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3.1 Aesthetics

This section describes existing conditions related to visual character, scenic resources, views, and light and glare in Humboldt County (both unincorporated and incorporated areas) as well as the relevant regulatory framework. This section also evaluates potential impacts related to aesthetics that could result from implementation of the RCAP and CEQA GHG Emissions Thresholds.

3.1.1 Environmental Setting

Visual Character

Visual character in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) context is an impartial description of the defining physical features, landscape patterns, and distinctive physical qualities within a landscape. Visual character is informed by the composition of land, vegetation, water, and structure and their relationship (or dominance) to one another, and by prominent elements of form, line, color, and texture that combine to define the composition of views. Visual character-defining resources and features within a landscape may derive from notable landforms, vegetation, land uses, building design and façade treatments, transportation facilities, overhead utility structures and lighting, historic structures or districts, or panoramic open space.

Unincorporated Humboldt County

Unincorporated Humboldt County is rural in nature with 80 percent of land being forested. Douglas Fir trees are the most predominant forest type.¹ Humboldt also includes agricultural land uses with approximately 634,000 acres of land in agricultural production. Humboldt contains several State and National Parks including Redwood State and National Parks and 100 miles of coastline, as well as Humboldt Bay. The Coast Range Mountains cover a large portion of inland Humboldt and include the Eel, Van Duzen, Mattole, and Mad River drainages in the central and southern areas, and the Redwood Creek drainage in the northwest. In northeastern Humboldt the Klamath Mountains feed into the Klamath and Trinity Rivers.² The majority of the population, and therefore the residential and commercial development, in Humboldt is concentrated in the incorporated cities, discussed below.

Incorporated Cities

The incorporated cities within Humboldt include Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka, Ferndale, Fortuna, Rio Dell, and Trinidad. These cities are all located within five miles of Highway 101, that stretches along the western side of Humboldt. The incorporated cities within Humboldt all have similar visual character as they are the main residential and commercial hubs in the area. The incorporated cities are built on a traditional grid pattern of streets broken up by gulch greenways, have many historic homes, and contain several walkable mixed-use commercial districts. They are made up of mostly single-family homes and small commercial corridors. Generally, the incorporated cities are surrounded by unincorporated land containing some residential development, and lands designated as agricultural land, timberland, or open space which serve as “community separators” that enhance the sense of individual community identity.¹ Arcata and Eureka are adjacent to Humboldt

¹ Humboldt County. 2017. Humboldt County General Plan Land Use Element. <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61996/Chapter-4-Land-Use-Element-PDF> (accessed October 2024).

² Humboldt County. 2017. Humboldt County General Plan Introduction. <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61993/Chapter-1-Introduction-PDF> (accessed November 2024).

Bay, while Fortuna, Ferndale, and Rio Dell are adjacent to or near the Eel River. The City of Blue Lake was established along the Mad River and Trinidad is adjacent to the Pacific Ocean.

Scenic Resources

Scenic Resources are important visual assets that contribute to community identity. These resources can include landforms, trees, water features, and the built environment insofar as they enhance and define the visual character of a landscape. Scenic resources include natural and open spaces, as well as the built environment, particularly if certain architecture is of historic or artistic value. Designated scenic resources within Humboldt are described below.

Unincorporated Humboldt County

WILD AND SCENIC RIVERS

Portions of the Eel, Klamath, Trinity, and Van Duzen Rivers are designated as “wild”, “scenic”, or “recreational” as part of the National and/or California Wild and Scenic River Systems.³ An example photograph of a Humboldt wild and scenic river, the Klamath River, is provided in Figure 3.1-1.

COASTLINES

Humboldt County has an extensive coastline that constitutes a scenic resource. The scenic qualities of these areas are protected by land use designations that encourage open space, require permit review under the Humboldt County Local Coastal Program (LCP), and design review requirements that minimize visual impacts of new development. Example photographs of the Humboldt coastline are provided in Figure 3.1-1.

AGRICULTURAL, TIMBERLAND, AND OPEN SPACE AREAS

Existing agricultural land, timberland, and open space areas within public lands throughout Humboldt are considered scenic natural features.³ The Humboldt County General Plan also specifically discusses Shelter Cove and the Avenue of the Giants as areas within Humboldt that have scenic resources protected by design review requirements. An example photograph of Humboldt timberland is provided in Figure 3.1-1.

Incorporated Cities

ARCATA

The Open Space Element of the Arcata General Plan designates the forested lands on the western slopes of Fickle Hill and agricultural lands in the Arcata Bottoms as scenic resources that should be preserved.⁴ Additionally, the Plaza, Humboldt Bay and Pacific Ocean are scenic resources.⁵

³ Humboldt County. 2017. Humboldt County General Plan Conservation and Open Space Elements. <https://humboldt.gov/DocumentCenter/View/61986/Chapter-10-Conservation-and-Open-Space-Elements-PDF> (accessed October 2024).

⁴ City of Arcata. 2024. Arcata General Plan Open Space Element. https://www.cityofarcata.org/DocumentCenter/View/14702/41_Open-Space (accessed October 2024).

⁵ City of Arcata. 2024. Arcata General Plan Design Element. https://www.cityofarcata.org/DocumentCenter/View/14690/51_Design (accessed October 2024).

Figure 3.1-1 Humboldt Scenic Resources Example Photos



Photography credit: Kelsey Bennett

BLUE LAKE

The Land Use Element of the Blue Lake General Plan designates Powers Creek, the Mad River, and other wetland areas within the City of Blue Lake as scenic resources.⁶

FERNDALE

The City of Ferndale General Plan Land Use Element does not designate any specific scenic resources.⁷ In 1975 the City of Ferndale was designated as a State Historical Landmark, and in 1994. Ferndale’s Main Street/State Route 211 from Shaw Avenue to Eugene Street was designated as a Historic District by the National Park Service and placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The Ferndale General Plan identifies the historic district stretching from Shaw Avenue to Eugene Street as contributing to the charm of the City. In addition, expansive agricultural and open lands that surround the City contribute to its rural ambiance.⁸

FORTUNA

The City of Fortuna General Plan designates views of the Eel River and Van Duzen Rivers, forested hillsides and agricultural land surrounding the City, the Rohnerville Plateau and Bluffs, and long-range views of coastal ranges to the west of the City as scenic resources.

RIO DELL

The Open Space and Conservation Element of the Rio Dell General Plan designates the bluffs on the east side of the City and the expansive vistas of the Eel River Valley as scenic resources within the City.⁹

TRINIDAD

The Trinidad General Plan designates the beaches, coastal bluffs behind the beaches, and Trinidad Bay and the islands within it as scenic resources.¹⁰

EUREKA

The City of Eureka General Plan includes discussion of prominent visual resources such as Humboldt Bay, the waterfront, landmark buildings, gulches and greenways, and surrounding agricultural and timberland.¹¹

⁶ City of Blue Lake. 2021. Blue Lake General Plan Land Use Element. https://bluelake.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Blue-Lake-Land-Use-Element-Update_Amended-4-27-21.pdf (accessed October 2024).

⁷ City of Ferndale. 2023. Draft Land Use Element. https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/x8b8zlmnwbzso4rg92tuw/Ferndale-LUE_draft-7.27.23-CLEAN.pdf?rlkey=74c49rw2hdg5czh6d9gavoaj8&e=1&st=82oyvi1o&dl=0. accessed November 20, 2024.

⁸ City of Ferndale. 2024. Land Use Element and Safety Element Draft Program Environmental Impact Report. https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/r750t1h0e93y7usngx6si/DRAFT_PEIR_LUE-SE_compressed_for_publishing.pdf?rlkey=ulwsg9v9nteuu1c1hqvgwtbno&e=1&st=api92u6p&dl=0. accessed November 20, 2024.

⁹ City of Rio Dell. 2013. Rio Dell General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element. https://www.cityofriodell.ca.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif8526/f/uploads/rio_dell_conservation_and_open_space_element_august_2013_0.pdf (accessed October 2024).

¹⁰ City of Trinidad. 2021. Trinidad General Plan. <https://www.trinidad.ca.gov/media/5491> (accessed October 2024).

¹¹ City of Eureka 2018. Eureka General Plan. <https://www.eurekaca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1190/2040-General-Plan-PDF?bidId=> (accessed October 2024).

Views and Scenic Vistas

Views may be generally described as panoramic views of a large geographic area for which the field of view can be wide and extend into the distance. Associated vantage points provide orientation from publicly accessible locations. Examples of distinctive views include urban skylines, valleys, mountain ranges, or large bodies of water. Viewshed is a term used to describe a range of resources and their context that relate to what people can see in the foreground, middle ground, and background distances.

The term “scenic vista” generally refers to visual access to, or the visibility of, a particular sight from a given publicly accessible vantage point or corridor. The subjects of valued or recognized views may be focal (meaning of specific individual resources), or panoramic (meaning broad geographic area). The nature of a view may be unique, such as a view from an elevated vantage point or particular angle. Existing views may be focused on a single feature, such as a building or garden, or panoramic encompassing a broad field of view, such as ocean/coastal views, distant mountain range, or hilltop ridgelines. Designated scenic vistas within Humboldt are described below.

Unincorporated Humboldt County

Scenic vistas within unincorporated Humboldt County are of coastlines, forested areas, scenic rivers, agricultural areas, hills and ridgelines, and open space areas. Scenic vistas in Humboldt County are available from publicly accessible roads, highways, beaches, coastal access points, and local, State, and federal parks. Examples of major roads and highways throughout Humboldt County that provide scenic vistas of these resources, include State Route 101, which provides extensive views of the coastline, and State Route 96, which provides views of the Klamath River, forested and open space areas, and agricultural lands. Additionally, parks such as Redwood National Park, Six Rivers National Forest, Redwoods State Park, and Kings Range National Conservation Area provide scenic vistas of forested and open space areas.

Incorporated Cities

Scenic vistas within Eureka, Arcata, and Trinidad are of Humboldt Bay and the Pacific Ocean and associated coastline areas as seen from publicly accessible roads, highways, trails, and public parks and plazas. Scenic views of the coastlines, including Humboldt Bay, from Eureka, Arcata, and Trinidad are primarily available from State Route 101 and public parks, beaches, and trails such as the Eureka Waterfront Trail, Trinidad State Beach, and Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary. Additionally, the following scenic view corridors are designated in the Eureka General Plan:

- Views of the waterfront looking north along G Street
- Views of Carson Mansion looking east along Second Street

Scenic vistas within Ferndale, Fortuna, Rio Dell, and Blue Lake include views of scenic rivers and surrounding agriculture, forested, and open space lands as seen from publicly accessible roads, highways, trails, and public parks and plazas. The Wildcat Hills to the south of Ferndale provide a vantage point for scenic vistas of the City and surrounding agricultural and open lands.¹² The Fortuna General Plan identifies the Riverwalk Pathway, a one-mile pedestrian and bicycle path

¹² City of Ferndale. 2024. Land Use Element and Safety Element Draft Program Environmental Impact Report. https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/r750t1h0e93y7usngx6si/DRAFT_PEIR_LUE-SE_compressed_for_publishing.pdf?rlkey=ulwsg9v9nteuu1c1hqvgwtbno&e=1&st=api92u6p&dl=0 (accessed November 20, 2024).

located along the Eel River levee, as an important scenic vista.¹³ Scenic views of the Eel river in Rio Dell are primarily available from State Route 101. Scenic views of the Mad River and Powers Creek in Blue Lake are available from the Blue Lake Levee Trail and local roadways.

Scenic Highways

The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been officially designated. A highway may be designated scenic depending upon how much of the natural landscape can be seen by travelers, the scenic quality of the landscape, and the extent to which development intrudes upon the traveler’s enjoyment of the view.

Unincorporated Humboldt County

The Humboldt County General Plan discusses the following roadways as eligible for California State Scenic Highway designation within Humboldt:

- Route 36 from Route 101 near Fortuna to the Trinity County line
- Route 96 from Route 299 at Willow Creek north to Siskiyou County
- Route 101 for its entire length in Humboldt County
- Route 254 in the Avenue of the Giants Community Plan Area
- Route 299 from Arcata to Willow Creek

There are no officially designated State scenic highways within Humboldt County.¹⁴

Incorporated Cities

Route 101, which is eligible for State Scenic Highway designation, passes through the incorporated Cities of Rio Dell, Fortuna, Eureka, Trinidad, and Arcata. The portion of Route 299 that is eligible for State Scenic Highway designation passes through the incorporated City of Blue Lake. There are no designated or eligible State scenic highways that pass through or near Ferndale.

Additionally, the following local routes are designated as scenic by the respective city general plans:

ARCATA

The Open Space Element of the Arcata General Plan designates State Route 255, Samoa Boulevard, as a scenic route.⁴

BLUE LAKE

The Scenic Highway Element of the Blue Lake General Plan indicates that there are no local scenic routes within the City of Blue Lake.¹⁵

¹³ City of Fortuna. 2010. City of Fortuna General Plan.

https://cms8.revize.com/revize/fortunaca/Document%20center/Department/Planning%20Division/General%20Plan%20and%20EIR%20documents/Fortuna%20General%20Plan%202030%20-%20Policy%20Document_web.pdf (accessed October 2024).

¹⁴ California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) 2018. California State Scenic Highway System Map.

<https://caltrans.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=465dfd3d807c46cc8e8057116f1aaca> (accessed October 2024).

¹⁵ City of Blue Lake 1975. Scenic Highway Element. https://bluelake.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/BL-General-Plan_Public-Safety-Noise-Scenic-Hwy-Elements_1975.pdf (accessed November 2024).

FERNDALE

The Scenic Highway Element of the Ferndale General Plan includes a discussion of the following local scenic routes within the City of Ferndale:

- The drive into the City up to Main Street and looping back on Berding Street
- The drive west from Ferndale to Ocean Beach
- The drive south to Petrolia and Bull Creek Redwoods State Park on Wildcat Road
- The drive east on Grizzly Bluff-Blue Slide Road to Rio Dell

While these routes are scenic, they were not officially designated as such in the 1978 Ferndale Scenic Highway Element.¹⁶

FORTUNA

There are no locally designated scenic routes within the City of Fortuna.¹⁷

RIO DELL

The City of Rio Dell General Plan does not designate any local scenic routes within the City of Rio Dell.^{18,19}

TRINIDAD

The following local routes are designated as scenic routes within the City of Trinidad:

- Scenic Drive
- Stagecoach Road and Patrick's Point Drive north of the intersection with Stagecoach Road
- Edwards Street²⁰

EUREKA

The City of Eureka General Plan identifies G Street and 2nd Street as local roads providing important view corridors to the waterfront and Carson Mansion, respectively.²¹

Light and Glare

In the context of the CEQA Guidelines, light is nighttime illumination that stimulates sight and makes things visible; glare is difficulty seeing in the presence of bright light such as direct or reflected sunlight.

¹⁶ City of Ferndale. 1978. Scenic Highway Element. <https://ci.ferndale.ca.us/wp/general-plan/Scenic%20Hwy%20Element%201978.PDF> (accessed November 2024).

¹⁷ City of Fortuna. 2010. General Plan Programmatic Environmental Impact Report. [https://cms8.revize.com/revize/fortunaca/Document%20center/Department/Planning%20Division/General%20Plan%20and%20EIR%20documents/Vol%201%20-%20DPEIR%20\(whole%20doc\).pdf](https://cms8.revize.com/revize/fortunaca/Document%20center/Department/Planning%20Division/General%20Plan%20and%20EIR%20documents/Vol%201%20-%20DPEIR%20(whole%20doc).pdf) (accessed November 2024).

¹⁸ City of Rio Dell. 2013. General Plan Circulation Element. https://www.cityofriodell.ca.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif8526/f/uploads/rio_dell_circulation_element_january_2013.pdf (accessed November 2024).

¹⁹ City of Rio Dell. 2013. General Plan Open Space and Conservation Element. https://www.cityofriodell.ca.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif8526/f/uploads/rio_dell_circulation_element_january_2013.pdf (accessed November 2024).

²⁰ City of Trinidad 2021. Scenic Highway Element. <https://www.trinidad.ca.gov/media/5616> (accessed January 2025).

²¹ City of Eureka. 2018. 2040 General Plan. <https://www.eureka.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1190/2040-General-Plan-PDF?bidId=> (accessed November 2024).

Sources of artificial light may include streetlights, illuminated signage, vehicle headlights, and other point sources. Uses, such as residences and hotels, are considered light-sensitive since they are typically occupied by persons who have an expectation of darkness and privacy during evening hours and who can be disturbed by bright light sources.

Glare is caused by the reflection of sunlight or artificial light from highly polished surfaces, such as window glass or reflective materials, and, to a lesser degree, from broad expanses of light-colored surfaces. Activities, such as driving, and land uses, such as parks and residences, are considered glare sensitive as the presence of glare could interfere with vision and/or result in an irritant to these activities/uses.

Unincorporated Humboldt County

Current light and glare levels within unincorporated Humboldt County are mainly consistent with rural areas. There is minimal light throughout the unincorporated rural areas of Humboldt, with most of the light source being automobile headlights along the major highways or temporary lighting needed for nighttime agricultural and/or timberland activities. There is also minimal glare throughout the unincorporated rural areas, with existing sources of glare limited to glass windows and vehicle windshields.

Other areas of unincorporated Humboldt County, (McKinleyville, Myrtle town, Cutten, King Salmon and Fields Landing) have existing light and glare conditions that are more consistent with urban development. Nighttime light is primarily created by streetlights, exterior building lighting, and lighted signs. Automobile headlights can also create temporary sources of light as they exit parking areas and drive along major highways and arterial streets within these urban areas of unincorporated Humboldt County. Primary sources of glare include sunlight reflected in the windows of buildings, including glass façades, and the windshields of parked cars.

Incorporated Cities

Existing light and glare conditions within the incorporated cities are consistent with urban development. Nighttime light is primarily created by streetlights, exterior building lighting, and lighted signs. Automobile headlights can also create temporary sources of light as they exit parking areas and drive along major highways and arterial streets within the incorporated cities. Primary sources of glare include sunlight reflected in the windows of buildings, including glass façades, and the windshields of parked cars.

3.1.2 Regulatory Framework

Federal Regulations

No federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws related to aesthetics are applicable.

State Regulations

California Scenic Highway Program

The State Legislature created the California Scenic Highway Program, maintained by Caltrans, in 1963. The purpose of the State Scenic Highway Program is to protect and enhance the natural scenic beauty of California highways and adjacent corridors, through special conservation treatment. The State laws governing the Scenic Highway Program are found in the Streets and Highways Code,

Sections 260 through 263. The State Scenic Highway System includes a list of highways that are either eligible for designation as scenic highways or have been officially designated. The status of a proposed State Scenic Highway changes officially from eligible to officially designated when the local governing body applies to Caltrans for scenic highway approval, adopts a Corridor Protection Program, and receives notification that the highway has been officially designated a Scenic Highway.

California Coastal Act

State Legislature passed the Coastal Act in 1976, which made the Coastal Commission a permanent agency with broad authority to regulate coastal development. The Coastal Act guides how the land along the coast of California is developed, or protected from development. It emphasizes the importance of the public being able to access the coast, and the preservation of sensitive coastal and marine habitat and biodiversity. It dictates that development be clustered in areas to preserve open space, and that coastal agricultural lands be preserved. It prioritizes coastal recreation as well as commercial and industrial uses that need a waterfront location. Coastal Act Section 30251 states the scenic and visual qualities of coastal areas shall be considered and protected as a resource of public importance.

California Code of Regulations Title 24 - Building Lighting Characteristics

The California Building Code (California Code of Regulations [CCR], Title 24)—including Title 24, Part 6—includes Section 140.7 of the Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which regulates outdoor lighting characteristics (i.e., maximum power/brightness, shielding, light sensor controls). Different lighting standards are set by classifying areas by lighting zone. The classification is based on 2010 Census population figures. Areas can be designated as LZ0 (Very Low), LZ1 (Low), LZ2 (Moderate), or LZ3 (Moderately High), and LZ4 (High). Lighting requirements for very low and low areas are stricter in order to protect the areas from new sources of light pollution and light trespass. The majority of the unincorporated county falls under the “very low” and “low” standard while the incorporated cities fall under the “moderate” standard.²²

Regional and Local Regulations

Humboldt County General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element

The Conservation and Open Space Element of the Humboldt County General Plan contains the following goals, policies, and standards related to aesthetics:

- **SR-G1 Conservation of Scenic Resources:** Protect high-value scenic forest, agriculture, river, and coastal areas that contribute to the enjoyment of Humboldt County’s beauty and abundant natural resources.
- **SR-P1 Working Landscapes:** Recognize the scenic value of resource production lands.
- **SR-P2 Development in Mapped Scenic Areas:** In mapped scenic areas, new discretionary and ministerial development shall be consistent with and subordinate to natural contours, hilltops, tree lines, bluffs and rock outcroppings. Visible disturbance and interruption of natural features shall be minimized to the extent feasible.

²² State of California. 2022. 2022 Building Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Non Residential Buildings. https://www.energy.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2022-12/CEC-400-2022-010_CMF.pdf (accessed January 2025).

- **SR-P3 Scenic Highway Protection:** Protect the scenic quality of designated Scenic Highways for the enjoyment of natural and scenic resources, coastal views, landmarks, or points of historic and cultural interest.
- **SR-S1 Development in Mapped Scenic Areas:** Discretionary and ministerial development shall avoid visual disturbance of natural contours, hilltops, tree lines, forest landscapes, bluffs and rock outcroppings, to the maximum extent feasible. Roads and public utility corridors shall be as narrow as feasible and follow natural contours. Natural features disturbed for construction purposes shall be restored to as close to natural condition as feasible. The construction of new off-premise billboards is prohibited.
- **SR-S2 Scenic Highway Standards:** The following standards apply to mapped Scenic Highways:
 - **A. Visual Buffer Width.** The width of the visual buffer along the road shall not exceed 200 feet from the edge of the traveled roadway.
 - **B. Permitted Uses.** Permitted uses shall be allowed except the construction of new off premise billboards is prohibited. Permitted uses that are within the visual buffer area measures may be required to protect scenic qualities of the site.
 - **C. Site Development.** Buildings and landscaping within the visual buffer shall be designed and located on the site to create a harmonious visual relationship with surrounding development and the natural terrain and vegetation.
 - 1. Existing topography, vegetation, and scenic features of the site shall be retained to the maximum extent possible and incorporated into the proposed development.
 - 2. Structures and signs shall be limited in height, bulk, and siting to be visually compatible with, and subordinate to, the character of surrounding areas.
 - **D. Consideration of Views.** Structures, signs, and plant materials within the visual buffer shall be constructed, installed, and planted to complement, enhance, and retain scenic views. Vegetative screening shall be used where needed to prevent significant intrusion or degradation of public views.
 - **E. Location and Screening of Unsightly Features.** Potentially unsightly features within the visual buffer area, such as parking lots etc., shall be located in areas not visible from the scenic highway. Where it is not feasible to locate such features out of view, features shall be screened from view by planting and/or fences, walls, or berms. Screening shall utilize primarily natural materials rather than solid fencing, preferably vegetation, in conjunction with low-earth berms.
 - **F. Site Grading.** Grading or earth-moving operations within the visual buffer area shall be planned and executed in such a manner that final contours appear to be consistent with the existing terrain both on, and adjacent to, the site.
 - 1. Vegetative cover shall be provided within a reasonable time after grading is completed to prevent visible scars remaining on the land from such operations.
 - 2. Contours altered by grading shall be restored by means of land sculpturing and a cover of topsoil in such a manner as to minimize runoff and erosion and prevent ponding of water.
 - 3. Finished contours shall be planted with native vegetation, so as to require minimum care and to be visually compatible with the existing landscaping.
 - **G. Access Roads.** The location and design of access roads within the visual buffer area shall not detract from the scenic quality of the road.

- **H. Utilities.** New, relocated, or existing utility distribution lines within the visual buffer area shall be placed underground whenever feasible. When it is not feasible to place lines underground, they shall be located so as to be inconspicuous from the scenic route wherever feasible. Combined or adjacent rights-of-way and common poles shall be used wherever feasible.
- **I. Railroads and Public Facilities.** Visual buffers shall exclude railroad rights of-way and public facilities.
- **SR-S4 Light and Glare:** New outdoor lighting shall be compatible with the existing setting. Exterior lighting fixtures and street standards (both for residential and commercial areas) shall be fully shielded, and designed and installed to minimize off-site lighting and direct light within the property boundaries.

Humboldt County Code

Title 3– Land Use and Development

Humboldt County Code (HCC) Title 3, Division 1, Section A specifies development and design standards, including lighting, density, height, parking, and setback requirements for residential, commercial, industrial, agricultural, and public uses within unincorporated Humboldt County. Specifically, this section of the code sets lighting requirements for new development including the requirement that new development within the Mixed-Use zoning districts that would make significant parking lot improvements or add new exterior lighting submit a lighting plan consistent with the HCC. This section of the code also prohibits glare that causes a nuisance or hazard beyond the property line.

Arcata General Plan, Open Space Element

The Open Space Element of the Arcata General Plan⁴ includes the following policies related to aesthetic resources:

- **OS-1f Designation of Lands with Scenic, Aesthetic, Historic, and Cultural Value:** The City has scenic routes, including Highway 101 and State Route 255, Samoa Boulevard; vistas, including the forested slopes of Fickle Hill and the Arcata Bottoms; and areas of historic and cultural value, such as the Plaza. The open and natural characteristics of these areas shall be maintained.

The Design Element of the Arcata General Plan⁵ includes the following goals and policies related to aesthetic resources:

- **D-3a Design Policy for Projects Affecting Scenic Highways** The following standards shall apply to any development which affects scenic routes, as well as views from U.S. Highway 101 (U.S. 101), State Route 255, and State Route 299:
 - 1. Billboards or other off-premises signs are prohibited.
 - 2. Landscape planting along State Route 101 shall not interrupt scenic views to the bay or eastward across agricultural lands.
 - 3. New development or redevelopment in the industrial area of South "G" Street shall provide dense landscape screens along all perimeter lot lines visible from State Route 101.
 - 4. The City shall work jointly with the County of Humboldt, Caltrans, and the Coastal Commission to enhance scenic views along scenic highways, particularly State Route 101 and 255 corridors.

- **D-3c Arcata Bay- Open Waters, Shoreline, and Tidal Marshes:** Proposed land uses and development shall not significantly alter the natural appearance or landforms of the waters, shoreline, and tidal marshes of Arcata Bay, which are designated in the natural resource land-use category. Where these resources are visually degraded, developments shall be required to restore or enhance their appearance. Development within the area bounded by Samoa Blvd., Butcher's Slough and Gannon Slough shall include local native plant landscaping, screenings and other measures to ensure compatibility with scenic coastal resources and with the educational, recreational, wildlife and other uses of the Humboldt Bay National Wildlife Refuge and the Arcata Marsh and Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **D-3d: Bay and Ocean Views:** Views of Arcata Bay and the Pacific Ocean from vantage points along public streets in hillside areas of Arcata shall not be blocked by development. Any impairment or partial obstruction of these ocean views from new development shall be the minimum necessary to allow reasonable development.
- **D-3e Wooded Hillside:** Views of wooded hillsides forming the City's eastern edge from vantage points along public streets west of the U.S. 101 should not be blocked by development to the extent practicable, balancing development rights in these areas. Any impairment or partial obstruction of these ocean views from new development shall be the minimum necessary for allowable development. The City shall encourage Cal Poly Humboldt to avoid blocking views in its new development.
- **D-3f Farmlands and Open Countryside:** Views of farmlands and open countryside — in the Arcata Bottom, along the State Route 101 south of Samoa Boulevard, north of Giuntoli Lane, and along State Route 255 west of the City, should be protected to the extent practicable, balancing development rights in these areas. Any impairment or partial obstruction of these views from new development shall be the minimum necessary for allowable development.
- **D-3g Streamside Riparian Areas:** Creeks or drainage channels and any associated riparian vegetation shall be retained in a natural state and incorporated into site design as a visual asset to development that adjoin them. Design codes should encourage “daylighting” streams on City and private property, and restoration of riparian ecology and function.

Arcata Land Use Code, Article 3

Article 3 of the Arcata Land Use Code establishes development and design standards, including lighting, density, height, parking, and setback requirements for all development and land uses within the City. This includes regulations on lighting and glare within the City.

Blue Lake General Plan, Land Use Element

The Land Use Element of the Blue Lake General Plan²³ includes the following policies related to aesthetic resources:

- **Performance Standards and Site Design Policy 1:** Development should not adversely affect the healthy and scenic rural environment of Blue Lake.
- **Powers Creek Management Policy 1:** Powers Creek shall be managed to maintain the creek as a scenic and natural resource, and to protect adjacent properties and structures to the greatest degree possible.

²³ City of Blue Lake. 2021. Blue Lake General Plan Land Use Element. https://bluelake.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Blue-Lake-Land-Use-Element-Update_Amended-4-27-21.pdf (accessed October 2024).

- **Powers Creek Management Policy 7:** The various wetland areas throughout the City shall be maintained as a scenic and habitat resource, and to prevent flooding impacts due to the modification of existing hydrology.

Blue Lake Municipal Code, Title 17

Title 17 of the Blue Lake Municipal Code includes development standards, height limitations, lighting standards, and landscaping standards for new development within the City.

Ferndale General Plan

There are no policies related to aesthetic resources in the Ferndale General Plan.

Ferndale Zoning Ordinance

The Ferndale Zoning Ordinance includes development standards, height limitations, lighting standards, and landscaping standards for new development within the City of Ferndale. In Ferndale's designated historic district and nearby neighborhoods, the appearance and design of buildings and structures is further regulated by a design control overlay zone.

Fortuna General Plan, Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element

The Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element of the Fortuna General Plan²⁴ includes the following policies related to aesthetic resources:

- **PROS-3.2 Open Space Dedication:** The City shall require developers to protect riparian vegetation and foothill scenic resources of the City through dedication of land for open space.

Fortuna Municipal Code, Title 17

Title 17 of the Fortuna Municipal Code includes development standards, height limitations, lighting standards, and landscaping standards for new development within the City.

Rio Dell General Plan, Land Use Element

The Land Use Element of the Rio Dell General Plan²⁵ includes the following goals related to aesthetic resources:

- **G1.2-3:** To preserve river, stream, and drainage channels that collect run-off, provide natural habitat, and serve as scenic open space.
- **G1.3.1-8:** To retain the scenic character of U.S. 101 through Rio Dell.

Rio Dell Municipal Code, Title 17

Title 17 of the Rio Dell Municipal Code includes development standards, height limitations, lighting standards, and landscaping standards for new development within the City.

²⁴ City of Fortuna. 2010. City of Fortuna General Plan.

https://cms8.revize.com/revize/fortunaca/Document%20center/Department/Planning%20Division/General%20Plan%20and%20EIR%20Documents/Fortuna%20General%20Plan%202030%20-%20%20Policy%20Document_web.pdf (accessed October 2024).

²⁵ City of Rio Dell. 2015. 2015 General Plan.

https://www.cityofriodell.ca.gov/sites/g/files/vyhlif8526/f/uploads/city_of_rio_dell_2015_general_plan_intro_and_land_use_0.pdf (accessed January 2025).

Trinidad General Plan, Community Design Element

The Community Design Element of the Trinidad General Plan²⁶ includes the following policies related to aesthetic resources:

- **Policy 72.** The beaches and sea cliffs which border the southern and western sides of the city (identified as Open Space) shall be preserved from further development and allowed to remain in their present, essentially natural, state.
- **Policy 73.** Trinidad Bay and the bay bordering Trinidad on the west, including all their islands, shall be preserved in their present state. These marine areas offer two of the most uniquely beautiful views, combining - ocean, islands, bay and rugged, timber shorelines, that can be found anywhere along the California coast. The islands provide habitats for marine organizations and serve as refuges or rookeries for birds and marine mammals, including sea lions and harbor seals. A breakwater, mooring expansion, or other harbor development should be visually compatible with the bay vista.
- **Policy 74.** The lands designated as open space lying seaward of Edwards and Van Wycke Streets shall remain entirely undeveloped and preserved in their present state. It is from these lands that the unparalleled view to the south is obtained.

Trinidad Municipal Code, Title 17

Title 17 of the Trinidad Municipal Code includes development standards, height limitations, and landscaping standards for new development within the City, as well as design review and view preservation requirements for new development. The City does not have an ordinance that regulates light or glare associated with new development, but because the City is almost entirely within the coastal zone, Coastal Act standards that require downcast and shielded lighting for new development are applicable.

Eureka General Plan

The Eureka General Plan²⁷ includes the following goals and policies related to aesthetic resources:

- **Policy E-7.6 US 101 through Eureka.** Work with Caltrans to beautify and enhance the physical infrastructure of Broadway, 4th Street, and 5th Street, to create gateways and corridors that create a sense of place that matches Eureka’s brand, and work with property owners and businesses to create attractive buildings and storefronts on these same streets in order to make these primary thoroughfares more vibrant and visually appealing to tourists and visitors.
- **Policy LU-1.12 Attractive Design.** Preserve Eureka’s unique charm and character by applying design guidance that promotes attractive and well maintained development that carefully integrates the new with the best of the old.
- **Policy LU-1.13 Lighting.** Minimize obtrusive light by limiting outdoor lighting that is misdirected, excessive, or unnecessary, and requiring light for development to be directed downward to minimize spill-over onto adjacent properties and reduce vertical glare.
- **Policy LU-1.16 Public Access.** Maintain and improve physical linkages from the community to the coastline, gulches, forests and Eureka’s other distinct recreational resources where feasible

²⁶ City of Trinidad. 2021. General Plan. <https://www.trinidad.ca.gov/media/5491> (accessed January 2025).

²⁷ City of Eureka. 2018. 2040 General Plan. <https://www.eureka.ca.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1190/2040-General-Plan-PDF?bidId=> (accessed November 2024).

by creating/preserving view corridors, enhancing trail and roadway connections, and providing signage and other wayfinding cues.

- **Policy PR-1.13 Resource Areas.** Where possible, improve public lands and work with private landowners to provide additional accessibility and views within the gulches and greenways system, forests, coastline and Eureka’s other distinct visual and natural resource areas.
- **Goal NR-4:** Preservation of significant visual resources that serve as scenic amenities and contribute to Eureka’s character.
 - **Policy NR-4.1 View Corridors:** Preserve view corridors on public streets that lead to prominent visual resources, such as Humboldt Bay, the waterfront, landmark buildings, gulches and greenways, and surrounding agricultural and timberlands. Such views include the views of the waterfront while looking north along G Street and the views of the Carson Mansion while looking east along 2nd Street. Properly maintained street trees are not considered to obscure view corridors.
 - **Policy NR-4.2 Lighting:** Require new lighting be designed and configured to minimize light pollution, glare, and spillage.

Eureka Municipal Code, Chapter 155

Chapter 155 of the Eureka Municipal Code includes a variety of development standards to implement the aesthetic-resource-related policies of the 2040 General Plan, including but not limited to standards for the design of street-facing building facades, screening of waste/recyclable material storage, fences and walls, signs, parking, and landscaping. Additionally, the City has outdoor lighting standards (Section 155.308.050) which require all new exterior lighting to be directed downward and require light fixtures to be shielded or recessed and to meet the International Dark Sky Association’s requirements for reducing waste of ambient light (“dark sky compliant”).

3.1.3 Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Significance Criteria

The County utilizes the following 2024 CEQA Guidelines Appendix G significance criteria questions related to Aesthetics.

Would the RCAP and CEQA GHG Emissions Thresholds:

- a) Have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?
- b) Substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a state scenic highway?
- c) In non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? If the project is in an urbanized area, would the project conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?
- d) Create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?

Approach to Analysis

Aesthetic impact assessments involve qualitative analysis that is subjective but informed by the basic guidelines provided above. Reactions to the same aesthetic conditions vary according to

viewer taste and interests. Since the proposed RCAP and CEQA GHG Emissions Thresholds are not a specific development proposal, the analysis focuses on a general discussion of the potential aesthetic impacts from RCAP implementation within Humboldt, in terms of the arrangement of built space to open space, potential loss of scenic resources, degradation of visual character, density and intensity of development, and visual fit with landscape characteristics.

Scenic Vistas

For the purposes of analysis, a scenic vista is a view from a public place (roadway, designated scenic viewing spot, etc.) that is considered by Humboldt County and/or the incorporated cities to be important, as identified in the Section 3.1.1, *Environmental Setting*, above. An adverse effect would occur if implementation of the RCAP would block or otherwise damage a scenic vista upon implementation.

Scenic Resources within Scenic Highways

The analysis of impacts to State scenic highways focuses on the impacts of implementation of the proposed RCAP near an eligible or designated State scenic highway or locally designated scenic route as identified by Caltrans and in the Humboldt County or incorporated cities' General Plans.

Visual Character and Quality of Public Views

The impacts on visual character or quality attributable to implementation of the RCAP were evaluated relative to visual conditions, as estimated by existing experiences from public viewpoints in Humboldt. The RCAP could result in the implementation of infrastructure projects throughout the unincorporated County and the incorporated cities. However, according to the CEQA Guidelines, the proposed RCAP would facilitate future projects in non-urbanized areas.²⁸ As such, the impact discussion of visual character and views is focused on whether the proposed RCAP would substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of a site and its surroundings.

Light and Glare

The analysis of light and glare impacts focuses on the nature and magnitude of changes in light and glare conditions associated with implementation of the proposed RCAP on unincorporated and incorporated Humboldt County and surroundings. If the light and glare conditions of the proposed RCAP and the existing environment are similar, then the visual compatibility would be high. If the light and glare conditions of the proposed RCAP strongly contrast with the existing light and glare or applicable policies and guidelines, then light and glare compatibility would be low and significant impacts may result.

EIR Scoping Comments Consideration

No EIR scoping comments relevant to aesthetics were received.

²⁸ Humboldt County and the incorporated cities within the County are not urbanized areas pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 21071, which states that an incorporated city is urbanized if it has either (1) a population of at least 100,000 persons or (2) has a population of less than 100,000 persons if the population of that city and not more than two contiguous incorporated cities combined equals at least 100,000 persons. Since all the incorporated cities within the County have populations of less than 100,000 persons and are not contiguous with cities with a combined population of 100,000 persons, for the purposes of the CEQA Aesthetics analysis, the entire Humboldt region is considered non-urbanized.

CEQA GHG Thresholds Analysis and RCAP EIR Focus Approach

The CEQA GHG Emissions Thresholds is a guidance document and does not propose development or changes to land use designations and zoning. Thus, implementation of the CEQA GHG Emissions Thresholds would not result in direct construction or operational impacts related to aesthetics. Therefore, the analysis in this section focuses on the potential for the RCAP to result in impacts related to aesthetics in Humboldt.

Specific Thresholds of Significance

Humboldt County has not adopted quantitative thresholds for the evaluation of aesthetics. The following qualitative thresholds are applied to evaluate the significance of aesthetics impacts resulting from development.

- Block existing views from a scenic route, highway, corridor, or other public areas toward a visual/scenic resource
- Be inconsistent with the character of the plan area or existing development in the surrounding area or would substantially alter existing natural topography
- Increase existing nighttime light or daytime glare sources in the plan area or vicinity in a manner that would substantially affect nighttime or daytime views

Impact Evaluation

Scenic Vistas

Significance Criterion a: Would the proposed plan have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista?

Impact AES-1 THE RCAP WOULD PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN HUMBOLDT. FUTURE RCAP-RELATED PROJECTS WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADHERE TO EXISTING ORDINANCES AND GENERAL PLAN POLICIES THAT PROTECT SCENIC RESOURCES; HOWEVER LARGE-SCALE ORGANIC WASTE PROCESSING FACILITY, RENEWABLE ENERGY, AND RENEWABLE FUEL PRODUCTION PROJECTS FACILITATED BY THE RCAP COULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON SCENIC VISTAS WITHIN HUMBOLDT. MITIGATION MEASURES AES-1 AND AES-2 WOULD LIMIT THESE IMPACTS, BUT IMPACTS WOULD REMAIN SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE.

Construction

Impacts related to substantial adverse effects on a scenic vista are limited to operational impacts, because construction impacts would be temporary. No substantial adverse effects on scenic vistas from infrastructure construction would result from implementation of the proposed plan.

Operation

Scenic vistas and views within Humboldt are discussed in Section 3.1.1, *Environmental Setting, Views and Scenic Vistas*. While the proposed RCAP does not include site-specific project proposals that would directly affect scenic vistas and views, it does include GHG reduction measures that may promote infrastructure development and other physical changes through actions that could affect the scenic views within Humboldt. Specifically, it includes measures that would encourage the streamlining and maximization of small-scale battery energy storage and solar panel installation (Measures BE-1, BE-2, BE-4, and BE-7), the identification of sites that are suitable for utility scale

renewable energy generation (Action BE-2f), the development of a regional organic waste processing facility (Measure SW-1), the addition of new recycled water infrastructure (Measure WW-2), mixed-use and infill development patterns (Measure T-3), the addition of new bicycle, pedestrian and public transit infrastructure (e.g., Measures T-1 Urban and Rural and T-2 Urban and Rural), and the addition of EV/ZEV chargers and fueling stations (e.g., Measures T-6 and T-7). In accordance with these measures, under the proposed RCAP, future projects would be required to implement renewable energy technologies such as solar panels, microgrids, and battery energy storage. In addition, infill development within existing population centers would be prioritized, with urban sprawl limited. The RCAP also promotes habitat restoration and preservation activities for carbon sequestration (Measure CS-1 through CS-3), which would provide aesthetic benefits.

Small-scale renewable energy projects facilitated by the RCAP within developed areas would not result in significant impacts to visual resources, because the addition of renewable energy technology such as rooftop solar panels would blend in with existing development. Likewise, the emphasis on infill development facilitated by the RCAP would not result in significant impacts to scenic vistas, as infill projects would blend with existing development. Rather, the prevention of urban sprawl would assist with the conservation of open space and rural scenic resources such as the agricultural and forested areas identified in the County and City General Plans as contributing to the scenic quality of Humboldt. Therefore, the majority of measures and actions identified in the RCAP would result in less than significant impacts related to scenic vistas.

However, large-scale projects, such as a regional organic waste processing facility facilitated by RCAP Action SW-1b, utility-scale solar and wind projects facilitated by RCAP Action BE-2f, and hydrogen and renewable fuel generation facilities facilitated by RCAP Measure T-10, could occur in rural areas of Humboldt and alter scenic views. The types of infrastructure and facilities that would likely accompany large-scale solar renewable energy systems include the following:

- PV arrays or concentrated solar on ground-mounted posts, or systems that track the sun;
- A collector substation site, including concrete pad and switchgear, and battery storage;
- A direct-current underground collection system and an overhead and underground transmission system that steps up the voltage to alternating current, linked to the substation;
- An operations and maintenance site (unless remotely monitored), including concrete pad with building(s);
- Transmission lines;
- Water tanks;
- Internal and external access roads; and
- Security and open space fencing.

Large-scale wind energy systems generally include the following components:

- Wind turbines ranging in height from approximately 200 to 330 feet to the wind turbine hub, and approximately 300 feet to 500 feet to the topmost blade tip;
- An overhead and underground collector cable system linking the wind turbines to the collector substation;
- A collector substation site and an operations and maintenance building (unless remotely monitored) with battery storage;
- Several permanent meteorological towers and one sonic detecting and ranging unit or one light detecting and ranging unit;

- An overhead transmission line running from the collector substation to the nearest substation;
- Water tanks;
- Internal and external access roads; and
- Security and open space fencing.

Large-scale organic waste processing facilities generally include the following components:

- Large composting piles, rows, bins or holding sites;
- Heavy machinery such as excavators, large-scale grinders conveyor belts or other heavy equipment;
- An operations and maintenance building;
- Water tanks;
- Internal and external access roads; and
- Security and open space fencing.

Hydrogen and renewable fuel generation facilities generally include large industrial-style buildings to house equipment for processing fuel, as well as storage tanks to store fuel and distribution infrastructure such as pipelines or truck loading stations. Hydrogen facilities include electrolysis units for hydrogen production, high-pressure storage tanks for compressed hydrogen and/or cryogenic storage for liquefied hydrogen, and distribution infrastructure; however, the exact design can vary depending on the scale of production and the specific hydrogen generation method used. Biofuel facilities include areas for biomass delivery and storage, biomass processing machinery, fuel storage tanks, and truck loading stations. Hydrogen and biofuel production facilities can be sited near renewable energy sources like solar or wind farms to provide a clean source of electricity to power the production and storage processes.

Impacts could include long-term scenic vista effects due to the addition of infrastructure that have height, forms, or colors that contrast with existing conditions. The degree of visual interruption from future utility-scale and renewable fuel production projects would vary depending on the location and size of the project, height and width of infrastructure, and the degree of reflectivity that accompanies the solar systems. Future utility-scale renewable energy and renewable fuel production projects would require discretionary permit approvals and project-level CEQA review.

Existing regulations in the HCC and each city's municipal code include development standards that would limit the allowable locations of utility-scale renewable energy and renewable fuel production projects, as well as design aspects such as height, massing, and setbacks. Additionally, General Plan policies protecting scenic resources, including Humboldt County General Plan Policies SR-G1, SR-P2, and SR-S1, would apply to future projects facilitated by the RCAP in the unincorporated areas. Future development within the incorporated cities would be required to adhere to applicable city general plan policies protecting scenic resources including Arcata General Plan Policies D-3c, D-3d, D-3e, D-3f, and D-3g, Blue Lake Performance and Design Standards and Site Design Policy 1, and Powers Creek Management Policy 1 and 7, Rio Dell General Plan Policy G1.2-3, Trinidad General Plan Policies COS-8.1 and CONS-8.5, and Eureka General Plan Policy NR-4.1. While these existing policies and regulations would require new projects to conserve and protect unique and sensitive visual features and the scenic quality of the environment, the size and magnitude of project features associated with utility scale renewable energy generation systems and renewable fuel production facilities may make it infeasible for future individual projects to fully reduce impacts related to scenic vistas to a less than significant level.

In summary, implementation of the RCAP would result in less than significant impacts related to scenic vistas with the exception of Actions SW-1b and BE-2f and Measure T-10 that would result in the potential development of large-scale renewable energy and renewable fuel production projects, and an organics processing facility. Although future projects would be required to adhere to existing General Plan, HCC, and County/city's municipal code standards to preserve visual resources and conduct project-level CEQA review, there is still the potential for significant impacts related to scenic vistas. Mitigation Measures AES-1 and AES-2 would reduce individual project impacts related to scenic vistas by requiring design features and visual screening measures to be implemented. However, because the siting and design of future projects facilitated by the RCAP is unknown at this time, the feasibility and effectiveness of these mitigation measures is unknown. Therefore, RCAP operational impacts related to scenic vistas would remain significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures would apply if a future RCAP-related project would potentially have a substantial adverse effect on a scenic vista:

MITIGATION MEASURE AES-1: IMPLEMENT ALTERNATIVE DESIGN MEASURES

Projects facilitated by the RCAP that would obstruct scenic vistas and views from publicly accessible vantage points shall identify and seek to protect public views and significant landscape features or landforms visible from such views and shall implement project-specific mitigation as applicable. If it is determined that a project would obstruct scenic views, the reviewing agency (County or relevant city) shall consider alternative designs that seek to avoid and/or minimize these visual impacts. Project-specific design measures may include reduction in height or width of improvements to reduce obstruction of views or other adverse visual effects, alteration of improvement configuration, or relocation of improvements to reduce obstruction of views. The reviewing agency shall implement the following (or equivalent) design measures as applicable:

- require that the scale and massing of new development provide appropriate transitions in structure height and bulk that are sensitive to the physical and visual character of the affected area;
- ensure structure heights are stepped back to maintain appropriate transitions in scale and to protect scenic views;
- underground utilities; and
- avoid siting electric towers, solar power facilities, wind power facilities, hydrogen generation facilities, biofuel production facilities, and/or above-ground lines where they could obstruct views from public vantage points, such as riding, hiking, or multiuse trails, along scenic roadways and routes, or scenic vista points.

MITIGATION MEASURE AES-2: IMPLEMENT VISUAL SCREENING

To screen views of projects facilitated by the RCAP in locations where they would be visible from publicly accessible vantage points (such as scenic vistas) and affect visual character or quality, the reviewing agency (County or relevant city) shall require the construction of a berm, vegetative screening, or other form of visual barrier of sufficient height to provide visual screening from the ground level. The color of proposed facades, fenestration, equipment, and roofs shall be designed to visually blend in and minimize the potential for visual contrast between the project elements and their natural landscape surroundings. Bright or very light colors (including glossy white) shall be avoided unless such colors blend in with the surrounding landscape. Re-contouring and revegetation

of temporarily disturbed graded areas shall be completed to provide a natural appearing landform upon completion of construction.

Level of Significance

Significant and Unavoidable

Scenic Resources within State Scenic Highways

Significance Criterion b: Would the proposed plan substantially damage scenic resources, including but not limited to, trees, rock outcroppings, and historic buildings within a State scenic highway?

Impact AES-2 THERE ARE NO DESIGNATED STATE SCENIC HIGHWAYS WITHIN HUMBOLDT; HOWEVER, THERE ARE ELIGIBLE STATE SCENIC HIGHWAYS AND LOCALLY DESIGNATED SCENIC ROUTES. FUTURE RCAP-RELATED PROJECTS WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADHERE TO EXISTING ORDINANCES AND GENERAL PLAN POLICIES THAT PROTECT SCENIC RESOURCES; HOWEVER LARGE-SCALE ORGANIC WASTE PROCESSING FACILITY, RENEWABLE ENERGY, AND RENEWABLE FUEL PRODUCTION PROJECTS FACILITATED BY THE RCAP COULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON SCENIC ROUTES WITHIN HUMBOLDT. MITIGATION MEASURES AES-1 AND AES-2 WOULD LIMIT THESE IMPACTS, BUT IMPACTS WOULD REMAIN SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE.

Construction

Impacts related to substantial damage to scenic resources are limited to operational impacts due to the temporary nature of construction activities. No respective construction impacts would occur with infrastructure facilitated by the proposed plan.

Operation

As discussed in Section 3.1.1, *Environmental Setting*, above, there are no officially designated State scenic highways within Humboldt; however, there are several eligible State scenic highways within unincorporated Humboldt County, and locally designated scenic routes within the incorporated cities of Humboldt. While the proposed RCAP does not include specific project proposals, it does include GHG reduction measures that may promote infrastructure development and other physical changes through policies and programs that could change existing visual conditions within scenic roadways within Humboldt. These projects could occur near eligible State scenic highways and could, depending on the location and design of the projects, result in changes to scenic resources visible along a scenic highway such as trees, rock outcroppings, or historic buildings.

Most actions facilitated by the RCAP would occur on infill sites within developed areas and would involve minor changes such as energy retrofits to existing buildings (e.g., Measures BE-3 Urban and Rural, BE-4, and BE-7), the addition of solar panels to rooftops (e.g., Measure BE-1 and Actions BE-2b and BE-2h), the addition of new bicycle, pedestrian and public transit infrastructure (e.g., Measures T-1 Urban and Rural and T-2 Urban and Rural), and the addition of EV/ZEV chargers and fueling stations (e.g., Measures T-6 and T-7). These types of small-scale projects would be unlikely to damage scenic resources. In addition, Measure T-3 would encourage mixed-use and infill development patterns, thereby reducing urban encroachment into the scenic, open space areas of Humboldt. The prevention of urban sprawl would assist with the conservation of open space and rural scenic resources such as the agricultural and forested areas identified in the County and City General Plans as resources contributing to the scenic quality of Humboldt.

While implementation of the majority of RCAP measures would not be anticipated to substantially damage scenic resources within eligible State scenic highways or locally designated scenic routes, RCAP Action BE-2f would encourage the development of utility-scale renewable energy projects to provide clean energy sources and enhance grid reliability, RCAP Action SW-1b would provide for a new organic waste processing facility within Humboldt, and RCAP Measure T-10 may result in the development of new hydrogen and biofuel production facilities. These large-scale projects could be sited near scenic roadways within Humboldt and could damage existing scenic resources and, in turn, affect existing views from these roadways. As described under Impact AES-1, impacts could include long-term effects due to the addition of infrastructure that have height, forms, or colors that contrast with existing conditions. The degree of visual interruption from future utility-scale and renewable fuel production projects would vary depending on the location and size of the project, height and width of infrastructure, and the degree of reflectivity that accompanies the solar systems. Future utility-scale renewable energy and renewable fuel production projects would require discretionary permit approvals and project-level CEQA review.

Existing regulations in the HCC and each city's municipal code include development standards that would limit the allowable locations of utility-scale renewable energy and renewable fuel production projects, as well as design aspects such as height, massing, and setbacks. Future development would also be required to adhere to existing General Plan policies that protect State scenic highways and locally designated scenic routes within Humboldt. Specifically, within unincorporated areas of Humboldt, development would be required to comply with General Plan policies SR-P3 and SR-S2, which require the protection of scenic highways and establish design standards for projects occurring within scenic highways. In incorporated areas of Humboldt, future development would be required to comply with Arcata General Plan Policy D-3a and Eureka General Plan policy NR-4.1, which require the preservation of view corridors and establish design policies for projects affecting scenic roadways. In addition, the General Plan policies listed under Section 3.1.2, *Regulatory Framework*, that protect scenic resources and quality in general would also apply to future projects occurring under the RCAP. However, due to their size and the nature of work associated with utility-scale renewable energy developments and renewable fuel production facilities, permanent alterations to scenic resources may occur through tree removal, blasting required for the construction of access roads or power line tower footings, and maintenance of power line clearance zones. Therefore, these types of projects could result in significant impacts related to scenic resources within State scenic highways and locally designated scenic roadways, even with adherence to existing regulations.

In summary, implementation of the RCAP would result in less than significant impacts related to scenic resources within scenic roadways with the exception of Action BE-2f and Measure T-10, which would result in the potential development of large-scale renewable energy projects. Although future utility-scale and renewable fuel production projects would be required to adhere to existing General Plan, HCC, and city municipal code standards to preserve visual resources within scenic roadways and conduct project-level CEQA review, there is still the potential for significant impacts related to scenic resources with designated scenic corridors. Mitigation Measures AES-1 and AES-2 would reduce individual project impacts related to scenic resources within State scenic highways and locally designated scenic routes by requiring design features and visual screening measures to be implemented. However, because the siting and design of future projects facilitated by the RCAP is unknown at this time, the feasibility and effectiveness of these mitigation measures is unknown. Therefore, RCAP operational impacts related to scenic resources within a State scenic highway would remain significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measures AES-1 and AES-2 would apply.

Level of Significance

Significant and Unavoidable

Visual Character or Quality of Public Views

Significance Criterion c: Would the proposed plan, in non-urbanized areas, substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the site and its surroundings? (Public views are those that are experienced from a publicly accessible vantage point). If the proposed plan is in an urbanized area, would the plan conflict with applicable zoning and other regulations governing scenic quality?

Impact AES-3 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RCAP WOULD PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT WITHIN HUMBOLDT. FUTURE RCAP-RELATED PROJECTS WOULD BE REQUIRED TO ADHERE TO EXISTING ORDINANCES AND GENERAL PLAN POLICIES THAT PROTECT VISUAL CHARACTER; HOWEVER LARGE-SCALE ORGANIC WASTE PROCESSING FACILITY, RENEWABLE ENERGY, AND RENEWABLE FUEL PRODUCTION PROJECTS FACILITATED BY THE RCAP COULD HAVE AN ADVERSE EFFECT ON PUBLIC VIEWS WITHIN HUMBOLDT. MITIGATION MEASURES AES-1 AND AES-2 WOULD LIMIT THESE IMPACTS, BUT IMPACTS WOULD REMAIN SIGNIFICANT AND UNAVOIDABLE.

Construction

Impacts related to substantial degrading of visual character or quality of public views are limited to operational impacts, as construction activities are temporary in nature.

Operation

As discussed in Section 3.1.3, *Approach to Analysis*, above, Humboldt is classified as non-urbanized pursuant to CEQA Guidelines Section 21071. Therefore, this analysis focuses on the potential for the RCAP to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of a site and its surroundings. As described under Section 3.1.1, *Environmental Setting, Visual Character*, Humboldt is characterized by large areas of forested, open space, and agricultural uses, with development concentrated around the incorporated cities and unincorporated communities such as McKinleyville. The developed areas of Humboldt are generally of low to medium density, featuring single-family residential neighborhoods and small commercial corridors and main streets surrounded by agricultural land, timberland, and open space areas.

While the RCAP does not include specific project proposals, it does include GHG reduction measures that may promote infrastructure development and other physical changes through policies and programs that could affect visual character or quality of public views. For example, the RCAP includes measures that would encourage the streamlining and maximization of small-scale battery energy storage and solar panel installation (Measures BE-1, BE-2, BE-4, and BE-7), the identification of sites that are suitable for utility scale renewable energy generation (Action BE-2f), mixed use and infill development patterns (Measure T-3), the addition of new bicycle, pedestrian and public transit infrastructure (e.g., Measures T-1 Urban and Rural and T-2 Urban and Rural), and the addition of EV/ZEV chargers and fueling stations (e.g., Measures T-6 and T-7). In accordance with these

measures, under the proposed RCAP, future projects would be required to implement renewable energy technologies such as solar panels, microgrids, and battery energy storage. In addition, infill development within existing population centers would be prioritized, thereby limiting urban sprawl.

Most actions facilitated by the RCAP would occur on infill sites and would involve minor changes such as energy retrofits to existing buildings (e.g., Measures BE-3 Urban and Rural, BE-4, and BE-7), the addition of solar panels to rooftops (e.g., Measure BE-1 and Actions BE-2b and BE-2h), the addition of new bicycle, pedestrian and public transit infrastructure (e.g., Measures T-1 Urban and Rural and T-2 Urban and Rural), and the addition of EV/ZEV chargers and fueling stations (e.g., Measures T-6 and T-7). These types of small-scale projects would generally occur within the existing developed areas of Humboldt and would not substantially alter existing visual character or quality. For example, the addition of small-scale renewable energy technology such as rooftop solar panels would blend in with existing development. Likewise, the emphasis on infill development facilitated by the RCAP would not result in significant impacts to visual character or quality of public views, as infill projects would generally be consistent with surrounding urban development. In addition, Measure T-3 would encourage mixed-use and infill development patterns, thereby reducing urban encroachment into the scenic, open space areas of Humboldt. The prevention of urban sprawl would assist with the conservation of visual character and quality of public views in the scenic open space and agricultural areas of Humboldt.

While implementation of the majority of RCAP measures would not be anticipated to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views, RCAP Action BE-2f would encourage the development of utility-scale renewable energy projects to provide clean energy sources and enhance grid reliability and RCAP Measure T-10 may result in the development of new hydrogen and biofuel production facilities. Additionally, RCAP Action SW-1b would facilitate the development of a regional organics processing facility to reduce waste sent to landfills. These large-scale projects could be sited in undeveloped areas and contrast starkly with the existing visual character and quality of Humboldt. As described under Impact AES-1, impacts could include long-term effects due to the addition of solar panels, wind turbines, and industrial buildings that have height, forms, or colors that contrast with existing conditions. The degree of visual interruption from future large-scale organic processing facilities, and utility-scale and renewable fuel production projects would vary depending on the location and size of the project, height and width of infrastructure, and the degree of reflectivity that accompanies the solar systems. Future utility-scale renewable energy, renewable fuel production and organics processing facility projects would require discretionary permit approvals and project-level CEQA review.

Existing regulations in the HCC and each City's municipal code include development standards that would limit the allowable locations of large-scale organic waste processing, utility-scale renewable energy, and renewable fuel production projects, as well as design aspects such as height, massing, and setbacks. Additionally, General Plan policies protecting visual character and quality, including Humboldt County General Plan Policies SR-G1, SR-P2, and SR-S1, would apply to future development facilitated by the RCAP in the unincorporated areas. Future development within the incorporated cities would be required to adhere to the applicable City's General Plan policies protecting scenic resources including Arcata General Plan Policies D-3c, D-3d, D-3e, D-3f, and D-3g, Blue Lake Performance and Design Standards and Site Design Policy 1, and Powers Creek Management Policy 1 and 7, Rio Dell General Plan Policy G1.2-3, Trinidad General Plan Policies COS-8.1 and CONS-8.5, and Eureka General Plan Policy NR-4.1. While these existing policies and regulations would require new projects to conserve and protect unique and sensitive visual features and the visual quality of the environment, due to their size and the nature of work associated with large-scale organic waste

processing, utility-scale renewable energy, and renewable fuel production developments, these types of projects could have significant impacts related to visual character and quality of public views, even with adherence to existing regulations.

In summary, implementation of the RCAP would result in less than significant impacts to existing visual character or quality of public views with the exception of Actions BE-2f and SW-1b and Measure T-10, which would result in the potential development of large-scale renewable energy, organic waste processing facility, and renewable fuel projects. Although future projects would be required to adhere to existing General Plan, HCC, and city municipal code standards to preserve visual quality and conduct project-level CEQA review, there is still the potential for significant impacts. Mitigation Measures AES-1 and AES-2 would reduce individual project impacts related to existing visual character or quality of public views by requiring design features and visual screening measures to be implemented. However, because the siting and design of future development facilitated by the RCAP is unknown at this time, the feasibility and effectiveness of these mitigation measures is unknown. Therefore, RCAP operational impacts related to visual character and quality of public views would remain significant and unavoidable.

Mitigation Measures

Mitigation Measures AES-1 and AES-2 would apply.

Level of Significance

Significant and Unavoidable

New Source of Light or Glare

Significance Criterion d: Would the proposed plan create a new source of substantial light or glare that would adversely affect daytime or nighttime views in the area?

Impact AES-4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE RCAP WOULD RESULT IN NEW SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE WITHIN HUMBOLDT THAT COULD CREATE NEW SOURCES OF LIGHT OR GLARE THAT COULD ADVERSELY AFFECT DAYTIME OR NIGHTTIME VIEWS IN THE PLAN AREA. MITIGATION MEASURE AES-3 WOULD REDUCE THE POTENTIAL FOR NEW SOURCES OF SUBSTANTIAL LIGHT AND GLARE, AND IMPACTS WOULD BE LESS THAN SIGNIFICANT WITH MITIGATION.

Construction

Impacts related to the creation of new sources of light and glare that could adversely affect daytime and nighttime views in the area are typically limited to operational impacts. In addition, most construction facilitated by the proposed RCAP would occur during the daytime, limiting potential for construction-related, temporary nighttime lighting impacts. Construction-related nighttime lighting would be used at future project construction sites only for safety and security purposes and would be directed downward to limit light spillover to adjacent areas, consistent with the HCC and city municipal code requirements. Therefore, RCAP construction impacts related to potential new sources of light and glare would be less than significant.

Operation

As discussed in Section 3.1.1, *Environmental Setting*, unincorporated Humboldt is primarily rural with limited existing sources of light and glare, with the exception of areas such as McKinleyville and

the unincorporated areas surrounding Eureka, where there is denser development. Within the incorporated cities and more densely developed portions of unincorporated Humboldt County, there is a higher concentration of existing sources of light and glare associated with urban development, such as streetlights, exterior building lighting, lighted signs, glass façades, and the windshields of parked cars. While the RCAP does not include specific project proposals, it does include GHG reduction measures that may promote infrastructure development and other physical changes through policies and programs. Specifically, Measures BE-1, BE-2, BE-4, BE-7, and T-3, that encourage installation of both small-scale and utility-scale solar PV and other renewable energy systems, microgrid projects, and battery energy storage systems, have the potential to result in new sources of light and glare if not thoughtfully designed and located. Measures T-10, SW-1, WW-2 may involve the future development of renewable fuel generation, organic waste processing, and recycled water facilities that may introduce new sources of light and glare within Humboldt. In addition, RCAP Measure T-3 would promote higher density, mixed-use development in infill priority areas, which could result in new sources of light and glare in the urban areas of Humboldt.

Light

New sources of nighttime lighting facilitated by the RCAP would be limited to lighting from infill and mixed-use projects promoted by RCAP Measure T-3 or safety lighting necessary on larger-scale project sites, such as water recycling, waste treatment, or energy generation facilities. Improperly installed building lighting could result in a significant impact to those with a direct line of sight to a project area from a publicly accessible vantage point and could be perceived as a slight glow on the horizon (or sky glow) for others who cannot see the facilities directly. Projects facilitated by the RCAP would be required to comply with State and local lighting requirements summarized under Section 3.1.2, *Regulatory Framework*. Compliance with applicable requirements for nighttime lighting, including Humboldt County General Plan Policy SR-S4, Eureka General Plan Policy NR-4.2, and the lighting regulations of the HCC and City Municipal Codes would minimize impacts related to existing nighttime lighting conditions. However, as the County and incorporated cities have differing levels of regulation related to lighting (for example, the Trinidad General Plan and Municipal Code do not contain specific policies or regulations to reduce lighting impacts from various types of development), there is still the potential for significant impacts related to new source of lighting to occur.

Glare

Anything that scatters light between its source and a person's eye can cause glare. Rain, snow, fog, or smoke can scatter sunlight, for example, and cracked, dirty, or frosty windshields can scatter light from streetlamps or headlights. Glare can be caused by reflective surfaces, such as glass and glossy finishes on vehicles or structures. RCAP measures and actions could facilitate projects that cause glare, including new infrastructure and facilities construction, rooftop and ground-mounted solar projects, or other infrastructure projects that include components that reflect light. New structures could cause glare if they have glossy or bright finishes (e.g., glossy white paint, light-colored concrete, etc.) or large areas of exterior glass or reflective metal. Should these structures be built in developed areas, within heavily trafficked flight paths, or adjacent to frequently traveled roadways, they could result in significant impacts related to glare.

New structures facilitated by the RCAP, such as infill development and renewable energy and battery storage, recycled water, organic waste processing, and renewable fuel generation facilities could result in new sources of glare from exterior building materials. Even if non-reflective, non-glare finishes are used on all structures for projects facilitated by the RCAP, some glare associated

with glass or metal of new buildings could occur on sunny days. In addition, solar panels can result in glare depending on the time of day, the angle of the sun, cloud cover, and other factors. Glare from solar panels can present a potential hazard or distraction for motorists on nearby roadways and for pilots and air-traffic control. Solar panels are designed to absorb as much light as possible, rather than to reflect it, and the glare created by photovoltaic panels is generally considered to be less than that created by water or common building materials such as metal, glass, and Portland white cement concrete.^{29, 30, 31} Nonetheless, new solar projects facilitated by the RCAP could still generate glare, and depending on site-specific contexts, could create hazards. These potentially significant impacts would be limited to larger-scale, ground mounted solar panels, for example, those associated with utility-scale renewable energy projects, as small-scale rooftop solar panels encouraged by the RCAP would generally be unnoticeable from ground level, where most viewers would be located, and would not create substantial sources of glare.

Projects facilitated by the RCAP would be required to comply with the local policies related to glare summarized above under Section 3.1.2, *Regulatory Framework*. Compliance with applicable requirements for reducing glare, including Humboldt County General Plan Policy SR-S4, Eureka General Plan Policy NR-4.2, and design regulations of the HCC and city municipal codes would minimize impacts related to glare. However, as the County and incorporated cities all have differing levels of regulation related to glare, there is still the potential for significant impacts related to glare from infrastructure materials and utility-scale solar projects.

Overall

Mitigation Measures AES-3 would reduce potential light and glare impacts by requiring non-glare light fixtures, minimally reflective exterior finishes, and solar project design considerations. This mitigation measure would apply only if specific projects would have potentially significant light and/or glare impacts. With implementation of existing regulations and Mitigation Measure AES-3, RCAP operational impacts related to potential new sources of light and glare would be less than significant.

Mitigation Measures

MITIGATION MEASURE AES-3: IMPLEMENT LIGHT AND GLARE REDUCTION DESIGN MEASURES

To reduce potentially significant light and glare impacts of projects facilitated by the RCAP, the reviewing agency (County or relevant city) shall require the following light and glare measures to be incorporated into project design for projects that include exterior lighting:

- The design of exterior light fixtures shall incorporate shielding and be directed downward onto the site to prevent offsite light spillage and sky glow;
- Exterior lighting fixtures shall be kept to the minimum number and intensity needed to ensure public safety. These lights shall incorporate the use of motion activated sensors and be dimmed

²⁹ Shields, M. 2010. PV Systems: Low Levels of Glare and Reflectance vs. Surrounding Environment. <https://www.cityofpasadena.net/planning/wp-content/uploads/sites/30/Sunpower-Corporation.-PV-Systems-Low-Levels-of-Glare-and-Reflectance-vs.-Surrounding-Environment-.pdf> (accessed November 2024).

³⁰ Riley, E. and Olson, S. 2011. A Study of the Hazardous Glare Potential to Aviators from Utility-Scale Flat-Plate Photovoltaic Systems. <https://doi.org/10.5402/2011/651857> (accessed November 2024).

³¹ National Renewable Energy Laboratory. 2018. Research and Analysis Demonstrate the Lack of Impacts of Glare from Photovoltaic Modules. <https://www.nrel.gov/state-local-tribal/blog/posts/research-and-analysis-demonstrate-the-lack-of-impacts-of-glare-from-photovoltaic-modules.html> (accessed November 2024).

after 11 p.m. to the maximum extent practical without compromising public safety as determined by the reviewing agency;

- Outdoor lighting shall include non-glare fixtures; and
- Structure design shall include exterior finishes and materials that are minimally reflective or sited or oriented in such a way as to direct glare away from sensitive receptors.

For projects involving solar panels, the following light and glare measures shall be incorporated into project design:

- All solar panels shall include an anti-reflective coating; and
- Solar projects one megawatt or greater in generation capacity shall conduct an analysis of solar glare and shall implement recommendations related to positioning and angling of solar panels, if warranted, to reduce offsite glare impacts.

Level of Significance

Less Than Significant with Mitigation

3.1.4 Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative projects scenario is the population, employment, and housing forecasts projected for Humboldt through 2030. Construction and operational activities and conditions for past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects, including projects implemented to accommodate the projected growth within the region, would combine with the incremental impacts of the RCAP to cause or contribute to cumulative aesthetic conditions within Humboldt.

Scenic Vistas

Scenic vistas are varied and dispersed throughout Humboldt. In locations where scenic vistas are of high quality, such as near the coast or in the rural, agricultural, and forested areas of Humboldt, cumulative projects would be more likely to cause or make a cumulatively considerable contribution to a significant cumulative impact on scenic vistas, in particular if the cumulative projects were located in close proximity to scenic vistas available from publicly accessible vantage points. By contrast, in locations where the quality of scenic vistas is of lesser quality, such as within the urbanized areas of Humboldt, there is a decreased likelihood that cumulative projects would result in significant impacts to scenic vistas, especially because development in these areas would likely be infill and, thus, consistent with neighboring existing development.

In particular, a regional organic waste processing facility, utility-scale renewable energy projects and renewable fuel production facilities facilitated by the RCAP could be located in rural, scenic areas of Humboldt and have the potential to result in substantial visual contrast. Consistency with the County and city general plans, HCC, and city municipal codes intended to protect scenic vistas would minimize potential impacts; however, the incremental impacts of the RCAP, together with the incremental impacts of past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects would result in a significant cumulative impact. The implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1 and AES-2 would reduce the severity of the RCAP's incremental contribution to cumulative impacts but would not ensure that the RCAP's contribution would be less than cumulatively considerable. Therefore, cumulative impacts related to scenic vistas would be significant and unavoidable.

Scenic Resources within State Scenic Highways

Eligible scenic highways and locally designated scenic routes run throughout Humboldt. If sited near an eligible State scenic highway or scenic route, cumulative projects could result in a cumulatively considerable impact if located near other cumulative projects that have a significant impact on scenic resources within State scenic highways or locally designated scenic routes. Projects facilitated by the RCAP located on infill sites would have a decreased likelihood of resulting in significant impacts within a State scenic highway or locally designated scenic route; however, large-scale organic waste processing, renewable energy and renewable fuel production projects occurring in more rural areas of Humboldt could result in a cumulatively considerable impact. Consistency with existing General Plan policies, HCC, and city municipal codes, along with implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1 and AES-2 would reduce the RCAP's contribution to cumulative impacts. However, cumulative impacts related to scenic resources within State scenic highways would remain significant and unavoidable.

Public Views and Visual Character

Implementation of the RCAP measures and actions could result in a cumulative impact on visual character and public views if future projects were to be located near other cumulative projects that change or affect the overall defining character of Humboldt. Projects facilitated by the RCAP, in combination with past, present, and future development in Humboldt, could degrade public views and visual character by transforming existing rural and undeveloped landscapes into developed land. This would be especially likely to have cumulatively considerable impacts in rural areas of Humboldt and where large-scale utility and renewable fuel production projects may be sited. Implementation of Mitigation Measures AES-1 and AES-2 would reduce the RCAP's incremental contribution to cumulative impacts but would not ensure that the contribution would not be cumulatively considerable. Accordingly, even with the implementation of these mitigation measures, cumulative impacts related to public views and visual character would remain significant and unavoidable.

Light and Glare

The incremental contribution of projects facilitated by the RCAP could result in a cumulative impact related to light or glare if one or more of the future projects were to be located near other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future cumulative projects that are significant sources of light or glare, especially in more rural areas of Humboldt where existing light and glare conditions are typically minimal. As discussed under Impact AES-4, most development associated with the RCAP would be on infill sites where light and glare from the project would be similar to surrounding uses. However, large-scale utility and renewable fuel production projects could be sited outside of developed areas and could introduce new light and glare sources in rural parts of Humboldt. All future development would be required to adhere to the General Plan policies, HCC, and city municipal code light and glare policies and requirements to reduce the potential for light and glare impacts. Therefore, Mitigation Measure AES-4 would reduce the RCAP's incremental contribution to cumulative impacts by further reducing light and glare associated with new projects facilitated by the RCAP. With adherence to existing regulations and implementation of Mitigation Measure AES-4, cumulative impacts related to light and glare would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated.

Overall Level of Cumulative Significance

Significant and Unavoidable