Community Design

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GOAL CD-1

Develop an aesthetically appealing urban form that reflects the rural, small-town character of the Ukiah Valley.

GOAL CD-2

Protect and enhance the natural beauty and scenic viewsheds of the Ukiah Valley.

Background

Ukiah Valley residents and visitors can appreciate the value of a community with an attractive physical character and identity. The UVAP Community Design Section recognizes these wishes by establishing the visual and design foundations derived from community input. The County intends to maintain and enhance the character of the Ukiah Valley planning area as a set of compact communities with distinctive, attractive, commercial areas and residential neighborhoods, surrounded by open space and agricultural land. This section will establish policy direction to maintain or enhance the visual appearance of the Ukiah Valley and proposes the use of design guidelines as a planning tool to achieve the community's objectives. The Community Design Section of the UVAP, and subsequent Design Guidelines, will help to inform the development community of the County's expectations and preferences for the quality and character of new development. In addition to assisting project designers and developers, the goals, policies, and implementation measures in this section, and future Design Guidelines, will be utilized in evaluating the suitability and appropriateness of individual project design.

Visual Setting

The rural setting of the Ukiah Valley provides a scenic backdrop for the Valley's communities. Views of wooded chaparral covered mountains provide a dramatic backdrop for all parts of the Ukiah Valley. While most mountain ridges are too steep for significant development, pressure to develop the lower flanks will likely continue, with possible adverse aesthetic impacts due to grading or insensitive building or landscape design. Vineyards and orchards dominate much of the non-urbanized areas of the valley floor. These intensive agricultural areas provide a strong and

pleasant contrast to the developed areas of the Ukiah Valley and contribute to its rural and picturesque character. The Russian River, with its riparian groves of trees, also provides a major visual element as it flows through the Valley. Examples of important riparian habitats within the UVAP planning area include the River Park area located at the east end of Gobbi Street, the vicinity of the Perkins Street crossing of the river, and the river area lying south of Lake Mendocino Drive. Creeks flowing to the Russian River also provide riparian corridors. Scattered throughout the Valley are remnants of the valley oak forests that originally covered much of this area. These remaining groves provide a significant silhouette and add to the visual character and heritage of the Ukiah Valley. Many outstanding large trees of all species

should be conserved or protected through creative site design. In the northeastern portion of the Planning Area, Lake Mendocino provides an expansive vista of open water nestled between the hills. Community design can play a role in maintaining the panoramic views and attractive first impressions.

Community Separation

Although design guidelines are intended to provide a comprehensive and cohesive aspect associated with the visual environment, they can also be utilized to reinforce the uniqueness of the existing communities within the UVAP planning area. This can be accomplished by tailoring certain elements of the guidelines to reinforce unique aspects of communities such as Talmage, Calpella, and The Forks. Design guidelines can also help in maintaining green/open space between communities in order to emphasize community distinctiveness.

Creating a Sense of Place

In addition to maintaining visual separation between communities, measures that create a sense of place are equally important. By incorporating features such as green space, landscaping, street trees and furniture, public art, pedestrian oriented development, cohesive architectural elements and other visual aspects that reflect the vision of the people, a community with a stronger sense of place can be created. By requiring and encouraging such design elements in new development, the County can help to preserve and enhance community character well into the future.

Scenic Corridors and Gateways

A Scenic corridor is a route with a high visual attractiveness that should be protected and enhanced. A gateway is a term used to describe an entry point to a community or area.

U.S. 101 is an important scenic corridor that provides travelers and residents visual access to the beauty of the Valley. Prior efforts to enhance the corridor's appearance included the Chamber of Commerce's U.S. 101 beautification program that resulted in the planting of trees in an area between Burke Hill Drive and Lake Mendocino Drive. Organized efforts such as Caltrans' Adopt-a-Highway program provides litter cleanup by local groups, improving the overall aesthetic beauty of the Valley. Improvement of the appearance along the U.S. 101 corridor enhance the impressions on the users of that highway.

Gateways are important because they provide a resident or visitor's "first impression" of the Valley and its various community areas. The major Valley gateways include U.S. 101, State Routes 20 and 253, and Eastside Road. Within the Valley, entrances to the various community areas such as the City of

Ukiah, Talmage, and Calpella are also considered gateways. Several of the Valley's gateways present a panorama of orchards, vineyards, trees, mountain sides, and various levels of development. It is important to protect and enhance gateway views which can become cluttered with too many structures and a proliferation of signs and billboards. The community wishes to preserve and enhance the beauty that is an attraction to visitors and source of pride for residents.

The gateways into the City of Ukiah and the immediate surrounding vicinity include North and South State Street, Perkins Street, Gobbi Street, Talmage Road and Low Gap Road. These gateways focus attention on the streetscape and development immediately visible in the area. The relatively intense and disorganized commercial development at many of these gateways could negatively influence the perception of the area for first time visitors and everyday residents alike. Indeed much of State Street outside of downtown Ukiah is dominated by commercial strip development. While street trees have been installed along some property frontages, the tree species generally lack the ultimate growth size needed to provide a significant visual presence by softening or unifying the streetscape.

Both Talmage and Calpella are distinct communities which have gateways that provide visitors with an overall impression of each community's unique characteristics. Talmage contains unique features such as the entrance to the City of Ten Thousand Buddhas which is visible as one approaches from the south on Eastside Road. Calpella includes features such as Russian River views, open space and agricultural lands immediately adjacent to the built environment, and an eclectic style of buildings in close

proximity to one another which is part of the current community character.

Changes in what both the County and City require of future development projects as well as collaborative efforts by both jurisdiction will go a long way in improving the Valley's scenic corridors and gateways.

Design Guidelines
The UVAP Community Design policies are intended to be the foundation from which formal Community Design Guidelines shall be established. These guidelines, which will be developed from community input and may be implemented via a separate Design Guidelines document or Land Use Codes, will form the framework for design-related evaluation of proposed developments. Design Guidelines could include some or all of the following design-related aspects and would be developed with substantial public input:

 • Architectural features

 • Encouraged/Discouraged design elements

 • Setbacks, height limits, building envelopes

 • Parking requirements and visual treatments

 • Public and Private area landscaping

 • Sign requirements and limitations

 • Relationship to neighboring structures

 • Street, curb and sidewalk standards

Additional aspects could be added as needed with the entire set of Guidelines refined over time. The design review guidelines will be used for evaluating the suitability and appropriateness of individual projects. A project that is consistent with the design guidelines (once adopted) is likely to be well received and could therefore move more quickly through the permitting process. To prevent unnecessary delay of development projects, the guidelines should be clear enough for architects, agents and planners to design a project that is consistent with the intent of the Design Guidelines or Land Use Code.

Design guidelines for the UVAP and the City of Ukiah should be consistent in City-County transition areas, the Valley's "gateways," and along the State Street, U.S. 101 and railroad corridors. A comprehensive approach to design standards and guidelines will

help to improve overall visual appearance, unify streetscapes, emphasize valued community themes, provide a "sense of place", and enhance the cohesiveness of the "Valley" as a community.

Special Design Issues

Below are some special issues to be considered in the development of design guidelines. As development occurs, design and visual appearance issues facing a community tend to increase. The visual appearance of signs, sound walls, above ground utilities, public places, parking lots, and the effects of artificial light, are issues of particular importance. It is the County's intention that these issues will be addressed in the future set of design guidelines or additions to the land use code. These issues are not intended to be all inclusive, other design issues and programs would be addressed as deemed necessary as part of the preparation of the design guidelines.

Sound Walls: As an area develops or as traffic increases, vehicle noise can become a source of annoyance and potentially a health hazard in residential areas adjoining major street and highway corridors. A common solution is to construct noise barriers between the residences and the road generating the noise. Technically, noise barrier sound walls must be of adequate height to block the line-of-sound between the noise-generating vehicles and the noise receivers. Noise barriers may take a variety of forms, most notably sound walls, or fences if properly designed. Poorly designed, they can overwhelm the scale of the community, block views and create a substantial visual dead space that decreases the walkability. This plan recommends avoiding these structures wherever possible and mitigating the noise impacts though other mitigation if feasible.

Utilities: A common method of improving the design and appearance of an area is to place utilities— electrical power, telecommunications and cable television—underground. Utility facilities which must be placed aboveground, such as communication and electrical towers, should be subject to special design standards, such as shared use to avoid unnecessary duplication of facilities.

Public Places: Public buildings, parks and other facilities are often visually prominent. However, quite often, local governments economize on facility appearance. The County and City can develop standards of design that sets an example for quality in appearance, through the appropriate use of signs, graphics, color and trim. Because public buildings often dominate or set the tone for the area in which they are located, they should at minimum adhere to the same quality design guidelines as private development.

Parking Lots: The location, size, design and landscaping of parking lots greatly influence their attractiveness as well as affecting the heating and cooling of the urban landscape. These issues are relevant not only to commercial parking lots, but also industrial and public parking lots as well.

Artificial Light: As the Ukiah Valley becomes more urban, the increased use of artificial light affects both urban and rural environments. Poorly designed or installed lighting along roadways can be hazardous and the harsh glare along major roadways such as U.S. 101 detracts from the rural character of the Valley. In neighborhoods, "light trespass" reduces privacy, hinders sleep, and degrades residential character. Excessive lighting wastes energy, affects wildlife and ecological systems, and reduces enjoyment of the nighttime sky. Lighting for

buildings, businesses, landscaping, streets and parking lots, and recreational and public areas can be designed and arranged to minimize visual, ecological, and energy impacts, while providing for nighttime safety, security, and productivity.

Signs: The number, size and appearance of signs, whether located in the County or the City, have the potential to detract from the visual quality of the Ukiah Valley. In general, sign regulations should focus on creating an environment in which signs serve the marketing needs in an attractive and informative manner, without overemphasis on sign detail.

Scale
Architectural form and building placement have a great influence on the community. Techniques such as limiting building heights and requiring varied building facades and differentiated building forms and shapes provides a more comfortable environment from the pedestrian's perspective, while still allowing for larger scale development. Requiring development within an appropriate scale for each community helps to achieve a comfortable setting and maintains the rural nature of the communities within the Ukiah Valley.

Note:

For additional policies that may apply, please see the County of Mendocino General Plan, adopted August 2009.

GOAL CD1

Develop an aesthetically appealing urban form that reflects the rural, small-town character of the Ukiah Valley.

Policy CD1.1: Develop and adopt guidelines that create a sense of place for the community and protect and enhance the visual character of the Ukiah Valley.

CD1.1a: Design Guidelines

Prepare a set of design guidelines to regulate development in unincorporated areas of the Valley.

Draw upon the City of Ukiah's design guidelines for City-County transition areas, Valley gateways, and along the State Street, U.S. 101 and railroad corridors.

The design guidelines shall reflect the differences in land use intensities, scale and environmental and community settings within the Valley.

CD1.1b: Neighborhood Scale

Develop and adopt design review guidelines that preserve and enhance the character of existing residential neighborhoods by limiting encroachment of new buildings and activities that are out of scale and character with surrounding uses.

CD1.1c: Street Character

Require that development projects mitigate the impacts of traffic on neighborhood character and integrity. Consider the use of traffic calming measures, alternative project designs, modifications to the circulation system, alternative transportation modes (e.g., pedestrian, bicycling), etc., when choosing mitigation alternatives.

CD1.1d: Parking Requirements

Include parking standards in the land development code to guide commercial and industrial parking quantity and design.

Requirements shall focus on minimizing the number of stalls required and improving site aesthetics, providing shade, reducing solar heat gain, and clean drainage.

CD1.1e: Landscape Guidelines

Establish landscape guidelines applicable to discretionary projects and building permits for new duplexes, multi-family residential, commercial, industrial, civic, and redevelopment projects.

CD1.1f: Tree Canopy

The landscape guidelines shall include provisions for street canopies and streetscape enhancement that promote plantings while protecting solar access to buildings.

Permit the planting of canopy trees within rights-of-way to improve or enhance the streetscape.

CD1.1g: Village Centers

Focus development around the existing small town centers of Calpella, the Forks, and Talmage and maintain separation between centers to reinforce the village sense of place.

Policy CD1.2: Encourage development that is attractive and reflects the small-town character of the Valley.

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CD1.2a: Site Planning

Promote and encourage the use of creative site planning techniques such as clustered development and planned development to facilitate the objective of providing a mix and range of housing types.

CD1.2b: Attractive Street Frontages

During project review, promote improvements that offer attractive, accessible, and pedestrian-friendly street frontages that contribute to the character of the Valley.

CD1.2c: Segmented Buildings

Ensure that building forms are well articulated. Avoid large, unsegmented shapes in building design such as blank walls or an unbroken series of garage doors on street frontages.

CD1.2d: Parking Lots

Require shade trees in large parking lots and planter separation between parking and property lines. Where possible, achieve substantial mature-tree canopy coverage of the paved areas of new parking lots.

Encourage development of surface parking behind the structures they serve rather than between the building and the street.

CD1.2e: Unique Design Elements

Ensure that building designs include varied building façades, rooflines, and building heights to create interesting and differentiated building forms and shapes.

CD1.2f: Public Facilities

New public uses shall be subject to design guidelines that address building form and incorporate relevant standards applied to private development.

Seek the cooperation of government agencies and special districts in complying with the design guidelines for new buildings and facilities.

CD1.2g: Design Guideline Outreach

Assist the public in understanding and complying with the design guidelines through informational materials and pre-application conferences.

GOAL CD2: Protect and enhance the natural beauty and scenic viewsheds of the Ukiah Valley.

Policy CD2.1: Enhance the visual appearance of the City-County transition areas, the Valley's gateways, State Street, and U.S. Highway 101 within the Valley.

CD2.1a: Building Distribution

Limit building intensity between Valley communities to provide a visual separation.

CD2.1b: Gateway Enhancement

Use the redevelopment powers or property incentives to encourage property owners to rebuild, restore, or enhance the appearance of the gateways.

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Make public rights-of-ways available for the planting of trees and flowers to improve gateway streetscapes.

CD2.1c: Noise Barriers

Avoid the use of sound walls or other noise barriers for noise mitigation whenever feasible; if unavoidable, require design review for aesthetics, function and sound-reducing capabilities.

CD2.1d: Sign Guidelines

Develop sign guidelines that incorporate a program for sign size, height, location and design to enhance visual appearance, unify the streetscape, and reduce visual clutter.

Policy CD2.2: Reduce excessive artificial light to maintain the quality of life throughout the Ukiah Valley.

CD2.2a: Lighting Guidelines

Adopt and enforce design guidelines that include standards to reduce excessive artificial light such as reduced wattage, downward shielding and limited hours.

Coordinate with the Ukiah Dark Sky Initiative to identify recommendations for lighting standards that reduce artificial light while maintaining adequate visibility for safety and security.

CD2.2b: Interim Design Guidelines

Until the design guidelines and landscape guidelines are adopted, the County will conduct design review of proposed discretionary projects. Outdoor lighting for new projects will not be allowed to cause light trespass and will limit light pollution to the degree feasible. The County will use as interim guidelines

the Simple Guidelines for Outdoor Lighting Regulations developed by the International Dark-Sky Association.

Policy CD2.3: Encourage and design the placement of utilities in a manner which improves visual appearances.

CD2.3a: Underground Utilities

Locate utilities underground where feasible and safe. Support utility provider cooperation in sharing costs and responsibilities for locating utilities underground.

CD2.3b: Utility Screening

Require that utilities, communications towers, and devices that must be sited above ground be designed and located to minimize visual impact and clutter, using techniques such as screening and shared use of facilities.