources comply with federal and state preservation standards; and require the adoption of design standards to safeguard the visual and historic integrity of the Rohnerville Historic District and areas where other historic resources are located. With implementation of the policies and programs listed above, and with compliance with federal and state historic resources standards, the proposed plan will not substantially damage the visual integrity of Fortuna's historic resources. Hence, the impact will be less than significant.

### **Determination of Level of Significance**

Less-Than-Significant

### **Mitigation**

No mitigation required

### **Impact 6.2-4: Visual Character**

*The proposed General Plan could substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the City of Fortuna and its surroundings.*

### **Discussion**

The visual character of the City of Fortuna is of a small rural community dominated by forested hillsides, bluffs, the Eel River, the Rohnerville Plateau, agricultural land, and rural residential development in the topographically diverse outskirts, and one- to three-story residential, commercial and industrial development, parks and riparian corridors in the flatter urban core. Within the urban core, the Downtown is representative of a small town main street, while the residential neighborhoods contain a spattering of historic residences, churches and meeting halls with Victorian-era architecture.

Several components of the proposed plan could potentially affect the rural small town character of Fortuna. First, the proposed plan includes the designation of five focus areas, including Fortuna Boulevard, Downtown, the Riverwalk District, Rohnerville, and the Mill District, where urban development and redevelopment would be encouraged. Second, the proposed plan includes four annexation areas, including Riverwalk, Strongs Creek, Carson Woods Road, and Rohnerville Airport, where City land use designations would replace County designations, and in some instances the City designations would permit more intensive development. Third, the

proposed Land Use Diagram will designate some areas for urban development or activities (e.g., timber harvesting) outside of the proposed focus and annexation areas. These components could: (1) result in the removal or modification of the scenic resources which make up the existing visual character of the City; and/or (2) introduce new development that is inconsistent with this existing visual character.

With respect to the potential for removal or modification of the scenic resources which make up the existing visual character of the City, this issue was addressed under the previous impacts. As indicated, the existing visual resources in the Planning Area will be preserved through compliance with existing federal, state and local regulations (e.g., Forest Practices Rules, historic resources regulations, etc.) and implementation of proposed policies and programs.

With respect to the potential to introduce new development that is inconsistent with the existing visual character of the City, the proposed plan defines the type and density of development permitted within each proposed land use districted such that new development would be consistent with existing development in each district. The proposed plan also includes policies and program designed to ensure that new development is consistent in character (design, appearance, etc.) with existing development.

- Policy LU-5.1 requires the City to ensure that land use and development decisions are not detrimental to the character and identity of Fortuna's neighborhoods;
- Policy CD-1.1 requires the City to promote community character by maintaining historic scale of development, encouraging the use of local architectural themes, and encouraging adaptive reuse;
- Policy CD-1.2 requires the City to adopt form-based zoning for selected areas to regulate building size and design so that the historic nature and integrity of distinct districts and neighborhoods is preserved;
- Policy CD-1.4 requires Design Review Board review for all commercial, multifamily residential and planned unit development projects;
- Policy CD-1.13 requires development project design that considers natural features, visibility, and the relationship to surrounding uses;
- Policy CD-1.14 requires the City to review lighting and landscaping plans to ensure compatibility with adjacent uses;
- Policy CD-2.4 requires that infill development respect existing historic structures, block patterns and landscapes, and incorporates compatible scale, style and character; and
- CD-5.4 requires that visual access to hillside views be maintained through regulating building orientation, height and bulk.

With adherence to applicable federal, state and local regulations, implementation of the development regulations set by the proposed land use designations, and implementation of the proposed policies and programs, the proposed plan will not substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of the City of Fortuna and its surroundings.

## Determination of Level of Significance

Less-Than-Significant

### Mitigation

No mitigation required

## Impact 6.2-5: Light and Glare

*Proposed General Plan implementation could create substantial light or glare which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area.*

### Discussion

#### Light

The existing light environment of the Planning Area can be characterized as small town in character, with: a lit urban core dominated by Fortuna's downtown and Fortuna Boulevard corridor commercial uses; northerly and easterly foothills which transition from a scattering of residential lighting associated with rural residential uses to unlit hillside, forest and meadow areas; and intermittently lit southerly and southwesterly agricultural and airport uses. Substantial existing sources of nighttime outdoor lighting are limited to several locations along arterial streets in the urban core.

Under the proposed plan, this existing pattern of development and associated nighttime outdoor lighting will be largely maintained: infill commercial, industrial and higher-density residential development will be permitted in the urban core likely resulting in similar moderate-intensity lighting to what already exists in the area; additional lower-density residential development, park and open space uses will be permitted in the northern and eastern foothills that could introduce some new low-intensity residential lighting to these areas; and agricultural and airport uses will continue to be permitted in the southern area, although few new uses and associated lighting are expected because the agricultural and airport uses are already largely built out in this area.

The proposed plan will include the designation of five focus areas where urban development and redevelopment will be facilitated, fostered and encouraged, including Fortuna Boulevard, Downtown, the Riverwalk District, Rohnerville, and the Mill District. In the Downtown, Fortuna Boulevard, Mill District Focus Areas, this new development will add to existing lighting in these focus areas representing an incremental increase in lighting. In the Riverwalk District and Rohnerville Focus Areas, this new development will replace unlit or dimly lit condition with lit conditions. Within these focus areas, but also within other parts of the urban core where commercial, industrial, mixed-uses and public uses will be permitted, there is the potential for the introduction of new high-intensity lighting.

Although new high-intensity lighting could occur in the Planning Area under the proposed plan, the proposed plan includes policies and programs to minimize the potential for any such lighting to substantially interfere with nighttime views.

- Policy CD-1.13 requires new development to reflect and consider its relationship to surrounding uses;
- Policy CD-1.14 requires the City to review lighting plans to ensure that they are compatible with adjacent uses, respond to public safety concerns, and reduce light emissions into the nighttime sky, and which prohibits continuous all night lighting except for security;
- Program CD-2 requires the City to adopt Design Guidelines with lighting, landscaping and other design standards;
- Program CD-6 requires that exterior lighting incorporate the lowest intensity lamp/wattage possible, and that this lighting be shielded and directed downward so as to avoid direct illumination of adjacent properties. With the implementation of these policies and programs, nighttime outdoor lighting impacts will be less than significant.

The incorporated City of Fortuna is located within CEC Lighting Zone 3 (medium ambient illumination), while the unincorporated portions of the Planning area are located within CEC Lighting Zone 2 (low ambient illumination). These zones mean that high-intensity lighting, which may be developed in the Planning Area under the proposed plan as discussed above, would not be permitted in either the incorporated or unincorporated portions of the Planning Area under CEC regulations without tight controls to ensure that such lighting does not directly illuminate adjacent properties or cause substantial nighttime glow. As indicated above, the proposed plan includes policies and programs (especially Program CD-6) will avoid direct illumination of adjacent properties. However, no policies or programs are proposed that will avoid the potential for substantial nighttime glow associated with placing high intensity lighting covering a large area, such as stadium lighting, in Zones 3 or 2. Therefore, the impact will be significant.

### Glare

The glare environment in the Planning Area is characterized by relatively low glare conditions given the low-rise nature of the City of Fortuna's urban core and the considerable amount of open space in the northern, eastern and southern portions of the Planning Area. Few buildings capable of generating glare occur, with the exception of several buildings or groups of buildings with metal and/or light-colored roofs (e.g., Peterson Tractor, mini storage on Alamar Way, GM dealership on Fortuna Boulevard, Forbusco Lumber).

Under the proposed plan, new development will be permitting in the Planning Area, and this development could potentially generate daytime glare. However, for two reasons, any glare produced will not be substantial. Policies and programs are proposed that require new development to be consistent with the height and scale with existing development - since existing development in the Planning Area is limited to three stories in height, new development will not include the mid- and high-rise development most often associated with glare production. Secondly, the proposed plan includes Policy CD-1.20 that requires new building exteriors to be

constructed with non-glare or low-glare materials and paints, and that new buildings minimize the use of reflective glass in exterior facades. With the implementation of these policies and programs, implementation of the proposed plan will not result in substantial glare, and the impact will be less than significant.

### **Determination of Level of Significance**

The light impact is Potentially Significant but can be reduced to Less-Than-Significant with incorporation of mitigation.

### **Mitigation**

*Mitigation Measure 6.2-5a:* Add a new program as follows:

**CD-12.** The operation of outdoor stadium lights, and of other high-intensity outdoor lighting covering more than five acres other than security lighting, shall not extend past 10:00 p.m. nightly.

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