September 2024 | Initial Study

INITIAL STUDY FOR BLUE LAKE 2019-2027

HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE

City of Blue Lake

Prepared for:
City of Blue Lake
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Initial Study

1. Project Title

The City of Blue Lake 2019-2027 Housing Element Update

2. Lead Agency Name and Address

City of Blue Lake
P.O. Box 458
111 Greenwood Ave
Blue Lake, California 95525

3. Contact Person and Phone Number

Garry Rees, Contract City Planner
707-668-5655
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4. Project Location

The project area is the entire City of Blue Lake in Humboldt County, California. The regional location and project area are shown in **Figure 1** and **Figure 2**. For a description of the City and its regional context see Section 9, Surrounding Land Uses and Setting.

5. Project Sponsor's Name and Address

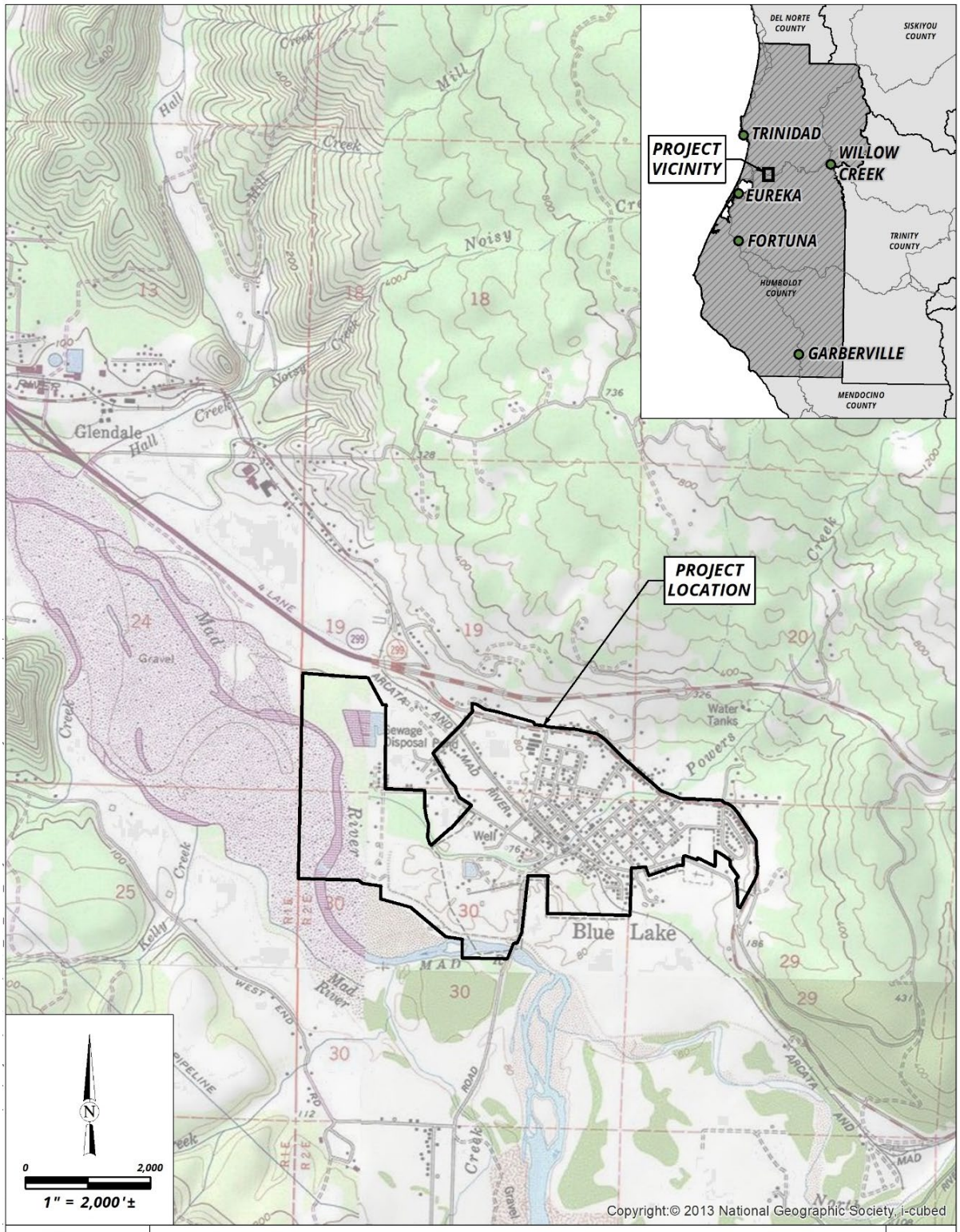
City of Blue Lake
P.O. Box 458
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Blue Lake, California 95525
Phone: 707-668-5655
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6. General Plan Designation

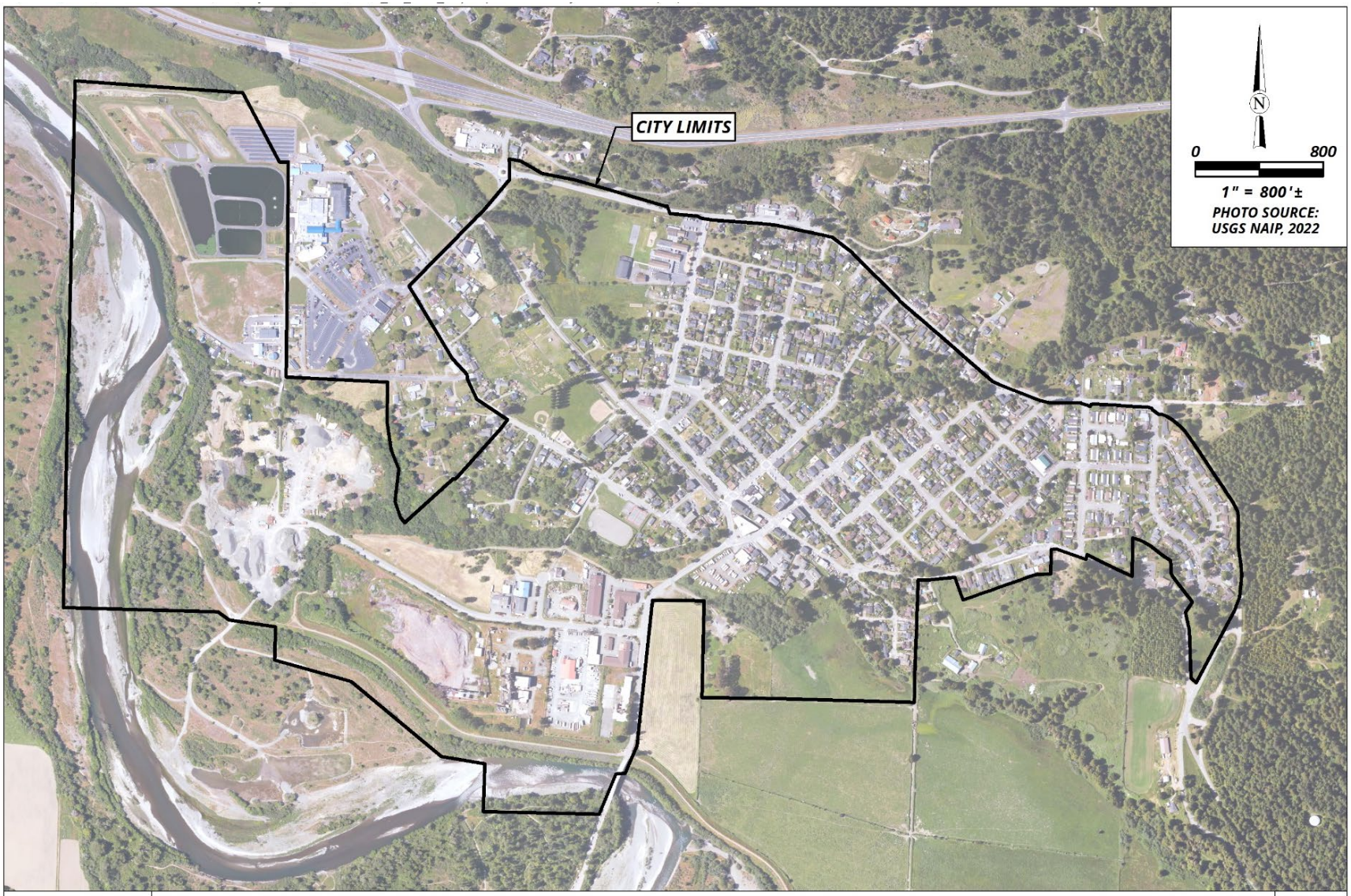
City-wide

7. Zoning

City-wide



SHN	City of Blue Lake Housing Element Update Blue Lake, California	**Project Location Map** February 2024 - 022168.100	**Figure** **1**



City of Blue Lake
Housing Element Update
Blue Lake, California

City Limits Map

February 2024 - 022168.100

Figure 2

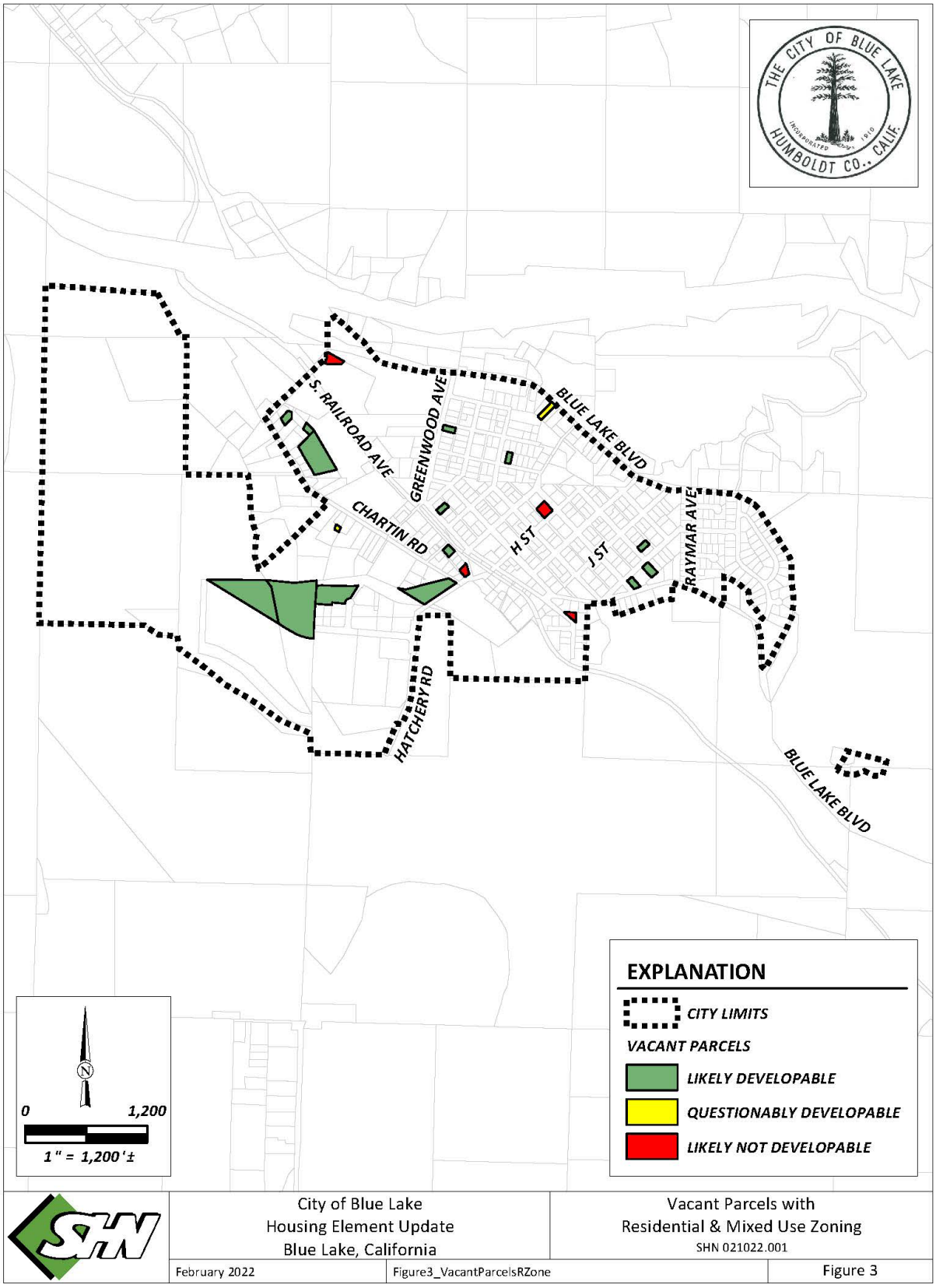
1. Project Description

Overview and Background

Under the requirements of state law, every city and county in California must prepare a Housing Element as part of its General Plan. The housing element must document in detail existing conditions and projected needs in accordance with state housing law provisions. The element is also required to contain goals, policies, programs, and quantified objectives that address housing needs over the next eight-year period. As part of the proposed project, the proposed 2019-2027 Housing Element Update will serve as the City of Blue Lake's guiding policy document that meets future needs of housing for all the City's economic groups.

The last housing element update adopted by the City was during the 4th cycle planning period (2007-2014). As required, the 4th cycle housing element was reviewed by the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD, 2023) but was not ultimately certified by HCD. Blue Lake prepared a draft update for the 5th cycle (2014-2019), which was reviewed by HCD but was not ultimately adopted by the City Council or certified by HCD. The proposed 2019-2027 Housing Element Update will replace the adopted 4th cycle housing element. The Housing Element Update identifies the potential for development of up to 89 new housing units at full buildout of the city's existing vacant lot inventory. **Figure 3** shows the location of the vacant lots in the City that are zoned to allow residential development. The projected number of units only considered development of existing vacant lots under current land use designations and zoning. Although a discussion of the residential development capacity of underutilized lots in the City is included in the Housing Element Update, this additional capacity was not used to determine whether the City has adequate sites to meet its share of the regional housing need for the 5th and 6th planning cycles.

The proposed project ("project") consists of a comprehensive update to the Housing Element of the City of Blue Lake General Plan for the 6th cycle planning period, which runs from December 31, 2018 to August 31, 2027. State law requires that housing elements be updated every eight years (California Government Code Sections 65580 to 65589.8). The Housing Element Update identifies residential sites adequate to accommodate a variety of housing types for all income levels and needs of special population groups, defined under state law (California Government Code Section 65583). It analyzes governmental constraints to housing maintenance, improvement, and development; addresses conservation and improvement of the condition of existing affordable housing stock; and outlines policies that promote housing opportunities for all persons. The Housing Element Update, pursuant to AB 686, identifies and analyzes impediments to fair housing by way of outreach, assessment of fair housing, site inventory, identification and prioritization of contributing factors, and goals and assessment.



SHN	City of Blue Lake Housing Element Update Blue Lake, California	Vacant Parcels with Residential & Mixed Use Zoning SHN 021022.001
February 2022	Figure3_VacantParcelsRZone	Figure 3

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, most projects that may occur in the future as a result of any amendments to the Zoning Code, would be subject to project-specific environmental review once a complete development application is received by the City.

As outlined below under the discussion of the 6th Cycle Housing Goals, Policies, and Implementation Programs, the proposed project would involve amending the City's Zoning Code for the following reasons:

- To ensure consistency with state regulations related to accessory dwelling units, manufactured housing/mobile homes, single room occupancy units, transitional and supportive housing, emergency shelters, employee housing, density bonuses, reasonable accommodation, and residential care facilities (see Implementation Program HI-1).
- To create a Multi-Family Combining Zone to allow multi-family projects without discretionary review or by-right at a density of 16 units per acre or 1 unit per 2,722.5 square feet of lot area (see Implementation Program HI-14). Due to the availability of adequate sites with limited constraints within the City where the combining zone could be applied, during the 6th cycle planning period, the combining zone is anticipated to be applied to a property in the City's Powers Creek District that is zoned Opportunity (O) and already allows for residential development. To meet the requirement for by-right zoning in Government Code Section 65583.2, subdivisions (h) and (i), the property would need to be sufficiently sized to allow a capacity of at least 11 units, which would be a minimum of 27,500 square feet (~0.63-acres) at the residential density allowed in the O zone (1 unit per 2,500 square feet of lot area). As described below, 11 units is the Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) allocation carry over from the 5th cycle planning period (see **Table 1**). Any by-right project proposed on a property that the combining zone has been applied to would not be subject to CEQA. Because the City did not have a housing element that was adopted and certified in the 5th cycle, HCD has determined that the City must complete Implementation Program HI-14 prior to receiving certification of its 6th cycle Housing Element Update.
- To remove potential constraints to the development of multi-family housing, the City will amend development standards in the Planned Development Residential (PD-R), Residential Two-Family (R-2), and Mixed-Use (MU) zones to ensure they are consistent with other zones allowing multi-family housing in the City (see Implementation Program HI-19). Development standards that would be amended in these zones include maximum ground coverage, maximum building height, and setbacks.
- To comply with the requirements for objective design standards in Government Code Section 65589.5, subdivision (f), the City will replace the subjective review criteria for the Site Plan Approval

process (such as, “Principles to Be Followed” in Zoning Code Section 17.24.250(F)) with objective standards (see Implementation Program HI-21). Objective standards are defined as those that involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and being uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official reviewing the project.

- To minimize the potential for confusion regarding the applicability of the City’s design guidelines, the City will amend all zones that reference the guidelines (for example, MU, RC, etc.) to make it clear that they are recommendations and not enforceable standards of the Zoning Code (see Implementation Program HI-22).

This Initial Study/Negative Declaration (IS-ND) serves as the environmental review of the proposed project, as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), Public Resources Code Section 21000 et seq., and the State CEQA Guidelines.

Regional Housing Needs Allocation Process

State Housing Element law requires local jurisdictions to update their Housing Elements at least once every eight years in response to the eight-year RHNA process. The RHNA process defines each local jurisdiction’s share of the region’s projected housing needs, by income category, for the planning period. State law mandates that jurisdictions provide sufficient land to accommodate a variety of housing opportunities for all economic segments of the community. Compliance with this requirement is measured by the jurisdiction’s ability to identify adequate sites to accommodate the RHNA. Humboldt County is required to adopt a Regional Housing Needs Plan (RHNP) that allocates a share of the County’s housing need to all the cities in the County. The projection period for the RHNP and the planning period for the City’s Housing Element Update began December 31, 2018, and ends August 31, 2027.

As noted above, the City did not have an adopted and certified Housing Element Update for the 5th cycle planning period (2014-2019). As generally required by Government Code Section 65584.09, because the City did not have a certified Housing Element in the 5th cycle, the 2014-2019 RHNA was required to be carried over into the 6th cycle Housing Element Update (the proposed project), which covers the 2019-2027 planning period. Therefore, the City must plan for both its 5th and 6th cycle RHNA in the 6th cycle Housing Element Update. Listed in **Table 1** is the breakdown of the RHNA for the City of Blue Lake, by income group, for the 2014-2019 (5th cycle) and 2019–2027 (6th cycle) planning periods.

Table 1: Blue Lake 5th and 6th Cycle RHNA

Income Category	2014-2019 RHNA (5th Cycle)[1]	2019-2027 RHNA (6th Cycle)[2]	Total RHNA (5th & 6th Cycle)
Very Low	4	7	11
Low	1	4	5
Moderate	2	5	7
Above Moderate	4	7	11
Total	**11**	**23**	**34**

Sources:
[1]HCAOG, 2013
[2]HCAOG, 2019

Residential Land Inventory

Section 65583(a)(3) of the Government Code requires Housing Elements to contain an "inventory of land suitable for residential development, including vacant sites and sites having potential for redevelopment, and an analysis of the relationship of zoning and public facilities and services to these sites." The 2019-2027 Housing Element contains an analysis of land that is available for the development of housing within the 6th cycle planning period, including land that is currently entitled for housing which has not yet been built, vacant land, and redevelopment sites, as well as the capacity for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs). The results of this analysis are shown in Table 21 and Table 22 of the Housing Element Update and are summarized in **Table 2**. **Table 2** shows that the City's residential land inventory exceeds its total 5th and 6th cycle RHNA in all income categories.

Table 2: Comparison of 5th and 6th Cycle RHNA and Residential Sites

Income Group	2014-2019 RHNA	2019–2027 RHNA	ADU/JADU Capacity	Site Capacity[1]	RHNA Surplus
Very Low	4	7	2	56	42
Low	1	4			
Moderate	2	5	2	20	15
Above Moderate	4	7	--	13	2
Total	**11**	**23**	**4**	**89**	**59**

Source: City of Blue Lake, 2024b.
[1]The site capacity only includes the capacity on vacant sites identified as likely developable in Table 21 of the 6th Cycle Housing Element Update.

Goals, Policies, Programs, and Objectives

Government Code, Section 65588(a)(2) "Review and Revision" requires that a newly proposed Housing Element Update review the goals, policies and programs of the previous housing element, and report on the

attainment and disposition of the programs. In some instances, the programs from the previous Housing Element are continued through to the proposed update.

Table 3 provides the implementation progress of the City's housing programs from the last Housing Element adopted by the City, which was in 2009 during the 4th cycle planning period (2007-2014). As indicated in **Table 3**, the proposed project would amend many existing programs to be more straightforward and streamlined, to provide greater consistency with current State housing law, and to reflect current conditions in the City. The proposed Goals, Policies, and Implementation Programs for the 6th cycle Housing Element Update are provided following **Table 3**.

Table 3. Implementation Progress of the City of Blue Lake's Housing Programs

2007-2014 (4th Cycle) Housing Element Programs	Implementation Status	Continue/ Modify/ Delete in 2019-2027 (6th Cycle) Housing Element
1. The City will review its 2003 Revised Second Unit Ordinance to create ways to further the appropriate construction of "second units or granny units" on single-family lots beyond the creation of the Ordinance and rezoning of lots for applicability.	During the 5th planning cycle, the City's Accessory Dwelling Unit regulations were determined by HCD to be "null and void" due the numerous inconsistencies with State regulations. Since that time, the City has deferred to current State regulations for Accessory Dwelling Units. The City has contacted HCD (adu@hcd.ca.gov) on several occasions to ask questions and receive clarification to ensure that State ADU regulations were being properly implemented in the City.	Modify. See Program HI-1.
2. The City will adopt a density bonus ordinance in accordance with Section 65915 of the Government Code. A density bonus will be granted by the City to an interested developer in exchange for a guarantee of affordable units.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, the City did not adopt a density bonus ordinance. The City defaults to current state regulations for density bonus requirements.	Modify. See Program HI-1.
3. The City will encourage planned developments on large parcels to facilitate the construction of a variety of housing types and densities, including multi-family for lower-income households. Financial assistance to offset part of the cost of extending public facilities will be considered by the City as an activity for inclusion in an application to the State Department of Housing & Community Development (HCD) for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds to assist in upgrading living conditions for the residents of Blue Lake.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, the City encouraged development on Planned Development Residential zoned parcels in the western portion of the City. Parcel 025-101-023 (~3 acres) was approved for the development of 3 single-family residences with accessory dwelling units and 2 duplexes (total of 10 units). The City did not submit any applications for CDBG funds to encourage planned development during the 4th and 5th planning cycles.	Modify. See Programs HI-5 and HI-14.

2007-2014 (4th Cycle) Housing Element Programs	Implementation Status	Continue/ Modify/ Delete in 2019-2027 (6th Cycle) Housing Element
4. The City will propose revision of the R3 Zone in the Zoning Ordinance to establish performance standards (as seen in the newly updated Industrial Zone) that would allow more of the conditionally allowable uses to be principally permitted (by-right) and including multi-family developments.	The City considered amendment of the R3 Zone to principally permit multi-family housing during the 4th and 5th planning cycles. The City ultimately decided to pursue developing a Combining Zone that, when applied to individual properties, would principally permit multi-family housing. The Combining Zone is proposed for adoption during the current planning cycle.	Modify. See Program HI-14.
5. The City will continue to apply (or support applications) to HCD and agencies for funds to provide low interest and deferred loan programs for the rehabilitation of housing occupied by targeted income households.	The City was not contacted by any qualifying households during the 4th and 5th planning cycles.	Modify. See Programs HI-4 and HI-9.
6. The City will continue participation in the Humboldt County Fair Housing Committee sponsored by the Board of Realtors.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, the City did not participate in the Humboldt County Fair Housing Committee.	Modify. See Program HI-10.
7. The City Clerk is designated as the contact for referral of fair housing complaints to the State Department of Fair Housing and Employment.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, notices were posted on several occasions at City Hall.	Modify. See Program HI-10.
8. During the effective period of this element the City will review the Zoning Ordinance and other City policies for consistency with the Fair Housing law.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, the City was not made aware of any inconsistencies between the Municipal Code and Fair Housing law.	Continue. See Program HI-10.
9. During the effective period of this element the City will review the Zoning Ordinance to include emergency shelters, transitional housing and group housing	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, the City considered amending the Municipal Code to allow these uses in the Retail Commercial and Mixed-use zones in and	Modify. See Program HI-1.

2007-2014 (4th Cycle) Housing Element Programs	Implementation Status	Continue/ Modify/ Delete in 2019-2027 (6th Cycle) Housing Element
and allow them in appropriate zones if the need arises. If the need is addressed, Blue Lake will enter into a multi-jurisdictional agreement with surrounding communities to address this problem pursuant to SB 2.	around the downtown. The amendments were not ultimately adopted.	
10. During the effective period of this element the City will review the sewer and water ordinances to ensure compliance with SB 1087. If they are not in compliance, the City will update and amend the ordinances so as to facilitate housing development for lower-income families and workers.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, no amendments were made to ensure compliance with SB 1087.	Continue. See Program HI-16.
11. During the effective period of this element the definition of family in the Zoning Ordinance will be revised to be compliant with fair housing law.	This amendment to the Municipal Code did not occur during the 4th and 5th planning cycles.	Modify. See Program HI-1.
12. Energy conservation information for existing housing will be disseminated by publicizing available weatherization programs.	During the 5th planning cycle, the City provided information at City Hall about RCEA and RCAA weatherization programs as information was made available. City staff, RCEA, and RCAA conducted public outreach to make renters and homeowners aware of these programs. During the 5th cycle, dozens of residences in the City received weatherization improvements through these programs.	Modify. See Programs HI-3 and HI-6.
13. Rehabilitated units will be encouraged to include retrofit weatherization improvements such as ceiling and floor insulation, caulking and weather-stripping.	During the 5th planning cycle, the City provided information about weatherization programs to owners rehabilitating residential units.	Continue. See Program HI-6.

2007-2014 (4th Cycle) Housing Element Programs	Implementation Status	Continue/ Modify/ Delete in 2019-2027 (6th Cycle) Housing Element
14. New construction will be required to comply with Title 24 of the State Building Code. These requirements are approved by the City Building Department at the time of plan review or permit application.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, all new construction was required to comply with Title 24 requirements.	Continue. See Program HI-8.
15. The City will continue to seek methods to revitalize Downtown. The purpose will be to increase local employment opportunities and tourist spending. The City Council will meet with the Blue Lake Chamber of Commerce to discuss business opportunities and constraints.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, the City continued marketing the Downtown including seeking grant funding to acquire a property for development of a plaza and a portion of the Annie and Mary Trail.	Delete.
16. A capital improvement program will be prepared. Financial assistance will be sought to implement identified strategies from the State Economic Development Set-Aside and HUD's Urban Development Action Grant Program.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, components of a capital improvement program were prepared. The City sought funding through sources other than those identified in this program.	Delete.
17. Large homes suitable for bed and breakfast are encouraged to convert to this use as part of the tourism effort.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycle, the City did not encourage owners of large homes to convert them to bed and breakfast businesses. Instead, the City encouraged owners of large homes to convert them to multiple long-term rental units.	Delete.
18. Increased local employment opportunities should be pursued through development of small business start-up opportunities and designation of suitable area for development. Financial assistance should be pursued.	During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, the City did encourage the development of small businesses and pursued financial assistance through sources other than those identified in this program.	Delete.

2007-2014 (4th Cycle) Housing Element Programs	Implementation Status	Continue/ Modify/ Delete in 2019-2027 (6th Cycle) Housing Element
19. Feasibility for group quarter opportunities for targeted groups (single persons, female-headed households, disabled, seniors, etc.) will be researched and implemented if a need or interest is identified. Once a need or interest is identified and program funds are available, the City will apply for HCD's Family Housing Demonstration Program (FHDP).	The City was contacted by one developer interested in developing senior housing on APN 025-101-023 during the 5th planning cycle. The project ultimately did not move forward because the developer determined that the lot constraints would not allow for a viable project. The lot constraints included an irregular lot shape, a drainage easement along the northern property boundary, and a large area of wetlands in the middle portion of the site. As discussed under Program 3, APN 025-101-023 (~3 acres) was ultimately approved for the development of 3 single-family residences with accessory dwelling units and 2 duplexes (total of 10 units).	Modify. See Program HI-5.
20. Senior Group Housing Opportunities should be pursued. The City will submit at least one application to HCD, at time a Request for Proposal is distributed, for Senior Citizen Shared Housing Program (SCSHP).	The City was contacted by one developer interested in developing senior housing on APN 025-101-023 during the 5th planning cycle. The project ultimately did not move forward because the developer determined that the lot constraints would not allow for a viable project. The lot constraints included an irregular lot shape, a drainage easement along the northern property boundary, and a large area of wetlands in the middle portion of the site. As discussed under Program 3, APN 025-101-023 (~3 acres) was ultimately approved for the development of three single-family residences with accessory dwelling units and two duplexes (total of 10 units).	Modify. See Program HI-5.
21. The City will revise the Residential-1 (R1) section of the Zoning Ordinance to address group homes (rest homes, nursing homes, etc.) of fewer than 6 persons to be consistent with State law.	This amendment to the Municipal Code did not occur during the 4th and 5th planning cycles.	Modify. See Program HI-1.

2007-2014 (4th Cycle) Housing Element Programs	Implementation Status	Continue/ Modify/ Delete in 2019-2027 (6th Cycle) Housing Element
22. The City will implement the requirements of the American Disabilities Act through the following specific actions: a) The City will provide a process for requesting "reasonable accommodation" with respect to zoning, permit processing, building laws, and the enforcement of building codes and the issuance of building permits. Once the process for "reasonable accommodation" is developed, the City will make this information available to the public by mailing it out with the monthly water bills. b) During the effective period of this element the City will make efforts to remove any existing constraints on housing for persons with disabilities, such as accommodating procedures for the approval of group homes, ADA retrofits, and evaluation of the Zoning Code for ADA compliance or other measures that provide flexibility. c) The City will also revise Section 610 of the Zoning Ordinance to addressing off-street parking facilities to allow for parking reductions for special needs housing.	a) During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, this task was not completed, and no requests were made for reasonable accommodation. b) During the 4th and 5th planning cycle, no units were developed in the City for persons with disabilities. c) During the 5th planning cycle, the City amended the Municipal Code to allow the City Planner to waive off-street parking requirements administratively. The waiver has been used on several residential projects since its adoption and could also be used to allow parking reductions for special needs housing.	Modify. See Programs HI-1 and HI-14.

2007-2014 (4th Cycle) Housing Element Programs	Implementation Status	Continue/ Modify/ Delete in 2019-2027 (6th Cycle) Housing Element
23. The City, through local community newsletter or water billing, will publicize available programs or resources regarding the following: a) Subsidized Housing Programs. b) Shared Housing Opportunities. c) Available day care/nursery school programs. d) Permit process to become a licensed day care provider. e) Fair Housing Practices. f) Nearby Social Services. g) Housing Rehabilitation Programs, Weatherization Programs. h) Local Employment Opportunities.	Promotional materials about these programs were made available at City Hall and the Blue Lake Community Resource Center during the 4th and 5th planning cycles.	Continue. See Program HI-3.
24. The City will conduct proactive efforts to assist multi-family development for low- and moderate-income households through the following specific actions: a) Assist developers in identifying suitable sites. b) Work with USDA Rural Development to keep up with funding opportunities applicable to this type of development. Where zoned appropriately allow conversion of large historic residences	a) During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, the City assisted three developers in pursuing multi-family housing projects on suitable sites. b) During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, no eligible projects were proposed in the City. c) During the 4th and 5th planning cycles, the City continued to provide free application assistance meetings to applicants pursuing housing projects.	Modify. See Programs HI-5 and HI-14.

2007-2014 (4th Cycle) Housing Element Programs	Implementation Status	Continue/ Modify/ Delete in 2019-2027 (6th Cycle) Housing Element
into multiple units and use housing rehabilitation money for qualifying users and look for other funding opportunities. c) Continue offering pre-application meetings to assist in developmental issues and concerns.		
25. The City will pursue or provide assistance to individuals for the development of limited care facilities for seniors and/or the disabled.	The City was contacted by one developer interested in developing senior housing on APN 025-101-023 during the 5th planning cycle. The project ultimately did not move forward because the developer determined that the lot constraints would not allow for a viable project. The lot constraints included an irregular lot shape, a drainage easement along the northern property boundary, and a large area of wetlands in the middle portion of the site. As discussed under Program 3, APN 025-101-023 (~3 acres) was ultimately approved for the development of 3 single-family residences with accessory dwelling units and 2 duplexes (total of 10 units).	Modify. See Program HI-5.

Blue Lake 6th Cycle Housing Goals, Policies, and Implementation Programs

The City's goals, policies, and implementation programs in the 2019-2027 Housing Element Update are listed below and are intended to accomplish the broad State housing goals and requirements as appropriate for Blue Lake's particular needs and circumstances. **Table 4** summarizes the potential environmental impacts that could occur as a result of the updated policies and implementation programs in the 6th cycle Housing Element Update. A more detailed analysis of potential environmental impacts of the proposed project is provided in Section 4 – Environmental Factors Potentially Affected.

Goal HG-1: Assure adequate, safe, cost-effective and energy efficient housing opportunities for all segments of the community, while maintaining the quality living environment and rural character of Blue Lake by planning for and enabling the development of balanced residential neighborhoods with access to affordable housing, community facilities, and public services.

Community Housing Policies

HP-1.1 Review all new residential development to be consistent with the existing small-town character of the community and blend with existing development, as well as to ensure sustainability and environmental protection.

HP-1.2 Encourage multi-family developments on larger lots (>1 acre) in the Mixed-Use (MU), Opportunity (O), and Planned Development Residential (PDR) zones.

HP-1.3 Revise the Municipal Code to allow manufactured housing to be permitted on sites where single-family dwellings would otherwise be allowed.

HP-1.4 Promote conservation and improvement of the existing housing stock, with emphasis on older structures. Specific areas of concern include energy efficiency, electrical wiring, foundation stability, and prevention of water damage.

HP-1.5 Encourage the use of private-initiated and / or publicly-funded programs to provide housing for low- and moderate-income families, and pursue as feasible, appropriate, and applicable, local, State, and Federal housing and economic development programs. As pertinent information becomes available, develop a program for notifying residents of the availability of housing programs and funding.

HP-1.6 Preserve the City's more affordable housing stock along with historical and cultural heritage through preservation and innovative reuse of older structures.

HP-1.7 Encourage citizen involvement in property maintenance and efforts to improve the housing stock and overall neighborhood quality.

Goal HG-2: Provide for adequate housing for persons with special housing needs such as target income groups of low-income, the elderly, handicapped, and female-headed households.

Special Needs Housing Policies

HP-2.1 Discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, sex, family size, marital status, national origin, ancestry, or other arbitrary factors is not permitted. Support appropriate safeguards to ensure fair housing opportunities.

HP-2.2 Encourage provisions for access for the handicapped in new or rehabilitated residential and commercial developments by considering exceptions or revisions to City ordinances allowing more flexibility relating to zoning, density, reduced setbacks or other incentives to provide reasonable accommodation or improve living conditions of residents.

HP-2.3 Encourage the County to allow a variety of housing types in the residential areas surrounding the City. Consider entering into a multi-jurisdictional agreement to provide housing and/or shelter for homeless persons.

HP-2.4 Encourage new residential development in Blue Lake to specifically address the needs of seniors, including projects that have smaller yards, low-maintenance landscaping, limited mobility fixtures, and appropriately sized parking spaces.

Implementation Programs

HI-1 Amend the Zoning Code to address the following:

- **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).** Allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) in accordance with current State law for ADUs, Assembly Bill 2299 and Senate Bill 1069. Consider adopting a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU) ordinance to allow for a simple and affordable housing option. To ensure the City's ADU standards are compliant with State law and remain compliant in perpetuity, the City will amend the Municipal Code to cite/reference State law for ADUs. The amendment to the Municipal Code will be provided to HCD for review and recommendation if any changes are required to achieve compliance.
- **Manufactured housing/Mobile homes**. Allow manufactured housing and mobile homes in the same manner and in the same zones as conventional or stick-built structures are permitted (Government Code Section 65852.3). This includes, but is not limited to, allowing manufactured homes on a permanent foundation as a single-family use.
- **Single Room Occupancy Units (SROs).** Define and allow principally permitted in the Residential Multiple-Family (R-3), Mixed-Use (MU), Opportunity (O), and Planned Development Residential (PDR) zones.
- **Transitional and Supportive Housing.** Define transitional and supportive housing. Permit transitional and supportive housing in all zones allowing residential uses subject to only the same restrictions on residential uses contained in the same type of structure. In addition, transitional and supportive housing will be allowed as a permitted use, without discretionary review, in zones where multi-family and mixed uses are permitted, including nonresidential zones permitting multi-family uses.

- **Emergency Shelters.** Allow by-right, without discretionary review, in a zoning district with sufficient capacity to accommodate the identified need for shelters (for example, Opportunity zone).
- **Employee Housing.** Comply with the State Employee Housing Act (Health and Safety Code Sections 17021.5 and 17021.6). This includes the following amendments: 1) amendment of the Zoning Code to allow agricultural employee housing for 6 or fewer persons by-right in the Residential One-Family (R-1) zoning district, subject to the same regulations as a single-family dwelling; 2) amendment of the Zoning Code to allow agriculture employee housing of no more than 12 units or 36 beds as a by-right agricultural use in the Agricultural Exclusive (AE) zoning district; and 3) amendment of the definition of "Farm Dwelling" in the Zoning Code to be consistent with Health and Safety Code Section 17026.1.
- **Density Bonus.** Comply with state density bonus law (Government Code [GC] Section 65915, as revised). Promote the density bonus through informational brochures, which will be displayed at City Hall.
- **Reasonable Accommodation.** Develop and formalize a process that a person with disabilities will need to go through to make a reasonable accommodation request in order to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities and streamline the permit review process. The City will provide information to individuals with disabilities regarding reasonable accommodation policies, practices, and procedures based on the guidelines from HCD. This information will be available through postings and pamphlets at the City and on the City's website.
- **Residential Care Facilities.** Allow for residential care homes with six or fewer persons by-right in all residential zones subject only to the same restrictions applicable to other residential uses in that zone. Allow larger group homes of seven or more persons in all zones allowing residential uses and revise zoning and permit procedures with objective standards and procedures to facilitate approval certainty and subject only to the same restrictions applicable to other residential uses in that zone. Additionally, the City will amend the Zoning Code to update its definition of "family" to be "One or more persons living together in a dwelling unit."

Responsibility: City Council, Planning Commission, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Amend the Zoning Code by December 2024. The Zoning Code amendment related to emergency shelters will be completed prior to adoption of the Housing Element.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-2 AB 101 (2019), review the City's Zoning Code and make revisions if necessary, to allow low barrier navigation centers for the homeless per Government Code 65660-65668.

Responsibility: City Council, Planning Commission, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Review zoning in 2023. Make any necessary revisions December 2024.

Funding Source: General Fund.

HI-3 As resources are available, publicize available programs regarding the following topics through a local community newsletter or water billing:

- Subsidized Housing Programs
- Shared Housing Opportunities
- Available day care/nursery school programs
- Permit process to become a licensed day care provider
- Available adult day care program
- Fair Housing Practices
- Nearby Social Services
- Housing Rehabilitation Programs, Weatherization Programs
- Local Employment Opportunities

Responsibility: City Council and City Clerk.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as programs are available. Programs will be publicized quarterly, at a minimum.

Funding Source: General Fund.

HI-4 As Notices of Funding Available (NOFAs) are released, apply for available grant funding through the CalHome program to assist individual first-time homebuyers through deferred-payment loans for down payment assistance, home rehabilitation, including manufactured homes not on permanent foundations, acquisition and rehabilitation, homebuyer counseling, self-help mortgage assistance, or technical assistance for self-help homeownership.

Responsibility: City Council, Planning Commission, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Annually apply as NOFAs are released.

Funding Source: CalHome and other available funding sources.

HI-5 To encourage development of housing for lower- income households including, extremely low-income, and special needs households such as, people experiencing homelessness, senior, single parent, and disabled households, the City is proposing the following activities: 1) work with local non-profits on a variety of activities, such as conducting outreach to housing developers on an annual basis; providing financial assistance (when feasible), or in-kind technical assistance; 2) providing expedited processing; 3) identifying grant and funding opportunities; 4) applying for or supporting applications for funding on an ongoing basis; 5) reviewing and prioritizing local funding at least twice in the planning period; and/or 6) offering additional incentives beyond the density bonus.

In addition, support the rehabilitation of suitable structures to single room occupancy units by providing available grant funding or other financial assistance opportunities when projects are brought to the City.

Responsible Agencies: City Council, Planning Commission, and Planning Staff.

Timeframe: Annual outreach to developers, prioritize local funding at least twice in the planning period, and support expediting applications on an ongoing basis.

Funding Source: General Fund, CDBG Funds.

HI-6 Encourage new and rehabilitated units to include weatherization improvements such as ceiling and floor insulation, caulking, and weather-stripping, and disseminate energy conservation information for existing housing by publicizing and / or providing information regarding energy audit and weatherization programs, such as those through the Redwood Coast Energy Authority, PG&E, and Energy Upgrade California™, as they become available.

Responsibility: City Council, Planning Commission, and Building Official.

Time Frame: Ongoing; as projects are processed, and program informational materials are made available.

Funding Source: General Fund.

HI-7 If applicable, the City will establish a written policy or procedure and other guidance as appropriate to specify the SB 35 streamlining approval process and standards for eligible projects, as set forth under GC Section 65913.4.

Responsibility: City Council, Planning Commission, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Annually review and, if applicable, develop an SB 35 streamlining approval process within one-year of determining that SB 35 applies to sites within the City.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-8 Continue to require all projects to comply with the current version of Title 24 of the California Building Standards Code.

Responsibility: City Building Department.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as projects are processed.

Funding Source: General Fund.

HI-9 The City will conduct a survey of the existing housing stock as an initial step for determining the housing rehabilitation needs in city limits. Once the survey is completed, the City will coordinate with the County of Humboldt on directing available funding to property owners in targeted income groups. Because the City does not have the resources to administer a housing rehabilitation program, the County of Humboldt is currently the agency that is assisting residents in city limits with obtaining housing rehabilitation funding.

Responsibility: City Council and City Staff.

Time Frame: Complete the housing conditions survey of the existing housing stock in the City by December 2023. Beginning in the first quarter of 2024, coordinate on a quarterly basis with the County of Humboldt during the planning period.

Funding Source: General Fund.

HI-10 Develop a plan to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH). The AFFH Plan shall take actions to address significant disparities in housing needs and in access to opportunity for all persons regardless of race, religion, sex, marital status, ancestry, national origin, color, familial status, or disability, and other characteristics protected by the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (Part 2.8 [commencing with Section 12900] of Division 3 of Title 2), Section 65008, and any other state and federal fair housing and planning law.

Specific actions could include but are not limited to:

- Provide dedicated staff that investigates fair housing complaints and enforces fair housing laws.
- Facilitate public education and outreach by creating informational flyers on fair housing that will be made available at public counters, libraries, and on the City's website. City Council meetings will include a fair housing presentation at least once per year.
- Actively recruit residents from neighborhoods of concentrated poverty to serve or participate on boards, committees, and other local government bodies.
- Develop a proactive code enforcement program that holds property owners accountable.
- Provide education to the community on the importance of completing Census questionnaires.
- Review the Zoning Code and other City codes and policies for consistency with the fair housing law.

Responsibility: City Council, Planning Commission, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Create Plan within three years of adoption of the Housing Element, and implement on an ongoing basis.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-11 The City will continue to encourage appropriately licensed/permitted cottage or home-base industries, including those related to recreation/tourism to the area, to a reasonable extent, in efforts to bolster the City's economy, promote affordable housing, and increase employment opportunities by implementing the following actions:

- Permit at least one (1) licensed day care or nursery school operation where appropriate
- Increase tourism revenues by promoting community events
- Increase opportunities for development of cottage industries / home occupations that are compatible with neighborhood character and environmental constraints
- Permit appropriate and necessary ancillary services to the recreational fishing industry

Responsibility: City Council, City Clerk, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: As feasible, hold annual meetings between the City Council, Economic Development Commission, and Business Community.

Funding Source: General Fund.

HI-12 Work with the Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC) to implement an outreach program that informs families in the city about housing and services available for persons with developmental disabilities. The program could include developing an informational brochure and directing people to service information on RCRC's website (https://redwoodcoastrc.org/for-clients/our-services/).

Responsibility: City Council, City Clerk, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Develop an outreach program within two years of adopting the Housing Element to assist persons with development disabilities. Once the outreach program is developed, outreach is proposed to occur on a quarterly basis.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-13 To ensure that assisted affordable housing remains affordable, the City will monitor the status of all affordable housing projects and, as their funding sources near expiration, will work with owners and other agencies to consider options to preserve such units. The City will also provide technical support to property owners and tenants regarding proper procedures relating to noticing and options for preservation.

Responsibility: City Council, City Clerk, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Ongoing, as projects approach expiration.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-14 To ensure that the use permit process for multi-family projects does not impact the timing, cost, or supply of multi-family development, the City will adopt and apply a Combining Zone to sites in the Residential Multiple-Family (R-3), Mixed-use (MU), Opportunity (O), and/or Planned Development Residential (PDR) zones to allow multi-family residential uses by-right at a density of 16 units per acre.

Responsibility: City Council, City Clerk, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Adopt the Combining Zone and apply to sites zoned Residential Multiple-Family (R-3), Mixed-use (MU), Opportunity (O), and/or Planned Development Residential (PDR) to allow multi-family residential uses by-right by December 2024. Capacity for at least 11 units (5th cycle RHNA) will meet all by-right requirements pursuant to Government Code Section 65583.2, subdivisions (h) and (i).

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-15 The City will review the City's Safety and Conservation Elements and any other General Plan Elements, as required, and ensure compliance with new State Law.

In addition, the city will bi-annually review the effectiveness of the programs in the Housing Element and make revisions as appropriate, including monitoring the effectiveness of programs to accommodate the regional housing need. If programs are not effective in making progress toward the regional housing need, the city will immediately revise strategies and amend the housing element for HCD review.

Responsibility: City Council, City Clerk, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Review in 2023, revise as necessary within three years of adoption of the Housing Element. Monitor the Housing Element programs annually and submit to HCD by April 1 each year.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-16 To comply with SB 1087, the City as the water and sewer provider, will set up a process to grant priority for water and sewer service allocations to proposed developments that include units affordable to lower-income households.

Responsibility: City Council, City Clerk, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Set up a process by December 2024; ongoing as projects are processed.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-17 As required by the Annual Progress Report process, the City will monitor the production and affordability of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs) during

the planning period. If ADU production does not meet the projections in the Housing Element, additional actions will be taken in consultation with HCD. The additional actions could include but are not limited to 1) conducting outreach to inform the public about current State law for ADUs and the benefits of ADU development; 2) amending the Municipal Code to incorporate ADU standards that are more permissive than current State law; or 3) rezoning sites in the City that have non-residential zoning to zones allowing residential development.

Responsibility: Planning Staff and Building Official.

Time Frame: ADU production and affordability will be monitored annually throughout the planning period. If additional actions need to be taken due to lack of ADU production, those actions will be taken within one-year of the City determining that the projections in the Housing Element are not being met.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-18 To address the potential for insufficient wastewater treatment capacity during a portion of the planning period, the City shall construct the wastewater treatment plant improvements identified in its Capital Improvement Plan within two years of adopting the Housing Element. These improvements include electrical panel upgrades and the installation of aerators, which are estimated to provide an additional 180 residential equivalent units (REUs).

Responsibility: City Council, City Manager, Public Works Department, and City Engineer.

Time Frame: The improvements to the wastewater treatment plant will be completed within two years of adoption of the Housing Element.

Funding Source: Wastewater Enterprise Fund, Development Impact Fees, and/or Grant Funding.

HI-19 To remove potential constraints to the development of multi-family housing, the City shall amend the following development standards in the Zoning Code:

- Zoning Code Section 17.16.080(C)(1)(b) requires a maximum ground coverage standard of 40 percent for the Planned Development Residential (PD-R) zone. This section shall be amended to allow a maximum ground coverage of 60 percent, which is the same as several other zones in the City allowing multi-family housing (for example, R-2, R-3, and MU zones).
- Zoning Code Section 17.16.080(C)(1)(a) requires a maximum building height standard of 30 feet for all other structures, which includes multi-family housing. This section shall be amended to allow a maximum building height of 35 feet for all structures, which is the standard required for single-family structures in the Planned Development Residential (PD-R) zone.
- Zoning Code Section 17.16.080(C)(1)(c) requires the following setbacks for all other structures, which includes multi-family housing: Front – 25 feet, Side – 10 feet, Rear – 25 feet. This section shall be amended to allow the following setbacks for multi-family structures: Front – 15 feet,

Side – 5 feet, and Rear – 20 percent of lot depth to a maximum of 20 feet. This amendment would make the PD-R zone setbacks for multi-family housing more consistent with other zones allowing multi-family housing in the City.

- Zoning Code Sections 17.16.040(C)(5) and 17.16.110(D)(4) require the following maximum building height standard, "*35 feet, not exceeding two stories*." These sections of the Residential Two-Family (R-2) and Mixed-Use (MU) zones shall be amended to remove the limitation on the number of building stories. This amendment would make the R-2 and MU building height standards more consistent with other zones allowing multi-family housing in the City.

Responsibility: City Council, Planning Commission, and Planning Staff.

Time Frame: Amend the Zoning Code by December 2024.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-20 To comply with the transparency requirements in Government Code Section 65940.1(a)(1), the City shall upload the following documents to the City of Blue Lake website so they are readily available for public review: 1) schedule of fees; 2) zoning map; 3) list of information required for a complete development application; 4) current and five previous annual fee reports or the current and five previous annual financial reports; and 5) an archive of impact fee nexus studies, cost of service studies, or equivalent.

Responsibility: City Council, City Manager, City Staff.

Time Frame: The required documents will be uploaded to the City's website within one-year of the adoption of the Housing Element.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-21 To comply with the requirements for objective standards in Government Code Section 65589.5, subdivision (f), the City shall replace the subjective review criteria for the Site Plan Approval process (such as, "Principles to Be Followed" in Zoning Code Section 17.24.250(F)) with objective standards. Objective standards are defined as those that involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and being uniformly verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official reviewing the project.

Responsibility: City Council, City Manager, and City Staff.

Time Frame: Amend the Zoning Code by December 2024.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-22 To minimize the potential for confusion regarding the applicability of the City's design guidelines, the City shall amend all zones that reference the guidelines (for example, MU, RC, etc.) to make it clear that they are recommendations and not enforceable standards of the Zoning Code.

Responsibility: City Council, City Manager, and City Staff.

Time Frame: Amend the Zoning Code by December 2024.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

HI-23 To ensure housing development in the City is occurring at the projected densities consistent with the income categories anticipated, the City will annually review building development on the vacant and likely developable sites included in the sites inventory of this element. If the annual review shows that sites are not providing sufficient opportunities for housing affordable to lower-income households, the City will review its Zoning Code to consider other measures, including the adoption of incentives or regulatory mechanisms to encourage construction at the mid-point or higher end of the density range. These measures could include but are not limited to: 1) requiring a minimum residential density; and 2) density bonuses (such as, specifying development standards that may be modified to make units more affordable – reduced lot sizes, increased ground coverage, etc.).

Responsibility: City Council, City Manager, and City Staff.

Time Frame: Housing production and affordability will be monitored annually throughout the planning period. If additional actions need to be taken due to the lack of housing production, those actions will be taken within one-year of the City determining that the sites are not providing sufficient opportunities for housing affordable to lower-income households.

Funding Source: General Fund and/or Grants.

Table 4. Potential Environmental Effects from Updated Policies and Programs

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
HP-1.1	Review all new residential development to be consistent with the existing small-town character of the community and blend with existing development, as well as to ensure sustainability and environmental protection.	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.
HP-1.2	Encourage multi-family developments on larger lots (>1 acre) in the Mixed-Use (MU), Opportunity (O), and Planned Development Residential (PDR) zones.	None. This policy would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for multi-family residential development.
HP-1.3	Revise the Municipal Code to allow manufactured housing to be permitted on sites where single-family dwellings would otherwise be allowed.	None. This policy would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.
HP-1.4	Promote conservation and improvement of the existing housing stock, with emphasis on older structures. Specific areas of concern include energy efficiency, electrical wiring, foundation stability, and prevention of water damage.	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.
HP-1.5	Encourage the use of private-initiated and / or publicly-funded programs to provide housing for low-and moderate-income families, and pursue as feasible, appropriate, applicable local, State, and Federal housing and economic development programs. As pertinent information becomes available, develop a program for notifying residents of the availability of housing programs and funding.	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.
HP-1.6	Preserve the City's more affordable housing stock along with historical and cultural heritage through preservation and innovative reuse of older structures.	None. This policy would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.
HP-1.7	Encourage citizen involvement in property maintenance and efforts to improve the housing stock and overall neighborhood quality.	None. This policy would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.
HP-2.1	Discrimination in housing based on race, color, religion, sex, family size, marital status, national origin, ancestry, or other arbitrary factors is not permitted. Support appropriate safeguards to ensure fair housing opportunities.	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.
HP-2.2	Encourage provisions for access for the handicapped in new or rehabilitated residential and commercial developments by considering	None. This policy would not allow new housing in areas that are not

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
	exceptions or revisions to City ordinances allowing more flexibility relating to zoning, density, reduced setbacks or other incentives to provide reasonable accommodation or improve living conditions of residents.	designated for residential development.
HP-2.3	Encourage the County to allow a variety of housing types in the residential areas surrounding the City. Consider entering into a multi-jurisdictional agreement to provide housing and/or shelter for homeless persons.	None. This policy would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.
HP-2.4	Encourage new residential development in Blue Lake to specifically address the needs of seniors, including projects that have smaller yards, low-maintenance landscaping, limited mobility fixtures, and appropriately sized parking spaces.	None. This policy would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.
IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS		**Potential for Environmental Effects**
HI-1	Amend the Zoning Code to address the following: – **Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs).** Allow Accessory Dwelling Units (ADU) in accordance with current State law for ADUs, Assembly Bill 2299 and Senate Bill 1069. Consider adopting a Junior Accessory Dwelling Unit (JADU) ordinance to allow for a simple and affordable housing option. To ensure the City's ADU standards are compliant with State law and remain compliant in perpetuity, the City will amend the Municipal Code to cite/reference State law for ADUs. The amendment to the Municipal Code will be provided to HCD for review and recommendation if any changes are required to achieve compliance. – **Manufactured housing/Mobile homes**. Allow manufactured housing and mobile homes in the same manner and in the same zones as conventional or stick-built structures are permitted (Government Code Section 65852.3). This includes, but is not limited to, allowing manufactured homes on a permanent foundation as a single-family use. – **Single Room Occupancy Units (SROs).** Define and allow principally permitted in the Residential Multiple-Family (R-3), Mixed-Use	None. Required amendments to the City's Zoning Code would not result in a physical change to the environment. Future development would comply with General Plan density limits, the development standards for the applicable zoning district, and State law.

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
	(MU), Opportunity (O), and Planned Development Residential (PDR) zones. – **Transitional and Supportive Housing.** Define transitional and supportive housing. Permit transitional and supportive housing in all zones allowing residential uses subject to only the same restrictions on residential uses contained in the same type of structure. In addition, transitional and supportive housing will be allowed as a permitted use, without discretionary review, in zones where multi-family and mixed uses are permitted, including nonresidential zones permitting multi-family uses. – **Emergency Shelters.** Allow by-right, without discretionary review, in a zoning district with sufficient capacity to accommodate the identified need for shelters (for example, Opportunity zone). – **Employee Housing.** Comply with the State Employee Housing Act (Health and Safety Code Sections 17021.5 and 17021.6). This includes the following amendments: 1) amendment of the Zoning Code to allow agricultural employee housing for six or fewer persons by-right in the Residential One-Family (R-1) zoning district, subject to the same regulations as a single-family dwelling; 2) amendment of the Zoning Code to allow agriculture employee housing of no more than 12 units or 36 beds as a by-right agricultural use in the Agricultural Exclusive (AE) zoning district; and 3) amendment of the definition of "Farm Dwelling" in the Zoning Code to be consistent with Health and Safety Code Section 17026.1. – **Density Bonus.** Comply with state density bonus law (Government Code [GC] Section 65915, as revised). Promote the density bonus through informational brochures, which will be displayed at City Hall. – **Reasonable Accommodation.** Develop and formalize a process that a person with disabilities will need to go through to make a	

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
	reasonable accommodation request in order to accommodate the needs of persons with disabilities and streamline the permit review process. The City will provide information to individuals with disabilities regarding reasonable accommodation policies, practices, and procedures based on the guidelines from HCD. This information will be available through postings and pamphlets at the City and on the City's website. – **Residential Care Facilities.** Allow for residential care homes with six or fewer persons by-right in all residential zones subject only to the same restrictions applicable to other residential uses in that zone. Allow larger group homes of seven or more persons in all zones allowing residential uses and revise zoning and permit procedures with objective standards and procedures to facilitate approval certainty and subject only to the same restrictions applicable to other residential uses in that zone. Additionally, the City will amend the Zoning Code to update its definition of "family" to be "One or more persons living together in a dwelling unit."	
HI-2	AB 101 (2019), review the City's Zoning Code and make revisions if necessary, to allow low barrier navigation centers for the homeless per Government Code 65660-65668.	None. Required amendments to the City's Zoning Code would not result in a physical change to the environment. Future development would comply with General Plan density limits, the development standards for the applicable zoning district, and State law.
HI-3	As resources are available, publicize available programs regarding the following topics through a local community newsletter or water billing: – Subsidized Housing Programs – Shared Housing Opportunities – Available day care/nursery school programs – Permit process to become a licensed day care provider – Available adult day care program	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
	– Fair Housing Practices – Nearby Social Services – Housing Rehabilitation Programs, Weatherization Programs – Local Employment Opportunities	
HI-4	As Notices of Funding Available (NOFAs) are released, apply for available grant funding through the CalHome program to assist individual first-time homebuyers through deferred-payment loans for down payment assistance, home rehabilitation, including manufactured homes not on permanent foundations, acquisition and rehabilitation, homebuyer counseling, self-help mortgage assistance, or technical assistance for self-help homeownership.	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.
HI-5	To encourage development of housing for lower-income households including, extremely low-income, and special needs households such as, people experiencing homelessness, senior, single parent, and disabled households, the City is proposing the following activities: 1) work with local non-profits on a variety of activities, such as conducting outreach to housing developers on an annual basis; providing financial assistance (when feasible), or in-kind technical assistance; 2) providing expedited processing; 3) identifying grant and funding opportunities; 4) applying for or supporting applications for funding on an ongoing basis; 5) reviewing and prioritizing local funding at least twice in the planning period; and/or 6) offering additional incentives beyond the density bonus. In addition, support the rehabilitation of suitable structures to single room occupancy units by providing available grant funding or other financial assistance opportunities when projects are brought to the City.	None. This program would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.
HI-6	Encourage new and rehabilitated units to include weatherization improvements such as ceiling and floor insulation, caulking, and weather-stripping, and disseminate energy conservation information for existing housing by publicizing and / or providing information regarding energy audit and	None. This program would have a beneficial effect by promoting energy conservation and potentially reducing energy use by residential development in the City.

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
	weatherization programs, such as those through the Redwood Coast Energy Authority, PG&E, and Energy Upgrade California™, as they become available.	
HI-7	If applicable, the City will establish a written policy or procedure and other guidance as appropriate to specify the SB 35 streamlining approval process and standards for eligible projects, as set forth under GC Section 65913.4.	None. Required amendments to the City's Zoning Code would not result in a physical change to the environment. Future development would comply with General Plan density limits, the development standards for the applicable zoning district, and State law.
HI-8	Continue to require all projects to comply with the current version of Title 24 of the California Building Standards Code.	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.
HI-9	The City will conduct a survey of the existing housing stock as an initial step for determining the housing rehabilitation needs in city limits. Once the survey is completed, the City will coordinate with the County of Humboldt on directing available funding to property owners in targeted income groups. Because the City does not have the resources to administer a housing rehabilitation program, the County of Humboldt is currently the agency that is assisting residents in city limits with obtaining housing rehabilitation funding.	None. This program would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.
HI-10	Develop a plan to Affirmatively Further Fair Housing (AFFH). The AFFH Plan shall take actions to address significant disparities in housing needs and in access to opportunity for all persons regardless of race, religion, sex, marital status, ancestry, national origin, color, familial status, or disability, and other characteristics protected by the California Fair Employment and Housing Act (Part 2.8 [commencing with Section 12900] of Division 3 of Title 2), Section 65008, and any other state and federal fair housing and planning law. Specific actions could include but are not limited to: – Provide dedicated staff that investigates fair housing complaints and enforces fair housing laws. – Facilitate public education and outreach by creating informational flyers on fair housing that will be made available at public counters,	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
	libraries, and on the City's website. City Council meetings will include a fair housing presentation at least once per year. – Actively recruit residents from neighborhoods of concentrated poverty to serve or participate on boards, committees, and other local government bodies. – Develop a proactive code enforcement program that holds property owners accountable. – Provide education to the community on the importance of completing Census questionnaires. – Review the Zoning Code and other City codes and policies for consistency with the fair housing law.	
HI-11	The City will continue to encourage appropriately licensed/permitted cottage or home-base industries, including those related to recreation/tourism to the area, to a reasonable extent, in efforts to bolster the City's economy, promote affordable housing, and increase employment opportunities by implementing the following actions: – Permit at least one (1) licensed day care or nursery school operation where appropriate – Increase tourism revenues by promoting community events – Increase opportunities for development of cottage industries / home occupations that are compatible with neighborhood character and environmental constraints – Permit appropriate and necessary ancillary services to the recreational fishing industry	None. This program would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.
HI-12	Work with the Redwood Coast Regional Center (RCRC) to implement an outreach program that informs families in the city about housing and services available for persons with developmental disabilities. The program could include developing an informational brochure and directing people to service information on RCRC's website	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
	(https://redwoodcoastrc.org/for-clients/our-services/).	
HI-13	To ensure that assisted affordable housing remains affordable, the City will monitor the status of all affordable housing projects and, as their funding sources near expiration, will work with owners and other agencies to consider options to preserve such units. The City will also provide technical support to property owners and tenants regarding proper procedures relating to noticing and options for preservation.	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.
HI-14	To ensure that the use permit process for multi-family projects does not impact the timing, cost, or supply of multi-family development, the City will adopt and apply a combining zone to sites in the Residential Multiple-Family (R-3), Mixed-use (MU), Opportunity (O), and/or Planned Development Residential (PDR) zones to allow multi-family residential uses by-right at a density of 16 units per acre.	None. Required amendments to the City's Zoning Code would not result in a physical change to the environment. Future development would comply with General Plan density limits, the development standards for the applicable zoning district, and State law. This program would not allow new multi-family development in areas that are not designated for residential development. The adoption and application of the combining zone to property in the City would be subject to review pursuant to CEQA.
HI-15	The City will review the City's Safety and Conservation Elements and any other General Plan Elements, as required, and ensure compliance with new State Law. In addition, the city will bi-annually review the effectiveness of the programs in the Housing Element and make revisions as appropriate, including monitoring the effectiveness of programs to accommodate the regional housing need. If programs are not effective in making progress toward the regional housing need, the city will immediately revise strategies and amend the housing element for HCD review.	None. This program would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.
HI-16	To comply with SB 1087, the City as the water and sewer provider, will set up a process to grant priority for water and sewer service allocations to proposed developments that include units affordable to lower-income households.	None. This program would not allow new housing in areas that are not designated for residential development.

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
HI-17	As required by the Annual Progress Report process, the City will monitor the production and affordability of Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Junior Accessory Dwelling Units (JADUs) during the planning period. If ADU production does not meet the projections in the Housing Element, additional actions will be taken in consultation with HCD. The additional actions could include but are not limited to 1) conducting outreach to inform the public about current State law for ADUs and the benefits of ADU development; 2) amending the Municipal Code to incorporate ADU standards that are more permissive than current State law; or 3) rezoning sites in the City that have non-residential zoning to zones allowing residential development.	None. Although this program would potentially result in an amendment to the Zoning Code to encourage ADU production, new development of ADUs would not result in more severe environmental impacts than previously analyzed for the non-residential land uses (commercial or industrial) allowed in the City under the current zoning districts. Any future rezoning actions would be subject to review pursuant to CEQA.
HI-18	To address the potential for insufficient wastewater treatment capacity during a portion of the planning period, the City shall construct the wastewater treatment plant improvements identified in its Capital Improvement Plan within two years of adopting the Housing Element. These improvements include electrical panel upgrades and the installation of aerators, which are estimated to provide an additional 180 residential equivalent units (REUs).	None. The Housing Element is a policy document and does not grant any project approvals or land use entitlements. Future improvements to the City's wastewater treatment plan would be subject to review pursuant to CEQA. Mitigation measures would be incorporated as necessary to ensure that no adverse effects to the environment occur.
HI-19	To remove potential constraints to the development of multi-family housing, the City shall amend the following development standards in the Zoning Code: – Zoning Code Section 17.16.080(C)(1)(b) requires a maximum ground coverage standard of 40 percent for the Planned Development Residential (PD-R) zone. This section shall be amended to allow a maximum ground coverage of 60 percent, which is the same as several other zones in the City allowing multi-family housing (for example, R-2, R-3, and MU zones). – Zoning Code Section 17.16.080(C)(1)(a) requires a maximum building height standard of 30 feet for all other structures, which includes multi-family housing. This section shall be amended to allow a maximum building height of 35 feet for all structures, which is the standard required for single-	None. The proposed amendments to the City's Zoning Code to reduce barriers to the development of multi-family housing would not result in a physical change to the environment. The amendments would provide consistency between the City's development standards for multi-family housing in areas that are currently zoned to allow multi-family housing.

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
	family structures in the Planned Development Residential (PD-R) zone. – Zoning Code Section 17.16.080(C)(1)(c) requires the following setbacks for all other structures, which includes multi-family housing: Front – 25 feet, Side – 10 feet, Rear – 25 feet. This section shall be amended to allow the following setbacks for multi-family structures: Front – 15 feet, Side – 5 feet, and Rear – 20 percent of lot depth to a maximum of 20 feet. This amendment would make the PDR zone setbacks for multi-family housing more consistent with other zones allowing multi-family housing in the City. – Zoning Code Sections 17.16.040(C)(5) and 17.16.110(D)(4) require the following maximum building height standard, "*35 feet, not exceeding two stories*." These sections of the Residential Two-Family (R-2) and Mixed-Use (MU) zones shall be amended to remove the limitation on the number of building stories. This amendment would make the R-2 and MU building height standards more consistent with other zones allowing multi-family housing in the City.	
HI-20	To comply with the transparency requirements in Government Code Section 65940.1(a)(1), the City shall upload the following documents to the City of Blue Lake website so they are readily available for public review: 1) schedule of fees; 2) zoning map; 3) list of information required for a complete development application; 4) current and five previous annual fee reports or the current and five previous annual financial reports; and 5) an archive of impact fee nexus studies, cost of service studies, or equivalent.	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.
HI-21	To comply with the requirements for objective standards in Government Code Section 65589.5, subdivision (f), the City shall replace the subjective review criteria for the Site Plan Approval process (such as, "Principles to Be Followed" in Zoning Code Section 17.24.250(F)) with objective standards. Objective standards are defined as those that involve no personal or subjective judgment by a public official and being uniformly	None. Required amendments to the City's Zoning Code would not result in a physical change to the environment. Future development would comply with General Plan density limits, the development standards for the applicable zoning district and State law. This program would not allow new residential

POLICIES		Potential for Environmental Effects
	verifiable by reference to an external and uniform benchmark or criterion available and knowable by both the development applicant or proponent and the public official reviewing the project.	development in areas that are not designated for residential development.
HI-22	To minimize the potential for confusion regarding the applicability of the City's design guidelines, the City shall amend all zones that reference the guidelines (for example, MU, RC, etc.) to make it clear that they are recommendations and not enforceable standards of the Zoning Code.	None. No physical change to the environment would occur.
HI-23	To ensure housing development in the City is occurring at the projected densities consistent with the income categories anticipated, the City will annually review building development on the vacant and likely developable sites included in the sites inventory of this element. If the annual review shows that sites are not providing sufficient opportunities for housing affordable to lower-income households, the City will review its Zoning Code to consider other measures, including the adoption of incentives or regulatory mechanisms to encourage construction at the mid-point or higher end of the density range. These measures could include but are not limited to: 1) requiring a minimum residential density; and 2) density bonuses (such as, specifying development standards that may be modified to make units more affordable – reduced lot sizes, increased ground coverage, etc.).	None. Although this program would result in an amendment to the Zoning Code to encourage housing production at the higher end of the density range for residential zoning districts, this program would not allow new residential development in areas that are not designated for residential development. Future development would comply with General Plan density limits and would not result in more severe environmental impacts than previously analyzed for housing development in the City. Any future amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to review pursuant to CEQA.

2. Other Public Agencies whose Approval is Required

The Draft 6th Cycle Housing Element was submitted to HCD for a 60-day formal review period on August 28, 2023. A comment letter was received from HCD on September 20, 2023, which determined the following (HCD, 2023):

> *"The revised draft element meets the statutory requirements of State Housing Element Law, including as described in HCD's August 29, 2022 review. However, the housing element cannot be found in substantial compliance until the City has completed necessary rezones as described below. The housing element will substantially comply with State Housing Element Law (Gov. Code, § 65580 et seq.) when the necessary rezoning is complete and the element is adopted, submitted to, and approved by HCD, in accordance with Government Code section 65585.*
>
> *Generally, pursuant to Government Code section 65584.09, if a city did not make available sites to accommodate the regional housing need allocation (RHNA), then the city shall, within the first year of the planning period of the new element, rezone adequate sites to accommodate the unaccommodated portion of the RHNA from the prior planning period. The City has an unaccommodated need from the prior planning period (Table 20). Since more than a year has lapsed from the beginning of the current planning period, the element cannot be found in compliance until the required rezoning is complete. Specifically, the element cannot be found in compliance until Program HI-14 (Rezoning and By Right Procedures) is implemented to meet the unaccommodated need from the 5th cycle RHNA. Once the rezoning has been completed, the City should submit documentation (for example, resolution, ordinance) to HCD and HCD will review and approve the element in accordance with Government Code section 65585."*

The City will seek certification of the Housing Element from HCD upon the implementation of Program HI-14.

3. Have California Native American tribes traditionally and culturally affiliated with the project area requested consultation pursuant to Public Resources Code section 21080.3.1? If so, is there a plan for consultation that includes, for example, the determination of significance of impacts to tribal cultural resources, procedures regarding confidentiality, etc.?

As described below, the City has complied with the tribal consultation requirements of SB 18 and AB 52.

Senate Bill (SB) 18

CGC §65352.3 (SB 18) requires local governments to contact tribal organizations prior to adopting or amending a General Plan or Specific Plan, and prior to designating open space. The intent of SB 18 is to provide Native American tribes an opportunity to participate in land use decisions for the purpose of protecting or mitigating impacts to Native American cultural resources and sacred sites. To satisfy the requirements of SB 18, the City provided written notice of the proposed 2019-2027 Housing Element Update to the Tribes in the Humboldt Bay region at the beginning of August 2022. Tribes have 90 days to respond to the request for consultation under SB 18 and no responses were received.

Assembly Bill (AB) 52

Public Resources Code (PRC) §21084.2 (AB 52) establishes that "*a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment*."

Pursuant to AB 52, in order to determine whether a project may have such an effect, a lead agency is required to consult with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project if the tribe requested to the lead agency, in writing, to be informed through formal notification of proposed projects in the geographical area, and the tribe responds, in writing, within 30 days of receipt of the formal notification and requests the consultation.

To satisfy the requirements of AB 52, the City provided written notice of preparation of a CEQA Initial Study for the 2019-2027 Housing Element Update to the Tribes in the Humboldt Bay region at the end of January 2024. No responses were received.

4. Environmental Factors Potentially Affected

This Project would potentially affect the environmental factors checked below, involving at least one impact that is "potentially Significant" or "less than Significant with Mitigation Incorporated" as indicated by the checklist on the following pages.

☐ Aesthetics	☐ Agricultural / Forestry Resources	☐ Air Quality
☐ Biological Resources	☐ Cultural Resources	☐ Energy
☐ Geology / Soils	☐ Greenhouse Gas Emissions	☐ Hazards & Hazardous Materials
☐ Hydrology / Water Quality	☐ Land Use / Planning	☐ Mineral Resources
☐ Noise	☐ Population / Housing	☐ Public Services
☐ Recreation	☐ Transportation / Traffic	☐ Tribal Cultural Resources
☐ Utilities / Service Systems	☐ Wildfire	☐ Mandatory Findings of Significance
☒ None		

DETERMINATION

On the basis of this Initial Study:

☒ I find that the proposed project COULD NOT have a significant effect on the environment and a NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that although the proposed project could have a significant effect on the environment, there will not be a significant effect in this case because revisions to the project and mitigation measures have been made by or agreed to by the project proponent. A MITIGATED NEGATIVE DECLARATION will be prepared.

☐ I find that the project MAY have a significant effect on the environment, and an ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT will be required.

Garry Rees, AICP, Contract City Planner — 9/23/24 Date

Aesthetics

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Except as provided in Public Resources Code Section 21099, **would the project:**				
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 nonurbanized 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 publicly accessible vantage point). 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 which would adversely affect day or nighttime views in the area?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Scenic vistas in the Mad River Valley area generally consist of views of nearby ridge tops, the agricultural valley, and the Mad River, which drains into the Pacific Ocean to the west. The City limits are bordered to the north and east by forested hillsides, to the south by the Mad River, and to the west by the Blue Lake Rancheria. Development in the City primarily consists of single-family residential development with commercial uses, public facilities, and apartments in the Downtown, and industrial, light industrial, and commercial uses in the Powers Creek District. The "Entrance to the City" is mostly uncluttered, lacking the typical services found at many other highway interchanges around the State. One exception is the development on Blue Lake Rancheria lands, including the Casino, hotel, gas station, and associated signage.

Regulatory Framework

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

Land Use Element - Character, Compatibility, Environmental Quality Policies:

Policy 1 All new residential development shall be consistent with the character of the City and blend with existing development.

Policy 3 Residential areas shall be kept free from incompatible or inharmonious uses except om the case of mixed-use areas where uses are designed and situated to minimize potential impacts. Special consideration shall be given to compatibility of adjoining land uses whenever Zoning Map changes are proposed within or adjacent to a residential district.

Land Use Element - Siting, Density Policies:

Policy 1 All types of dwelling units shall be placed on their site so as to provide adequate usable outdoor living area. Building sites shall be considered with respect to the location of other buildings, streets, terrain, and to other elements of the environment.

Policy 3 Planned Unit Developments, clustering, and other innovative development design techniques shall be encouraged, where feasible, to maximize open space and allow flexibility in design.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a) Less Than Significant Impact. The City of Blue Lake has not designated any scenic vistas within the boundary of the City limits or Sphere of Influence. Based on the existing development in the City and the areas identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory, it is not anticipated that the Housing Element Update would have a substantial adverse effect on any scenic vistas designated by other jurisdictions such as the County of Humboldt. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would have a less than significant impact in this regard.

b) No Impact. State Route 299 is classified as eligible to be a state designated scenic highway north of the City but is not currently a state designated scenic highway (Caltrans, 2024). Therefore, the Housing Element Update would have no impact on a state scenic highway or historic and natural resources within a state scenic highway.

c-d) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not include site-specific designs or development proposals, nor does it permit development entitlements that would degrade the existing visual character of the City. The Housing Element Update anticipates land uses that are consistent with the General

Plan and would not remove policies that protect aesthetic resources or Zoning Code requirements associated with site planning and development standards.

As discussed in the Project Description in Section 1, the proposed project would involve amending the City's Zoning Code to create a Multi-Family Combining Zone to allow multi-family projects without discretionary review or by-right at a density of 16 units per acre or 1 unit per 2,722.5 square feet of lot area (City of Blue Lake, 2024b; see Implementation Program HI-14). Due to the availability of adequate sites with limited constraints within the City where the combining zone could be applied during the 6th cycle planning period, the combining zone is anticipated to be applied to a property in the City's Powers Creek District that is zoned Opportunity (O) and already allows for residential development. It should be noted that the combining zone would not result in a higher density than is already allowed by the O zone, which allows for 1 unit per 2,500 square feet or 17.4 units per acre. To meet the requirement for by-right zoning in Government Code Section 65583.2, subdivisions (h) and (i), the property would need to be sufficiently sized to allow a capacity of at least 11 units, which would be a minimum of 27,500 square feet (~0.63-acres) at the residential density allowed in the O zone (1 unit per 2,500 square feet of lot area). Any by-right project proposed on a property where the combining zone has been applied would not be subject to CEQA. Considering the existing low aesthetic quality and value of the development in the Powers Creek District, the development of modern residential buildings on a property subject to the combining zone would not be considered to substantially degrade the existing visual character or quality of public views of the District and its surroundings. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

Future residential development has the potential to increase daytime glare or nighttime illumination in the City, and potential impacts would be considered on a project-by-project basis when projects are reviewed for compliance with the City's General Plan and the development standards of the Zoning Code. For example, much of the City's multi-family development potential is projected to occur in the Powers Creek District on properties that are zoned Opportunity (O). As noted above, this includes a property in the district that would be rezoned to apply a Multi-Family Combining Zone that allows multi-family development by-right. To reduce potential lighting/glare impacts, Section 17.16.111(E)(3) of the O zone has performance standards addressing lighting design that requires compliance with the DarkSky International standards for reducing ambient light ("dark sky compliant"; City of Blue Lake, 2024b). The remaining sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update are anticipated to be developed with unit types ranging from single-family residences to four-plexes, which are not typically associated with substantial lighting impacts. With the implementation of the existing standards in the City's Zoning Code, impacts related to lighting and glare would be less than significant.

AGRICULTURE AND FORESTRY RESOURCES

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
In determining whether impacts to agricultural resources are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to the California Agricultural Land Evaluation and Site Assessment Model (1997) prepared by the California Dept. of Conservation as an optional model to use in assessing impacts on agriculture and farmland. In determining whether impacts to forest resources, including timberland, are significant environmental effects, lead agencies may refer to information compiled by the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection regarding the state's inventory of forest land, including the Forest and Range Assessment Project and the Forest Legacy Assessment project; and forest carbon measurement methodology provided in Forest Protocols adopted by the California Air Resources Board. **Would the project:**				
a) Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland), as shown on the maps prepared pursuant to the Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program of the California Resources Agency, to non-agricultural use?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract?	☐	☐	☐	☒
c) Conflict with existing zoning for, or cause rezoning of, forest land (as defined in Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)), timberland (as defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526), or timberland zoned Timberland Production (as defined by Government Code Section 51104(g))?	☐	☐	☐	☒
d) Result in the loss of forest land or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒
e) Involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, could result in conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

Agricultural uses, in and around Blue Lake, and throughout Humboldt County include timber, livestock, nursery, vegetable and field crops, cannabis, and fruit and nut crops. While agriculture is one of the most enduring industries in the County, agricultural operators face growing challenges to maintain viable

operations. Rising costs, increasingly complex regulatory requirements, and growing development pressures are among the hurdles facing today's farmers. Agriculture is an important component of the local economy and culture, but adverse economics and generational transitions have accelerated the conversion of farmland to other uses. Despite protection policies in the Humboldt County General Plan, the conversion of agricultural lands to non-agricultural uses has continued over time. It is estimated that approximately 3,000 to 5,000 acres of agricultural land has been converted to non-agricultural use each year since 1964 (County of Humboldt, 2017).

The majority of the agricultural preserves in Humboldt County are located in the southern portion of the coastal zone and the southeastern portion of the County. No land within the City is under a Williamson Act Contract, conservation easement, or other mechanism for the preservation of agricultural land. There is one parcel zoned Agriculture Exclusive (AE; allows 1 unit per 10 acres) in the southern portion of the City, which has historically been used for limited crop production and grazing purposes. There are prime farmland soils within the City limits that exist on parcels that are not economically viable agricultural units and have therefore been zoned for residential, commercial, public facility, and industrial development.

The City does not have a zone for the protection of timberlands or forest lands and there are no timberlands or forestlands within City limits (as defined by defined by Public Resources Code Section 4526, by Government Code Section 51104(g) or Public Resources Code Section 12220(g)).

Regulatory Framework

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

Land Use Element - Preservation of Open Space and Agricultural Lands Policies:

Policy 1 Land suited for agriculture shall be used for that purpose, where prime or potentially prime agricultural soils occur in economically viable units.

Policy 2 There shall be an agricultural land use designation that permits exclusively agricultural uses, including a single-family residence per land unit.

Policy 3 Uses considered compatible with agricultural uses shall be permitted in agriculturally designated areas; such uses shall not preclude the viability or use of the land for agricultural purposes.

Policy 6 Agricultural and potentially incompatible uses shall be separated, where possible, by such natural or man-made features as roads, vegetation, stream courses or topographical features.

Policy 13 The City shall provide levels of service appropriate for agricultural land, in order to encourage its continued use for agriculture and discourage its conversion to other uses.

Policy 14 The City shall pursue acquiring forest lands to the east of the City limits for use as a community forest.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not include site-specific designs or development proposals, nor does it permit development entitlements. The site inventory in the Housing Element Update only identifies sites as vacant and likely developable that are already zoned for residential use. There are prime agricultural soils that exist on a few parcels in the City zoned for residential development, but these sites are not economically viable agricultural units (such as, <10 acres and surrounded by development or lands zoned for non-agricultural development) and have been previously zoned for non-agricultural use. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact on this resource category.

b-e) No Impact. The site inventory in the Housing Element Update does not identify any lands as vacant and likely developable that are zoned for agricultural use. Additionally, there are no properties in the City that are subject to a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in no impact related to conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use or a Williamson Act contract.

The City does not have a zoning district for the protection of timberlands or forestlands and there are no timberlands or forestlands within City limits. As such, the Housing Element Update would result in no impact to timberlands or forest lands.

The Housing Element Update does not include site-specific designs or development proposals, nor does it permit development entitlements. The Housing Element Update anticipates land uses that are consistent with the General Plan and would not remove policies that protect agricultural and timberland resources or Zoning Code requirements associated with site planning and development regulations. As noted above, the site inventory of the Housing Element Update does not identify sites as vacant and likely developable that are zoned for agriculture or timberland uses. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not involve other changes in the existing environment which, due to their location or nature, would result in the conversion of Farmland, to non-agricultural use or conversion of forest land to non-forest use. Therefore, there would be no impact in this regard.

Air Quality

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Where available, the significance criteria established by the applicable air quality management district or air pollution control district may be relied upon to make the following determinations. **Would the project:**				
a) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of the applicable air quality plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Result in a cumulatively considerable net increase of any criteria pollutant for which the project region is non-attainment under an applicable federal or state ambient air quality standard?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Result in other emissions (such as those leading to odors) adversely affecting a substantial number of people?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The project site is located in Humboldt County, which lies within the North Coast Air Basin (NCAB). The NCAB extends for 250 miles from Sonoma County in the south to the Oregon border. The climate of NCAB is influenced by two major topographic units: the Klamath Mountains and the Coast Range provinces. The climate is moderate with the predominant weather factor being moist air masses from the ocean. Average annual rainfall in the area is approximately 60 inches, with the majority falling between October and April. Predominate wind direction is typically from the northwest during summer months and from the southwest during storm events occurring during winter months.

As in all of northern California, the principal control on climate in the NCAB is the high-pressure cell (Pacific High), which is often present off the west coast of North America. Because of the wintertime southward shift in the Pacific High, the NCAB is subject to a series of frontal systems which sweep across the region in an almost unbroken succession. In the summer, the Pacific High shifts northward diverting most storms well to the north of California. Due to the upwelling immediately off the coast, the comparatively warm Pacific air mass drifting over this band of cold water is cooled in the lower layers forming a deck of coastal stratus. As this stratus bank sweeps inland, the air is heated so that the moisture evaporates a few miles inland. This bank of clouds usually extends inland further during the night and then recedes to the vicinity of the coast during the day. Prevailing winds are generally from the northwest through north along the coast. The coastal ranges are responsible for deflecting these winds so that except for the immediate coast, the wind direction is likely to be more a product of local terrain than it is of the prevailing circulation.

Humboldt County is listed as “attainment” or “unclassified” for all federal ambient air quality standards, and all state standards with the exception of particulate matter (PM-10; NCUAQMD, 2024). Air quality in the City is influenced mostly by pollutant transport from upwind areas, such as Arcata, but also by local emission sources, such as wood burning stoves and fireplaces during the winter months, and vehicles using area roadways such as State Route 299. When there is a local air inversion, the air quality in Blue Lake deteriorates, but this is mostly due to pollutants generated outside of the City’s jurisdiction (City of Blue Lake, 2004).

Sensitive receptors (for example, children, senior citizens, and acutely or chronically ill people) are more susceptible to the effect of air pollution than the general population. Land uses that are considered sensitive receptors typically include residences, schools, parks, childcare centers, hospitals, and retirement homes.

Regulatory Framework

Air Quality is regulated at federal, state, and local levels. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency regulates at the Federal level. The California Air Resources Board (CARB, 2022) regulates at the state level. The North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District (NCUAQMD) regulates at the regional or district level, which includes Humboldt, Del Norte, and Trinity Counties. The NCUAQMD has not formally adopted significance thresholds for use in environmental review of land use projects. However, the NCUAQMD requires the implementation of Best Available Control Technology (BACT) to reduce the impacts of stationary sources if they are estimated to exceed specified emission rates for criteria pollutants.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-d) Less Than Significant Impact. As noted in the setting, Humboldt County is listed as “attainment” or “unclassified” for all federal ambient air quality standards, and all state standards with the exception of particulate matter (NCUAQMD, 2024). The NCUAQMD prepared a Particulate Matter Attainment Plan, Draft Report, in May 1995. The plan established goals to reduce particulate matter emissions and eliminate the number of days in which the state standard is exceeded. The Plan includes three areas of recommended control strategies to meet these goals: transportation, land use, and burning. The Housing Element Update indicates that most of the residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites is located within the City’s Powers Creek District, which is zoned to require a mixture of residential and commercial uses. For example, the District is zoned to not allow residential-only development, in order to promote a beneficial mixture of residential and commercial uses. Land use regulations that promote infill and mixed-use development have the potential to reduce vehicle miles traveled and associated vehicular emissions including diesel particulate matter. Additionally, based on current regulations, it is anticipated that the future

residential development in the City would use gas-burning fireplaces or EPA-approved stoves for heating. As such, the projected future residential development in the City would be consistent with the goals of the Draft Particulate Matter Attainment Plan and impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

The Housing Element Update does not include site-specific designs or development proposals, nor does it permit development entitlements. The Housing Element Update does not allow residential development beyond what is already allowed under the City's current General Plan and Zoning Code. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant sites in the City (89 units; see Table 21 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2024b), it is not anticipated that future residential development would result in a cumulatively considerable increase in particulate matter or expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. Future construction of residential development would be subject to federal, state, and local regulations protecting air quality, such as the California Air Resources Board's construction equipment emissions standards and the NCUAQMD's standards for controlling dust emissions. Additionally, there are currently no sources of substantial pollutant concentrations within or around the City of Blue Lake that would impact future residents. In compliance with applicable laws and regulations, the Housing Element Update would result in less than significant adverse environmental impacts related to particulate matter emissions and the exposure of sensitive receptors to pollutant concentrations.

The Housing Element Update is a policy-level document that encourages the provision of a range of housing types and affordability levels on sites that are already zoned for residential development. Potential odors generated from future residential construction activity (for example, diesel-powered construction equipment, asphalt paving, etc.) would be short-term in nature and would not result in permanent impacts to surrounding land uses and would not affect a substantial number of people. Residential development is typically considered a sensitive receptor as opposed to a land use type that can generate substantial emissions such as odors. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

Biological Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Have a substantial adverse effect, either directly or through habitat modifications, on any species identified as a candidate, sensitive, or special status species in local or regional plans, policies, or regulations, or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Have a substantial adverse effect on any riparian habitat or other sensitive natural community identified in local or regional plans, policies, regulations or by the California Department of Fish and Wildlife or U.S. Fish and Wildlife services?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Have a substantial adverse effect on state or federally protected wetlands (including, but not limited to, marsh, vernal pool, coastal, etc.) through direct removal, filling, hydrological interruption, or other means?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any native resident or migratory fish or wildlife species or with established native resident or migratory wildlife corridors, or impede the use of native wildlife nursery sites?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources, such as a tree preservation policy or ordinance?	☐	☐	☒	☐
f) Conflict with the provisions of an adopted Habitat Conservation Plan, Natural Community Conservation Plan, or other approved local, regional, or state habitat conservation plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The City of Blue Lake is an incorporated city located in Humboldt County, California, eight miles inland from Humboldt Bay on State Route 299 (see **Figure 1**). The City is situated in the Mad River Valley and the Mad River borders the City on the south and west. Potential flooding along a portion of the City is controlled by a levee. The lands surrounding the City are comprised of steep hillsides to the north and east and generally flat,

agricultural lands to the west and south. Large portions of the surrounding hillsides are owned by a timber company and are harvested for timber production, with large areas that have been clear cut in the past. Agricultural lands in the Mad River Valley are used for cattle grazing and intensive crop production. The City is primarily a residential community with a downtown area consisting of limited commercial development. The City's Powers Creek District, which is a former lumber mill site that is located on the southwestern portion of the City, has been redeveloped over the last several decades with commercial, manufacturing, public facility, and heavy industrial uses.

A few of the vacant or underutilized parcels in the western portion of the City have areas that fall under the current federal definition of wetlands. The larger vacant properties in and adjacent to the Powers Creek District are located along Powers Creek, which is a tributary to the Mad River. The suburban nature of the City, adjacent to a major river system and extensive forested lands, offers pockets of suitable habitat for a variety of wildlife species.

Regulatory Framework

A number of existing Federal, State and Local laws and regulations are in place for the preservation of biological resources, including but not limited to the following:

Federal

Federal Clean Water Act

Section 404

Under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act (CWA), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) regulates the discharge of dredged or fill material into wetlands and waters of the U.S. The USACE requires that a permit be obtained prior to the placement of structures within, over, or under navigable waters and/or prior to discharging dredged or fill material into waters below the ordinary high-water mark (OHWM).

Section 401

Under Section 401 of the CWA, a project requiring a USACE Section 404 permit is also required to obtain a State Water Quality Certification (or waiver) to ensure that the project will not violate established State water quality standards. When a discharge is proposed to waters outside of federal jurisdiction, the discharge is regulated under the State Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act through the issuance of Waste Discharge Requirements (WDRs). The State has a policy of no-net-loss of wetlands and requires mitigation for impacts to wetlands before it issues water quality certifications or WDRs.

Federal Endangered Species Act

The Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA) of 1973 requires that all federal agencies ensure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out will not likely jeopardize the continued existence of federally listed species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat. Projects that would result in "take" of any federally listed species are required to obtain authorization from National Marine Fisheries

Service (NMFS) and/or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) through either Section 7 (interagency consultation) or Section 10(a) (incidental take permit) of FESA, depending on whether the federal government is involved in permitting or funding the project.

Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act

Under the Migratory Bird Treaty Act (MBTA) of 1918, as amended, migratory bird species listed in CFR Title 50, §10.13, including their nests and eggs, are protected from injury or death, and any project-related disturbances. The MBTA applies to over 1,000 bird species, including geese, ducks, shorebirds, raptors, and songbirds, some of which were near extinction before MBTA protections were put in place in 1918. The MBTA provides protections for nearly all native bird species in the U.S., including nonmigratory birds.

Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act

Under the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act of 1980, as amended, the USFWS maintains lists of migratory and non-migratory birds that, without additional conservation action, are likely to become candidates for listing under the FESA. These species are known as Birds of Conservation Concern and represent the highest conservation priorities.

Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act

The Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSFCMA), also known as the Sustainable Fisheries Act, requires the identification of Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) for federally managed fishery species and implementation of appropriate measures to conserve and enhance EFH that could be affected by project implementation. All federal agencies must consult with NMFS on projects authorized, funded, or undertaken by an agency that may adversely affect EFH for species managed under the MSFCMA.

State

California Endangered Species Act

Under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA), the Fish and Game Commission is responsible for listing and delisting threatened and endangered species. The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW) maintains documentation and occurrence records on listed species, including candidate species for threatened or endangered status, fully protected species, species of special concern (SSC). SSC are vulnerable to extinction but are not legally protected under CESA; however, impacts to SSC are generally considered significant under CEQA.

CESA prohibits the take of State-listed threatened and endangered species, but CDFW has the authority to issue incidental take permits under special conditions when impacts are minimized and mitigated. Fully protected species may not be taken or possessed at any time, and no licenses or permits may be issued for their take. One exception allows the collection of fully protected species for scientific research.

California Fish and Game Code §1600-1616 (Streambed Alteration)
California Fish and Game Code §1600 et seq., requires that a project proponent enter into a Streambed Alteration Agreement (SAA) with CDFW prior to any work that would divert or obstruct the natural flow of any river, stream, or lake; change the bed, channel, or bank of any river, stream, or lake; use material from any river, stream, or lake; and/or deposit or dispose of material into any river, stream, or lake. The SAA includes conditions that minimize/avoid potentially significant adverse impacts to riparian habitat and waters of the state.

California Fish and Game Code §3503 and 3503.5 (Nesting Bird Protections)
These sections of the Code provide regulatory protection to resident and migratory birds and all birds of prey within the State and make it unlawful to take, possess, or needlessly destroy the nest or eggs of any bird, except as otherwise provided by the Code.

California Fish and Game Code §1900-1913 (Native Plant Protection Act)
The Native Plant Protection Act (NPPA) includes measures to preserve, protect, and enhance native plants that are listed as rare and endangered under the CESA. The NPPA states that no person shall take, possess, sell, or import into the state, any rare or endangered native plant, except in compliance with provisions of the Act. The California Native Plant Society categorizes the rarity of native plants in California. Rank 1B plants are rare, threatened, or endangered in California and elsewhere. Rank 2 plants are rare, threatened, or endangered in California, but are more common elsewhere. Rank 3 plants are those about which more information is needed (a review list). Rank 4 plants have limited distribution (a watch list).

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

<u>Land Use Element - Environmental Protection policies:</u>

Policy 1 The City shall consider all development with respect to potential impacts on environmental quality.

Policy 2 Developers shall be encouraged to design projects so as to avoid topography changes and unnecessary stripping of natural foliage. Where feasible, existing trees and terrain shall be preserved by fitting streets and building sites into the landscape with minimum disturbance of the land, its natural vegetation and creek ways. Developers shall be encouraged to use existing natural vegetation and topographic features to provide required open space and landscaping.

<u>Land Use Element - Agriculture and Open Space policies:</u>

Policy 9 Property owners should be encouraged to keep areas with unique natural features in a natural or enhanced condition. Such areas include the Mad River, Powers Creek, and the site of the historic lake.

Land Use Element - Creeks & Wetlands policies:

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.

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.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-e) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update anticipates residential development that is consistent with the City's General Plan and Zoning Code. Additionally, the Update would not remove policies that protect biological resources or Zoning Code requirements associated with site planning and development regulations.

Future residential development may have the potential to result in significant impacts to special-status species and sensitive natural communities such as riparian habitat and federally protected wetlands. However, compliance with existing federal and state laws and regulations, including but not limited to those listed above in the discussion of Regulatory Framework, would result in the avoidance and/or minimization of direct and indirect impacts to special-status species and sensitive habitats. These regulations require site-specific analysis where a project site contains potential habitat for special-status species including wetlands and riparian areas. Based on the result of the site-specific analysis and where appropriate, federal and State agencies will require mitigation for project-level impacts. In compliance with existing laws and regulations, the Housing Element Update would not have a substantial adverse effect on special-status species and their habitat, riparian habitat, wetlands, or wildlife corridors and would not conflict with any local policies or ordinances protecting biological resources. Therefore, the proposed project would have a less than significant impact related to biological resources.

As discussed in the Project Description in Section 1, the proposed project would involve amending the City's Zoning Code to create a Multi-Family Combining Zone to allow multi-family projects without discretionary review or by-right at a density of 16 units per acre or 1 unit per 2,722.5 square feet of lot area (City of Blue Lake, 2024b; see Implementation Program HI-14). Due to the availability of adequate sites with limited constraints within the City where the combining zone could be applied during the 6th cycle planning period, the combining zone is anticipated to be applied to a property in the City's Powers Creek District that is zoned Opportunity (O) and already allows for residential development. It should be noted that the combining zone would not result in a higher density than is already allowed by the O zone, which allows for 1 unit per

2,500 square feet or 17.4 units per acre. To meet the requirement for by-right zoning in Government Code Section 65583.2, subdivisions (h) and (i), the property would need to be sufficiently sized to allow a capacity of at least 11 units, which would be a minimum of 27,500 square feet (~0.63-acres) at the residential density allowed in the O zone (1 unit per 2,500 square feet of lot area). Any by-right project that would be proposed on the property where the combining zone has been applied, would not be subject to CEQA. Considering that the properties available for residential development in the Powers Creek District were previously prepared for industrial development, including grading and the installation of access and utility infrastructure, it is anticipated that development of these properties in compliance with existing laws and regulations would result in less significant impacts to biological resources.

f) No Impact. There are no Habitat Conservation Plans, Natural Community Conservation Plans, or other approved habitat conservation plans within or directly adjacent to the City and; therefore, the Housing Element Update would not conflict with such a plan. No impact would occur in this regard.

Cultural Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a historical resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource pursuant to § 15064.5?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Disturb any human remains, including those interred outside of dedicated cemeteries?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Cultural resources are remains and sites associated with human activities, including Native American archaeological sites (both prehistoric remains and sites occupied after European arrival), historic buildings and archaeological sites, and natural landscape elements with traditional cultural significance (including areas of economic and religious significance).

The City lies within the traditional territory of the Pat-a-wat division of the Wiyot Indian tribe. By the time of the arrival of European settlers in 1850, the Blue Lake area had become a borderland zone between the territories of the Wiyot and Whilkut tribes (Loud, 1918). The Wiyots of Mad River were a subunit of the larger Wiyot tribe, and were known as Pat-a-wats, after the Wiyot name for Mad River. The territory for the Pat-a-wats was generally described as the lower Mad River from Blue Lake near the junction of the North Fork down to the coast, and thence south to the southern shore of Humboldt Bay (Merriam, 1976).

Ranching has taken place in the vicinity of Blue Lake since the mid-1800s. Early ranching and mining operations often involved construction of access roads, railroads, residential and farm structures, and additional features (for example, ponds, ditches, irrigation components, etc.). Collectively, these historic activities have affected many of the prehistoric sites in the region.

The City of Blue Lake contains at least 60 residences that have historical interest as documented in the 1990 Blue Lake Community Development Corporation (CDC) Historical Research Report (City of Blue Lake, 1990). Despite the number of historic buildings in the City, the City does not have a designated historic district.

Regulatory Framework

A number of existing Federal, State, and Local laws and regulations are in place for the preservation of cultural resources, including but not limited to the following:

Federal

Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA)

Section 106 of the NHPA and its implementing regulations require federal agencies to take into account the effects of their activities and programs on historic properties. A historic property is any prehistoric or historic district, site, building, structure, or object included in, or eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). Section 106 applies to projects undertaken or funded by federal agencies, and projects that require a federal-agency permit.

State

California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA)

CEQA Guidelines §15064.5 et seq. requires that projects financed by or requiring the discretionary approval of public agencies in California be evaluated to determine potential adverse effects on historical and archaeological resources. Historical resources are defined as buildings, sites, structures, or objects, each of which may have historical, architectural, archaeological, cultural, or scientific importance. Section 15064.5 also includes provisions for the accidental discovery of cultural resources and human remains.

Local

The Blue Lake General Plan also includes policies specific to cultural resource protection including the following:

<u>Land Use Element - Cultural Resources Policies:</u>

Policy 1 The potential for significant impacts to cultural resources shall be identified, as required by State law, during discretionary project review under CEQA.

Policy 2 Projects not subject to CEQA shall be required to adhere to an inadvertent discovery protocol for archaeological resources.

<u>Housing Element Update – Preservation and Reuse of Older Structures Program</u>:

HP–1.6. Preserve the City's more affordable housing stock along with historical and cultural heritage through preservation and innovative reuse of older structures.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-c) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update anticipates residential development that is consistent with the City's General Plan and Zoning Code. Additionally, the Update would not remove policies that protect cultural resources or Zoning Code requirements associated with site planning and development regulations. Construction activities for future residential development have the potential to uncover unknown cultural resources, including human remains found outside of cemeteries.

The sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update site inventory are vacant. As such, future residential development on these sites would not impact structures of historic interest in the City.

All future residential development within the City would be required to comply with local and State regulations that protect cultural resources. At the local level, the City's General Plan and the regulations in Municipal Code Chapter 15.12 (Grading, Erosion, and Sediment Control) require the implementation of an inadvertent discovery protocol for all development. This protocol requires construction activity to cease if cultural resources are encountered during permitted or non-permitted construction activities. Future projects that require discretionary review would also be subject to review under CEQA, which could require consultation with local Tribes and preparation of a site-specific Cultural Resources Investigation. If a site is considered sensitive for cultural resources or resources are discovered during site-specific investigation, mitigation would be required to reduce potential impacts. Additionally, California Health and Safety Code (CHSC) Section 7050.5 requires halting site disturbance upon discovery of human remains until a coroner has conducted an investigation. If the remains are determined to be of Native American descent, CHSC Section 5067.98 requires that the most likely descendant(s) be notified immediately.

In compliance with local and State laws and regulations protecting cultural resources, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact to cultural resources.

Energy

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Result in potentially significant environmental impact due to wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

In Humboldt County, energy is primarily used as a transportation fuel and as electrical and heat energy in homes, businesses, industries, and agriculture. The majority of energy used in Humboldt County is imported, with the exception of biomass energy. Although the majority of electricity is generated in the county, a large portion of it is generated using natural gas. The county imports about 90% of its natural gas; the rest is obtained locally from fields in the Eel River valley (Schatz Energy Research Center, 2005). Essentially all of the county's transportation fuels are imported.

Humboldt County is remotely located at the end of the electrical and natural gas supply grids, and this limits both energy supply options and system reliability. Pacific Gas & Electric Company (PG&E) owns the natural gas and electricity transmission and distribution systems in Humboldt County. There is one major natural gas supply line that serves the county and four electrical transmission circuits (Schatz Energy Research Center, 2005).

Prior to May 2017, electricity provided to the City was primarily sourced from the PG&E Humboldt Bay Generating Station (HBGS), which is located just south of the City of Eureka along Humboldt Bay. The HBGS began commercial operation in 2010 and normally runs on natural gas, with ultra-low sulfur diesel as its backup fuel (CEC, 2024).

Beginning in May 2017, the electricity source for Humboldt County transitioned to the Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) Community Choice Energy (CCE) program (RCEA, 2024). The CCE program allows city and county governments to pool (or aggregate) the electricity demands of their communities in order to increase local control over electric rates, purchase power with higher renewable content, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reinvest in local energy infrastructure. The electricity continues to be distributed and delivered over the existing power lines by PG&E (RCEA, 2024). In 2022, the CCE program procured approximately 50 percent of its power from renewable sources (RCEA, 2022). In addition, customers can choose to opt up to a premium service called Repower+, which is 100 percent renewable energy at only $0.01 more per kilowatt hour (kWh) (RCEA, 2024). RCEA is pursuing the following procurement goals which

will further increase the percentage of power from renewable resources for all of its customers – 100% carbon-free electricity by 2025 (RCEA Board goal adopted in 2019) and 100% local carbon-free electricity by 2030 (Board goal adopted in 2016) (RCEA, 2021).

Regulatory Framework

State

The California Code of Regulations (CCR) Title 24 regulates structural safety and sustainability for residential and other developments. The California Energy Commission (CEC) updates the Building Energy Efficiency Standards (Energy Code), Title 24 section 6, every three years. The 2022 Building Energy Efficiency Standards went into effect January 2023. Future residential development in Blue Lake would be subject to building energy efficiency standards set forth by Title 24.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-b) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update is a policy document and does not provide site-specific designs or development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. Short-term construction and long-term operational activities as a result of future residential development, would result in energy consumption.

During construction of future residential development, energy would be consumed in the form of petroleum-based fuels used to power off-road construction vehicles and equipment, construction worker and delivery truck travel to and from the project site, and to operate generators to provide temporary power for electronic equipment. There are not anticipated to be any unusual characteristics of future residential development that would require the use of construction equipment or practices that would be less energy efficient than at comparable construction sites in the region or State. Construction activity would be temporary and fuel consumption would cease once construction ends. Further, various construction equipment would be supplied by onsite generators, and would not require permanent connections to or otherwise burden local utilities. Due to the temporary nature of construction activities, the fuel and energy needed during project construction activities would not be considered a wasteful or inefficient use of energy.

During operational activities for future residential development, energy would be consumed for building operations (such as ventilation, heating/cooling, operation of electrical systems, etc.), and transportation of vehicles. As required by State regulations, the design and construction of future residential development would be in accordance with California's Energy Efficiency Standards for Residential and Nonresidential Buildings (Title 24, Part 6, of the California Code of Regulations). These requirements regulate insulation,

window space and type, and other building features to maximize structural energy efficiency. These standards also require the installation of solar panels on certain residential buildings to offset electricity use. Compliance with these standards restricts unnecessary residential energy consumption.

The Housing Element Update indicates that most of the residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites is located within the City's Powers Creek District, which is zoned to require a mixture of residential and commercial uses. For example, the District is zoned to not allow residential-only development, in order to promote a beneficial mixture of residential and commercial uses. Land use regulations that promote infill and mixed-use development have the potential to reduce vehicle miles traveled and transportation-related energy consumption. Additionally, consistent with State and local plans for renewable energy, future residential development in the City will be provided increasingly renewable sources of energy from the RCEA CCE program.

In compliance with existing laws and regulations, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact related to energy.

Geology and Soils

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Directly or indirectly cause potential substantial adverse effects, including the risk of loss, injury, or death involving:				
i) Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zoning Map, issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of a known fault? Refer to Division of Mines and Geology Special Publication 42.	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii) Strong seismic ground shaking?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii) Seismic-related ground failure, including liquefaction?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv) Landslides?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Result in substantial soil erosion or the loss of topsoil?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Be located on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable as a result of the project, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Be located on expansive soil, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code (1994), creating substantial direct or indirect risks to life or property?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems where sewers are not available for the disposal of wastewater?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Directly or indirectly destroy a unique paleontological resource or site or unique geologic feature?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The City is situated in the lower Mad River Valley; the Mad River borders the City on the south and west. The lands surrounding Blue Lake are comprised of steep hillsides to the north and east and generally flat agricultural lands to the west and south (see **Figure 2**).

The City is located in a downfaulted portion of the Northern Coast Range geologic province of California. Much of the Mad River Basin is underlain by the Franciscan complex (marine sedimentary and metasedimentary rocks). Sedimentary and volcanic rocks were deposited in a marine trough along the west coast of North America, which was subsequently severely deformed and uplifted. The widespread disarray of the rocks within the Franciscan Complex, and prevalence of shear zones, testify to the immense forces involved in its disruption. Most of the deformation took place during and soon after its deposition, so that the shear zones are no longer active. The ubiquitous presence of this sheared rock, however, together with rapid and unpredictable changes in rock type from place to place, give the associated slopes a general, but highly variable, instability.

The youthful and steep topography of the coast range is known for its potential for landslides. Humboldt County in general is at risk from strong ground shaking. The western portions of Humboldt County, and adjoining offshore areas, are regions of moderate to high seismicity. The only known historical surface rupture associated with a fault in the area was in 1906 along the San Andreas Fault in southern Humboldt County. The frequent earthquakes south and southwest of the City of Ferndale indicate modern activity along the Cape Mendocino-False Cape shear zone (City of Blue Lake, 2004).

Liquefaction is defined as “the sudden large decrease of shearing resistance of a cohesionless soil, caused by collapse of the soil structure by shock or strain, and associated with a sudden but temporary increase of the pore fluid mass” (City of Blue Lake, 1975). Fine unconsolidated sand or silt saturated with water is particularly subject to liquefaction. Horizontal to slightly tilted layers of this material may underlie river flood plains and terraces. Earthquake shock waves may cause an overlying sloping soil mass to slide laterally along the temporarily liquified layer at the base.

The lowlands and present river flood plain in the Blue Lake planning area are underlain by river alluvium of undetermined thickness. Such alluvium (salt, sand, pebbles, cobbles) may contain lenses of material susceptible to liquefaction, especially when under the shallow water table (top of saturated zone) characteristic of the area. Although, if these zones are present, they are likely of minor extent, but the possibility of localized liquefaction should not be discounted entirely. The siting of critical structures should assess this potential by means or borings beneath the sites. Under moderate to intense shaking, unconsolidated alluvium and soils may undergo various amounts of horizontal displacement toward adjacent unconfined areas (such as the bluff along a river or stream), associated in some cases, with liquefaction. Cracks and fissures generally accompany this “lurching”, ranging from inches to many feet in length, and of varying widths. Structures located on such ground can be severely disrupted and tilted (City of Blue Lake, 2004).

Mass movement of material on hillsides is a major accompaniment of moderate and strong earthquakes. These can take the form of landslides, rock avalanches, mud and debris flows, or another type of slope failure. Areas north of the City, and along State Route 299 are considered to be at high risk of slope failure, but are determined to not be hazardous to the population within City limits. The majority of the current townsite is in lowland areas characterized by stable gradual slopes and are not at risk of slope failure. There is potential for liquefaction, lurching, cracking, and differential subsidence within the City.

The City is located in close proximity to United States Geologic Survey mapped faults in the Mad River Fault Zone and is vulnerable to shaking caused by a rupture of any of these faults. The closest Alquist-Priolo Zone to the City is approximately 0.75 miles southwest on the eastern side of Fickle Hill. No fault hazard areas have been identified within City limits. The general risks associated with earthquakes in the Blue Lake area are structural damage, slope failures, and liquefaction. These risks tend to be greater in areas of unstable slopes, wet conditions, alluvial deposits, or fill material. Blue Lake is not at risk of potential tsunami damage or inundation due to its inland location (City of Blue Lake, 1975).

Regulatory Framework

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

Public Safety Element Policies:

Policy 4 Before any major excavation, or the construction of dwellings, public facilities, and large commercial or industrial buildings is permitted by the City within low or moderate stability areas, special studies by a registered soil engineer or licensed geologist should be undertaken by the developer and necessary provisions made for reducing landslide risk.

Policy 5 Any proposed construction of commercial or industrial structures in the area more than 300 feet southwesterly of the railroad right-of-way should be preceded by site investigations to determine the potential for liquefaction and similar types of earth movement resulting from ground shaking.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-d) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update is a policy document and does not provide site-specific designs or development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The

Housing Element Update provides policies and programs designed to facilitate the construction and conservation of housing. Future residential development in the City could increase the exposure of people and structures to seismic hazards, including strong seismic shaking and seismic-related ground failure. As noted above in the Setting, the closest Alquist-Priolo Zone to the City is approximately 0.75 miles southwest on the eastern side of Fickle Hill. No fault hazard areas have been identified within City limits.

The State of California provides minimum standards for building design through the California Building Code (CBC). Specific minimum seismic safety and structural design requirements are set forth in CBC Chapter 16. The CBC identifies seismic factors that must be considered in structural design. Development on the sites identified vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element update would be required to comply with State and local regulations related to seismic hazards (for example, building codes and other applicable regulations requiring soil analysis and design-level geotechnical evaluation), which would minimize adverse impacts related to seismic hazards including fault rupture, liquefaction, and landslides. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

There are no expansive soils, as defined in Table 18-1-B of the Uniform Building Code, known to exist on the sites identified as vacant likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update. Compliance with CBC requirements related to ensuring the suitability of site soils (for example, applicable regulations requiring soil analysis and design-level geotechnical evaluation) would address any potential impacts. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

e) No Impact. All sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update would be required to connect to the City's sewer system, in accordance with Blue Lake Municipal Code Section 13.16.030 (City of Blue Lake, 2024b). As such, future residential development would not have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems. Therefore, there would be no impact in this regard.

f) Less Than Significant impact. No paleontological resources or unique geologic features are known to exist in the City. Regional uplifting and other seismic activity in the area limit the potential for discovery of paleontological resources. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Would the project:				
a) Generate greenhouse gas emissions, either directly or indirectly, that may have a significant impact on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict with an applicable plan, policy or regulation adopted for the purpose of reducing the emissions of greenhouse gases?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Greenhouse gases (GHGs) are gases in the atmosphere that absorb and emit radiation. The greenhouse effect traps heat in the troposphere through a three-fold process, summarized as follows: short wave radiation emitted by the sun is absorbed by the Earth; the Earth emits a portion of this energy in the form of long-wave radiation; and GHGs in the upper atmosphere absorb this long-wave radiation and emit this long-wave radiation into space and toward the Earth. This "trapping" of the long-wave (thermal) radiation emitted back toward the Earth is the underlying process of the greenhouse effect.

Other than water vapor, the primary GHGs contributing to global climate change include the following gases:

- Carbon dioxide (CO2), primarily a byproduct of fuel combustion;
- Nitrous oxide (N2O), a byproduct of fuel combustion and associated with agricultural operations such as the fertilization of crops;
- Methane (CH4), commonly created by off-gassing from agricultural practices (for example, livestock), wastewater treatment, and landfill operations;
- Chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), which were used as refrigerants, propellants, and cleaning solvents, although their production has been mostly prohibited by international treaty;
- Hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs), which are now widely used as a substitute for chlorofluorocarbons in refrigeration and cooling; and
- Perfluorocarbons (PFCs) and sulfur hexafluoride (SF6) emissions, which are commonly created by industries such as aluminum production and semiconductor manufacturing.

Global climate change is not confined to a particular project area and is generally accepted as the consequence of GHG emissions from global industrialization over the last 200 years. A typical project, even a very large one, does not generate enough GHG emissions on its own to influence global climate change significantly; hence, the issue of global climate change is, by definition, a cumulative environmental impact.

Beginning in May 2017, the electricity source for Humboldt County transitioned to the Redwood Coast Energy Authority (RCEA) Community Choice Energy (CCE) program. The CCE program allows city and county governments to pool (or aggregate) the electricity demands of their communities in order to increase local control over electric rates, purchase power with higher renewable content, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and reinvest in local energy infrastructure. The electricity continues to be distributed and delivered over the existing power lines by PG&E (RCEA, 2024). In 2022, the CCE program procured approximately 50 percent of its power from renewable sources (RCEA, 2022). In addition, customers can choose to opt up to a premium service called Repower+, which is 100 percent renewable energy at only $0.01 more per kilowatt hour (kWh) (RCEA, 2024). RCEA is pursuing the following procurement goals which will further increase the percentage of power from renewable resources for all of its customers – 100% carbon-free electricity by 2025 (RCEA Board goal adopted in 2019) and 100% local carbon-free electricity by 2030 (Board goal adopted in 2016) (RCEA, 2021).

Regulatory Framework

State

California passed Assembly Bill 32 (Global Warming Solutions Act) in 2006, mandating a reduction in GHG emissions and Senate Bill 97 in 2007, evaluating and addressing GHG under CEQA. On April 13, 2009, the Governor's Office of Planning and Research (OPR) submitted to the Secretary for Natural Resources its proposed amendments to the State CEQA Guidelines for GHG emissions, as required by Senate Bill 97 (Chapter 185) and they became effective March 18, 2010. As a result of these revisions to the CEQA Guidelines, lead agencies are obligated to determine whether a project's GHG emissions significantly affect the environment and to impose feasible mitigation to eliminate or substantially lessen any such significant effects.

The Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) also directed the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to develop the Climate Change Scoping Plan (Scoping Plan), which outlined a set of actions to achieve the AB 32 goal of reducing GHG emissions to 1990 levels by 2020, and to maintain such reductions thereafter. CARB approved the Scoping Plan in 2008 and first updated it in May 2014. The second update in November 2017 addressed the actions necessary to achieve the goal of reducing GHG emissions to 40 percent below 1990 levels by 2030, as described in Senate Bill 32 (SB 32). The most recent update in December 2022 addresses recent legislation that extends and expands upon these earlier plan updates with a target of reducing GHG emissions 85 percent below 1990 levels by 2045. The 2022 update also takes the unprecedented step of adding carbon neutrality as a science-based guide and touchstone for California's climate goals (CARB, 2022).

Local

The City is located in the North Coast Air Basin (NCAB) and is under the jurisdiction of the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District (NCUAQMD). Neither Humboldt County nor the NCUAQMD have adopted quantitative thresholds for determining the significance of GHG emissions from land use projects in environmental documents. In addition, Humboldt County and the City of Blue Lake do not have adopted Climate Action Plans or GHG Reduction Plans.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-b) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not provide specific development designs or development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. Additionally, the Housing Element Update would not allow housing in areas that are not already designated and zoned for residential development. Future residential development could result in an increase in GHG emissions during both construction and operational activities.

Future residential development in the City would be subject to a myriad of State and local regulations applicable to project design, construction, and operation that would reduce GHG emissions, increase energy efficiency, and provide compliance with the CARB Climate Change Scoping Plan (CARB, 2022). The State of California has the most comprehensive GHG regulatory requirements in the United States, with laws and regulations requiring reductions that affect project emissions. Legal mandates to reduce GHG emissions from vehicles, for example, reduce project-related vehicular emissions. Legal mandates to reduce per capita water consumption and impose waste management standards to reduce methane and other GHGs from solid wastes are all examples of mandates that reduce GHGs.

Existing regulations that would apply to any future residential development, including the California Green Building Standards Code and California's Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, would reduce GHG emissions associated with future residential projects. The Housing Element Update indicates that most of the residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites is located within the City's Powers Creek District, which is zoned to require a mixture of residential and commercial uses. For example, the District is zoned to not allow residential-only development, in order to promote a beneficial mixture of residential and commercial uses. Land use regulations that promote infill and mixed-use development have the potential to reduce vehicle miles traveled and associated vehicular emissions including GHG emissions. Additionally, future residential development in the City will be provided increasingly renewable sources of energy from the RCEA CCE program, which would result in reductions in GHG emissions.

In compliance with existing laws and regulations, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact related to greenhouse gas emissions.

Hazards and Hazardous Materials

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Emit hazardous emissions or handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Be located on a site which is included on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code § 65962.5 and, as a result, would it create a significant hazard to the public or the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) For a project located within an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project result in a safety hazard or excessive noise for people residing or working in the project area?	☐	☐	☐	☒
f) Impair implementation of or physically interfere with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
g) Expose people or structures, either directly or indirectly, to a significant risk of loss, injury or death involving wildland fires?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

There is limited industrial and commercial use in the City, so hazardous land uses and contaminated sites are not prevalent. The Powers Creek District was previously developed as a lumber mill and operated by the McIntosh Lumber Company, Inc. According to the information on the Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) Envirostor Database, the former mill site does not contain known significant contamination

above regulatory screening levels and has received a determination from DTSC of "No Action Required" (DTSC, 2024). According to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) GeoTracker Database, there are eight leaking underground storage tank sites in the City. These sites are primarily located in the downtown area and have all received determinations from the SWRCB of "Case Closed" (SWRCB, 2024). Explosives or dangerous chemicals are seldom transported throughout the area but an accidental spill or explosion on State Route 299 is a possibility.

The schools in the City include Blue Lake Union Elementary and the Dell'Arte International School of Physical Theatre. The closest airport to the City is the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport in McKinleyville, which is located approximately 8 miles northwest of the City.

Fire protection in Humboldt County is provided by local districts, cities, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE, 2024a). The City limits are located in a Local Responsibility Area (LRA), which is served by the Blue Lake Volunteer Fire Protection District. Forestlands surrounding the City are in a State Responsibility Area (SRA) that is served by CAL FIRE. The closest fire station to the project site is the main station for the Volunteer Fire Protection District, which is near City Hall on First Avenue. The forestlands in this part of Humboldt County could be subject to wildfire and are classified by CAL FIRE as Moderate, High, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The City limits and forestlands immediately surrounding the City are classified by CAL FIRE as being in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (CAL FIRE, 2024).

Regulatory Framework

Hazardous materials management is regulated by federal and State regulations. The federal government enforces hazardous material transport pursuant to its interstate commerce regulation authority.

Federal

Resource Conservation and Recovery Act

The Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), a Division of the California Environmental Protection Agency, acts to protect California from exposure to hazardous wastes by cleaning up existing contamination and looking for ways to reduce the hazardous waste produced in the state. The Department of Toxic Substances Control regulates hazardous waste in California primarily under the authority of the Federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act, and the California Health and Safety Code. Other laws that affect hazardous waste are specific to handling, storage, transportation, disposal, treatment, reduction, cleanup, and emergency planning. Any release or possible release of hazardous material must be reported to the California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES) Warning Center.

STATE

Unified Program and California Environmental Reporting System (CERS)

The California Environmental Protection Agency (CalEPA) oversees California's "Unified Program." The program protects Californians from hazardous waste and hazardous materials by ensuring local regulatory agencies consistently apply statewide standards when they issue permits, conduct inspections, and engage in enforcement activities.

The CalEPA Unified Program consolidates, coordinates, and makes consistent the administrative requirements, permits, inspections, and enforcement activities of six environmental and emergency response programs in California. These six programs (and their corresponding state oversight agencies) are:

- Hazardous Materials Release Response Plans and Inventories (Business Plans) - California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
- California Accidental Release Prevention (CalARP) Program - California Governor's Office of Emergency Services (CalOES)
- Underground Storage Tank (UST) Program - California State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB)
- Aboveground Petroleum Storage Act (APSA) - Office of the State Fire Marshal (CAL FIRE-OSFM)
- Hazardous Waste Generator and Onsite Hazardous Waste Treatment (tiered permitting) Programs - DTSC
- California Uniform Fire Code: Hazardous Material Management Plans and Hazardous Material Inventory Statements - Office of the State Fire Marshal (CAL FIRE-OSFM)

The Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health is the local Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) that implements the CalEPA's Unified Program.

State Water Resources Control Board

The State Water Resources Control Board oversees hazardous materials that are stored in underground storage tanks. The Board addresses how those hazardous materials are stored and handled, as well as clean-up of any contamination created by leaking underground storage tanks. The Office of the State Fire Marshal oversees petroleum products that are stored in aboveground storage tanks.

The California Environmental Protection Agency certifies 81 local Certified Unified Program Agencies statewide to oversee the following hazardous materials programs:

- Area Plans for Hazardous Materials Emergencies
- California Accidental Release Prevention Program (CalARP)
- Hazardous Materials Release Response Plans and Inventories
- Hazardous Waste Generator and Onsite Hazardous Waste Treatment Programs
- Underground Storage Tank Program

Title 49 of the CFR lists thousands of hazardous materials, including gasoline, insecticides, household cleaning products, and radioactive materials. State-regulated substances that have the greatest probability of adversely impacting communities are listed in the Title 19 of the CCR.

LOCAL

Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health

As noted above, the Certified Unified Program Agency (CUPA) with regulatory authority over the City is the Humboldt County Division of Environmental Health. This agency helps businesses meet state

requirements for reporting hazardous materials and waste above certain designated quantities that they use, store, or handle at their facility. The California Environmental Reporting System is the statewide web-based system that supports the electronic exchange of required information among businesses, local governments and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA).

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-d) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update is a policy document and does not provide site-specific designs or development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update provides policies and programs designed to facilitate the construction and conservation of housing.

The construction of future residential development would require the temporary use and transport of paints, fuels, oils, solvents, and other chemicals used during construction activities. Improper use and transportation of hazardous materials could result in accidental releases or spills, potentially posing health risks to workers, the public, and the environment. These activities are controlled by County code provisions and State and federal regulations. Throughout the transport, use, or disposal of potentially hazardous materials, the contractor is required to employ standard cleanup and safety procedures to minimize the potential for public exposure from accidental releases of such substances into the environment. The operation of residential land uses is not typically associated with the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials. Residential uses may utilize cleaning products that contain toxic substances, but they are usually in low concentration and small in amount and would not pose a significant risk to humans or the environment during transport to and from or use at future residential development. As such, the Housing Element Update would not create a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials or through reasonably foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the release of hazardous materials into the environment. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

Public schools in the City include the Blue Lake Union Elementary School. The construction and operation of residential land uses is not typically associated with the release of hazardous emissions or the handling of hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste. These types of impacts are typically generated by industrial uses including stationary sources that are subject to numerous State and federal regulations. Construction activity from future residential development may generate emissions in the form of diesel particulate matter and fugitive dust, but due to the short-term nature of construction activity, is not anticipated to result is adverse effects. Additionally, most of the residential

development potential identified in the Housing Element Update is located more than a quarter mile from the elementary school. Residential uses may utilize cleaning products that contain toxic substances, but they are usually in low concentration and small in amount and would not pose a significant risk to the school. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

As discussed in the Setting, there are nine sites in the City that are on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. None of the sites are known to contain significant contamination above regulatory screening levels and have received determinations of either "No Action Required" or "Case Closed" by regulatory agencies including the DTSC and SWRCB (DTSC, 2024; SWRCB, 2024). Future residential development on the sites identified as vacant and likely developable could potentially uncover unknown hazardous materials contamination during construction activities. Based on the information available from prior site investigations and agency determinations, this would not be considered to pose a significant risk to humans or the environment. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

e) No Impact. The proposed project is not within two miles of an airport or within an airport land use plan. The closest airport to the City is the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport in McKinleyville, which is located approximately 8 miles northwest of the City. Therefore, there would be no impact in this regard.

f-g) Less Than Significant Impact. The City is included in the Humboldt County Emergency Operations Plan and the Humboldt County Operational Area Hazard Mitigation Plan. There are multiple routes for access in and out of the City that could be used for emergency evacuations including Blue Lake Boulevard, Hatchery Road/West End Road, Maple Creek Road, Glendale Drive, and State Route 299. The City's designated industrial truck route (Greenwood Avenue, Railroad Avenue, and Hatchery Road) is the main artery roadway through the City that would serve most future residential development identified in the Housing Element Update. According to recent traffic counts, the traffic volumes on Greenwood Avenue are well below its design capacity and it currently operates at an acceptable level of service of C or better (W-Trans, 2023). Future residential development may require new access roads and driveways to development sites that will require review by the Public Works Department, Engineering Department, and Volunteer Fire Protection District to ensure that they comply with applicable design standards for emergency access including, but not limited to, lane widths, road surfaces, vertical clearance, brush clearance, and allowable grades. Based on the projected buildout identified on vacant and likely developable sites in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update (89 units; see Table 21 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2024b), it is not anticipated that future residential development in the City would impair implementation of or physical interference of an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

Fire protection in Humboldt County is provided by local districts, cities, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). The City limits are located in a Local Responsibility Area (LRA), which is served by the Blue Lake Volunteer Fire Protection Districct. Forestlands surrounding the City are in a State Responsibility Area (SRA), which is served by CAL FIRE. The closest fire station to the project site is the main

station for the Volunteer Fire Protection District, which is near City Hall on First Avenue. The forestlands in this part of Humboldt County could be subject to wildfire and are classified by CAL FIRE as Moderate, High, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The City limits and forestlands immediately surrounding the City are classified by CAL FIRE as being in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (CAL FIRE, 2024).

The sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update do not exhibit topography, vegetation patterns, or other factors (for example, fuels, aspect, etc.) that would expose future residents or structures to a significant risk of wildland fires. The City's proximity to State Route 299 and the number of access points in and out of the City provide adequate access and response in an emergency situation. Future residential development would be consistent with existing land uses in the City and would not exacerbate wildfire risks. Therefore, a less than significant impact would occur in this regard.

Hydrology and Water Quality

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Violate any water quality standards or waste discharge requirements or otherwise substantially degrade surface or ground water quality?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Substantially decrease groundwater supplies or interfere substantially with groundwater recharge such that the project may impede sustainable groundwater management of the basin?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially alter the existing drainage pattern of the site or area, including through the alteration of the course of a stream or river or through the addition of impervious surfaces, in a manner which would:				
i) result in a substantial erosion or siltation on- or off-site;	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii) substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff in a manner which would result in flooding on- or offsite;	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii) create or contribute runoff water which would exceed the capacity of existing or planned stormwater drainage systems or provide substantial additional sources of polluted runoff; or	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv) impede or redirect flood flows?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) In flood hazard, tsunami, or seiche zones, risk release of pollutants due to project inundation?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Conflict with or obstruct implementation of a water quality control plan or sustainable groundwater management plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The City of Blue Lake is situated in the Mad River Valley. The Mad River borders the City on the south and west. A historic lake, for which the City was named, is now a small freshwater marsh of about 3.5 acres on private property on the southern edge of town. A levee along the Mad River on the southern edge of the City

has successfully contained past flooding and it is expected to withstand a 100-year storm event. Powers Creek runs from the northeast through the center of town to the southwest. The lower creek channel remains dry in the summer but floods, to varying degrees, every winter. Flooding occurs in the area north of the railroad but most of the bank overflow occurs between the railroad and the Mad River, where the flood plain spreads out. Some residences in the lower reach have been affected by flooding and various efforts to clean out the brush and debris in the creek have been undertaken in the past. Water table levels in the City have been observed to fluctuate as a function of changing river stage and precipitation.

The Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD) obtained the lands in the Ruth Valley to create a reservoir in the 1960s to allow for water storage and recreational opportunities, creating the Ruth Lake reservoir in Trinity County and constructing a dam on the Mad River (R.W. Matthews Dam; HBMWD, 2024). The HBMWD is the main supplier of water to the Humboldt Bay Region and draws water from the unconfined Holocene River Channel Deposits aquifer at a depth of 60 to 90 feet below the bed of the Mad River through Ranney wells situated in or in close proximity to the Mad River. Water is extracted from this aquifer instead of directly from the river since percolation through surface ground layers help to naturally filter water and improve quality of the drinking water supply. The HBMWD Groundwater Management Plan indicates that groundwater recharge is achieved by inundation of the recharge areas in the Mad River channel through the District's operation of Matthews Dam and Ruth Lake. As a result, additional development in the Humboldt Bay Region would not have a direct impact on the volume of groundwater available to HBMWD. Additionally, the HBMWD has indicated that there is sufficient supply for currently forecasted development (City of Eureka, 2018). The City is under contract with the HBMWD for its domestic water supply, which would serve future residential development. The City's water system includes two redwood water storage tanks, transmission mains, fire hydrants, valves, and the individual water lines from the mains to individual water meters.

The Matthews Dam Emergency Action Plan (EAP) analyzes the worst-case flood scenario from failure of the R.W. Matthews Dam. This would occur if the maximum recorded flood (1964) and the failure of the dam combined together into one catastrophic flood. In this situation, the sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update would experience flooding (City of Blue Lake, 2004). According to Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) FIRM Panel No. 06023C0713F, except for parcel 025-141-007, the sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update are located outside of a mapped special flood hazard zone (FEMA, 2016). The Tsunami Hazard Area Map from the California Geological Survey (CGS) shows the City as being located outside of a tsunami hazard zone (CGS, 2024). There is no body of water near the City that has the potential for the generation of a seiche.

Regulatory Framework

FEDERAL

Clean Water Act (CWA)

The CWA (33 USC §1251-1376), as amended by the Water Quality Act of 1987, is the major federal legislation governing water quality and was established to "restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the Nation's waters." Pertinent sections of the Act are as follows:

1. Sections 303 and 304 provide for water quality standards, criteria, and guidelines.
2. Section 401 (Water Quality Certification) requires an applicant for any federal permit that would authorize a discharge to waters of the United States to obtain certification from the state that the discharge will comply with other provisions of the Act.
3. Section 402 establishes the National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES), a permitting system for the discharge of any pollutant (except for dredged or fill material) into waters of the United States. This permit program is administered by the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) and is discussed in detail below.
4. Section 404, jointly administered by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA), establishes a permit program for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States.

Federal Anti-Degradation Policy

The federal Anti-Degradation Policy is part of the CWA (Section 303(d)) and is designed to protect water quality and water resources. The policy directs states to adopt a statewide policy that protects designated uses of water bodies (for example, fish and wildlife, recreation, water supply, etc.). The water quality necessary to support the designated use(s) must be maintained and protected.

Safe Drinking Water Act

Under the 1974 Safe Drinking Water Act, most recently amended in 1996, USEPA regulates contaminants of concern to domestic water supply, which are those that pose a public health threat or that alter the aesthetic acceptability of the water. These types of contaminants are classified as either primary or secondary Maximum Contaminant Levels (MCLs). MCLs and the process for setting these standards are reviewed triennially.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

FEMA is responsible for mapping flood-prone areas under the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP). Communities that participate in the NFIP are required to adopt and enforce a floodplain management ordinance to reduce future flood risks related to new construction in a flood hazard area. In return, property owners have access to affordable federally-funded flood insurance policies.

National Pollution Discharge Elimination System (NPDES)

Under Section 402(p) of the CWA, the USEPA established the NPDES to enforce discharge standards for both point-source and non-point-source pollution. Dischargers can apply for individual discharge permits, or apply for coverage under the General Permits that cover certain qualified dischargers. Point-source discharges

include municipal and industrial wastewater, stormwater runoff, combined sewer overflows, sanitary sewer overflows, and municipal separate storm sewer systems. NPDES permits impose limits on discharges based on minimum performance standards or the quality of the receiving water, whichever type is more stringent in a given situation.

STATE

Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act

The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act (California Water Code §13000 et seq.) is the principal law governing water quality regulation in California. It establishes a comprehensive program to protect water quality and the beneficial uses of waters of the State. The Porter-Cologne Water Quality Control Act applies to surface waters, wetlands, and groundwater, and to both point and non-point sources of pollution. The Act requires a Report of Waste Discharge for any discharge of waste (liquid, solid, or otherwise) to land or surface waters that may impair a beneficial use of surface or groundwater of the state. The RWQCBs enforce waste discharge requirements identified in the Report.

State Anti-Degradation Policy

In 1968, as required under the Federal Anti-Degradation Policy, the SWRCB adopted an Anti-Degradation Policy, formally known as the Statement of Policy with Respect to Maintaining High Quality Waters in California (State Water Board Resolution No. 68-16). Under the Anti-Degradation Policy, any actions that can adversely affect water quality in surface or ground waters must be consistent with the maximum benefit to the people of the State, not unreasonably affect present and anticipated beneficial use of the water, and not result in water quality less than that prescribed in water quality plans and policies.

National Pollution Discharge Elimination System

Pursuant to the federal CWA, the responsibility for issuing NPDES permits and enforcing the NPDES program was delegated to the SWRCB and the nine Regional Water Quality Control Boards (RWQCBs). NPDES permits are also referred to as waste discharge requirements (WDRs) that regulate discharges to waters of the United States.

Sustainable Groundwater Management Act

The Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), enacted in September 2014, established a framework for groundwater resources to be managed by local agencies in areas designated by the Department of Water Resources as “medium” or “high” priority basins. Basins were prioritized based, in part, on groundwater elevation monitoring conducted under the California Statewide Groundwater Elevation Monitoring program.

The SGMA required local agencies in medium- and high-priority basins to form Groundwater Sustainability Agencies by July 1, 2017, and be managed in accordance with locally-developed Groundwater Sustainability Plans (GSPs). Critically over-drafted basins were to be managed under a GSP by January 31, 2020. All other medium- and high-priority basins were to be managed under a GSP by January 31, 2022.

LOCAL

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

Land Use Element - Environmental Protection Policies:

Policy 4 The City shall encourage site design that maximizes onsite retention of stormwater and minimizes discharge to the City's stormwater system.

Land Use Element - Powers Creek Management Policies:

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.

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.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-e) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not include site-specific design or development proposals, nor does it permit development entitlements. All future development within the City would be required to comply with federal, State, and local regulations intended to protect water quality and ensure compliance with waste discharge requirements. At the local level, Municipal Code Chapter 15.12 (Grading, Erosion, and Sediment Control) contains grading, sediment control, and revegetation standards as well as standards for the protection of watercourses and drainage inlets that must be complied with during all grading or other land-disturbing activities. For projects that will disturb more than one-acre during construction, a Construction General Permit (CGP) will be required to be obtained from the SWRCB, which requires the preparation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) that documents the stormwater dynamics at the site, the best management practices (BMPs) and water quality protection measures that will be used, and the frequency of inspections to ensure compliance with water quality standards. During operation, residential land uses have a limited potential to result in water quality impacts relative to more intensive and impactful land uses. All future residential development would be connected to the City's wastewater treatment system, which would prevent potential water quality impacts related to the use of onsite wastewater treatment systems. In compliance with existing laws and regulations protecting water quality, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

The City's daily water use allotment is currently 400,000 gallons, established via the contract with HBMWD. Currently, the City reports that the average water use during peak use months is approximately 150,000 gallons per day (gpd), 38% of the daily allotment from HBMWD. Based on the City's current population of 1,149 residents as estimated by the California Department of Finance (DOF, 2024), daily per capita water use is conservatively estimated to be approximately 131 gallons per day (gpd) based on the peak use months noted above (150,000 gallons). The HBMWD draws water from the unconfined Holocene River Channel Deposits aquifer at a depth of 60 to 90 feet below the bed of the Mad River through Ranney wells situated in or in close proximity to the Mad River. Water is extracted from this aquifer instead of directly from the river since percolation through surface ground layers help to naturally filter water and improve quality of the drinking water supply. The amount of water supplied to the City under existing conditions is less than 1 percent of the annual yield of the Mad River. The HBMWD Groundwater Management Plan indicates that groundwater recharge is achieved by inundation of the recharge areas in the Mad River channel through the District's operation of Matthews Dam and Ruth Lake. As a result, additional residential development within the City would not have a direct impact on the volume of groundwater available to HBMWD. Additionally, the HBMWD has indicated that there is sufficient supply for currently forecasted development in the Humboldt Bay Region. Additionally, the HBMWD is required to comply with the applicable requirements intended to protect and preserve groundwater and groundwater recharge including its Groundwater Management Plan (City of Eureka, 2018). Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

The sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update, with the exception of parcel 025-141-007, would not have the potential to alter the course of stream or river. Any future projects that would propose direct physical impacts to a stream or river would be required to obtain permits and comply with federal and State regulations including site-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Future residential development will create new impervious surfaces and has the potential to increase the volume and rate of surface runoff, which could result in erosion, siltation, and localized flooding on- or off-site and potentially exceed the capacity of the City's existing stormwater system. All development will be required to comply with the City's grading, sediment control, and revegetation standards in Municipal Code Chapter 15.12 (Grading, Erosion, and Sediment Control). These standards would minimize erosion and siltation during construction and operation of future residential land uses. Although the City is not within a Phase II MS4 Permit area, the Public Works and Engineering Departments can require the onsite management of stormwater runoff if it is determined that a project has the potential to exceed the capacity of the City's stormwater system. This is typically required for larger projects with greater areas of impervious surface as conditions of a discretionary permit or building permit. In compliance with the requirements of Municipal Code Chapter 13.20 (Floodplain Management), it is not anticipated that future residential development would impede or redirect flood flows. Any development proposed within a mapped special flood hazard area or area subject to regular inundation from flood waters, would be required to be placed above or outside of the flood zone. In compliance with existing laws and regulations, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

According to FEMA FIRM Panel No. 06023C0713F, with the exception of parcel 025-141-007, the sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update are located outside of a mapped special flood hazard area (FEMA, 2016). As noted above, future development proposed within a mapped special flood hazard area, would be required to be placed above or outside of the flood zone, which would minimize the potential for the release of pollutants due to inundation. This would also reduce potential impacts related to inundation in the unlikely event of the failure of R.W. Matthews Dam. The Tsunami Hazard Area Map from the California Geological Survey (CGS) shows the City as being located outside of a tsunami hazard zone (CGS, 2024). There is no body of water near the City that has the potential for the generation of a seiche. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact related to the release of pollutants due to inundation.

As discussed above, future residential development in the City must comply with federal, State, and local regulations pertaining to the protection of water quality and groundwater supply. As such, it is not anticipated that the Housing Element Update would result in conflict with a water quality control plan or groundwater management plan. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Land Use and Planning

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Physically divide an established community?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The City of Blue Lake is located in northern Humboldt County in the Mad River Valley. It is inland of the Humboldt Bay area along State Route 299. Though founded years earlier, the City was incorporated in 1910 and has a current estimated population of 1,149 living in an area of about 0.6 square miles (416 acres; DOF, 2024). It is governed by a five-member city council whose members are elected at large.

The City limits are bordered to the north and east by forested hillsides, to the south and west by the Mad River, and to the west by the Blue Lake Rancheria. Development in the City primarily consists of single-family residential development with commercial uses, public facilities, and apartments in the downtown, and industrial, light industrial, and commercial uses in the Powers Creek District (former Industrial Park and Business Park).

The most sizable annexations to the City occurred during the 1980s consistent with the City's General Plan. This included an annexation in 1983 to expand the former Blue Lake Industrial Park (currently Powers Creek District) to support the construction of an 11-megawatt biomass power plant. After approval of this annexation and power plant construction, an additional 124.5 acres was annexed to the City in 1984. The City also assumed responsibility for maintaining the western portion of the Mad River Levee at this time. In 1985, Blue Lake annexed 8.76 acres to incorporate some of the wastewater treatment plant that was outside City limits. In 1986, the City annexed the site of their 500,000-gallon water storage tank for purposes of management and control (Humboldt LAFCo, 2019).

The last major update of the City's General Plan occurred in the mid-1980s. At that time, the City planned for: A) the revitalization of its downtown; B) replacement of the former McIntosh Mill with an Industrial Park, C) multi-family development adjacent to the downtown and along eastern Railroad Avenue; and D) a creative approach to residential development on the western portion of the City to allow clustering of development in areas without environmental constraints (for example, wetlands, drainages, etc.). Since that time, the City has completed incremental updates to the General Plan, primarily with grant funding, based on input from community visioning processes, changes in community sentiment regarding industrial development

(Industrial Park transitioned to Business Park), and changes in State law. This has included several updates of the General Plan Housing Element to achieve compliance with State housing law. The most recent update to the General Plan was amendment of the Land Use Element in 2021 to plan for mixed-use development in the newly rebranded Powers Creek District (former Industrial Park and Business Park) and incorporate sustainable development policies into the Element. This amendment included the creation and adoption of the Opportunity (O) zone, which allows a combination of residential, commercial, and light manufacturing uses in order to promote a beneficial mixture of residential and commercial uses. As part of this amendment, the O zone was applied to portions of the Powers Creek District, which shifted the focus for residential development from the western portion of the City to the District. As discussed in other sections of this document, the site inventory in the Housing Element Update identifies the Powers Creek District and O zone as containing the majority of residential development potential in the City.

Regulatory Framework

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

Land Use Element - Character Policies:

Policy 1 All densities shall be considered with respect to the general density of the City and the neighborhood concerned.

Policy 6 The City should encourage development of property in accordance with general density and rural character.

Policy 9 Congruous and compatible development shall be encouraged.

Land Use Element – Siting Density Policies:

Policy 1 All types of dwelling units shall be placed on their sites so as to provide adequate useable outdoor living area. Building sites shall be considered with respect to the location of other buildings, streets, terrain, and to other elements of the environment.

Policy 2 The City should in approving residential development, require sufficient area to allow open space for each dwelling unit consistent with quality of the rural setting of Blue Lake.

Policy 3 Planned Unit Development, clustering, and other innovative development design techniques shall be encouraged, where feasible, to maximize open space and allow flexibility in design.

Land Use Element - Multi-Use Development Policies:

Policy 1 Residential uses allowed in commercial areas shall be located and operated in a manner that does not detract from the commercial activities or character of the area. Such uses shall be located on the upper floors or in the portion of the structure away from the street or main entrance.

Policy 2 The City should encourage incidental residential use of portions of commercial structures when other City requirements can be met onsite.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-b) No Impact. The site inventory in the Housing Element Update only identifies sites as vacant and likely developable that are already designated and zoned for residential use. Development of the sites in the site inventory would be considered infill development as these sites are surrounded by existing development. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would encourage the development of housing on vacant sites in the City and would not divide an established community.

The Housing Element Update does not provide specific development designs or development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for residential development that is consistent with the requirements of the General Plan, Zoning Code, and State housing law. Future development proposals would be reviewed by the City to ensure compliance with applicable land use plans, policies, and regulations adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

As discussed in the Project Description in Section 1, the proposed project would involve amending the City's Zoning Code to create a Multi-Family Combining Zone to allow multi-family projects without discretionary review or by-right at a density of 16 units per acre or 1 unit per 2,722.5 square feet of lot area (City of Blue Lake, 2024b; see Implementation Program HI-14). Due to the availability of adequate sites with limited constraints within the City where the combining zone could be applied during the 6th cycle planning period, the combining zone is anticipated to be applied to a property in the City's Powers Creek District that is zoned Opportunity (O) and already allows for residential development. It should be noted that the combining zone would not result in a higher density than is already allowed by the O zone, which allows for 1 unit per 2,500 square feet or 17.4 units per acre. To meet the requirement for by-right zoning in Government Code Section 65583.2, subdivisions (h) and (i), the property would need to be sufficiently sized to allow a capacity of at least 11 units, which would be a minimum of 27,500 square feet (~0.63-acres) at the residential density allowed in the O zone (1 unit per 2,500 square feet of lot area). Any by-right project proposed on a property where the combining zone has been applied would not be subject to CEQA. However, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

Therefore, the Housing Element Update would have no impact related to physically dividing an established community or conflict with a land use plan, policy, or regulation for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*

Mineral Resources

Would the project:				
a) Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource that would be a value to the region and the residents of the state?	☐	☐	☐	☒
b) Result in the loss of availability of a locally important mineral resource recovery site delineated on a local general plan, specific plan or other land use plan?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

A mineral resource is land on which known deposits of commercially viable mineral or aggregate deposits exist. The designation is applied to sites determined by the State Division of Mines and Geology as being a resource of regional significance and is intended to help maintain any quarrying operations and protect them from encroachment of incompatible uses. The Mad River, which runs along the southern and western boundary of the City, contains sand and gravel resources that are mined annually. Additionally, there are several quarries that exist in the Mad River Valley area.

Regulatory Framework

State

The Surface Mining and Reclamation Act (SMARA; PRC Chapter 9, Division 2) provides a comprehensive surface mining and reclamation policy to ensure that adverse environmental impacts are minimized and mined lands are reclaimed to a usable condition. Mineral Resource Zones (MRZs) are applied to sites determined by the California Geological Survey (CGS) as being a resource of regional significance and are intended to help maintain mining operations and protect them from encroachment of incompatible uses.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment.

a-b) No Impact. There are no known important mineral resources on the sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory in the Housing Element Update. As such, it is not anticipated that future

residential development will result in the loss of availability of important mineral resources. Therefore, no impacts would occur in this regard.

Noise

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project result in:				
a) Generation of a substantial temporary or permanent increase in ambient noise levels in the vicinity of the project in excess of standards established in the local general plan or noise ordinance, or applicable standards of other agencies?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Generation of excessive ground borne vibration or ground borne noise levels?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) For a project located within the vicinity of a private airstrip or an airport land use plan or, where such a plan has not been adopted, within two miles of a public airport or public use airport, would the project expose people residing or working in the project area to excessive noise levels?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The City of Blue Lake is located in northern Humboldt County in the Mad River Valley. It is inland of the Humboldt Bay area along State Route 299. The City limits are bordered to the north and east by forested hillsides, to the south and west by the Mad River, and to the west by the Blue Lake Rancheria. Development in the City primarily consists of single-family residential development with commercial uses, public facilities, and apartments in the downtown, and industrial, light industrial, and commercial uses in the Powers Creek District (former Industrial Park and Business Park).

The primary sources of noise in the City include transportation noise from State Route 299 and local streets, industrial and manufacturing activity in the Powers Creek District, and construction activity. State Route 299 runs along the northern edge of the City and is considered ambient noise. State Route 299 does not cause high ambient noise levels because it is elevated above the City and the sound is either prevented from projecting by roadside banks or it projects out over the town and diminishes rapidly along the ground. Traffic volume on local streets is low enough that traffic represents single noise events rather than ambient noise. Heavy truck traffic and construction activity generate most high single noise events in the City. In 1975, when the City adopted its General Plan Noise Element, noise issues in the City were identified as heavy truck traffic on local streets and trains on the Arcata and Mad River Railroad (City of Blue Lake, 1975).

The City is not located within two miles of a private airstrip or public use airport. The closest airport to the City is the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport in McKinleyville, which is located approximately 8 miles northwest of the City.

Regulatory Framework

There are several methods of characterizing sound. The standard unit of sound level measurement is the decibel, which is represented by dB. The decibel system of measuring sound gives a rough correlation of the intensity of sound and its perceived loudness to the human ear. Unlike linear measurement units such as inches or pounds, decibels are measured using a logarithmic scale. On a logarithmic scale, a ten dB increase is ten times more intense than a one dB increase, and an additional 20 dB increase would be 100 times more intense. Noise measurements are usually based on the range of sound frequencies, which most human ears can hear, called the "A-weighted" scale; as a result, most measurements are reported as "dBA."

Local

The City of Blue Lake has adopted noise standards that regulate noise levels for the protection of sensitive receptors. The noise standards are in Municipal Code Section 17.24.280 (Noise Standards). The Municipal Code stipulates construction activity be limited to the hours of 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm on Saturdays, and does not allow heavy equipment-related construction activities (for example, demolition grading, pile-driving, paving etc.) on Sundays and holidays (City of Blue Lake, 2024a). **Table 5** defines the maximum allowable noise level by receiving land use type, as required by Municipal Code Section 17.24.280(C)(3).

Table 5. Maximum Allowable Noise Level by Receiving Land Use.

Noise Level Descriptor	Maximum Exterior Noise Level			Maximum Interior Noise Level		
	7 am - 7 pm	7-10 pm	10 pm - 7 am	7 am - 7 pm	7-10 pm	10 pm – 7 pm
Dwellings, Transient Lodging, Hospitals, Extended Care, and Similar Uses						
Hourly Leq[1]	55 dBA	50 dBA	45 dBA	45 dBA	40 dBA	35 dBA
Meeting Facilities, Auditoriums, Theaters, Libraries, Schools, and Similar Uses						
Hourly Leq[1]	55 dBA	55 dBA	n/a	40 dBA	40 dBA	n/a

[1] Leq means the equivalent continuous sound level in decibels, equivalent to the total sound energy measured over a stated period of time. Hourly Leq means the equivalent continuous sound level in decibels over one hour.

Residential land uses are considered a sensitive receptor for noise. If future residential development is in an elevated noise environment (for example, near industrial operations or major roadways), applicants would be required to conduct exterior and interior noise analysis to ensure future occupants are not subject to noise levels in excess of the standards in **Table 5**. If it is determined that noise levels will exceed the noise standards, then effective noise mitigation measures must be incorporated into the project design pursuant to Municipal Code Section 17.24.280(C)(4).

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-b) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not provide specific development designs or development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for residential development that is consistent with the requirements of the General Plan, Zoning Code, and State housing law. Future residential development has the potential to generate noise during both construction and operation. As noted under the Regulatory Framework discussion, Municipal Code Section 17.24.280 (Noise Standards) places limitation on the hours and days of construction activity, which would minimize potential noise impacts to sensitive receptors in the City. During operation, residential land uses are typically considered sensitive receptors for noise. As such, it is not anticipated that future residential development would result in substantial increases in noise levels in the City. If future residential development is proposed to be located in an elevated noise environment (for example, near industrial operations or major roadways), applicants would be required to conduct exterior and interior noise analysis to ensure future occupants are not subject to noise levels in excess of the standards in Section 17.24.280. Additionally, if new noise-generating land uses are developed near existing residential uses, they would be required to meet the noise standards in Section 17.24.280 at the property line of those residential uses (City of Blue Lake, 2024a). As such, the Housing Element Update would not generate substantial increases in ambient noise levels in excess of applicable standards. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

During the construction of future residential development, there is the potential to generate groundborne vibration and noise from the use of heavy equipment. Ground vibrations from construction activities do not often reach levels that can damage structures. Pile-driving generates the highest levels of vibration; however, pile-driving is not anticipated to be a common construction method used for future residential development in the City. With respect to the impacts of vibration on persons, vibration from future construction activity would be of short duration and would occur during daytime hours, when residents are less likely to be home. As noted above, Municipal Code Section 17.24.280 (Noise Standards) places limitation on the hours and days of construction activity, which would also minimize the potential impacts of vibration on residents near the future development sites. In compliance with the City's noise standards, the Housing Element Update would not generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

c) No Impact. The City is not located within two miles of a private airstrip or public use airport. The closest airport to the City is the California Redwood Coast-Humboldt County Airport in McKinleyville, which is located approximately 8 miles northwest of the City. Therefore, there would be no impact related to airport noise.

Population and Housing

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project result in:				
a) Induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere?	☐	☐	☐	☒

Setting

The Housing Element Update is a policy level document that plans for the City's share of the housing need in Humboldt County during the 6th housing element planning cycle (2019-2027). Housing needs are largely determined by population. Blue Lake's population decreased from 1,253 in 2010 to 1,149 in 2024 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; DOF, 2024), which is an 8.3 percent decrease in population. Over the same time period, the Humboldt County population decreased from 134,623 in 2010 to 133,100 in 2024, which is an 11.3 percent decrease in population. According to the California Department of Finance (DOF), the City of Blue Lake is estimated to have 570 housing units in 2024 and the total number of units in the County is estimated to be 63,397 (DOF, 2024).

As noted in **Table 1**, the Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) that is planned for in the Housing Element Update is 34 units, which includes the RHNA from both the 5th and 6th housing element planning cycles. As noted in **Table 2**, the site inventory in the Housing Element Update estimates that the development potential on the sites identified as vacant and likely developable is 89 units.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a) Less Than Significant Impact. The site inventory in the Housing Element Update only identifies sites as vacant and likely developable that are already designated and zoned for residential use. Development of the sites in the site inventory would be considered infill development as these sites are surrounded by existing development and can be served by existing utilities and infrastructure.

Based on the estimated number of persons per household in the City (2.12 persons per household; DOF, 2024), development of the RHNA allocation of 34 units is estimated to result in a population increase of approximately 72 residents. This would be a 6.3 percent increase in population and a 6 percent increase in the number of total housing units. If all the vacant and likely developable sites listed in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update were developed as estimated in **Table 2** (89 total units), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 189 residents. This would be a 16.4 percent increase in population and a 15.6 percent increase in the total number of housing units.

Since the Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development, the Update would not result in substantial unplanned population growth in the City. Future residential development would be served by existing utilities and infrastructure and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

b) No Impact. The Housing Element Update plans for residential development on sites that are vacant and encourages the preservation of existing housing in the City. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would not displace substantial numbers of existing people or housing. Therefore, no impact would occur in this regard.

Public Services

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project result in:				
a) Result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for any of the public services:				
i) Fire protection	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii) Police protection	☐	☐	☒	☐
iii) Schools?	☐	☐	☒	☐
iv) Parks?	☐	☐	☒	☐
v) Other public facilities				

Setting

Fire Protection

The Blue Lake Fire Protection District, a volunteer organization, provides fire protection within the Blue Lake planning area from headquarters located at 111 1st Avenue in Blue Lake. The Blue Lake Fire Protection District currently has 13 active volunteer fire fighting personnel on its roster. The Fire Protection District maintains a full array of response vehicles, including two Type 1 engines, a Type 3, a rescue unit, two water tenders, and two utility response vehicles. Firefighters are trained and equipped to provide structure, wildland and medical response services. The Fire District employs a full-time, paid Chief that oversees the daily operations of the department (A. Mager, personal communication, September 17, 2024). The BLFPD participates in the countywide mutual aid agreement and has an automatic aid agreement with the Arcata Fire Protection District (AFPD), where both districts are dispatched to fires and other major emergency calls in Blue Lake and the Valley West area of Arcata (Humboldt LAFCo, 2019).

Police Department

The City of Blue Lake contracts with the Humboldt County Sheriff Department for law enforcement services. The contract with the Sheriff Department facilitates the full spectrum of police services, including 24/7 call and response services and related auxiliary services such as investigative, community services, criminalistics, supervisorial, and traffic service functions. Support services include records management, dispatch services, and property/evidence services. The contract provides services at a level not less than that provided by the Sheriff in adjacent areas in the County (City of Blue Lake, 2024c).

Schools

Public schools in the City include the Blue Lake Union Elementary School, which is located on Greenwood Avenue and enrolls students from transitional kindergarten to eighth grade. The Blue Lake Union Elementary School District serves students within and outside the City limits. Their services are supplemented by various private schools and programs conducted by the Office of Education. The current capacity of the elementary school is 300 students, and the current enrollment is approximately 150 students (D. Waldvogel, personal communication, September 17, 2024).

Parks and Recreational Facilities

City standards concerning parkland require that there be at least 3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents and were enacted pursuant to Govt. Code Section 66477. The City currently has approximately 9 acres of parks and recreational facilities. As of 2024, 570 households and a population of 1,149 residents were serviced by the 4 park and recreational facilities in Blue Lake, which includes Perigot Park, The Tot Lot, the Town Square, and the rodeo grounds (DOF, 2024). The City's recreation program includes numerous recreation programs, including a public skate program, a trail network, two baseball/softball fields, as well as a dog park and a yearly Summer and break camp program. The City is in the process of building a new bike park and routinely facilitates recreation events, including the Mad River Enduro Bike Race and the Blue Lake Elementary All-Schools Cross Country Event (A. Mager, personal communication, September 17, 2024).

Other Public Facilities

There are two hospitals within the Humboldt Bay Region that provide medical services: 1) Mad River Hospital in Arcata, and 2) St. Joseph's Hospital in Eureka. The City has partnered with the County of Humboldt to host a public library, which is located in the same building as City Hall and is open to the public two days per week. The library routinely hosts public literacy events. The City of Blue Lake has partnered with Providence Health to facilitate the Blue Lake Resource Center and has entered into an MOU with Providence to facilitate the use of City owned facilities in support of the program. The Resource Center provides various programs and services to the community, including a food distribution program, senior programming, a clothing distribution program, as well as various programs to support health and wellness counseling and referrals (A. Mager, personal communication, September 17, 2024).

Regulatory Framework

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

Land Use Element - Utilities and Services Policy:

Policy 5 Development should be encouraged to achieve efficient use of existing public utilities and services.

Land Use Element - Sense of Community Policy:

Policy 2 The City should promote neighborhood organizations and involvement in improving local services, facilities and living conditions.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a, i- v) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan.

As discussed in the section on Population and Housing, development of the RHNA allocation of 34 units is estimated to result in a population increase of approximately 72 residents, which would be a 6.3 percent increase in population. Additionally, if all the vacant and likely developable sites listed in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update were developed as estimated in **Table 2** (89 total units), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 189 residents, which would be a 16.4 percent increase.

Future residential development in the City as projected in the Housing Element Update could result in an increase in the need for public services. Under CEQA, the need for additional equipment and/or personnel to support public services is not considered a significant impact unless new facilities need to be constructed, that could potentially result in physical impacts. The projected population increase from residential development on the vacant and likely developable sites in the City (189 residents and 16.4 percent increase in population), would not increase the need for public services to the extent that new governmental facilities would need to be constructed. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project result in:				
a) Would the project increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreational facilities such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Does the project include recreational facilities or require the construction or expansion of recreational facilities which might have an adverse physical effect on the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Recreation

Setting

City standards concerning parkland require that there be at least 3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents and were enacted pursuant to Government Code Section 66477. The City currently has approximately 9 acres of parks and recreational facilities. As of 2024, 570 households and a population of 1,149 residents were serviced by the 4 park and recreational facilities in Blue Lake, which includes Perigot Park, The Tot Lot, the Town Square, and the rodeo grounds (DOF, 2024). The City's recreation program includes numerous recreation programs, including a public skate program, a trail network, two baseball/softball fields, as well as a dog park and a yearly Summer and break camp program. The City is in the process of building a new bike park and routinely facilitates recreation events, including the Mad River Enduro Bike Race and the Blue Lake Elementary All-Schools Cross Country Event (A. Mager, personal communication, September 17, 2024).

Regulatory Framework

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

<u>Land Use Element - Preservation of Open Space and Agricultural Lands Policies:</u>

Policy 7 A pedestrian/equestrian pathway system should be developed to connect open space and recreational areas, utilizing existing open space corridors.

Policy 8 Flood prone areas should be designated for agricultural or recreational uses and kept free from urban development wherever possible.

Policy 10 Areas on the river side of the levee, and the levee shall be retained in undeveloped open space; public access to this area, for recreational purposes, shall be encouraged.

Policy 12 Maximum use of school land, utility rights-of-way and other public lands for parks, recreation and open space purposes shall be encouraged.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-b) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan.

As discussed in the section on Population and Housing, development of the RHNA allocation of 34 units is estimated to result in a population increase of approximately 72 residents, which would be a 6.3 percent increase in population. Additionally, if all the vacant and likely developable sites listed in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update were developed as estimated in **Table 2** (89 total units), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 189 residents, which would be a 16.4 percent increase. If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,149 (DOF, 2024) to approximately 1,338.

Future residential development in the City as projected in the Housing Element Update could result in an increase in the use of parks and recreational facilities. As noted in the Setting, the City currently has 9-acres of parkland and the City's standards concerning parkland require that there be at least 3 acres of parkland per 1,000 residents. With the projected population increase from residential development on the vacant and likely developable sites in the City (increase to approximately 1,338 residents), the acres of parkland needed to meet the City's standard would be approximately 4 acres. Based on the amount of parkland in the City relative to this projected population increase, it is not anticipated that the Housing Element Update would result in substantial physical deterioration of parks and recreational facilities in the City. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

Transportation

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Conflict with a program, plan, ordinance or policy addressing the circulation system, including transit, roadway, bicycle and pedestrian facilities?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Substantially increase hazards due to a geometric design feature (for example, sharp curves or dangerous intersections) or incompatible uses (for example, farm equipment)?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Result in inadequate emergency access?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Regional access to the City of Blue Lake is provided by State Route 299, Blue Lake Boulevard, Glendale Drive, Maple Creek Road, West End Road, and Hatchery Road.

Vehicle Traffic

Pursuant to SB 743, traffic congestion is no longer considered a significant impact on the environment under CEQA. Although not required by CEQA, the following discussion about the operational capacity of streets in the City is provided for informational purposes only.

At the time of preparation of the City's 1986 General Plan Circulation Element, traffic counts were obtained within City limits in mid-1985 by City staff with the assistance of the Humboldt County Department of Public Works (City of Blue Lake, 1986; see page 74b of the 1986 Circulation Element). The highest traffic volumes in the City were measured along Blue Lake Boulevard, Greenwood Avenue, and Hatchery Road. Blue Lake Boulevard is the old State Route 299, Greenwood Avenue is the main entrance into the City, and Hatchery Road is the access to the City from the south, which crosses the Mad River. The traffic counts measured approximately 370 vehicles per hour during peak hour traffic and an Average Daily Traffic (ADT) of 3,764 on Greenwood Avenue.

Additional traffic counts were taken by City staff on Greenwood Avenue in the summer of 2015, which measured the following traffic levels:

- 1,973 ADT
- 16% generated by truck traffic
- 131 am Peak (6.6%)
- 185 pm Peak (9.4%)

The traffic levels obtained for Greenwood Avenue in 2015 were significantly lower than the levels obtained in mid-1985 (3,764 ADT in 1985 versus 1,973 ADT in 2015). One possible explanation could be the decline of the timber industry and resulting mill closures and associated decrease in economic activity. Additionally, the City's population has also decreased since the mid-1980s. In contrast to the decreased traffic levels on Greenwood Avenue, the development of the Blue Lake Casino provides a higher level of traffic throughout the day and night on roads such as Blue Lake Boulevard and Chartin Road (County), which provides primary access to the Rancheria.

In the 1986 Circulation Element, it was stated that approximately 1,200 to 1,300 cars per hour would be a high level of traffic for a street with Greenwood's capacity. Additionally, it was also stated that the traffic volume on Greenwood would have to be quadrupled (3,764 to 15,056 vehicle trips per day) to reach capacity. With the decrease in traffic volume since the mid-1980s, it is not anticipated that Greenwood will reach capacity because of build out in the City since the road is fully capable, with its present make-up (parking, width, surface, traffic controls) of handling the increase in volume.

The 1986 Circulation Element includes an analysis of the implications of future growth on the transportation system. As a result of this analysis, the highest priority road improvements were directed towards addressing congestion on Greenwood Avenue, Railroad Avenue, and Hatchery Road (the designated industrial truck route), and the Downtown area. In the last few years, the City completed an intensive engineering and design study for the truck route and the project has been funded to install improvements to the route to slow down traffic and encourage safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists. The planned improvements to the Greenwood portion of the truck route are currently under construction.

Public Transportation

The Humboldt Transit Authority has a transit bus that travels between Willow Creek and Arcata, which serves two bus stops in Blue Lake during the week (City Hall and Blue Lake Casino). Monday through Friday there are 3 westbound runs and 2 eastbound runs. On Saturdays there are 3 westbound and 3 eastbound runs (HTA, 2024).

Trails

In the mid-1980s, much interest was expressed by the community in support of an equestrian and pedestrian trail to the Mad River. Blue Lake's size and topography is conducive to pedestrian and bicycle activity, which allows convenient access to the river and other scenic attractions in the surrounding area. Equestrian use is also common within the City.

In the late 1990s, the City adopted a trails plan, entitled the Blue Lake Community Trail and Pathway Plan, which led to the expansion of trails in the City, including the Powers Creek District loop (former Industrial Park and Business Park loop). This has also included the installation of a pedestrian bridge connecting

Broderick Lane with Monda Way and providing an additional connection between the Downtown and the trail system in the Powers Creek District. Most recently, it has resulted in the installation of a portion of the Annie & Mary Trail (Class I multi-use path) along South Railroad Avenue between Chartin Road and H Street. These trails are used by pedestrians, bicyclists, and equestrians in the community and visitors to the area.

Bicycle Facilities

Class II bike lanes exist on Chartin Road and on Hatchery Road north of the Mad River bridge crossing. As noted above, a Class I multi-use path is located alongside South Railroad Avenue and is part of the planned Annie and Mary Trail that would connect the cities of Arcata and Blue Lake. Bicyclists also ride in the roadway and/or on sidewalks along other streets in the City.

Regulatory Framework

State

Pursuant to SB 743, traffic congestion is no longer considered a significant impact on the environment under CEQA. The new metric bases the traffic impact analysis on vehicle miles traveled (VMT), and potential impacts are reviewed based on land use efficiency rather than road capacity. VMT refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project.

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

<u>Circulation Element - Circulation Patterns Policies:</u>

Policy 6 Adequate local circulation plans shall be required for future divisions and new development.

<u>Circulation Element - Development Policies:</u>

Policy 7 New development shall be required to provide sidewalks or other street improvements and necessary traffic control signs as determined by the City of Blue Lake.

Policy 8 Adequate street access shall be provided to all newly divided parcels and/or new development. "Flag lots" shall be discouraged.

<u>Circulation Element - Public Transportation Policies:</u>

Policy 15 Public transit service, linking Blue Lake to the nearest public transportation corridor, shall be made available at convenient hours and convenient places within the City.

<u>Circulation Element - Non-Vehicular Access Policies:</u>

Policy 16 The City should establish safe access for non-vehicular traffic to and along the Mad River.

Circulation Element - Truck/Industrial Policy:

Policy 23 As long as the City uses the existing truck route, the City should consider minimizing potential densities for residential lots within one local street or one block of Greenwood Avenue.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. Development of these sites would be considered infill development as these sites are surrounded by existing development and can be served by existing utilities and infrastructure.

As discussed in the section on Population and Housing, development of the RHNA allocation of 34 units is estimated to result in a population increase of approximately 72 residents, which would be a 6.3 percent increase in population. Additionally, if all the vacant and likely developable sites listed in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update were developed as estimated in **Table 2** (89 total units), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 189 residents, which would be a 16.4 percent increase. If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,149 (DOF, 2024) to approximately 1,338.

Future residential development in the City as projected in the Housing Element Update would result in an increase in vehicle trips on City streets and the use of facilities for alternatives modes and transit service. Future development projects would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to ensure consistency with applicable regulations that address the circulation system. Depending on the size and character of future projects, a Traffic Impact Study may be required to analyze potential transportation impacts.

Considering the modest increase in population that could result from residential development on the vacant and likely developable sites in the City (189 residents and 16.4 percent increase in population), and the design capacity of the main artery roadway in the City (Greenwood Avenue, Railroad Avenue, and Hatchery Road), it is not anticipated that the Housing Element Update would conflict with any program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

b) Less Than Significant Impact. Senate Bill (SB) 743 established vehicle miles traveled (VMT) as the metric to be applied for determining transportation impacts associated with development projects. Pursuant to SB 743, traffic congestion is no longer considered a significant impact on the environment under CEQA, and potential

impacts are reviewed based on land use efficiency rather than road capacity. VMT refers to the amount and distance of automobile travel attributable to a project.

CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b) provides the criteria for analyzing transportation impacts related to VMT. The City of Blue Lake has not yet established thresholds of significance for VMT. CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.3(b)(3) states that if existing models or methods are not available to estimate the vehicle miles traveled for a particular project, a lead agency may analyze the project's vehicle miles traveled qualitatively. Such qualitative analysis could evaluate factors such as the efficiency of land use patterns, proximity to other destinations, and proximity to facilities for alternative modes.

The Housing Element Update does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. Development of these sites would be considered infill development as these sites are surrounded by existing development and can be served by existing infrastructure. Depending on the size and character of future projects, a Traffic Impact Study may be required to analyze potential VMT impacts.

The Housing Element Update indicates that most of the residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites is located within the City's Powers Creek District, which is zoned to require a mixture of residential and commercial uses. For example, the District is zoned to not allow residential-only development, in order to promote a beneficial mixture of residential and commercial uses. Land use regulations that promote infill and mixed-use development have the potential to reduce vehicle miles traveled.

The City has planned for the following improvements to support pedestrian and bicycle use, which would encourage the use of alternative modes by the future residents on the sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the Housing Element Update. Several of these improvements would specifically improve the pedestrian and bicycle access to and from the Powers Creek District, where most of the residential development potential is projected to occur.

- Paving the existing trail system.
- Eliminating pedestrian facility gaps to improve access between the Powers Creek District, Downtown, and the Blue Lake Elementary School.
- Constructing complete streets improvements along the City's industrial truck route.
- Providing bicycle parking spaces at public facilities and other City-owned property.

Given the proximity of most of the sites planned for residential development to the center of Blue Lake, and the required mix of uses in the Powers Creek District, future residential development would encourage short trips to access a variety of destinations by alternative transportation modes and the completion of these improvements would be expected to reduce VMT. Additionally, most of the sites planned for residential development are within walking distance (<1/3 mile) of the bus stops at City Hall and the Blue Lake Rancheria.

Based on the above discussion, the Housing Element Update would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b). Therefore impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

c-d) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. Development of these sites would be considered infill development as these sites are surrounded by existing development and can be served by existing utilities and infrastructure.

There are multiple routes for access in and out of the City that could be used for emergency access including Blue Lake Boulevard, Hatchery Road/West End Road, Maple Creek Road, Glendale Drive, and State Route 299. The City's designated industrial truck route (Greenwood Avenue, Railroad Avenue, and Hatchery Road) is the main artery roadway through the City that would serve most future residential development identified in the Housing Element Update. According to recent traffic counts, the traffic volumes on Greenwood Avenue are well below its design capacity and it currently operates at an acceptable level of service of C or better (W-Trans, 2023). Although the City's industrial truck route would serve most of the projected residential development in the Housing Element Update, the percentage of truck traffic is a small portion of the overall traffic volume and would not result in incompatibility between the existing industrial and future residential uses.

Future residential development may require new access roads and driveways to development sites that will require review by the Public Works Department, Engineering Department, and Volunteer Fire Protection District to ensure that they comply with applicable design standards for adequate emergency access and do not result in any hazardous design features. In compliance with existing design standards, the Housing Element Update would not increase hazardous design features or incompatible uses and would not result in inadequate emergency access. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

Tribal Cultural Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Would the project cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource, defined in Public Resources Code § 21074 as either a site, feature, place, cultural landscape that is geographically defined in terms of the size and scope of the landscape, sacred place, or object with cultural value to a California Native American tribe, and that is				
i) Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or	☐	☐	☒	☐
ii) A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code § 5024.1. In applying the criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resource Code § 5024.1, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Public Resources Code Section 21074 (a)(1)(A) and (B) defines tribal cultural resources as "sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe" and meets either of the following criteria:

- Listed or eligible for listing in the California Register of Historical Resources, or in a local register of historical resources as defined in Public Resources Code section 5020.1(k), or
- A resource determined by the lead agency, in its discretion and supported by substantial evidence, to be significant pursuant to criteria set forth in subdivision (c) of Public Resources Code Section 5024.1. In applying these criteria, the lead agency shall consider the significance of the resource to a California Native American tribe.

The City lies within the traditional territory of the Pat-a-wat division of the Wiyot Indian tribe. By the time of the arrival of European settlers in 1850, the Blue Lake area had become a borderland zone between the territories of the Wiyot and Whilkut tribes (Loud, 1918). The Wiyots of Mad River were a subunit of the larger Wiyot tribe, and were known as Pat-a-wats, after the Wiyot name for Mad River. The territory for the Pat-a-wats was generally described as the lower Mad River from Blue Lake near the junction of the North Fork down to the coast, and thence south to the southern shore of Humboldt Bay (Merriam, 1976).

The sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update are not known to contain any tribal cultural resources.

Regulatory Framework

State

Senate Bill (SB) 18

CGC §65352.3 (SB 18) requires local governments to contact tribal organizations prior to adopting or amending a general plan or specific plan, and prior to designating open space. The intent of SB 18 is to provide Native American tribes an opportunity to participate in land use decisions for the purpose of protecting or mitigating impacts to Native American cultural resources and sacred sites. Tribes have 90 days to respond to the request for consultation under SB 18.

Assembly Bill (AB) 52

Public Resources Code (PRC) §21084.2 (AB 52) establishes that "*a project with an effect that may cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a tribal cultural resource is a project that may have a significant effect on the environment*."

Pursuant to AB 52, in order to determine whether a project may have such an effect, a lead agency is required to consult with a California Native American tribe that is traditionally and culturally affiliated with the geographic area of the proposed project if the tribe requested to the lead agency, in writing, to be informed through formal notification of proposed projects in the geographical area, and the tribe responds, in writing, within 30 days of receipt of the formal notification and requests the consultation.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a, i-ii) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. As noted in the Setting, the sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update are not known to contain any tribal cultural resources.

To satisfy the requirements of SB 18, the City provided written notice of the proposed 2019-2027 Housing Element Update to the Tribes in the Humboldt Bay region at the beginning of August 2022. Tribes have 90 days to respond to the request for consultation under SB 18 and no responses were received. To satisfy the requirements of AB 52, the City provided written notice of preparation of a CEQA Initial Study for the 2019-2027 Housing Element Update to the Tribes in the Humboldt Bay region at the end of January 2024. Tribes have 30 days to respond to the request for consultation under AB 52 and no responses were received.

All future residential development within the City would be required to comply with local and State regulations that protect cultural resources. At the local level, the City's General Plan and the regulations in Municipal Code Chapter 15.12 (Grading, Erosion, and Sediment Control) require the implementation of an inadvertent discovery protocol for all development. This protocol requires construction activity to cease if cultural resources are encountered during permitted or non-permitted construction activities. Future projects that require discretionary review would also be subject to review under CEQA, which could require consultation with local Tribes and preparation of a site-specific Cultural Resources Investigation. If a site is considered sensitive for cultural resources or resources are discovered during site-specific investigation, mitigation would be required to reduce potential impacts.

Therefore, in compliance with existing regulatory requirements, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact related to tribal cultural resources.

Utilities and Service Systems

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
Would the project:				
a) Require or result in the relocation or construction of new or expanded water, wastewater treatment or storm water drainage, electric power, natural gas, or telecommunications facilities, the construction or relocation of which could cause significant environmental effects?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Have sufficient water supplies available to serve the project and reasonably foreseeable future development during normal, dry and multiple dry years?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Result in a determination by the wastewater treatment provider, which serves or may serve the project that it has adequate capacity to serve the project's projected demand in addition to the provider's existing commitments?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Generate solid waste in excess of state or local standards, or in excess of the capacity of local infrastructure, or otherwise impair the attainment of solid waste reduction goals?	☐	☐	☒	☐
e) Comply with federal, state, and local management and reduction statutes and regulations related to solid waste?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

Water

The City of Blue Lake obtains all of its domestic water supply through a contract with the Humboldt Bay Municipal Water District (HBMWD). Water is delivered to the city via a booster pump station northwest of the City on Glendale Drive. The City's water system includes two redwood water storage tanks, transmission mains, fire hydrants, valves, and the water services from the mains to individual water meters. The City owns and operates the booster pump station on Glendale Drive, which pumps water through a single pipe into the City's main distribution system to a pressure needed to fill two storage tanks. The distribution system consists of 51,050 feet of pipeline which is mostly asbestos cement, installed in the early 1970s. The booster station pumps water into town and the water that is not used flows through the system and into the City's

storage tanks. The City has two redwood storage tanks with a total storage capacity of 900,000 gallons (Humboldt LAFCo, 2019). There is an existing water main line along Taylor Way that was designed to serve industrial development and is available to serve most of the residential development potential projected in the Housing Element Update.

The City's daily water use allotment is currently 400,000 gallons, established via the contract with HBMWD. Currently, the City reports that the average water use during peak use months is approximately 150,000 gallons per day (gpd), 38% of the daily allotment from HBMWD. Based on the City's current population of 1,149 residents as estimated by the California Department of Finance (DOF, 2024), daily per capita water use is conservatively estimated to be approximately 131 gallons per day (gpd) based on the peak use months noted above (150,000 gallons).

Wastewater

The Blue Lake Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) is located in the northwest portion of the City. The WWTP is a primary headworks facility followed by a 7.5 acre, 4-cell secondary treatment lagoon system, a chlorine disinfection system, and two effluent disposal percolation ponds. The WWTP has an average dry weather flow (ADWF) of 0.18 million gallons per day (MGD). The wastewater treatment capacity is 1 million gallons per day (mgd). The system is designed for average flows of 0.25 mgd and peak flows of 1.54 mgd (Humboldt LAFCo, 2019). According to the City Public Works Department, the City's average dry weather flows are currently 0.09 mgd, which is approximately 9 percent of the plant's 1 mgd capacity and 36 percent of the average flow design capacity. To date, the system has not experienced any sewer overflow events.

In 2013, the City adopted an Interim Policy Pertaining to the Release of Sewer Capacity. It determined that the WWTP had a remaining unallocated sewer capacity equal to 100 residential equivalent units (REUs). The City has approved projects to use the remaining REUs, but these projects have not yet been constructed. The City is planning capital improvements to the WWTP to serve the development in the Powers Creek District, which includes electrical panel upgrades and installation of two (2) 5 h.p. aerators at the treatment plant. These improvements, which would increase treatment capacity by approximately 180 residential equivalent unit (REUs), were previously planned to serve an expansion of production at the Mad River Brewery (MRB). The proposal by MRB to expand their production was ultimately abandoned and the City did not construct the improvements to the WWTP to provide the additional capacity.

Stormwater

A large portion of the City of Blue Lake's stormwater infrastructure dates back to the 1950s and 60s and some of the facilities may need to be serviced or replaced in the near future. The City constructed stormwater infrastructure in the early 1980s in the Powers Creek District, when the City was planning to redevelop the former McIntosh Mill site as an industrial park. The City has not adopted its own stormwater regulations and is not within the municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4) permit area in Humboldt County. Onsite and offsite stormwater improvement requirements for development projects are applied on a case-by-case basis.

Dry Utilities

Electricity is supplied to the City through Redwood Coast Energy Authority Community Choice Energy Program (RCEA, 2024), which utilizes the Pacific Gas and Electric Company (PG&E) electrical grid. Gas is supplied to the City through PG&E. Telecommunications are supplied to the City by Optimum and AT&T.

Solid Waste

Humboldt Waste Management Authority (HWMA) was formed through a joint powers' agreement in 1999, and is comprised of six jurisdictions within Humboldt County: the cities of Arcata, Blue Lake, Eureka, Ferndale, Rio Dell, and representing the unincorporated areas, Humboldt County. Solid waste produced in the City of Blue Lake is collected by Blue Lake Garbage and transported to a transfer station in the Humboldt Bay region such as the HWMA transfer station in Eureka, California. The solid waste is then transported to the Dry Creek Landfill in White City, Oregon. The Dry Creek Landfill has an operational life exceeding 100 years (Dry Creek Landfill, Inc., 2024).

Regulatory Framework

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policy including:

Land Use Element - Utilities and Services Policies:

Policy 3 Solid waste, whether public or private, shall be properly collected, stored and transported to protect public health and safety and to ensure a clean community appearance.

Policy 4 The City shall not allow development which would exceed the City's sewage treatment capacity; nor shall the City knowingly allow development which could adversely affect water quality in the Mad River.

Policy 5 Development should be encouraged to achieve efficient use of existing public utilities and services.

Policy 6 In approving development, the City shall be consistent in requiring street improvements, sidewalks, curbs, gutters, fire protection systems, utility undergrounding and other pertinent improvements.

Policy 7. The City shall provide adequate supply of good quality water to all current users; new users shall be accommodated without diminishing existing levels of service.

Policy 8 The City shall reserve sewer capacity for the residential build-out projected in the Housing Element. Any remaining unallocated sewer capacity shall be made available to nonresidential uses as approved by the City Manager and/or City Council.

Policy 11 Due to limited remaining sewer capacity, large water users/strong dischargers shall be required to use alternative treatment/pre-treatment methods, where feasible, rather than the City

sewage treatment system.

Policy 12 Fees shall be charged by the City for water and sewer system users; these fees shall be determined equitably, based on the entire system costs. Multiple uses of the same hookup shall be discouraged unless sufficient justification, as determined by Public Works, can be provided to do otherwise.

Land Use Element – Utilities and Services Implementation Measures:

Measure C The City should develop an annual Capital Improvements program for major construction, repair, and replacement of public facilities. During the upcoming period, for instance, the City should consider the following capital improvements:

- Improvements to the sewer treatment plant to increase capacity to accommodate new commercial and industrial users.

Housing Element Update – Wastewater Treatment Plant Improvements Program:

HI-18 To address the potential insufficient wastewater treatment capacity during a portion of the planning period, the City shall construct the wastewater treatment plant improvements identified in the City's Capital Improvement Plan within two years of adopting the housing element. These improvements include electrical panel upgrades and the installation of two (2) 5-horsepower aerators, which are estimated to provide an additional 180 residential equivalent units (REUs).

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. Development of these sites would be considered infill development as these sites are surrounded by existing development and can be served by existing utilities and infrastructure.

Future residential development in the City would require utility infrastructure improvements that would result in physical impacts to the development sites and the adjacent public right-of-way to connect to existing infrastructure. These potential impacts from future residential development will be addressed when permit applications are submitted. Through the building permit process, impacts would be addressed through compliance with existing infrastructure design standards and regulatory requirements. If the future projects

require a discretionary permit, then analysis of the impacts would also be required under CEQA.

In compliance with existing design standards and regulatory requirements, potential impacts related to the construction or relocation of utility infrastructure from future residential development would not cause significant environmental effects. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

b) Less Than Significant Impact. The City's daily water use allotment is currently 400,000 gallons, established via the contract with HBMWD. Currently, the City reports that the average water use during peak use months is approximately 150,000 gallons per day (gpd), 38% of the daily allotment from HBMWD. Based on the City's current population of 1,149 residents as estimated by the California Department of Finance (DOF, 2024), daily per capita water use is conservatively estimated to be approximately 131 gallons per day (gpd) based on the peak use months noted above (150,000 gallons).

The HBMWD draws water from the unconfined Holocene River Channel Deposits aquifer at a depth of 60 to 90 feet below the bed of the Mad River through Ranney wells situated in or in close proximity to the Mad River. Water is extracted from this aquifer instead of directly from the river since percolation through surface ground layers help to naturally filter water and improve quality of the drinking water supply. The amount of water supplied to the City under existing conditions is less than 1 percent of the annual yield of the Mad River. The HBMWD Groundwater Management Plan indicates that groundwater recharge is achieved by inundation of the recharge areas in the Mad River channel through the District's operation of Matthews Dam and Ruth Lake. As a result, additional residential development within the City would not have a direct impact on the volume of groundwater available to HBMWD. Additionally, the HBMWD has indicated that there is sufficient supply for currently forecasted development in the Humboldt Bay Region.

As discussed in the section on Population and Housing, if all the vacant and likely developable sites listed in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update were developed as estimated in **Table 2** (89 total units), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 189 residents, which would be a 16.4 percent increase. If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,149 (DOF, 2024) to approximately 1,338. With this increase in population, it is estimated that daily water use would increase by approximately 24,760 gallons for a total of 174,760 gallons during peak use months. Since the estimated increase in daily water use would be well within the City's daily water use allotment of 400,000 gallons, there would be sufficient water supplies available to serve the residential development projected in the Housing Element Update. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

c) Less Than Significant Impact. In 2013, the City adopted an Interim Policy Pertaining to the Release of Sewer Capacity. It determined that it had a remaining unallocated sewer capacity equal to 100 residential equivalent units (REUs). Of the estimated remaining REUs, 60 REUs were reserved then for residential connections, including both single- and multi-family uses, and 40 REUs were then made available for non-residential use. According to the City Engineer, the remaining wastewater treatment capacity is anticipated to be used by the approved (not constructed yet) and proposed development projects in the City. Therefore, improvements to the City's wastewater treatment facility will be required in order to have adequate capacity to serve the residential development potential projected in the Housing Element Update. As identified in the City's Capital Improvement Plan, these improvements include electrical panel upgrades and the installation

of two (2) 5 horsepower aerators, which are anticipated to provide an additional 180 REUs. To address the potential for insufficient wastewater treatment capacity during a portion of the 6th cycle planning period, the City has included Program HI-18 in the Housing Element Update, which commits the City to construction of the wastewater treatment plant improvements within two years of adoption of the Housing Element. This implementation schedule will ensure there is sufficient wastewater treatment capacity available during the planning period for development on the vacant and likely developable sites identified in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update. The City anticipates requiring future residential development projects to pay a fair share contribution to the improvements to the WWTP through a development impact fee, which will be determined based on the estimated REUs for the projects. In compliance with Program HI-18, the City would have sufficient wastewater treatment capacity to serve the projected residential development potential. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

d-e) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. Development of these sites would be considered infill development as these sites are surrounded by existing development and can be served by existing utilities and infrastructure.

Future residential development within the City would increase the demand for solid waste services and would increase the amount of solid waste generated and sent to landfills. Solid waste produced in the City is collected by Blue Lake Garbage and transported to a transfer station in the Humboldt Bay region such as the HWMA transfer station in Eureka, California. The solid waste is then transported to the Dry Creek Landfill in White City, Oregon. The Dry Creek Landfill has an operational life exceeding 100 years (Dry Creek Landfill, Inc., 2024). The HWMA transfer station and the Dry Creek Landfill have sufficient capacity for the foreseeable future to accommodate the solid waste generated by future residential development in the City of Blue Lake. Additionally, all future development would be required to comply with application regulations related to reducing solid waste, recycling, and so on. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

Wildfires

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
If located in or near state responsibility areas or lands classified as very high fire hazard severity zones, **would the project**:				
a) Substantially impair an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Due to slope, prevailing winds, and other factors, exacerbate wildfire risks, and thereby expose project occupants to pollutant concentrations from a wildfire or the uncontrolled spread of a wildfire?	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Require the installation or maintenance of associated infrastructure (such as roads, fuel breaks, emergency water sources, power lines or other utilities) that may exacerbate fire risk or that may result in temporary or ongoing impacts to the environment?	☐	☐	☒	☐
d) Expose people or structures to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes?	☐	☐	☒	☐

Setting

The City of Blue Lake is an incorporated city located in Humboldt County, California, eight miles inland from Humboldt Bay on State Route 299 (see **Figure 1**). The City is situated in the Mad River Valley and the Mad River borders the City on the south and west. The lands surrounding Blue Lake are comprised of steep hillsides to the north and east and generally flat agricultural lands to the west and south. The land uses surrounding Blue Lake are a combination of rural residential, agriculture, timberland, commercial, industrial, and open space land uses.

Fire protection in Humboldt County is provided by local districts, cities, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE, 2024a). The City limits are located in a Local Responsibility Area (LRA), which is served by the Blue Lake Volunteer Fire Protection District. Forestlands surrounding the City are in a State Responsibility Area (SRA) that is served by CAL FIRE. The closest fire station to the project site is the main station for the Volunteer Fire Protection District, which is near City Hall on First Avenue. The forestlands in this part of Humboldt County could be subject to wildfire and are classified by CAL FIRE as Moderate, High, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The City limits and forestlands immediately surrounding the City are classified by CAL FIRE as being in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (CAL FIRE, 2024).

Regulatory Framework

State

California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE)
The Bates Bill (AB 337), enacted in 1992, required CAL FIRE to work with local governments to identify high fire hazard severity zones throughout each county in the State. CAL FIRE adopted Fire Hazard Severity Zone (FHSZ) Maps for SRAs in November 2007. Pursuant to CGC §51175-51189, CAL FIRE also recommended FHSZs for Local Responsibility Areas (LRAs). Over the years, CAL FIRE has updated the maps and provided new recommendations to local governments based on fire hazard modeling.

The fire hazard model considers wildland fuels (natural vegetation that burns during the wildfire); topography (fires burn faster as they burn up-slope); weather (fire burns faster and with more intensity when air temperature is high, relative humidity is low, and winds are strong); and ember production and movement (how far embers move and how receptive the landing site is to new fires). The model recognizes that some areas of California have more frequent and severe wildfires than other areas.

California Fire, Building, and Residential Codes
California Fire Code, Part 9, Chapter 49 (Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Areas), California Building Code Chapter 7A (Materials and Construction Methods for Exterior Wildfire Exposure), and California Residential Code Section R337 include standards for new construction in Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Areas (fire hazard severity zones). A Wildland-Urban Interface Fire Area is defined as a geographic area identified by the State as a Fire Hazard Severity Zone in accordance with PRC §4291 through §4204, and Government Code §51175 through §51189, or other areas designated by the local enforcing agency to be at a significant risk from wildfires. The purpose of the standards is to prevent a building from being ignited by flying embers that can travel as much as a mile away from a wildfire and to contribute to a systematic reduction in fire-related losses through the use of performance and prescriptive requirements. In addition, as of 2011, the CRC requires that automatic fire sprinkler systems be installed in all new single-family residences to protect all areas of a dwelling unit in the event of a fire.

Local

Future development on any sites identified for residential development in the Housing Element Update will be required to comply with all relevant General Plan policies including:

Public Safety Element Policies:

Policy 11 The City of Blue Lake should ensure good fire protection by improving the water and hydrant system wherever necessary to eliminate dead end mains, provide adequate valving, provide a minimum of 1,500 gallons per minute from any single hydrant at the maximum daily residential consumption rate, provide hydrants within 300 feet of any point, and provide adequate storage for the types of fire encountered.

Policy 12 Enforcement of the Building Code, the Housing Code, and Title 19 of the California Administrative Code and the City Weed Abatement Ordinance should be given high priority to ensure adequate new construction and the correction of unsafe fire conditions.

Policy 15 Where existing streets are narrow, on street parking should be controlled so that emergency vehicles will be able to pass at all times. Downtown Blue Lake needs to be studied to determine the types of control that will relieve existing congestion.

Policy 37 State Highway 299 (in both directions), Glendale Boulevard and Blue Lake Boulevard, Maple Creek Road and West End Road should be designated as evacuation routes from the planning area, Greenwood Avenue, Railroad Avenue and I Street are the evacuation routes within the city. These routes should be kept passable in major emergencies recognizing that the type and location of the disaster will determine which will be most needed.

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a-d) Less Than Significant Impact. The Housing Element Update does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. Development of these sites would be considered infill development as these sites are surrounded by existing development and can be served by existing utilities and infrastructure.

There are multiple routes for access in and out of the City that could be used for emergency evacuations including Blue Lake Boulevard, Hatchery Road/West End Road, Maple Creek Road, Glendale Drive, and State Route 299. The City's designated industrial truck route (Greenwood Avenue, Railroad Avenue, and Hatchery Road) is the main artery roadway through the City that would serve most future residential development identified in the Housing Element Update. According to recent traffic counts, the traffic volumes on Greenwood Avenue are well below its design capacity and it currently operates at an acceptable level of service of C or better (W-Trans, 2023). Future residential development may require new access roads and driveways to development sites that will require review by the Public Works Department, Engineering Department, and Volunteer Fire Protection District to ensure that they comply with applicable design standards for emergency access including, but not limited to, lane widths, road surfaces, vertical clearance, brush clearance, and allowable grades. Based on the projected buildout identified on vacant and likely developable sites in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update (89 units; see Table 21 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2024b), it is not anticipated that future residential development in the

City would impair implementation of an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan. Therefore, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

Fire protection in Humboldt County is provided by local districts, cities, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE). The City limits are located in a Local Responsibility Area (LRA), which is served by the Blue Lake Volunteer Fire Protection District. Forestlands surrounding the City are in a State Responsibility Area (SRA), which is served by CAL FIRE. The closest fire station to the project site is the main station for the Volunteer Fire Protection District, which is near City Hall on First Avenue. The forestlands in this part of Humboldt County could be subject to wildfire and are classified by CAL FIRE as Moderate, High, and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. The City limits and forestlands immediately surrounding the City are classified by CAL FIRE as being in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone (CAL FIRE, 2024).

There are three primary factors that are used in assessing wildfire hazards - topography, weather, and fuel. The sites identified as vacant and likely developable in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update would be in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone and do not exhibit topography, vegetation patterns, or other factors (for example, fuels, aspect, etc.) that would expose future residents or structures to a significant risk of wildland fires or exacerbate wildfire risks. The future residents would be at no greater risk of experiencing pollutant concentrations from wildfires than other residents in the Humboldt Bay region. Future residential development will require new infrastructure and utilities, which would be installed and maintained at the development sites and adjacent public right-of-way. The location of new infrastructure would occur in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone in City limits and is not anticipated to exacerbate fire risk or result in ongoing impacts to the environment. The residential development potential projected in the Housing Element Update would occur on sites that are generally flat and would not be subject to significant risks, including downslope or downstream flooding or landslides, as a result of runoff, post-fire slope instability, or drainage changes. Therefore, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

Mandatory Findings of Significance:

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
a) Does the project have the potential to substantially degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce the habitat of a fish or wildlife species, cause a fish or wildlife population to drop below self-sustaining levels, threaten to eliminate a plant or animal community, substantially reduce the number or restrict the range of a rare or endangered plant or animal or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory?	☐	☐	☒	☐
b) Does the project have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? ("Cumulatively considerable" means that the incremental effects of a project are considerable when viewed in connection with the effects of past projects, the effects of other current projects, and the effects of probable future projects.)	☐	☐	☒	☐
c) Does the project have environmental effects which will cause substantial adverse effects on human beings, either directly or indirectly	☐	☐	☒	☐

Discussion

The Housing Element Update is a policy document that does not result in physical changes to the environment but encourages the provision of housing in areas of the City that are already designated and zoned to allow residential development. While policies could require amendments to the Zoning Code or result in actions of the City that could cause a physical change, the policies would not result in specific physical changes to the environment. Additionally, any amendments to the Zoning Code would be subject to project-specific environmental review pursuant to CEQA.

a) Less Than Significant Impact. As discussed in the applicable environmental resource sections above, the proposed 2019-2027 Housing Element Update does not have the potential to degrade the quality of the environment, substantially reduce fish or wildlife habitats, impact wildlife populations or ranges, or eliminate important examples of the major periods of California history or prehistory.

The proposed 2019-2027 Housing Element Update does not entitle, propose, or otherwise require the construction of new housing units or rehabilitation of existing housing units, and does not allow development

in areas that are not already designated and zoned for residential development as identified in the City's General Plan Land Use Element and Zoning Code.

Through the City's development review process, future residential development projects would be evaluated to identify potential environmental impacts to biological and cultural resources and ensure compliance with existing laws and regulations protecting these resources. Where applicable, appropriate project changes and/or mitigation measures would be required to avoid/minimize potential impacts associated with future projects. In compliance with existing laws and regulations, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

b) Less Than Significant Impact. As defined in §15355 of the CEQA Guidelines, a cumulative impact consists of an impact that is created as a result of the combination of a proposed project together with other closely related past, present, and reasonably foreseeable future projects that cause related impacts. As noted in §15064(h)(4) of the CEQA Guidelines, the mere existence of significant cumulative impacts caused by other projects alone shall not constitute substantial evidence that the proposed project's incremental effects are cumulatively considerable.

The proposed 2019-2027 Housing Element Update is a policy document that identifies goals, policies, and implementation programs that are necessary to accommodate adequate housing in the City in accordance with the RHNA. The Housing Element Update does not include specific development proposals, nor does it grant development entitlements. The Housing Element Update plans for development on sites that are already designated and zoned for residential development and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. Development of these sites would be considered infill development as these sites are surrounded by existing development and can be served by existing utilities and infrastructure.

As discussed in the section on Population and Housing, development of the RHNA allocation of 34 units is estimated to result in a population increase of approximately 72 residents, which would be a 6.3 percent increase in population. Additionally, if all the vacant and likely developable sites listed in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update were developed as estimated in **Table 2** (89 total units), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 189 residents, which would be a 16.4 percent increase. If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,149 (DOF, 2024) to approximately 1,338. Considering the decrease in population and economic activity in the City over the last two decades, it is not anticipated that this level of growth would result in significant cumulative impacts in any of the resource categories analyzed in this document.

As discussed in the various resource sections of this document, in compliance with existing laws and regulations, future residential development in the City is not anticipated to result in significant environmental impacts. Future development projects would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis through the City's development review process to identify potential impacts and ensure compliance with existing laws and regulations. Where applicable, appropriate project changes and/or mitigation measures would be required to avoid/minimize potential impacts. In compliance with existing laws and regulations, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

c) Less Than Significant Impact. As discussed in the applicable environmental resource sections of this document, the proposed 2019-2027 Housing Element Update does not have any components that would

result in adverse effects on human beings. Future development projects would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis through the City's development review process to identify potential impacts and ensure compliance with existing laws and regulations for the protection of public health and safety. Where applicable, appropriate project changes and/or mitigation measures would be required to avoid/minimize potential impacts on human beings. In compliance with existing laws and regulations, the Housing Element Update would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

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