September 2025 | Initial Study

INITIAL STUDY FOR BLUE LAKE 2019-2027 HOUSING ELEMENT UPDATE – IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAM HI-14 (MULTI-FAMILY OR MF COMBINING ZONE)

City of Blue Lake

Prepared by:
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111 Greenwood Ave
Blue Lake, California 95525

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Initial Study

1. Project Title

The City of Blue Lake 2019-2027 Housing Element Update – Implementation Program HI-14 (Multi-Family or MF combining zone).

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
https://bluelake.ca.gov
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Blue Lake, California 95525

4. Project Location

The project area is the City of Blue Lake in Humboldt County, California. The regional location and project area are shown in **Figures 1** and **2**. The specific site that the Multi-Family or MF combining zone would be applied to is a 1-acre portion of APN 025-201-023 (see **Figures 3 and 4**).

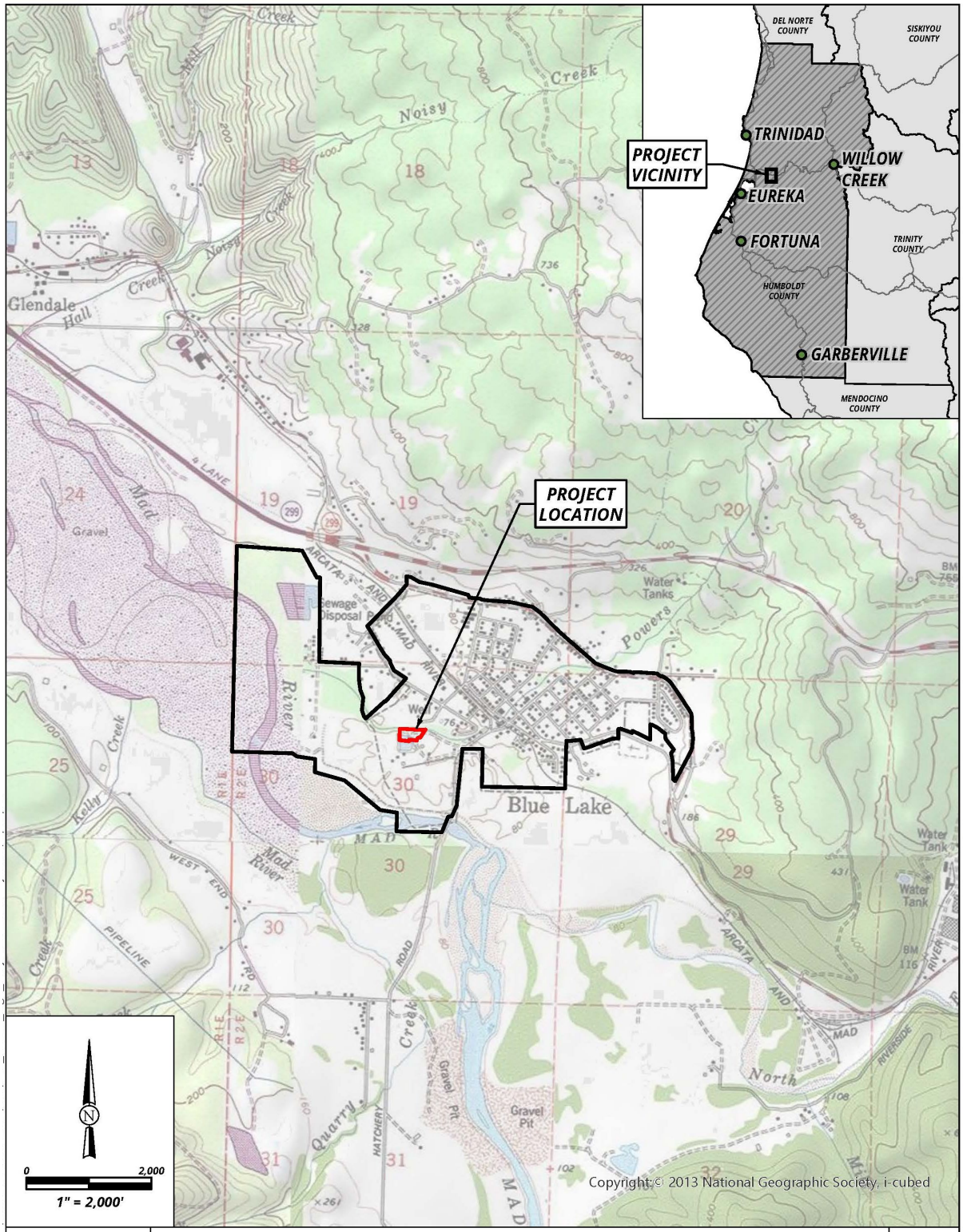
5. Project Sponsor's Name and Address

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

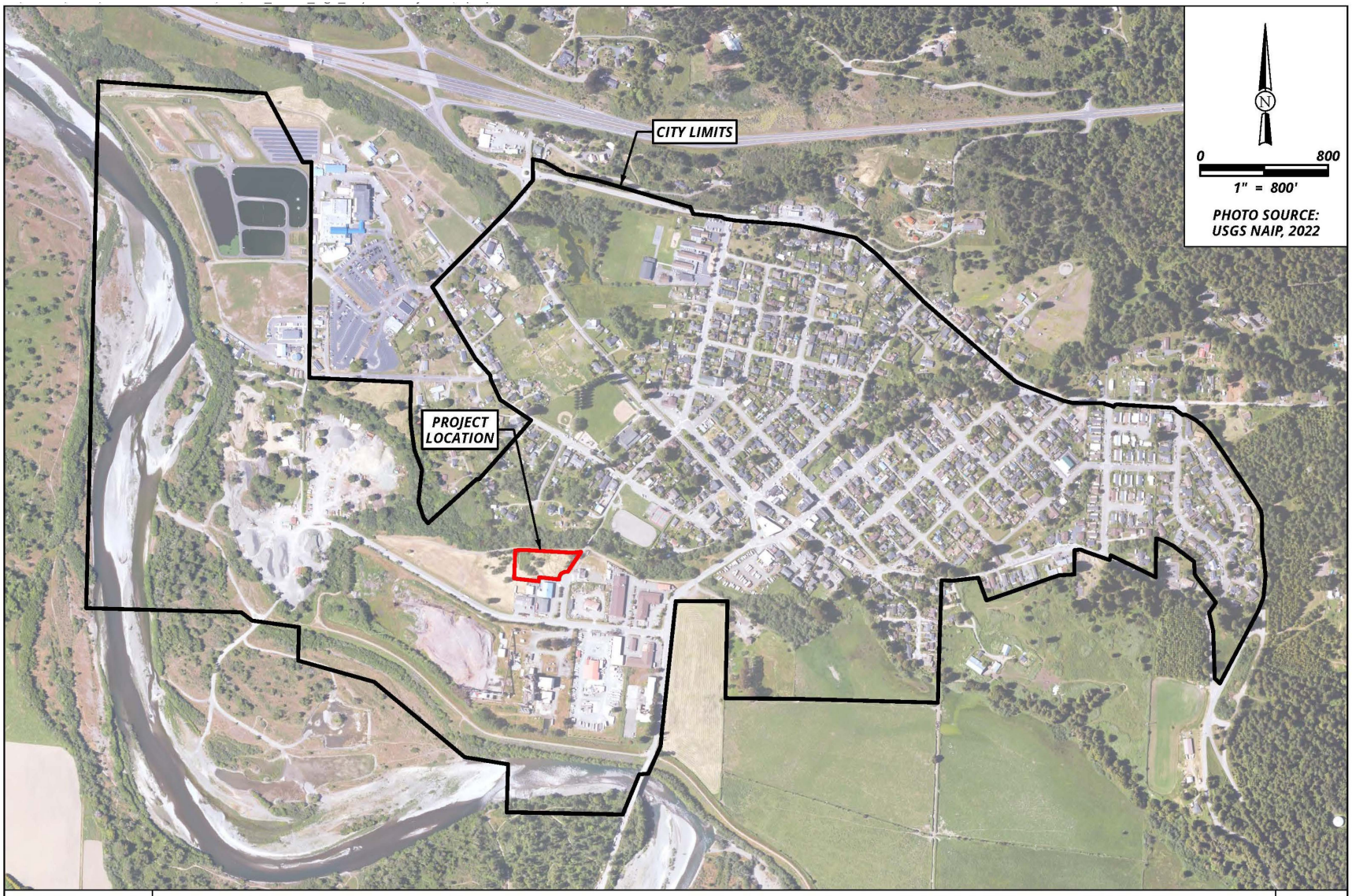
6. Zoning

The Multiple Family or MF Combining Zone has the potential to be applied to the following Zoning Classifications:

- Residential Multiple Family (R-3)
- Mixed Use (MU)
- Opportunity (O)
- Planned Development Residential (PD-R)



SHN	City of Blue Lake Housing Element Update - Implementation Program HI-14 Blue Lake, California	**Project Location Map** September 2025 - 016107.017	**Figure 1**



City of Blue Lake
Housing Element Update - Implementation Program HI-14
Blue Lake, California

City Limits Map

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Figure 2

7. 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 an eight-year period.

The City of Blue Lake adopted its Housing Element Update for the 6th planning cycle (2019-2027) on July 22, 2025, but the City must implement one of the programs in the Housing Element Update (Program HI-14) before the element can be found in substantial compliance with State Housing Law. As stated in a recent determination letter (dated August 21, 2025) from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD, 2025):

> "*The adopted element meets statutory requirements of State Housing Element Law (Gov. Code, § 65580 et seq). The adopted element was found to be substantially the same as the revised draft element that HCD's September 20, 2023 review determined met statutory requirements. 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 when all necessary rezoning 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 21). 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 HI14 (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 (e.g., resolution, ordinance) to HCD and HCD will review and approve the element in accordance with Government Code section 65585*."

For reference, the text of Program HI-14 is shown below.

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.*

<u>Responsibility</u>: City Council, City Clerk, and Planning Staff.

<u>Time Frame</u>: 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).

<u>Funding Source</u>: General Fund and/or Grants.

Housing Element Program HI-14 proposes the creation of a new combining zone (Multi-Family or MF combining zone) to address the requirements in State Housing Law to have a zone in the City that allows multi-family development without discretionary review (i.e., Conditional Use Permit or Site Plan Approval). Projects that are allowed without discretionary review are also referred to as being allowed by-right or principally permitted and are not subject to review under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The intent of the MF combining zone is to provide a zoning tool that will allow the City to meet the by-right zoning requirements in State Housing Law on a specific site or sites in the City each Housing Element planning cycle (every 8 years) to ensure there are adequate sites to provide housing for a variety of income levels. During the current planning cycle (6th cycle), the MF combining zone must be applied to a single site that is greater than 1-acre.

The proposed text of the Multi-Family or MF Combining Zone is provided below.

17.20.070 Multi-Family or MF Zone

The Multi-Family or MF Combining Zone is intended to be combined with the Residential Multiple Family (R-3), Mixed-Use (MU), Opportunity (O), and Planned Development Residential (PD-R) zones for the purpose of facilitating multi-family housing for a variety of income levels.

A. *Applicability. The following regulations shall apply in the R-3, MU, O, and PD-R zones, when combined with the MF Combining Zone in lieu of the requirements normally applicable.*

B. *Density. A minimum of 16 dwelling units per acre (1 unit per 2,723 square feet of lot area) and a maximum of 20 dwelling units per acre (1 unit per 2,178 square feet of lot area), except as may be modified by State Density Bonus Law.*

C. *Percentage of Residential Development. A minimum of 50 percent of the square footage in a mixed-use development shall be residential. A development shall not be precluded from providing 100 percent residential square footage due to the requirements of the principal zone.*

D. *No Discretionary Review Required. Residential development in the MF Combining Zone shall be principally permitted and shall not require Site Plan Approval by the Planning Commission when at least 20 percent of the units are affordable to lower-income households.*

E. Objective Design Standards. New residential or mixed-use structures or additions/renovations to existing residential or mixed-use structures in the MF Combining Zone shall be subject to the objective design standards applicable to the principal zone.

The proposed project analyzed in this Initial Study-Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS-MND) consists of the following actions necessary to implement Housing Element Program HI-14:

- **Zoning Code Amendment**: Amend Municipal Code Chapter 17.20 (Regulations for the Combining of Zones and for Open Space Lands) to add Section 17.20.070 (Multi-Family or MF combining zone).
- **Zoning Map Amendment**: Application of the MF combining zone to a single site in the City that is 1-acre or greater during the 6th cycle planning cycle. The site proposed for application of the MF combining zone and that which is analyzed in this IS-MND is a 1-acre portion of APN 025-201-023, which is hereinafter referred to as the "rezoning site" (see **Figures 1** through **4**).

This Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS-MND) 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.

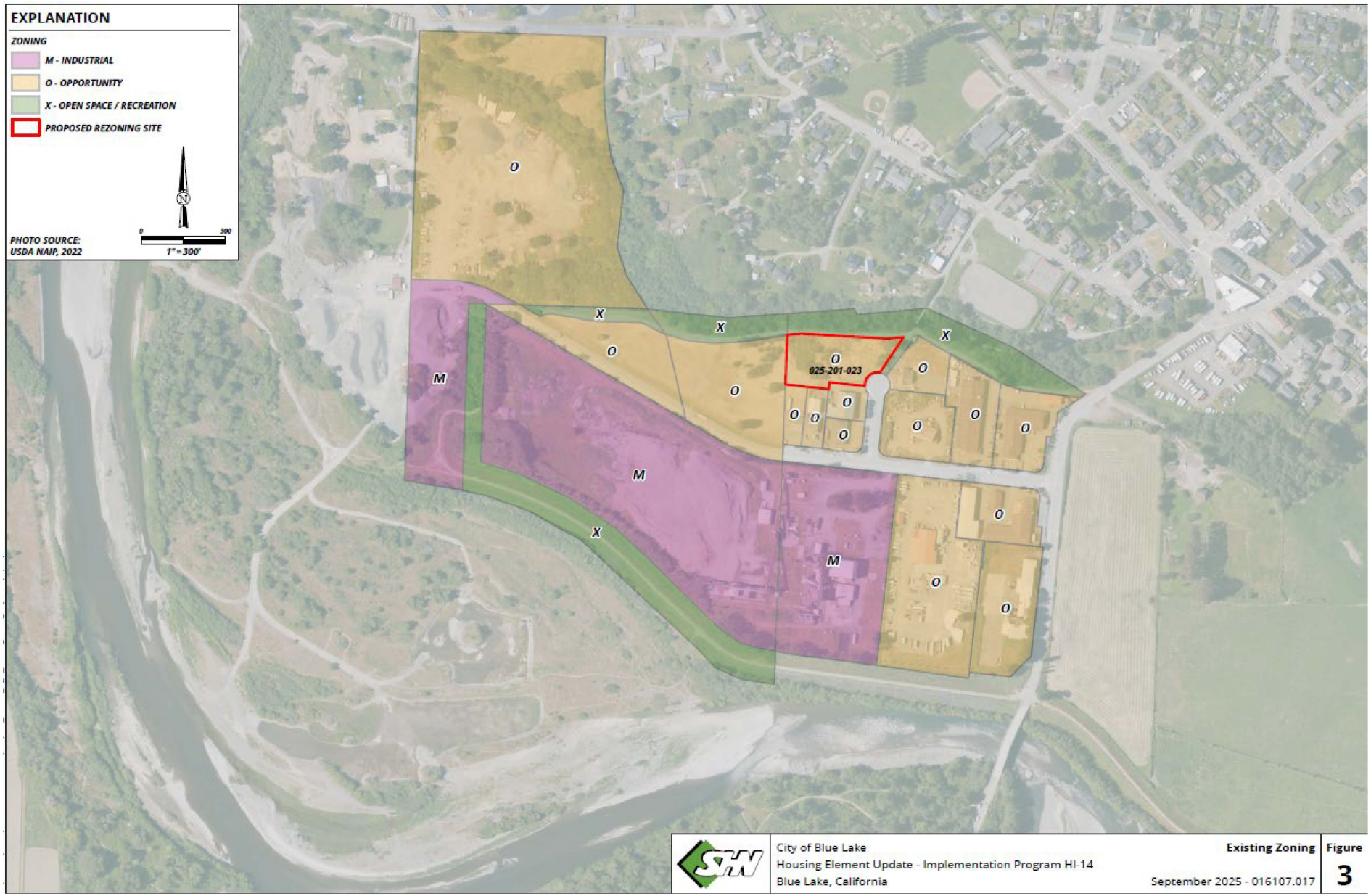
EXPLANATION
ZONING
M - INDUSTRIAL
O - OPPORTUNITY
X - OPEN SPACE / RECREATION
PROPOSED REZONING SITE
PHOTO SOURCE:
USDA NAIP, 2022
0
300
1" = 300'
025-201-023
City of Blue Lake
Housing Element Update - Implementation Program HI-14
Blue Lake, California
Existing Zoning
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Figure
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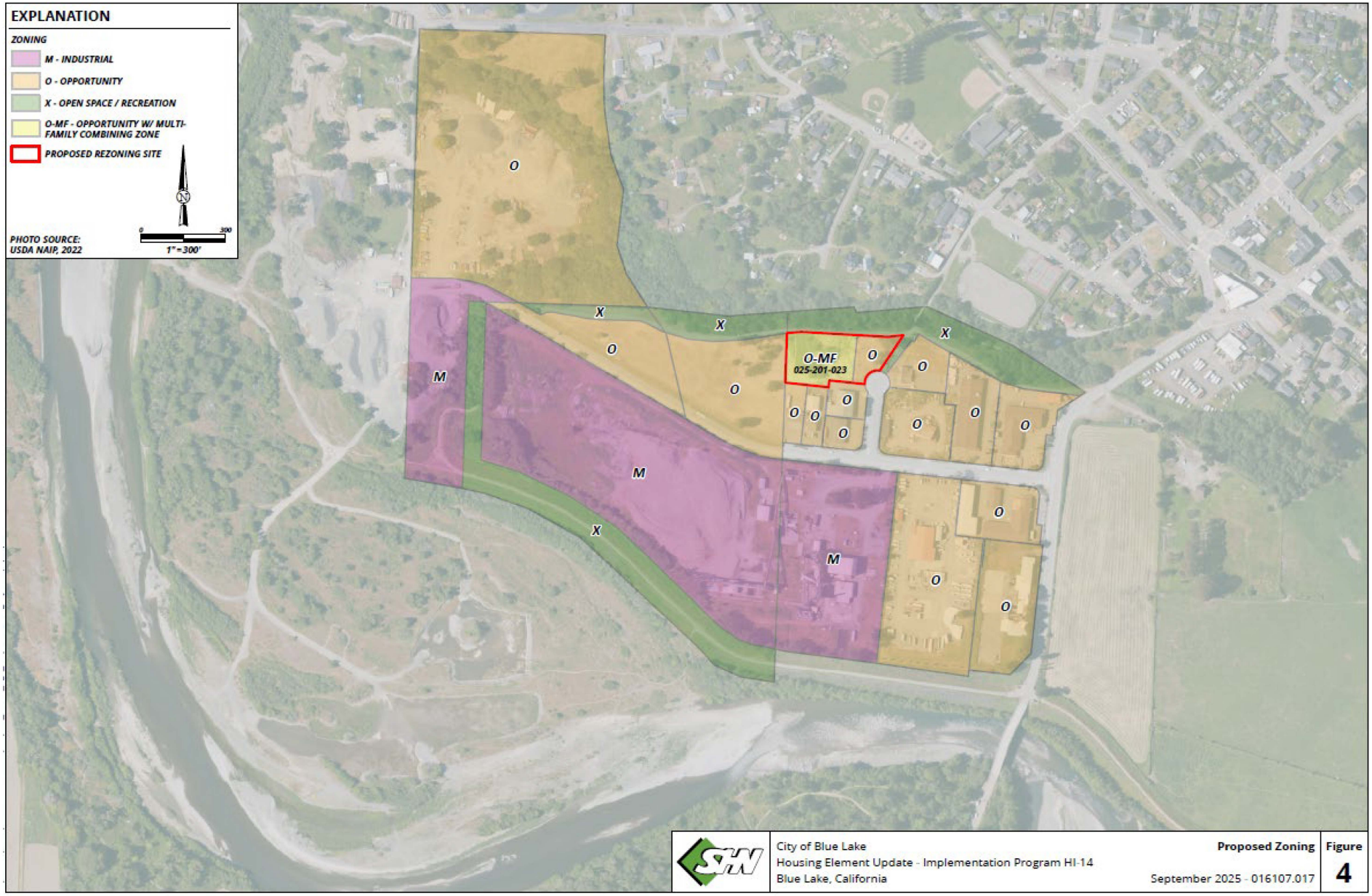
EXPLANATION
ZONING
M - INDUSTRIAL
O - OPPORTUNITY
X - OPEN SPACE / RECREATION
O-MF - OPPORTUNITY W/ MULTI-FAMILY COMBINING ZONE
PROPOSED REZONING SITE
PHOTO SOURCE:
USDA NAIP, 2022
0
300
1" = 300'
O-MF
025-201-023
City of Blue Lake
Housing Element Update - Implementation Program HI-14
Blue Lake, California
Proposed Zoning
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Figure
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8. Other Public Agencies whose Approval is Required

The California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) is responsible for implementing and enforcing State Housing Law. This includes reviewing and approving Housing Element Updates and reviewing and monitoring the implementation of Housing Element programs. The City will seek certification of the 6th cycle Housing Element from HCD upon the implementation of Program HI-14.

9. 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 Housing Element Implementation Program HI-14 (Multi-Family or MF combining zone) on September 12, 2025 to the Tribes in the Humboldt Bay region. A response was received from the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria requesting implementation of an inadvertent discovery protocol during future construction activity.

10. 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, Contract City Planner — 9/26/25 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.

The site proposed for application of the Multi-Family or MF combining zone (APN 025-201-023) is a vacant site located in the Powers Creek District (see **Figures 3** and **4**). The site contains a variety of vegetation including trees, shrubs, and grasses as well as areas of non-engineered fill from City public works projects (see site photos in **Figure 5**). Land uses surrounding the site include commercial, light industrial, public facility and open space. A section of the Powers Creek District trail runs along the northern boundary of the site (see **Figures 2** to **4**).

Figure 5 – Site Photos

Photo of Eastern Portion of APN 025-201-023 from Monda Way

Photo of Central Portion of APN 025-201-023 from Monda Way

Figure 5 – Site Photos

Photo of Eastern Portion of APN 025-201-023 from the Powers Creek Bridge

Photo of Central Portion of APN 025-201-023 from the Creek Trail

Photo of Western Portion of APN 025-201-023 from the Creek Trail

Photo from South Boundary of APN 025-201-023 Looking Northwest

Regulatory Framework

Local

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Aesthetic resources:

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

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 Powers Creek District, it is not anticipated that any future development on the site proposed for application of the MF combining zone (APN 025-201-023), would have a substantial adverse effect on any scenic vistas designated by other jurisdictions such as the County of Humboldt. Therefore, the proposed project 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, 2025). Therefore, the proposed project would have no impact on a state scenic highway or historic and natural resources within a state scenic highway.

c) Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed project would involve amending the City's Zoning Code to create a Multi-Family or MF combining zone to allow multi-family development at a minimum density of 16 to a maximum of 20 units per acre or 1 unit per 2,178 - 2,722.5 square feet of lot area. If projects propose at least 20 percent of the units as affordable to lower-income households, they would be allowed without discretionary review or by-right (see Section 8 – Project Description for further information).

The project also proposes applying the MF combining zone to a site in the City that is 1-acre or greater. The site proposed for application of the MF combining zone is APN 025-201-023 (rezoning site), which is a vacant site located in the Powers Creek District (see **Figures 3** and **4**). The site contains a variety of vegetation

including trees, shrubs, and grasses and has been used historically for the storage of non-engineered fill from City public works projects (see site photos in **Figure 5**). Land uses surrounding the site include commercial, light industrial, public facility and open space. A section of the Powers Creek District trail runs along the northern boundary of the site (see **Figures 2** to **4**).

Considering the existing lower aesthetic quality and character of the development in the Powers Creek District, the development of modern residential or mixed use buildings on the rezoning site 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.

d) Less Than Significant Impact. Future development on the rezoning site has the potential to increase daytime glare or nighttime illumination in the City. The rezoning site has a base zoning district of Opportunity (O), which contains performance standards for outdoor lighting intended to reduce potential lighting/glare impacts. Pursuant to BLMC Section 17.16.111(E)(3), outdoor lighting in the O zone must be designed to be compliant with the DarkSky International standards for reducing ambient light ("dark sky compliant"). These standards contain requirements for acceptable fixture types, appropriate shielding and lighting direction, and maximum color temperature. Additionally, the lighting standards in the O zone limit the height of stand-alone light fixtures, do not allow lighting of unusually high intensity or brightness, and require that no lighting can produce an illumination level greater than one-foot candle beyond the property boundary of the light source (City of Blue Lake, 2024a). With the implementation of the existing performance standards in the O zone, impacts related to lighting and glare from development on the rezoning site 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 California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program has not yet mapped farmland in Humboldt County (CDOC, 2025). 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, agricultural 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)).

The rezoning site proposed for application of the Multi-Family or MF combining zone (APN 025-201-023) is a vacant site located in the Powers Creek District that has been planned for development since the 1980s (see **Figures 3** and **4**). Portions of the site were previously developed with a log pond associated with the McIntosh lumber mill, which was backfilled with non-engineered fill prior to closure of the mill in the 1970s. Previous site investigations in this area of the City (NGS, 1981; SHN, 2008; SHN, 2013; SHN, 2023) identify these fill soils as non-native material. According to the USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey, the soils at the rezoning site are not classified as prime farmland (USDA NRCS, 2025). The base zoning district for the rezoning site is Opportunity, which is a mixed-use zone that allows a variety of uses including residential, commercial, and light manufacturing. As such, the site is not zoned for agricultural or timberland uses.

Regulatory Framework

Local

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Agriculture and Forestry resources:

Future development on any sites that the Multi-Family or MF combining zone is applied to will be reviewed for consistency with all relevant General Plan policies including:

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

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

a) No Impact. As noted in the Setting, the California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program has not yet mapped farmland in Humboldt County (CDOC, 2025). The rezoning site proposed for application of the Multi-Family or MF combining zone (APN 025-201-023) is a vacant site located in the Powers Creek District that has been planned for development since the 1980s (see **Figures 3** and **4**). Portions of the site were previously developed with a log pond associated with the McIntosh lumber mill, which was backfilled with non-engineered fill prior to closure of the mill in the 1970s. Previous site investigations in this area of the City identify these fill soils as non-native material (NGS, 1981; SHN, 2008; SHN, 2013; SHN, 2023). According to the USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey, the soils at the rezoning site are not classified as prime farmland (USDA NRCS, 2025). Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact on this resource category.

b-e) No Impact. The rezoning site proposed for application of the Multi-Family or MF combining zone (APN 025-201-023) is not zoned for agricultural use and is not subject to a Williamson Act contract. Therefore, the proposed project 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 proposed project would result in no impact to timberlands or forest lands.

The proposed project does not include the removal or modification of any policies that protect agricultural and timberland resources. The proposed project would involve amending the City's Zoning Code to create a Multi-Family or MF combining zone and applying it to a single site in the City. The intent of the MF combining zone is to provide a zoning tool that will allow the City to meet the by-right zoning requirements in State Housing Law on a specific site or sites in the City each Housing Element planning cycle (every 8 years) to ensure there are adequate sites to provide housing for a variety of income levels. During the current planning cycle (6th cycle), the MF combining zone must be applied to a single site that is greater than 1-acre. Future development on the rezoning site (APN 025-201-023) would be considered infill development as the site is adjacent to existing development and has been planned for development since the 1980s. Therefore, the proposed project 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 proposed project 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, 2025). 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 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 thresholds for criteria pollutants (NCUAQMD, 2015).

Discussion

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, 2025). 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 City's 6th cycle 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 allow a mixture of residential and commercial uses. Similarly, the MF combining zone would allow a mixed-use development on the rezoning site with up to 50 percent of the development consisting of 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 particulate matter. Additionally, based on current regulations, it is anticipated that the future residential development on the rezoning site would use forced air heating, gas-burning fireplaces, or EPA-approved stoves for heating. These alternatives to traditional wood burning fireplaces and stoves produce substantially less particulate matter. As such, future development on the rezoning site would be consistent with the goals of the Draft Particulate Matter Attainment Plan and impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Future development on the 1-acre rezoning site could result in up to 20 new residential units. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), it is not anticipated that future development would result in a cumulatively considerable increase in

particulate matter (PM-10) or expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations. For reference, according to the California Emissions Estimator Model, it would require the development of over 300 residential units before the NCUAQMD's significance threshold for emissions of PM-10 (80 pounds per day or 15 tons per year) would potentially be exceeded (CAPCOA, 2022; NCUAQMD, 2015).

Future development on the rezoning site 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 fugitive dust emissions (Rule 104(D) – Fugitive Dust Emissions; NCUAQMD, 2015). Additionally, there are currently no sources of substantial air pollutant concentrations within or around the City of Blue Lake that would impact future residents. In compliance with applicable laws and regulations, the proposed project would result in less than significant adverse environmental impacts related to particulate matter emissions and the exposure of sensitive receptors to pollutant concentrations.

Potential odors generated from future construction activity on the rezoning site (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 **Figures 1** and **2**). 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 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.

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. Powers Creek, an intermittent tributary to the Mad River, runs along the norther boundary of the District. The site proposed for application of the Multi-Family or MF combining zone (APN 025-201-023) is a vacant site located in the Powers Creek District (see **Figures 3** and **4**). The site contains a variety of vegetation including trees, shrubs, and grasses as well as areas of non-engineered fill from City public works projects (see site photos in **Figure 5**). Land uses surrounding the site include commercial, light industrial, public facility and open space. A section of the Powers Creek District trail runs along the northern boundary of the site (see **Figures 2** to **4**).

A Biological Resources Assessment (BRA) was conducted in 2023 and updated in 2024 for a mixed-use development proposed by Danco Communities directly adjacent to the proposed rezoning site (NIC, 2023; AEI, 2024b). Field surveys for these efforts were conducted on December 28, 2022 (NIC) and September 28, 2024 (AEI). The study area for the field surveys occurred along the western, northern, and eastern boundary of the proposed rezoning site. No special-status species were detected within the study area during the field surveys, however, based on suitable habitat available on site, several special status animals and plants have the potential to occur within and adjacent to the proposed rezoning site. According to the 2024 updated BRA, special-status plants may occur in the annual grassland habitat north of Taylor Way. These special-status plant species consist of:

- Oregon goldthread (*Coptis laciniata*) (California Rare Plant Rank 4.2) Blooming period (Feb) March to May (Sep-Nov)
- Pacific gilia (*Gilia capitata* ssp. *pacifica*) (California Rare Plant Rank 1B.2) Blooming period April to August
- Harlequin lotus (*Hosackia gracilis*) (California Rare Plant Rank 4.2) Blooming period March to July
- Nodding semaphore grass (*Pleuropogon refractus*) (California Rare Plant Rank 4.2) Blooming period (Feb-Mar) April to August
- Maple-leaved checkerbloom (*Sidalcea malachroides*) (California Rare Plant Rank 4.2) Blooming period (Mar) April to August

According to the 2024 updated BRA, special-status animals may have the potential to occur in the annual grassland habitat north of Taylor Way and adjacent riparian habitat along Powers Creek. These special-status animal species consist of:

- Western bumble bee (*Bombus occidentalis*) (No Federal listing, State Candidate Endangered)
- Obscure bumble bee (*Bombus caliginosus*) (No Federal or State Listing)
- Crotch's bumble bee (*Bombus crotchii*) (No Federal listing, State Candidate Endangered)
- Humboldt cuckoo wasp (*Cleptes humboldti*) (No Federal or State Listing)

- Northwestern pond turtle (*Actinemys marmorata*) (Federally Proposed Threatened, CDFW Species of Special Concern)
- Northern red-legged Frog (*Rana aurora*) (CDFW Species of Special Concern)
- Foothill yellow-legged frog (*Rana boylii*) (CDFW Species of Special Concern)

The vacant properties north of Taylor Way could also support a variety of nesting birds during the nesting season (typically March 15-August 31) protected by the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act and State Fish and Game Codes 3503 and 3503.5.

According to the 2024 updated BRA, the Powers Creek riparian corridor contains the following special-status habitats: coast willow thicket and black cottonwood forest and woodland. There is also riparian habitat at the northern edge of the Powers Creek District trail. The outer edge of riparian vegetation is part of the "stream zone" that is under CDFW jurisdiction, and thus the waters of the State for Powers Creek extends to this outer edge of riparian vegetation. There were no vernal pools or other isolated wetlands identified in the study area for the 2024 update BRA (AEI, 2024b).

Wildlife movement corridors in the Mad River Valley link remaining areas of functional wildlife habitat that are separated primarily by human disturbance and development. Powers Creek, north of the proposed rezoning site, functions as a wildlife movement corridor. The City of Blue Lake is not located within any adopted Habitat Conservation Plan or Natural Community Conservation Plan (AEI, 2024b).

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

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Biological resources:

<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

a) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. The proposed rezoning site is located in ruderal/developed habitat and annual grassland habitat, which would be impacted by future development on the proposed rezoning site.

Plants

Special-status plants have a moderate potential to occur in the annual grassland habitat because rare plant species have been reported in similar habitats in the region (AEI, 2024b). The field surveys conducted for the Biological Resource Assessments (BRAs) were performed outside of the blooming period(s) of most rare plants occurring in the region. Without performing botanical surveys during the appropriate blooming periods, it cannot be determined whether special-status plants will be impacted by future development. Therefore, the requirement to perform seasonally appropriate botanical surveys has been included as Mitigation Measure BIO-1 to reduce potential impacts to special-status plants to a less than significant level.

Wildlife

Special-status wildlife species have the potential to be present within and adjacent to the proposed rezoning site during any future development, especially those associated with the riparian habitat of Powers Creek. Northern red-legged frog, foothill yellow-legged frog, and northwestern pond turtle could be directly impacted by future development by potentially being crushed by equipment if on site during the initiation of construction activities. Therefore, the requirement to perform pre-construction surveys for special status reptiles and amphibians has been included as Mitigation Measure BIO-2 to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

In addition, a variety of nesting birds could be present during the nesting season, including nesting in trees, shrubs, and human-made structures within and adjacent to the proposed rezoning site. Therefore, the requirement to conduct pre-construction nesting bird surveys has been included as Mitigation Measure BIO-3 to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

As discussed in greater detail below, the special-status bumblebees listed in the Setting have low or no potential to occur on the proposed rezoning site due to current distribution, the small, isolated patch of available habitat surrounded by development and disturbed areas, and the lack of abundant floral resources that they require.

- The Western bumblebee requires a variety of flowering resources spring, summer, and fall and nest in colonies in the ground (abandoned ground squirrel or rodent burrows). Since 1998, this bumble bee has undergone a drastic decline throughout some areas of its former range. While viable populations still exist east of the Cascades, the once common populations of central California have

largely disappeared. There have been significant range losses particularly from lower elevation sites in California (Xerces Society, 2025). This species has a low potential to occur within or adjacent to the proposed rezoning site.

- Obscure bumblebee nests individually (not colonial) underground, but also above ground in abandoned bird nests. Habitats include open grassy coastal prairies and coast range meadows with abundant, diverse flowering plants from spring through fall, and undisturbed areas for nesting underground Food plants for this species include Ceanothus, Cirsium, Clarkia, Keckiella, Lathyrus, Lotus, Lupinus, Rhododendron, Rubus, Trifolium, and Vaccinium. Dispersal occurs primarily in spring by queens while searching for suitable nest sites. It does not appear to do well in heavily agricultural regions and may fail to persist at all in more urbanized places (NatureServe Explorer, 2025). This species has low potential to occur within or adjacent to the proposed rezoning site.
- Crotch bumblebee is listed as Candidate Endangered with the State. They are known to be more particular about plant species (milkweed especially) and also nest in ground burrows. However, this species requires more hot, dry conditions than what the proposed rezoning site provides, and this species has been determined to only now occur in Southern California (IUCN, 2025). Therefore, this species has a low potential to occur within or adjacent to the proposed rezoning site.
- Humboldt Cuckoo wasp parasitize sawflies in the families Diprionidae (conifer sawflies) and Tenthredinidae (common sawflies). They attack prepupal sawflies by tearing a hole in the cocoon and laying an egg directly on the larva or elsewhere within the cocoon. Few records of this species exist in Humboldt County and little is known about its natural history. Their host larvae occur on conifers, deciduous trees, and flowering plants. The proposed rezoning site is primarily grasses, with a few willows and ornamental/fruit trees. Therefore, this species has a low potential to occur within or adjacent to the proposed rezoning site.

Due to the low potential for these special-status species to occur on or within the proposed rezoning site, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact on Western bumblebee, obscure bumblebee, Crotch's bumblebee, and Humboldt cuckoo wasp.

Conclusion

In compliance with the proposed mitigation measures as well as local, State, and federal laws and regulations protecting biological resources, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.

b) Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed rezoning site does not contain special-status habitats, although there are special-status habitats adjacent to the site—riparian habitats of coast willow thickets and black cottonwood forest and woodland. Although adjacent to the rezoning site, future development on the site has a limited potential to result in direct and indirect impacts to riparian habitat and sensitive natural communities. Compliance with existing 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 sensitive habitats. For example, the City of Blue Lake has setback requirements that would be protective of the Powers Creek riparian corridor. The Opportunity zone, which will remain as the base zoning district for the proposed rezoning site, requires setbacks from the centerline of Powers Creek and the southern edge of the creek trail. For the proposed rezoning site, this functionally results in an approximately 75-foot setback from

the creek centerline (or 50 feet from the top of bank). Therefore, in compliance with existing laws and regulations, the proposed project would have a less than significant impact on riparian habitat or other sensitive natural communities.

c) Less Than Significant Impact. There are no federally protected wetlands or other aquatic resources within the proposed rezoning site (see site photos in **Figure 5**). Therefore, no direct impacts to aquatic resources will occur as a result of future development on the rezoning site. Potential indirect impacts to aquatic resources such as Powers Creek could occur during future construction activity on the rezoning site. Surface water quality has the potential to be degraded from stormwater transport of sediment from disturbed soils or by accidental release of hazardous materials or petroleum products from sources such as heavy equipment servicing or refueling. As discussed above, the City of Blue Lake has setback requirements that would be protective of riparian areas such as Powers Creek. For example, the Opportunity zone, which will remain as the base zoning district for the proposed rezoning site, requires setbacks from the centerline of Powers Creek and the southern edge of the creek trail. For the rezoning site, this functionally results in an approximately 75-foot setback from the creek centerline (or 50 feet from the top of bank). Additionally, the City's grading regulations (Municipal Code Chapter 15.12 - Grading, Erosion, and Sediment Control) contain 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. Also, if future development on the rezoning site would disturb more than one-acre during construction, a Construction General Permit (CGP) would be required to be obtained from the State Water Resources Control Board, which requires the preparation of a Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan 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. In compliance with existing laws and regulations, the potential indirect impacts to federally protected wetlands and other aquatic resources would be less than significant.

d) Less Than Significant Impact. Although no mapped wildlife corridors (such as the California Essential Habitat Connectivity Area layer in the California Natural Diversity Database) exist within or near the proposed rezoning site, the Powers Creek corridor adjacent to the site facilitates animal movement and migrations. Future development on the rezoning site would not include proposed modifications to this movement corridor. Powers Creek will remain functional for animal movement past the rezoning site. Therefore, the proposed project would have a less than significant impact on wildlife movement.

e) Less Than Significant Impact. The City of Blue Lake does not have a tree preservation policy or ordinance. Any future development on the proposed rezoning site will be required to comply with local policies and ordinances protecting biological resources. This includes the creek setback requirements in the Opportunity zone. As discussed above, the Opportunity zone functionally requires an approximately 75-foot setback from the creek centerline (or 50 feet from the top of bank). Additionally, compliance with the City's grading regulations would be protective of the water quality in Powers Creek. The proposed project would not result in any changes to the existing City requirements for the protection of biological resources. Therefore, the proposed project would have a less than significant impact in this regard.

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. Therefore, the proposed project would not conflict with such a plan and there would be no impact in this regard.

Mitigation Measures

With implementation of the following mitigation measures, potential impacts from the proposed project would be less than significant.

BIO-1: Pre-construction Special-status Plant Survey

- Prior to the commencement of ground disturbance and construction related activities, CDFW protocol-level botanical survey(s) shall be conducted within the blooming period(s) for the special-status plants with potential to occur on the rezoning site (including, but not limited to, Oregon goldthread, Pacific gilia, harlequin lotus, nodding semaphore grass, and maple-leaved checkerbloom).
- If any special-status plant species are observed within the rezoning site, they are to be avoided if possible.
  If avoidance is not possible, a qualified botanist shall prepare a Salvage-Relocation Plan in consultation with CDFW. The Plan must include annual monitoring requirements that address the duration of monitoring and the specific success criteria. It is anticipated that a potential relocation site would occur on City-owned property within the Powers Creek District. The Plan shall be prepared, reviewed by CDFW, and then implemented prior to the completion of construction related activities.

BIO-2: Pre-construction Special-status Reptile and Amphibian Exclusion and Survey

- Prior to the commencement of ground disturbance and construction related activities, exclusion fencing shall be installed between the development footprint and the Powers Creek riparian corridor. Fencing will be installed by construction personnel according to the following specifications:
  - Use a silt fence material (smooth plastic, not mesh) at least 2 feet high, stapled or otherwise securely adhered to wooden stakes for installation in the ground.
  - With a biological monitor present to watch for reptiles and amphibians and turtle nests in the ground, trench and bury the bottom of the fencing at least 4 to 6 inches deep and/or use all-fiber wattles to weigh down the bottom of the fencing, preventing any gaps.
  - Tilt the fence slightly toward Powers Creek and leave the top of the fence slightly bent over toward Powers Creek.
  - Wrap the ends of the fence toward Powers Creek, disallowing reptile and amphibian access around the ends of the fencing and directing them back to Powers Creek.
  - If construction fencing is used during development activities, place it inside the exclusion fence (between the exclusion fence and the work area).
  - Fencing materials acquisition and installation will be the responsibility of the contractor, with guidance from a qualified biologist.

- Exclusion fencing will remain in place and be checked periodically (weekly at a minimum) for integrity until project construction is complete.
- If silt fencing is used between the development footprint and Powers Creek riparian corridor for stormwater management during construction, this may also be used as the reptile and amphibian exclusion fence. If there will be any gaps in the silt fence used for stormwater management, separate reptile and amphibian exclusion fencing must be installed to close the gap but not secured to the silt fence.
- Prior to the commencement of ground disturbance and construction activities, a Worker Environmental Awareness Training Program shall be conducted for all construction personnel to review the description, biology, and conservation measures to follow in case special-status reptiles and amphibians move into the site during construction. This should include prohibiting pets on the work site.

- After exclusion fencing is installed and immediately prior to vegetation removal, ground disturbance, and/or equipment mobilization onto the development site, a CDFW-approved biologist shall conduct a pre-construction visual survey for special-status reptiles and amphibians. If no special-status reptiles or amphibians are observed, no further surveys or monitoring will be required. If special-status reptiles or amphibians are observed within the development footprint, the biologist shall coordinate with CDFW staff regarding relocation outside of the development site.

BIO-3: Pre-Construction Nesting Bird Survey

- In compliance with the Federal Migratory Bird Treaty Act, vegetation removal and ground disturbance should occur outside the nesting bird season to avoid potential impacts to nesting birds. The typical nesting season in the project area is between March 15 to August 31 annually.
- If vegetation removal and ground disturbance will commence during the nesting season, a qualified biologist shall conduct a nesting bird survey within seven calendar days prior to the commencement of construction related activities.
- If active nests (containing eggs or nestlings) are found, the biologist shall determine and assist the contractor in implementing an appropriate no-disturbance buffer around the nest(s). Once no-disturbance buffer(s) are in place, the biologist shall monitor the nest(s) on a weekly basis until they determine the nest(s) are no longer active. .
- If construction activities cease for more than seven calendar days during the nesting season and further vegetation removal is to be done, an additional nesting bird survey shall be conducted by a qualified biologist prior to re-starting construction activities.

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.

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. Powers Creek, an intermittent tributary to the Mad River, runs along the norther boundary of the District. The site proposed for application of the Multi-Family or MF combining zone (APN 025-201-023) is a vacant site located in the Powers Creek District (see **Figures 3** and **4**). The site contains a variety of vegetation including trees, shrubs, and grasses as well as areas of non-

engineered fill from City public works projects (see site photos in **Figure 5**). Land uses surrounding the site include commercial, light industrial, public facility and open space. A section of the creek trail runs along the northern boundary of the site (see **Figures 2** to **4**).

A Cultural Resources Investigation was prepared in 2022 and updated in 2024 for a mixed-use development proposed by Danco Communities directly adjacent to the proposed rezoning site (APN 025-201-023). The study area for the Investigation included the rezoning site. No pre-historic or historic cultural resources were identified within the study area during the field survey completed for the Investigation (ARSC, 2024).

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 following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Cultural and Historic resources:

<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.

Housing Element Update – Preservation and Reuse of Older Structures Program:

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

a-c) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. The proposed project would assist the City in achieving compliance with State Housing Law and does not propose to remove or amend policies that protect pre-historic or historic cultural resources. As noted above, the proposed rezoning site is currently vacant, and future development on the site would not impact structures of historic interest in the City.

To satisfy the requirements of AB 52, the City provided written notice of preparation of a CEQA Initial Study for Housing Element Implementation Program HI-14 (Multi-Family or MF combining zone) on September 12, 2025 to the Tribes in the Humboldt Bay region. A response was received from the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria requesting implementation of an inadvertent discovery protocol during future construction activity.

Any future development on the rezoning site 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. As stated in Municipal Code Section 15.12.020(D):

> "*Inadvertent Discovery Protocol for Archeological Resources. If archaeological resources are encountered during permitted or nonpermitted grading activities in the City of Blue Lake, all onsite work shall cease in the immediate area and within a 50-foot buffer of the discovery location. A qualified locally experienced archaeologist will be retained to evaluate and assess the significance of the discovery, and develop and implement an avoidance or mitigation plan, as appropriate. For discoveries known or likely to be associated with Native American heritage (prehistoric sites and select historic period sites), the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) for the Blue Lake Rancheria, Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, and Wiyot Tribe are to be contacted immediately to evaluate the discovery and, in consultation with the project proponent or property owner, City of Blue Lake, and consulting archaeologist, develop a treatment plan in any instance where significant impacts per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) cannot be avoided. Prehistoric materials may include, but are not limited to, obsidian or chert flakes, tools, locally darkened midden soils, groundstone artifacts, shellfish or faunal remains, and human burials. Historic archaeological discoveries may include, but are not limited to, 19th century building foundations; structural remains; or concentrations of artifacts made of glass, ceramic, metal or other materials found in buried pits, old wells or privies. Should known or suspected Native American skeletal remains or burials be inadvertently discovered, the provisions of Section 7050.5 of the California **Health & Safety Code** and Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code shall apply (see at **http://www.nahc.ca.gov/profguide.html**).*"

A Cultural Resources Investigation was prepared in 2022 and updated in 2024 for a mixed-use development proposed by Danco Communities directly adjacent to the proposed rezoning site. The study area for the Investigation included the proposed rezoning site (APN 025-201-023). No pre-historic or historic cultural resources were identified on the rezoning site during the field survey completed for the Investigation (ARSC, 2024). Due to the density of known pre-historic and historic sites along historically manipulated drainages in the project area, the Cultural Resources Investigation provided recommendations for cultural monitoring during initial ground disturbing activity and implementation of an inadvertent discovery protocol throughout the duration of construction. Therefore, the requirement to conduct cultural monitoring during initial ground disturbing activities as part of future development on the rezoning site, has been included as Mitigation Measure CUL-1 to reduce potential impacts to unknown cultural resources to a less than significant level.

In compliance with the proposed mitigation measure as well as local, State, and federal laws and regulations protecting cultural resources, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated.

Mitigation

With implementation of the following mitigation measures, potential impacts from the proposed project would be less than significant.

CUL-1: Cultural Monitoring

Due to the density of known sites within the project area in the context of historically manipulated drainages, cultural monitoring shall be conducted by a professional archaeologist and tribal monitor during initial ground disturbing activities as part of future development on the rezoning site. The professional archaeologist and tribal monitor shall be approved by the Blue Lake Rancheria, Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria, and Wiyot Tribe. The project proponent and contractor are responsible for coordinating with the approved professional archaeologist and tribal monitor including providing the construction schedule and notification of the commencement of initial ground disturbing activities.

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, 2025a). 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, 2025a). In 2022, the CCE program procured approximately 50 percent of its power from renewable sources (RCEA, 2025b). 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, 2025a). 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, 2025b).

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

a-b) Less Than Significant Impact. During the construction of future development on the proposed rezoning site, 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 site, and to operate generators to provide temporary power for electronic equipment. There are not anticipated to be any unusual characteristics of future 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 development on the proposed rezoning site, 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 development on the rezoning site 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 City's 6th cycle 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 allow a mixture of residential and commercial uses. Similarly, the MF combining zone would allow a mixed-use development on the rezoning site with up to 50 percent of the development consisting of 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 proposed project 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).

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. Powers Creek, an intermittent tributary to the Mad River, runs along the norther boundary of the District. The site proposed for application of the Multi-Family or MF combining zone (APN 025-201-023) is a vacant site located in the Powers Creek District (see **Figures 3** and **4**). The site contains a variety of vegetation including trees, shrubs, and grasses as well as areas of non-engineered fill from City public works projects (see site photos in **Figure 5**). Portions of the site were previously developed with a log pond associated with the McIntosh lumber mill, which was backfilled with non-engineered fill prior to closure of the mill in the 1970s. Previous site investigations in this area of the City (NGS, 1981; SHN, 2008; SHN, 2013; SHN, 2023) identify these fill soils as non-native material. Additionally, according to the USDA NRCS Web Soil Survey, the soils at the rezoning site are classified as Grizzlybluff, 0 to 2 percent slopes (Map Unit Symbol 201; USDA NRCS, 2025).

Regulatory Framework

Local

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Geology and Soils resources:

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

a-d) Less Than Significant Impact. Future development on the proposed rezoning site 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. Future development on the rezoning site 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 potential impacts related to seismic hazards including fault rupture, liquefaction, and landslides. Therefore, in compliance with existing laws and regulations, the proposed project 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 proposed rezoning site. 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, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

e) No Impact. Any future development on the proposed rezoning site 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, 2024a). As such, future development on the rezoning site would not have soils incapable of adequately supporting the use of septic tanks or alternative wastewater disposal systems. Therefore, the proposed project would result in 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, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

Greenhouse Gas Emissions

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
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, 2025a). In 2022, the CCE program procured approximately 50 percent of its power from renewable sources (RCEA, 2025b). 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, 2025a). 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, 2025b).

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

a-b) Less Than Significant Impact. Future development on the proposed rezoning site could result in an increase in GHG emissions during both construction and operational activities. Future development on the site 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 future development on the rezoning site, including the California Green Building Standards Code and California's Title 24 Building Energy Efficiency Standards, would reduce GHG emissions associated with future development projects. The City's 6th cycle 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 allow a mixture of residential and commercial uses. Similarly, the MF combining zone would allow a mixed-use development on the rezoning site with up to 50 percent of the development consisting of commercial uses. Land use regulations that promote infill and mixed-use development have the potential to reduce vehicle miles traveled and associated vehicular GHG emissions. Additionally, future development on the rezoning site will be provided increasingly renewable sources of energy from the RCEA CCE program, which would result in reductions in GHG emissions.

Future development on the 1-acre rezoning site could result in up to 20 new residential units. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), it is not anticipated that future development would result in a cumulatively considerable increase in GHG emissions. For reference, according to the California Emissions Estimator Model, it would require the development of over 115 residential units before the significance thresholds for GHG emissions used by other air districts in the northern California (1,100 metric tons of CO2e per year) would potentially be exceeded (CAPCOA, 2022; MCAQMD, 2010).

Therefore, in compliance with existing laws and regulations, the proposed project 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 has received a determination from DTSC of "No Action Required" (DTSC, 2025). According to the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) GeoTracker Database, there are eight leaking underground storage tank (LUST) sites in the City limits. These sites are

primarily located in the downtown area and have all received determinations from the SWRCB of "Case Closed" (SWRCB, 2025). Explosives or dangerous chemicals are seldom transported throughout the area but an accidental spill or explosion on State Route 299 is a possibility.

A soil and groundwater investigation was conducted in 2013 on the City-owned properties north of Taylor Way (SHN, 2013). The investigation included soil and groundwater sampling on the proposed rezoning site. According to the results of the investigation, one soil sample collected from a soil boring location at a depth of 12 feet below ground surface on the rezoning site exceeded screening levels for diesel and motor oil. The soil boring location from the 2013 investigation is located on the northern edge of the paved access road that provides access from the north to the Paradise Cay and Jewell Distillery businesses (APN 025-201-022). All other constituents tested for in soil and groundwater samples were either below laboratory method detection limits or contained concentrations below screening levels proposed in the Sampling Analysis Plan (excluding arsenic). Arsenic concentrations identified in site soils were determined to be within the range of naturally occurring background levels (Bradford, G.R., et al., 1996).

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. 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 proposed rezoning 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, 2025).

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

a-c) Less Than Significant Impact. The construction of future development on the proposed rezoning site 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. Any business proposed as part of future mixed-use development on the rezoning site would be required to comply with the CalEPA Unified Program if they would be using, storing, or handling hazardous materials and waste above designated quantities. This would require filing information about hazardous materials and waste with the California Environmental Reporting System and being subject to inspection and potential enforcement if compliance with applicable regulations is not achieved and maintained. As such, the proposed project 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.

Public schools in the City include the Blue Lake Union Elementary School, which is greater than one-quarter mile from the proposed rezoning site. Additionally, the construction and operation of residential and mixed-use development is not typically associated with the release of substantial quantities 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. Therefore, the proposed project would not emit or

handle hazardous or acutely hazardous materials, substances, or waste within one-quarter mile of an existing or proposed school.

Based on the location of the proposed rezoning site and compliance with existing regulatory requirements, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

d) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. As discussed in the Setting, there are nine sites in the City limits that are on a list of hazardous materials sites compiled pursuant to Government Code Section 65962.5. These sites have been subject to past investigation and/or remediation and have received determinations of either "No Action Required" or "Case Closed" by regulatory agencies including the DTSC and SWRCB (DTSC, 2025; SWRCB, 2025).

The Powers Creek District, where a majority of the residential development potential in the City is projected, was the location of the former McIntosh Lumber Mill. According to the DTSC Envirostor Database, the McIntosh Lumber Mill (Envirostor ID: 12240045) is listed as having a cleanup status of "No Action Required as of 8/8/1996". The rationale provided in the 'Site Evaluation Tracking Sheet' (dated 8/8/96) stated, "There is no documented evidence of release of contaminants at hazardous levels that threatens public health and/or the environment" (DTSC, 2025). The area identified in the Envirostor Database mapping is the property containing the former Calgon Carbon facility (APN: 025-161-010). A portion of the proposed rezoning site is within the area where the former mill log pond was located, which is a minimum of 700 feet to the northwest of the former Calgon Carbon site.

A soil and groundwater investigation was conducted in 2013 on the City-owned properties north of Taylor Way (SHN, 2013). The investigation included soil and groundwater sampling on the proposed rezoning site. According to the results of the investigation, one soil sample collected from a soil boring location at a depth of 12 feet below ground surface on the rezoning site exceeded screening levels for diesel and motor oil. The soil boring location from the 2013 investigation is located on the northern edge of the paved access road that provides access to the Paradise Cay and Jewell Distillery businesses from the north (APN 025-201-022). All other constituents tested for in soil and groundwater samples were either below laboratory method detection limits or contained concentrations below screening levels proposed in the Sampling Analysis Plan (excluding arsenic). Arsenic concentrations identified in site soils were determined to be within the range of naturally occurring background levels (Bradford, G.R., et al., 1996). Based on the results of the soil and groundwater investigation, it was recommended that a soil and groundwater contingency management plan be prepared and implemented during future construction activity to protect workers from possible exposure (SHN, 2013).

As identified in the soil and groundwater investigation completed in 2013, one soil sample at a depth of 12 feet below ground surface on the proposed rezoning site exceeded screening levels for diesel and motor oil (SHN, 2013). For this reason, the requirement to conduct pre-construction characterization of site soils prior to future development has been included as Mitigation Measure HAZ-1 for the proposed project to reduce potential impacts to future residents to a less than significant level. The pre-construction characterization shall comply with relevant regulations and occur in coordination with applicable regulatory agencies (e.g., DTSC, SWRCB, etc.) including submitting a sampling plan for review and approval. If the pre-construction characterization sampling indicates that contaminant levels are above residential screening levels, then

remediation activities shall occur in compliance with relevant regulations and in coordination with applicable regulatory agencies including the submittal of a remediation plan for review and approval and the implementation of the approved remediation plan. Prior to the occupancy of the proposed buildings for any use (residential or mixed-use), clearances shall be received from the applicable regulatory agencies determining that the site is suitable for the proposed uses.

Based on the recommendations of the soil and groundwater investigation completed in 2013, the requirement to develop and implement a soil and groundwater management plan during future development on the rezoning site has been included as Mitigation Measure HAZ-2 to reduce potential impacts to construction workers to a less than significant level. These types of plans are commonly prepared and implemented for development activities on former industrial sites. Similar to the Soil and Groundwater Management Plan (SGMP) that was prepared for a mixed-use development proposed by Danco Communities directly adjacent to the proposed rezoning site (AEI, 2024a), the SGMP would include a summary of planned development and earthwork, a summary of known and potential environmental conditions, and measures to address environmental impacts that may be encountered. The SGMP would also include provisions for health and safety, proper handling of soil, groundwater management measures, contingency measures, and construction best practices as they relate to potentially impacted soil and groundwater.

Therefore, with the proposed mitigation measures and in compliance with existing regulatory requirements, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated 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 future development on the proposed rezoning site. 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 development on the rezoning site will require new access roads and/or driveways to 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. Future development on the 1-acre rezoning site could result in up to 20 new residential units. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), it is not anticipated that future development

on the proposed rezoning site would impair implementation of or cause physical interference with 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 proposed rezoning 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, 2025).

The proposed rezoning site does 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 development on the rezoning site 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.

Mitigation

With implementation of the following mitigation measures, potential impacts from the proposed project would be less than significant.

HAZ-1: Pre-Construction Characterization of Site Soils

Due to legacy contamination above regulatory screening levels on a specific area of the proposed rezoning site, pre-construction characterization of site soils shall be conducted prior to the issuance of the building permit for future development to reduce potential impacts to future residents to a less than significant level. The pre-construction characterization shall comply with relevant regulations and occur in coordination with applicable regulatory agencies (e.g., DTSC, SWRCB, etc.) including submitting a sampling plan for review and approval. If the pre-construction characterization sampling indicates that contaminant levels are above residential screening levels, then remediation activities shall occur in compliance with relevant regulations and in coordination with applicable regulatory agencies including the submittal of a remediation plan for review and approval and the implementation of the approved remediation plan. Prior to the occupancy of the proposed buildings for any use (residential or mixed-use), clearances shall be received from the applicable regulatory agencies determining that the site is suitable for the proposed uses.

HAZ-2: Soil and Groundwater Management Plan

Due to past industrial use on the proposed rezoning site, a Soil and Groundwater Management Plan (SGMP) shall be developed and implemented during future construction activity to reduce potential impacts to construction workers to a less than significant level. The SGMP should include a summary of planned development and earthwork, a summary of known and potential environmental conditions, and

measures to address environmental impacts that may be encountered. The SGMP should also include provisions for health and safety, proper handling of soil, groundwater management measures, contingency measures, and construction best practices as they relate to potentially impacted soil and groundwater.

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 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 lower elevation areas in the City including the proposed rezoning site, would experience flooding (HBMWD, 2019). According to Federal Emergency Management Authority (FEMA) FIRM Panel No. 06023C0713F, the proposed rezoning site is 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

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Water resources:

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

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

<u>Land Use Element - Powers Creek Management Policies:</u>

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

a) Less Than Significant Impact. Future development on the proposed rezoning site 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 or mixed-use development on the rezoning site will have a limited potential to result in water quality impacts relative to more intensive and impactful land uses such as the industrial businesses that historically operated in the Powers Creek District. All future development on the rezoning site 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 proposed project would result in a less than significant impact 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 1,136 residents as estimated by the California Department of Finance (CDOF, 2025), daily per capita water use is conservatively estimated to be approximately 132 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 development within the City, including on the proposed rezoning site, 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 proposed project would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

c) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. Future development on the proposed rezoning site would not have the potential to alter the course of a stream or river as the site is outside of a special flood hazard area (FEMA, 2016) and any development would be required to be designed with setbacks from Powers Creek that would avoid direct physical impacts (City of Blue Lake, 2024a). Future development on the rezoning site will create new impervious surfaces with 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. Development on the rezoning site 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 development. Although the City is not within a Phase II MS4 Permit area, the Public Works and Engineering Departments may 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. Based on the size of the rezoning site (1-acre) and the allowable development potential (up to 20 residential units), compliance with the Phase II MS4 Permit requirements have been included as Mitigation Measure HYD-1 for the proposed project to reduce potential stormwater runoff impacts to a less than significant level. This will require that onsite stormwater management facilities be designed and constructed to be consistent with the Humboldt Low Impact Development Stormwater Manual (NCSC, 2021). Prior to issuance of building permits for future development on the rezoning site, the project proponent will be required to submit a Stormwater Control Plan and Soil Report for review and approval by the City Engineer. The Plan will be required to demonstrate that the stormwater management facilities will have adequate capacity to percolate stormwater from the applicable design storm event. Prior to the occupancy of the proposed buildings for any use (residential or mixed-use), the project proponent will be required to receive verification from the City Engineer that the requirements of the Phase II MS4 Permit and Humboldt Low Impact Development Stormwater Manual have been met. Therefore, with the proposed mitigation and in compliance with existing laws and regulations, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated in this regard.

d-e) Less Than Significant Impact. According to FEMA FIRM Panel No. 06023C0713F, the proposed rezoning site is 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). Additionally, there is no body of water near the City that has the potential for the generation of a seiche. As noted in the Setting, according to the Matthews Dam Emergency Action Plan (EAP), the lower elevation areas in the City including the proposed rezoning site, would experience flooding from the failure of the dam (HBMWD, 2019). However, dam failure is relatively unlikely, and this potential flooding would not result in any greater release of pollutants than could potentially occur for other residential and mixed-use development within the projected inundation zone for dam failure. Therefore, the proposed project 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 proposed project would result in conflict with a water quality control plan or groundwater management plan. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

Mitigation

With implementation of the following mitigation measures, potential impacts from the proposed project would be less than significant.

HYD-1: Phase II MS4 Permit Compliance

Based on the size of the rezoning site (1-acre) and the allowable development potential (up to 20 residential units), compliance with the Phase II MS4 Permit requirements is required for the proposed project to reduce potential stormwater runoff impacts to a less than significant level. This requires that onsite stormwater management facilities be designed and constructed to be consistent with the Humboldt Low Impact Development Stormwater Manual (NCSC, 2021). Prior to issuance of the building permit for future development on the rezoning site, the project proponent shall submit a Stormwater Control Plan and Soil Report for review and approval by the City Engineer. The Plan shall demonstrate that the stormwater management facilities will have adequate capacity to percolate stormwater from the applicable design storm event. Prior to the occupancy of the proposed buildings for any use (residential or mixed-use), the project proponent shall receive verification from the City Engineer that the requirements of the Phase II MS4 Permit and Humboldt Low Impact Development Stormwater Manual have been met.

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 1,136 living in an area of about 0.6 square miles (416 acres; CDOF, 2025). 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. Besides the 6th cycle

Housing Element Update adopted in July 2025, 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 (City of Blue Lake, 2021). The site inventory in the 6th cycle Housing Element Update identifies the Powers Creek District and O zone as containing the majority of residential development potential in the City.

Regulatory Framework

State

Department of Housing and Community Development

As discussed in the Project Description section, the City of Blue Lake adopted its Housing Element Update for the 6th planning cycle (2019-2027) in July 2025, but the City must implement one of the programs in the Housing Element Update (Program HI-14) before the element can be found in substantial compliance with State Housing Law. As stated in a recent determination letter (dated August 21, 2025) from the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD):

> "*The adopted element meets statutory requirements of State Housing Element Law (Gov. Code, § 65580 et seq). The adopted element was found to be substantially the same as the revised draft element that HCD's September 20, 2023 review determined met statutory requirements. 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 when all necessary rezoning 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 21). 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 HI14 (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 (e.g., resolution, ordinance) to HCD and HCD will review and approve the element in accordance with Government Code section 65585*."

Local

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Land Use and Planning:

<u>Land Use Element - Character Policies:</u>

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

a) No Impact. The proposed rezoning site is vacant and already designated and zoned for residential and mixed-use development. Development of the rezoning site would be considered infill development as the site is adjacent to existing development and has been planned for development since the 1980s. Therefore, the application of the MF combining to the rezoning site would encourage the development of housing on a vacant site in the City and would not divide an established community. Therefore, no impact would result from the proposed project.

b) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. The implementation of Program HI-14 would encourage residential development that is consistent with the requirements of the General Plan, Zoning Code, and State Housing Law. Although the MF combining zone would allow a residential density greater than the density currently allowed on the proposed rezoning site (20 units per acre instead of 17.4 units per acre as allowed in the Opportunity zone), the density allowed would still be less than the maximum residential density allowed in the City (21.78 units per acre in the R-3 zone; City of Blue Lake, 2024a). Future development proposals on the proposed rezoning site would be reviewed by the City to ensure compliance with applicable land use plans, policies, mitigation measures, and regulatory requirements adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

As discussed throughout this document, in all instances where potentially significant impacts have been identified, mitigation is provided to reduce each impact to less than significant levels. This was necessary in the following sections:

- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Utilities and Service Systems

No additional mitigation measures beyond those already identified would be required for the proposed project. As such, based on the analysis in this document and proposed mitigation, the proposed project would not conflict with a land use plan, policy, or regulation for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated in this regard.

Mitigation

With implementation of the following mitigation measures, potential impacts from the proposed project would be less than significant:

BIO-1: Pre-construction Special-status Plant Survey

BIO-2: Pre-construction Special-status Reptile and Amphibian Exclusion and Survey

BIO-3: Pre-construction Nesting Bird Survey

CUL-1: Cultural Monitoring

HAZ-1: Pre-Construction Characterization of Site Soils

HAZ-2: Soil and Groundwater Management Plan

HYD-1: Phase II MS4 Permit Compliance

UTL-1: Wastewater System Development Impact Fees

Mineral Resources

	Potentially Significant Impact	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
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. Powers Creek, which runs along the northern boundary of the proposed rezoning site, also contains sand and gravel resources. 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

a-b) No Impact. There are no known important mineral resources on the site proposed for application of the MF combining zone (APN 025-201-023). As such, it is not anticipated that future development on the proposed rezoning site 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 railroad ceased operations several decades ago and is no longer a primary source of noise in the City.

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 1** defines the maximum allowable noise level by receiving land use type, as required by Municipal Code Section 17.24.280(C)(3).

Table 1. 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 1**. 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

a-b) Less Than Significant Impact. Future development on the proposed rezoning site 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 near the rezoning site during the construction of future development. During operation, residential land uses are typically considered sensitive receptors for noise. As such, it is not anticipated that future residential development on the rezoning site would result in substantial increases in noise levels in the City. Since the majority of the heavy industrial uses in the Powers Creek District have ceased operating, it is not anticipated that the future residents on the rezoning site would be subject to noise levels in excess of the City's noise standards (see Table 1). If new noise-generating land uses are developed on the rezoning site (e.g., commercial or light manufacturing uses), they would be required to meet the City's noise standards, which would minimize potential impacts to surrounding sensitive receptors (City of Blue Lake, 2024a). As such, it is not anticipated that the proposed project would generate substantial increases in ambient noise levels in excess of applicable standards. Therefore, in compliance with existing regulations, there would be a less than significant impact in this regard.

During the construction of future development on the proposed rezoning site, 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 development on the rezoning site. 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 rezoning site. In compliance with the City's noise standards, the proposed project would not generate excessive groundborne vibration or groundborne noise levels. Therefore, in compliance with existing regulations, 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 in this regard.

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

According to the California Department of Finance, the population in Blue Lake in 2025 is estimated to be 1,136 residents and the population in Humboldt County is estimated to be 133,817 residents (CDOF, 2025). Blue Lake's population decreased from 1,253 in 2010 to 1,144 in 2024, which is an 8.7 percent decrease in population. Over the same time period, the Humboldt County population decreased from 134,623 in 2010 to 133,888 in 2024, which is a 5.5 percent decrease in population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010; CDOF, 2025).

According to the California Department of Finance, the City of Blue Lake is estimated to have 570 housing units in 2025 and the total number of units in the County is estimated to be 63,765 (CDOF, 2025). Housing needs are largely determined by population. The Regional Housing Needs Allocation (RHNA) that is planned for in the City's 6th cycle Housing Element Update is 34 units, which includes the RHNA from both the 5th and 6th housing element planning cycles. The site inventory in the Housing Element Update estimates that the development potential on the sites identified as vacant and likely developable is 62 units. The proposed project could potentially result in 10 additional units on the rezoning site than what is projected in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update (total of up to 72 units).

Discussion

a) Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed rezoning site is vacant and already designated and zoned for residential and mixed-use development. Development of the rezoning site would be considered infill development as the site is adjacent to existing development and has been planned for development since the 1980s. As such, the application of the MF combining to the rezoning site would encourage the development of housing on a vacant site in the City that is planned for this purpose.

Based on the estimated number of persons per household in the City (2.10 persons per household; CDOF, 2025), development of the RHNA allocation of 34 units is estimated to result in a population increase of approximately 71 residents. This would be a 6.3 percent increase in population and a 6 percent increase in the number of total housing units. Future development on the 1-acre rezoning site could result in up to 20

new residential units. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 151 residents. This would be a 13.3 percent increase in population and a 12.6 percent increase in the total number of housing units. If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,136 (CDOF, 2025) to approximately 1,287.

Since the proposed project plans for development on a vacant site that is already designated and zoned for residential and mixed-use development, it would not result in substantial unplanned population growth in the City. Although the MF combining zone would allow a residential density greater than the density currently allowed on the proposed rezoning site (20 units per acre instead of 17.4 units per acre as allowed in the Opportunity zone), the density allowed would still be less than the maximum residential density allowed in the City (21.78 units per acre in the R-3 zone; City of Blue Lake, 2024a). Future development on the rezoning site would be served by existing utilities and infrastructure and would be consistent with the projected growth in the City's General Plan. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

b) No Impact. The implementation of Housing Element Program HI-14 would encourage residential development on a vacant site that has been planned for development since the 1980s. As such, the proposed project 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, 2024b).

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. In 2025, 570 households and a population of 1,136 residents are 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 (CDOF, 2025). 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

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Public Services:

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

a) Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed rezoning site is vacant and already designated and zoned for residential and mixed-use development. Development of the rezoning site would be considered infill development as the site is adjacent to existing development and has been planned for development since the 1980s. As such, the application of the MF combining to the rezoning site would encourage the development of housing on a vacant site in the City that is planned for this purpose.

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 71 residents, which would be a 6.3 percent increase in population. Future development on the 1-acre rezoning site could result in up to 20 new residential units. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 151 residents (13.3 percent increase in population). If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,136 (CDOF, 2025) to approximately 1,287.

Future development on the proposed rezoning site 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 potentially significant impact unless new facilities need to be constructed, that could potentially result in physical impacts that would be potentially significant. The projected population increase from residential development on the vacant and likely developable sites in the City combined with the proposed project (151 residents and 13.3 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 proposed project would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

Recreation

	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?	☐	☐	☒	☐

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 2025, 570 households and a population of 1,136 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 (CDOF, 2025). 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

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Recreation:

<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

a-b) Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed rezoning site is vacant and already designated and zoned for residential and mixed-use development. Development of the rezoning site would be considered infill development as the site is adjacent to existing development and has been planned for development since the 1980s. As such, the application of the MF combining to the rezoning site would encourage the development of housing on a vacant site in the City that is planned for this purpose.

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 71 residents, which would be a 6.3 percent increase in population. Future development on the 1-acre rezoning site could result in up to 20 new residential units. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 151 residents (13.3 percent increase in population). If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,136 (CDOF, 2025) to approximately 1,287.

Future development on the proposed rezoning site 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 combined with the proposed project (increase to approximately 1,287 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 proposed project would result in substantial physical deterioration of parks and recreational facilities in the City. Therefore, the proposed project 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 (City of Blue Lake, 1986).

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

- 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 (City of Blue Lake, 1986).

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. To implement the recommendations of the 1986 Circulation Element, the City completed an intensive engineering and design study for the truck route that resulted in recommendations for improvements to slow down traffic and encourage safe access for pedestrians and bicyclists. The proposed improvements to the Greenwood portion of the truck route were funded in 2024 and the improvements have been completed. The City is currently pursuing funding for construction of the remaining portion of the truck route from the intersection of Greenwood Avenue and Railroad Avenue to the Hatchery Road bridge.

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, 2025).

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 bridge crossing over the Mad River. 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

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Transportation:

Circulation Element - Circulation Patterns Policies:

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

Circulation Element - Development Policies:

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.

Circulation Element - Public Transportation Policies:

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.

Circulation Element - Non-Vehicular Access Policies:

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

a) Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed rezoning site is vacant and already designated and zoned for residential and mixed-use development. Development of the rezoning site would be considered infill development as the site is adjacent to existing development and has been planned for development since the 1980s. As such, the application of the MF combining to the rezoning site would encourage the development of housing on a vacant site in the City that is planned for this purpose.

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 71 residents, which would be a 6.3 percent increase in population. Future development on the 1-acre rezoning site could result in up to 20 new residential units. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 151 residents (13.3 percent increase in population). If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,136 (CDOF, 2025) to approximately 1,287.

Future development on the proposed rezoning site would result in an increase in vehicle trips on City streets and the use of facilities for alternative modes and transit service. In 2023, a Transportation Impact Study (TIS) was prepared for four reasonably foreseeable projects in the Powers Creek District (W-Trans, 2023). The TIS analyzed the potential development of the following land uses on four sites north of Taylor Way:

- Multi-Family (Low-Rise) = 24 dwelling units
- Affordable Housing = 36 dwelling units
- Live-Work Housing = 13 dwelling units
- Strip Retail = 26,650 square feet
- Manufacturing = 14,350 square feet

The TIS analyzed potential development on the proposed rezoning site (project titled "Paradise Cay Mixed-Use Project") including 10 live-work units with a total of approximately 15,000 square feet of commercial and/or light manufacturing workspace and 10 apartment units (total of 20 residential units).

The TIS provided the following conclusions:

- The project is expected to have a less than significant impact on VMT.
- All six study intersections would operate at acceptable overall Levels of Service under Existing and Future conditions, without and with traffic generated by the project.
- Emergency access and site circulation are anticipated to function acceptably with the incorporation of applicable design standards into the site layout.
- The proposed project would not introduce any new hazards and would therefore be expected to have a less than significant impact on safety.

Considering the modest increase in population that could result from residential development on the vacant and likely developable sites in the City combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (151 residents and 13.3 percent increase in population), the design capacity of the main artery roadway in the City (Greenwood Avenue, Railroad Avenue, and Hatchery Road), and the conclusions of

the 2023 Transportation Impact Study, it is not anticipated that the proposed project would conflict with any program, plan, ordinance, or policy addressing the circulation system. Therefore, the proposed project 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.

As discussed under question a) above, a Transportation Impact Study (TIS) was prepared in 2023 for four reasonably foreseeable projects in the Powers Creek District (W-Trans, 2023). The TIS analyzed potential development on the proposed rezoning site (project titled "Paradise Cay Mixed-Use Project") including 10 live-work units with a total of approximately 15,000 square feet of commercial and/or light manufacturing workspace and 10 apartment units (total of 20 residential units). The TIS concluded that the project is expected to have a less than significant impact on VMT.

Based on the conclusions of the 2023 Transportation Impact Study, the proposed project would not conflict or be inconsistent with CEQA Guidelines § 15064.3, subdivision (b). Therefore, potential impacts would be less than significant in this regard.

c-d) Less Than Significant Impact. The proposed rezoning site is vacant and already designated and zoned for residential and mixed-use development. Development of the rezoning site would be considered infill development as the site is adjacent to existing development and has been planned for development since the 1980s. As such, the application of the MF combining to the rezoning site would encourage the development of housing on a vacant site in the City that is planned for this purpose.

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, including the proposed rezoning site.

As discussed under question a) above, a Transportation Impact Study (TIS) was prepared in 2023 for four reasonably foreseeable projects in the Powers Creek District (W-Trans, 2023). The TIS analyzed potential development on the proposed rezoning site (project titled "Paradise Cay Mixed-Use Project") including 10 live-work units with a total of approximately 15,000 square feet of commercial and/or light manufacturing workspace and 10 apartment units (total of 20 residential units). The TIS concluded the following regarding potential safety issues and emergency access:

- The proposed project would not introduce any new hazards and would therefore be expected to have a less than significant impact on safety.
- Emergency access and site circulation are anticipated to function acceptably with the incorporation of applicable design standards into the site layout.

Although the City's industrial truck route would serve the projected residential and mixed-use development in the Powers Creek District, the percentage of truck traffic on this route is a small portion of the overall traffic volume and is not anticipated to result in incompatibility between the remaining industrial uses and future residential or mixed uses.

Future development on the rezoning site would require new access roads and driveways 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 proposed project would not increase hazardous design features or incompatible uses and would not result in inadequate emergency access.

Therefore, based on the conclusions of the 2023 Transportation Impact Study and compliance with existing design standards, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

Tribal Cultural Resources

Would the project:	*Potentially Significant Impact*	*Less Than Significant With Mitigation Incorporated*	*Less Than Significant Impact*	*No Impact*
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).

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

a) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. Pursuant to the requirements of SB 18 and AB 52, the City completed the following efforts for the 6th cycle Housing Element Update:

- 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.
- 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.
- Provided written notice of preparation of a CEQA Initial Study for Housing Element Implementation Program HI-14 (Multi-Family or MF combining zone) on September 12, 2025 to the Tribes in the Humboldt Bay region. A response was received from the Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria requesting implementation of an inadvertent discovery protocol during future construction activity.

All future development on the rezoning site 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

requirements in Municipal Code Chapter 15.12 (Grading, Erosion, and Sediment Control) require the implementation of an inadvertent discovery protocol for all development. As stated in Municipal Code Section 15.12.020(D):

> "*Inadvertent Discovery Protocol for Archeological Resources. If archaeological resources are encountered during permitted or nonpermitted grading activities in the City of Blue Lake, all onsite work shall cease in the immediate area and within a 50-foot buffer of the discovery location. A qualified locally experienced archaeologist will be retained to evaluate and assess the significance of the discovery, and develop and implement an avoidance or mitigation plan, as appropriate. For discoveries known or likely to be associated with Native American heritage (prehistoric sites and select historic period sites), the Tribal Historic Preservation Officers (THPOs) for the Blue Lake Rancheria, Bear River Band of Rohnerville Rancheria, and Wiyot Tribe are to be contacted immediately to evaluate the discovery and, in consultation with the project proponent or property owner, City of Blue Lake, and consulting archaeologist, develop a treatment plan in any instance where significant impacts per the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) cannot be avoided. Prehistoric materials may include, but are not limited to, obsidian or chert flakes, tools, locally darkened midden soils, groundstone artifacts, shellfish or faunal remains, and human burials. Historic archaeological discoveries may include, but are not limited to, 19th century building foundations; structural remains; or concentrations of artifacts made of glass, ceramic, metal or other materials found in buried pits, old wells or privies. Should known or suspected Native American skeletal remains or burials be inadvertently discovered, the provisions of Section 7050.5 of the California **Health & Safety Code** and Section 5097.98 of the Public Resources Code shall apply (see at **http://www.nahc.ca.gov/profguide.html**)*."

A Cultural Resources Investigation was prepared in 2022 and updated in 2024 for a mixed-use development proposed by Danco Communities directly adjacent to the proposed rezoning site. The study area for the Investigation included the proposed rezoning site (APN 025-201-023). No pre-historic or historic cultural resources were identified within the study area during the field survey completed for the Investigation (ARSC, 2024). Due to the density of known pre-historic and historic sites along historically manipulated drainages in the project area, the Cultural Resources Investigation provided recommendations for cultural monitoring during initial ground disturbing activity and implementation of an inadvertent discovery protocol throughout the duration of construction. Therefore, the requirement to conduct cultural monitoring during initial ground disturbing activities as part of future development on the rezoning site, has been included as Mitigation Measure CUL-1 to reduce potential impacts to unknown cultural resources to a less than significant level.

Therefore, with implementation of the proposed mitigation measure and in compliance with existing regulatory requirements, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact related to tribal cultural resources.

Mitigation

With implementation of the following mitigation measures, potential impacts from the proposed project would be less than significant.

CUL-1: Cultural Monitoring

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 future residential and mixed-use development in the Powers Creek District.

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 1,136 residents as estimated by the California Department of Finance (CDOF, 2025), daily per capita water use is conservatively estimated to be approximately 132 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). 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. The City is planning capital improvements to the WWTP to serve future development in the City, 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 units (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 chose not to construct the improvements at that time.

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, 2025a), 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., 2025).

Regulatory Framework

Local

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Utilities and Services:

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

a) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. Future development on the proposed rezoning site 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.

The infrastructure improvements proposed by the project would result in physical impacts to the project site, which have been previously analyzed under the appropriate resource sections of this document. The project has been designed and mitigated to reduce construction and operational impacts to less than significant. Mitigation was required for the proposed project as discussed in the following resource sections of this document:

- Biological Resources
- Cultural Resources
- Hazards and Hazardous Materials
- Hydrology and Water Quality
- Utilities and Service Systems

No additional mitigation measures beyond those already identified would be required for the proposed project.

Therefore, the proposed project as mitigated and in compliance with existing regulatory requirements, would not cause significant environmental effects related to the construction or relocation of utility infrastructure

from future development on the proposed rezoning site. Therefore, impacts would be less than significant with mitigation incorporated 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 1,136 residents as estimated by the California Department of Finance (CDOF, 2025), daily per capita water use is conservatively estimated to be approximately 132 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 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, considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 151 residents (13.3 percent increase in population). If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,136 (CDOF, 2025) to approximately 1,287.

With this increase in population, it is estimated that daily water use would increase by approximately 19,932 gallons for a daily total of approximately 169,932 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 proposed project and reasonably foreseeable future development in the City. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

c) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. 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 projected future development in the City, including development on the proposed rezoning site. 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 for development on the vacant and likely developable sites identified in the site inventory of the Housing Element Update. The City proposes requiring future 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. Due to the need for capacity upgrades to the City's wastewater treatment plant to serve future development on the proposed rezoning site, a wastewater system development impact fee will be required as Mitigation Measure UTL-1 to reduce impacts to a less than significant level.

In compliance with Housing Element Update Program HI-18 and Mitigation Measure UTL-1, the City would have sufficient wastewater treatment capacity to serve the projected development potential, including future development on the proposed rezoning site. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated in this regard.

d-e) Less Than Significant Impact. Future development on the proposed rezoning site 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., 2025). The HWMA transfer station and the Dry Creek Landfill have sufficient capacity for the foreseeable future to accommodate the solid waste generated by future development in the City of Blue Lake. Additionally, all future development would be required to comply with applicable regulations related to reducing solid waste, recycling, and so on. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact in this regard.

Mitigation

With implementation of the following mitigation measures, potential impacts from the proposed project would be less than significant:

BIO-1: Pre-construction Special-status Plant Survey

BIO-2: Pre-construction Special-status Reptile and Amphibian Exclusion and Survey

BIO-3: Pre-construction Nesting Bird Survey

CUL-1: Cultural Monitoring

HAZ-1: Pre-Construction Characterization of Site Soils

HAZ-2: Soil and Groundwater Management Plan

HYD-1: Phase II MS4 Permit Compliance

UTL-1: Wastewater System Development Impact Fees

The project proponent shall be responsible for paying an impact fee for their fair share contribution for the planned improvements to the City's wastewater treatment plant (WWTP). The planned improvements will include electrical panel upgrades and the installation of two (2) 5 horsepower aerators, which are estimated to increase the capacity of the WWTP by one hundred eighty (180) residential equivalent units. The recommended calculation for determining a fair share contribution is provided below.

Total cost of WWTP improvements / Total number of additional REUs created = Fee for each REU of wastewater capacity needed for a project.

The project proponent shall pay the impact fee to the City prior to issuance of building permit(s).

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. 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, 2025).

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

The following policies from the City of Blue Lake General Plan are related to Public Safety:

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

a-d) Less Than Significant Impact. 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 the future development in the Powers Creek District. 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 development on the proposed rezoning site may require new access roads and driveways 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. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), 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, 2025).

There are three primary factors that are used in assessing wildfire hazards - topography, weather, and fuel. The proposed rezoning site is in a Moderate Fire Hazard Severity Zone and does 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 development on the rezoning site will require new infrastructure and utilities, which

would be installed and maintained at the site 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 future development on the rezoning site would occur in an area that is 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 proposed project 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

a) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. As discussed in the applicable environmental resource sections above, as mitigated and in compliance with existing regulatory requirements, the proposed project 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. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated in this regard.

b) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. 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 rezoning site is vacant and already designated and zoned for residential and mixed-use development. Development of the rezoning site would be considered infill development as the site is

adjacent to existing development and has been planned for development since the 1980s. As such, the application of the MF combining to the rezoning site would encourage the development of housing on a vacant site in the City that is planned for this purpose.

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 71 residents, which would be a 6.3 percent increase in population. Considering the estimated residential development potential on vacant and likely developable sites in the City (62 units) combined with the additional density that would be allowed by the proposed project (up to 10 additional units on the rezoning site (total of up to 72 units; see Table 22 in Housing Element Update; City of Blue Lake, 2025), this could result in an estimated population increase of approximately 151 residents (13.3 percent increase in population). If all these sites were developed as projected, the City's population would increase from 1,136 (CDOF, 2025) to approximately 1,287. 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.

As discussed in the various resource sections of this document, as mitigated and in compliance with existing laws and regulations, future development on the proposed rezoning site is not anticipated to result in significant environmental impacts. As such, it is not anticipated that development on the rezoning site would result in a cumulatively considerable contribution to potential cumulative impacts from future development in the City. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated in this regard.

c) Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated. As discussed in the applicable environmental resource sections of this document, as mitigated and in compliance with existing laws and regulations, the proposed project would not result in adverse effects on human beings. Therefore, the proposed project would result in a less than significant impact with mitigation incorporated in this regard.

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