



Notice of Preparation Environmental Impact Report County of Butte

Date: October 7, 2022

To: State Clearinghouse
State Responsible Agencies
State Trustee Agencies
Other Public Agencies
Interested Organizations

From: Dan Breedon, Planning Division Manager
Butte County
Planning Division
7 County Center Drive
Oroville, CA 95965

Subject: Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the General Plan Update

Lead Agency: Butte County

Project Sponsor: Butte County, Planning Division

Project Title: Butte County General Plan 2040 Update

Project Area: County of Butte

Notice is hereby given that the County of Butte (County) will prepare an EIR for the Butte County General Plan Update (proposed project) and will hold a public meeting to receive comments on the scope of the EIR, as detailed below. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15206, the proposed project is considered a project of statewide, regional, or areawide significance. The County, acting as the lead agency, determined that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts and that an EIR is required.

The County will prepare an EIR to address the potential environmental impacts associated with the project at a programmatic level consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15168. The program-level EIR will evaluate the proposed project for potential impacts on the environment and analyze the proposed policies to determine the potential environmental consequences of future change. An evaluation of project alternatives that could reduce significant impacts will be included in the EIR. The project location and setting, background and overview, objectives, and potential environmental effects are described below.

The County is requesting comments and guidance on the scope and content of the EIR from interested public agencies, organizations, and individuals. With respect to the views of Responsible and Trustee Agencies as to significant environmental issues, the County needs to know the reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that are germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

Due to the time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than the close of the 30-day NOP review period at **4:00 p.m. on Monday, November 7, 2022**. If you submit comments on the scope of the EIR, you will automatically be added to the County's distribution list for future notices and information about the environmental review process for proposed project. If you do not wish to submit comments on the scope of the EIR but would like to be added to the County's mailing list, you can submit your contact information, including email address with a request to be added to the mailing list.

Please send your written comments to Mark Michelena, at the address shown above or email to mmichelena@buttecounty.net with "Butte County General Plan Update EIR" as the subject. Public agencies providing comments are asked to include a contact person for the agency.

A Scoping Meeting to accept oral comments regarding the environmental issues to be addressed in the EIR will be held on **Wednesday, October 26, 2022, from 5:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.** The Scoping Meeting will be held in the Butte County Human Resources' Training Room (East) located at 3 County Center Drive, Oroville, CA 95965. This hearing will also be held in a hybrid, in person and web-based, format to accommodate those who wish to attend the meeting in person or participate remotely. The following is the how to login or call in to the meeting:

Link: <https://bcds.net/DSScoping>
Event (Meeting) Number: 2551 327 2045
Event Password: Scoping
Participants may also call in: 1-408-418-9388

A copy of this NOP, project information including relevant documents, information on upcoming meetings, and ways to provide feedback can be viewed at: 1) <https://www.buttecounty.net/dds/generalplanupdate>, or 2) Butte County Development Services Office (7 County Center Drive, Oroville, CA 95965). The Planning Division counter is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except for Wednesday when the counter is open from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Project Location and Setting: Created in 1850, Butte County is located in California's Central Valley, north of the state capital of Sacramento. It covers approximately 1,073,000 acres, including the Chico Metropolitan Statistical Area. It is bordered by Tehama, Plumas, Yuba, Sutter, and Glenn counties. The attached map shows Butte County's regional location and the EIR Study Area.

Project Background and Overview: The General Plan establishes the community's long-term vision for the future, including where people in Butte County will live, work, shop, learn, and recreate. It serves as guidance for all zoning and land use decisions within the unincorporated county. It will shape future housing, support job growth, foster healthy and resilient neighborhoods, protect and manage natural resources and agricultural lands, ensure community safety, and promote social and economic equity.

Butte County is in the process of updating the General Plan. Since the current General Plan was adopted in 2010, the devastating Camp and North Complex Fires destroyed nearly 17,000 structures, including more than 14,000 homes, and displaced many more residents. The updated General Plan will support the County's efforts to rebuild and create a more resilient future. The General Plan Update will also serve as an opportunity to address issues related to climate adaptation and environmental justice, as well as other new State laws. To achieve these goals, the County is closely working with community members and stakeholders to ensure that community needs and opportunities are fully understood and properly addressed.

Project Objective: The goals of this project are to support Camp Fire and North Complex Fire recovery, address current and future needs of Butte County, comply with State regulations, and engage community members as key decision makers for adaptation, community resilience, public safety, and environmental justice.

Project Description:

The proposed project is a targeted update to the current General Plan and will include the following:

- The updated **Health and Safety Element** will address the life changing impacts of recent disasters like the Camp and North Complex Fires and the Oroville Dam crisis and respond to community needs, values, and priorities that have emerged in their aftermath. The updated element will respond in a locally sensitive way to State-mandated topics such as wildfire mitigation, climate change, and evacuation routes. It will also provide a framework for adaptation and resilience to climate change.

- The updated **Housing Element** will include a plan to ensure that residents of all income levels can find housing, including fire-destroyed units. The new **Environmental Justice Element** will address the topics of pollution exposure and equitable access to resources and opportunities to advance environmental justice in the county, as required by Senate Bill (SB) 1000. Environmental justice means the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes in decisions about land use and other environmental regulations so that no communities are disproportionately burdened by pollution.
- The **Land Use Element** will be revised to adopt the Upper Ridge Community Plan (URCP) which is an area composed of eight distinct neighborhoods in the Upper Ridge area, as well as open spaces within and adjacent to the neighborhoods. The URCP sets a community-supported, long-term vision promoting a thriving, resilient, and sustainable Upper Ridge region. The URCP provides implementable strategies and design concepts to help guide development in the area. The General Plan Update identifies two locations in the Upper Ridge for land use redesignation to allow multifamily housing to be more easily built on commercial properties. These locations include the Old Magalia neighborhood and the Magalia Center neighborhood and are considered ideal for a limited amount of multifamily housing on the Upper Ridge. The proposed land use changes would occur on 14 parcels in the Old Magalia neighborhood and 14 parcels in the Magalia Center neighborhood. Combined, the 2040 General Plan Update redesignates 28 parcels in the URCP area from Retail Office to Mixed-Use. This allows for either commercial, residential, or both types of development and offers flexibility to develop housing if desired. The proposed project would also expand the Specific Plans and Planned Developments to be Developed Overlay to include an area envisioned as a campus for the Regional Recreation Campus Planned Development, a 264-acre area located east of the Butte Creek Preserve, between the Skyway and Highway 99, southeast of Chico. This overlay applies to areas that are expected to be developed under a planned development and only allows subsequent application. No other land use map changes are proposed as part of this project.
- The revised **Circulation Element** will address how the County evaluates the transportation impacts of new development. It will also respond to new and emerging County priorities, including increased support for active transportation, and changing conditions like new transportation technologies.
- The updated **Water Resources Element** will focus on water conservation opportunities to sustain Butte County's groundwater, as well as policies to support resilient water supply and infrastructure and coordination between Groundwater Sustainability Agencies in the county.
- Other elements of the current General Plan, the **Economic Development, Agriculture, Conservation and Open Space, Public Facilities and Services, and Area and Neighborhood Plans Elements**, will be revised to ensure consistency with the updates to the Health and Safety, Housing, Land Use, Circulation, and Water Resources Elements and the new Environmental Justice Element. The plan will also account for changing conditions, including updating information regarding equitable access to infrastructure and public services, in compliance with SB 244.

Environmental Review: The General Plan Update EIR will determine whether implementation of the proposed project may result in environmental impacts that require mitigation measures to offset potential impacts. The General Plan Update itself will incorporate implementation provisions (goals, policies, and actions) that focus on reducing environmental impacts to reduce the need for separate EIR mitigation measures, improve the efficiency of implementation, and increase the likelihood that development within the study area will be environmentally sustainable. In accordance with CEQA, the cumulative impacts discussion will be based on review of other plans shaping development outside of the EIR Study Area. CEQA requires that an EIR evaluate alternatives to a project that could reasonably attain the project objectives while reducing any significant impact of the project, as well as considering the "No Project" Alternative (i.e., what could happen if the project were not approved).

Probable Environmental Effects/EIR Scope: The EIR for the proposed project will address the range of impacts that could result from adoption and implementation of the General Plan Update. Below is a list of environmental topics that will be examined in the EIR.

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|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| ▪ Aesthetics | ▪ Land Use and Planning |
| ▪ Agricultural and Forestry Resources | ▪ Mineral Resources |
| ▪ Air Quality | ▪ Noise |
| ▪ Biological Resources | ▪ Population and Housing |
| ▪ Cultural Resource | ▪ Public Services |
| ▪ Energy | ▪ Parks and Recreation |
| ▪ Geology and Soils | ▪ Transportation |
| ▪ Greenhouse Gas Emissions | ▪ Tribal Cultural Resources |
| ▪ Hazards and Hazardous Materials | ▪ Utilities and Service Systems |
| ▪ Hydrology and Water Quality | ▪ Wildfire |

Date: October 7, 2022

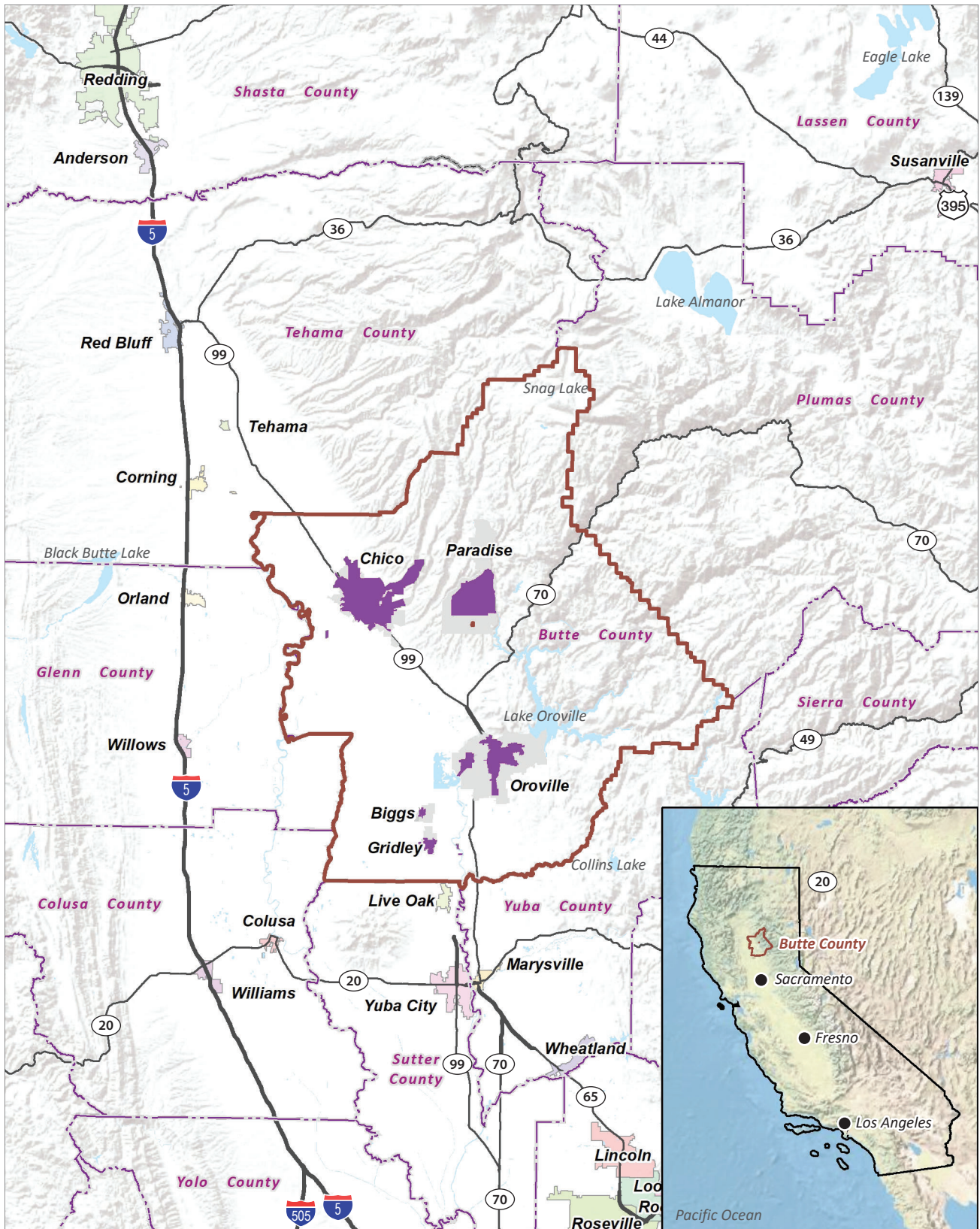
Signature: *Mark Michelena*

Title: Senior Planner

Attachments:

Figure 1 Regional Location

Figure 2 Planning Area

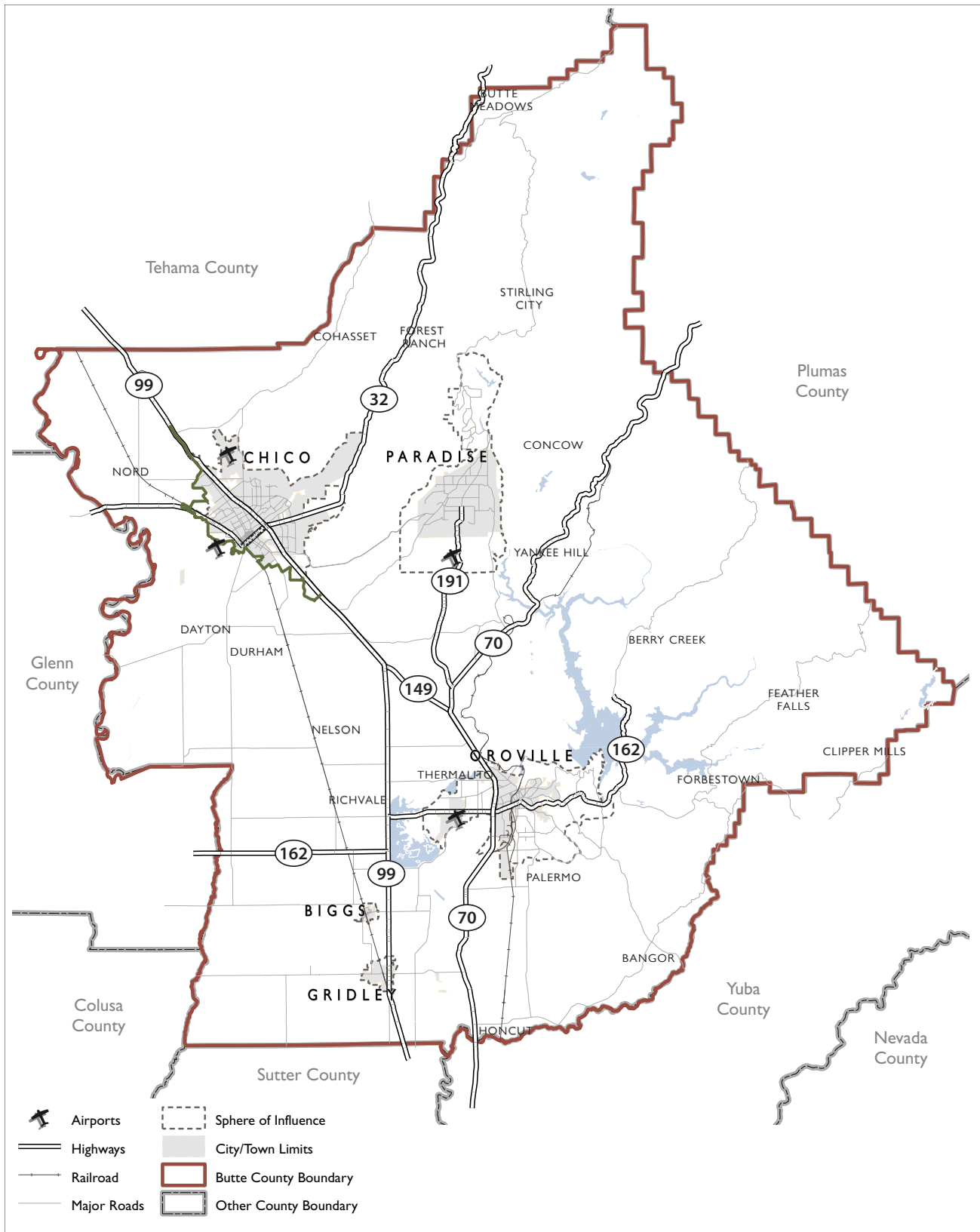


Source: ESRI, 2022



- Butte County Boundary
- - - Other County Boundary
- Spheres of Influence

Figure 1
Regional Location



Source: Butte County, 2009



Figure 2
Planning Area