CITY OF RIO DELL LAND USE ELEMENT
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT
CONTENTS

Figure List

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

The Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the City of Rio Dell General Plan has been prepared to comply with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This is a program level EIR. It evaluates the effects that goals, policies, and related implementation measures proposed in the City of Rio Dell General Plan Land Use Element and Housing Element would potentially have on the environment. The EIR focuses on the secondary effects from adoption of the Elements and is not as detailed as a project level EIR. Content and process requirements for Program EIRs are found in the California Code of Regulations, Title 14, Chapter 3: Guidelines for Implementation of CEQA.

This Chapter includes the following sections:

1.1 CITY GENERAL PLAN UPDATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW PROCESS

California state law requires cities to adopt a General Plan to guide the physical development of both public and private lands within the city limits. The general plan acts as a "constitution" that directs a city's long-term physical development. The prior General Plan Land Use Element was first adopted in 1968, three years after the incorporation of the City of Rio Dell, to provide a framework for growth and development. Few substantive revisions have been made to the General Plan since that time. The prior Housing Element was adopted in 1993. The Rio Dell General Plan will cover an approximate twelve-year time frame, from 2003 to 2015.

The California Government Code §65302 (all subsequent reference to California law will be to the Government Code unless otherwise specified) requires that the General Plan address seven specific Elements. These Elements are Land Use, Circulation, Housing (further specified in §65580), Conservation, Open Space, Noise, and Safety. The General Plan may also contain other optional Elements, such as public facilities, historic preservation, community design, and economic development (§65303). The Elements may be combined at the discretion of the local agency (§65301). In some cases, combining Elements can improve the Plan by eliminating redundancy.

1.2 CEQA PROGRAM EIR GUIDELINES

The Guidelines include the following description of a Program EIR (CEQA §15168):
(a) General. A program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:

1) Geographically:
2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions:

3) In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct on a continuing program; or
4) As Individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.

(b) Advantages. Use of a program EIR can provide the following advantages:

1) Provide an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action.
2) Ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis.
3) Avoid duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations,
4) Allow the Lead Agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts, and
5) Allow reduction in paperwork.

(c) Use with Later Activities. Subsequent activities in the program must be examined In the light of the program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared.

1) If a later activity would have effects that were not examined in the program EIR, a new initial Study would need to be prepared leading to either an EIR or a Negative Declaration.
2) If the agency finds that pursuant to § 15162, no new effects could occur or no new mitigation measures would be required, the agency can approve the activity as being within the scope of the project covered by the program EIR, and no new environmental document would be required.
3) An agency shall incorporate feasible mitigation measures and alternatives developed in the program EIR into subsequent actions in the program.
4) Where the subsequent activities involve site specific operations, the agency should use a written checklist or similar device to document the evaluation of the site and the activity to determine whether the environmental effects of the operation were covered in the program EIR.
5) A program EIR will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible. With a good and detailed analysis of the program, many subsequent activities could be found to be within the scope of the project described in the program EIR, and no further environmental documents would be required.

(d) Use with Subsequent EIR's and Negative Declarations. A program EIR can be used to simplify the task of preparing environmental documents on later parts of the program. The program EIR can:

1) Provide the basis in an initial study for determining whether the later activity may have any significant effects.
2) Be incorporated by reference to deal with regional influences, secondary effects, cumulative impacts, broad alternatives, and other factors that apply to the program as a whole.
3) Focus an EIR on a subsequent project to permit discussion solely of new effects which had not been considered before.

(e) Notice with Later Activities. When a law other than CEQA requires public notice when the agency later proposes to carry out or approve an activity within the program and to rely on the program EIR for CEQA compliance, the notice for the activity shall Include a statement that:

1) This activity is within the scope of the program approved earlier, and
2) The program EIR adequately describes the activity for the purposes of CEQA.

The detailed descriptions of the permissible uses of this document are provided in an effort to encourage its use. The program EIR can be used effectively with a decision to carry out a new governmental program or to adopt a new body of regulations in a regulatory program. The program EIR enables the agency to examine the overall effects of the proposed course of action and to take steps to avoid unnecessary adverse environmental effects.

Following this approach, when individual activities within the program are proposed, the agency would be required to examine the individual activities to determine whether their effects were fully analyzed in the program EIR. If the activities would have no effects beyond those analyzed in the program EIR, the agency could assert that the activities are merely part of the program which had been approved earlier, and no further CEQA compliance would be required. This approach offers many possibilities for agencies to reduce their costs of CEQA compliance and still achieve high levels or environmental protection.

1.3 ORGANIZATION AND INTENDED USES OF THE EIR

Organization of the Environmental Document

The main body of this document is divided into five chapters as follows:

Chapter 1 (Introduction) describes the General Plan preparation process and description of the Rio Dell General Plan 2015, and summarizes the plan's environmental impacts.

Chapter 2 (Natural Environment) examines the impacts of the plan on soils and geologic resources, hydrology and water resources, air resources, hazards, energy and mineral resources, noise, biological resources, and agricultural resource.

Chapter 3 (Community Environment) reviews impacts on land use and populations, as well as public facilities and services such as land use and planning, population and housing, public services, cultural resources, aesthetics, and transportation.

Chapter 4 (Evaluation of Plan Alternatives) describes the statutory requirements for alternatives and contains an evaluation of proposed alternatives.

Chapter 5 (Other CEQA Subjects) addresses mandatory EIR sections, including short-term versus long term uses, significant irreversible effects, growth inducing impacts, and cumulative impacts

For each subject addressed in Chapters 2 and 3, the discussion is organized into the following five parts:

Environmental Setting. CEQA § 15125 - Environmental Setting. Requires that an EIR must include a description of the environment in the vicinity of the project, as it exists before the commencement of the project, from both a local and regional perspective. The

description shall be no longer than is necessary to give an understanding of the significant effects of the proposed project and its alternatives. The setting section typically describes existing conditions.

Impacts Found to be Potentially Significant. A "significant effect on the environment" is defined by CEQA § 21068 as "a substantial, or potentially substantial, adverse change in the environment." This includes "direct physical changes… and reasonably foreseeable indirect physical changes in the environment" (§ 15064). There must be substantial evidence to determine that an effect is significant. A Program EIR allows consideration of cumulative impacts over time, and it allows discussion of broad policy measures as mitigation for potentially significant impacts.

Impact. Potentially significant impacts are identified in this section, for example: potential loss or damage to archeological resources, or potential landslides and soil instability. The impact is typically stated as a section title, followed by analysis, significance threshold and level of significance/mitigation measure discussions.

Analysis of Impact. The potential effect of implementing the General Plan is analyzed in this section. This analysis includes relevant impacts to the Planning Area, the resources involved, physical changes, alterations to ecological systems, and changes induced in population distribution, population concentration, the human use of the land (including commercial and residential development), health and safety problems caused by the physical changes, and other aspects of the resource base such as water, scenic quality, and public services.

Significance Standard. Significance standards have been adapted from Appendix G of the Revised CEQA Guidelines. For example, Appendix G, also known as the environmental checklist, as the generic question: would the project 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? The General Plan anticipates physical development throughout the City, rather than an individual project. Following the example described above, the language from Appendix G is adapted to state: Implementation of the General Plan would be considered significant if it would allow placement of structures on a geologic unit or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable, and potentially result in on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, liquefaction or collapse.

General Plan Policy. The level of potentially significant impacts are typically: significant but mitigable, or significant and not mitigable. CEQA § 15370 states that mitigation measures alleviate adverse changes in the environment by:

a) avoiding the impact altogether,
b) minimizing the impact by limiting its magnitude,
c) rectifying the impact through restoration,
d) reducing or eliminating the impact over time, or
e) compensating for the impact by replacing or providing substitute resources or environments.

Level of Impact (Significance). An EIR shall contain a statement briefly indicating the reasons that various possible significant effects of a project were determined not to be significant and were therefore not discussed in detail in the EIR (CEQA § 15128).

Intended Uses of This EIR

The EIR has two basic uses. First, it provides analysis of environmental effects of the Rio Dell General Plan 2015 Land Use and Housing Elements, and establishes a framework for plan adoption. Second, it serves as a first-tier EIR for subsequent environmental review on projects that would implement the Plan. In addition to the uses identified above, this EIR serves as an informational document, as identified in the following CEQA guidelines:

CEQA § 15121 - Informational Document

(a) An EIR is an informational document which will inform public agency decision-makers and the public generally of the significant environmental effect of a project, identify possible ways to minimize the significant effects, and describe reasonable alternatives to the project. The public agency shall consider the information in the EIR along with other information which may be presented to the agency.

(b) While the information in the EIR does not control the agency's ultimate discretion on the project, the agency must respond to each significant effect identified in the EIR by making findings under Section 15091 and if necessary by making a statement of overriding consideration under Section 15093.

(c) The information in an EIR may constitute substantial evidence in the record to support the agency's action on the project if its decision is later challenged in court.

1.4 COMMUNITY SETTING, CITY LIMITS, SPHERE OF INFLUENCE AND PLANNING AREA

Setting. The City of Rio Dell is located in Humboldt County, California, along Highway 101 within the Eel River Valley. The City of San Francisco is approximately 250 miles south of Rio Dell, Eureka is approximately 25 miles north, and the Oregon/California border is approximately 125 miles to the north. Figure 1 shows Rio Dell's location within Humboldt County and the State of California.

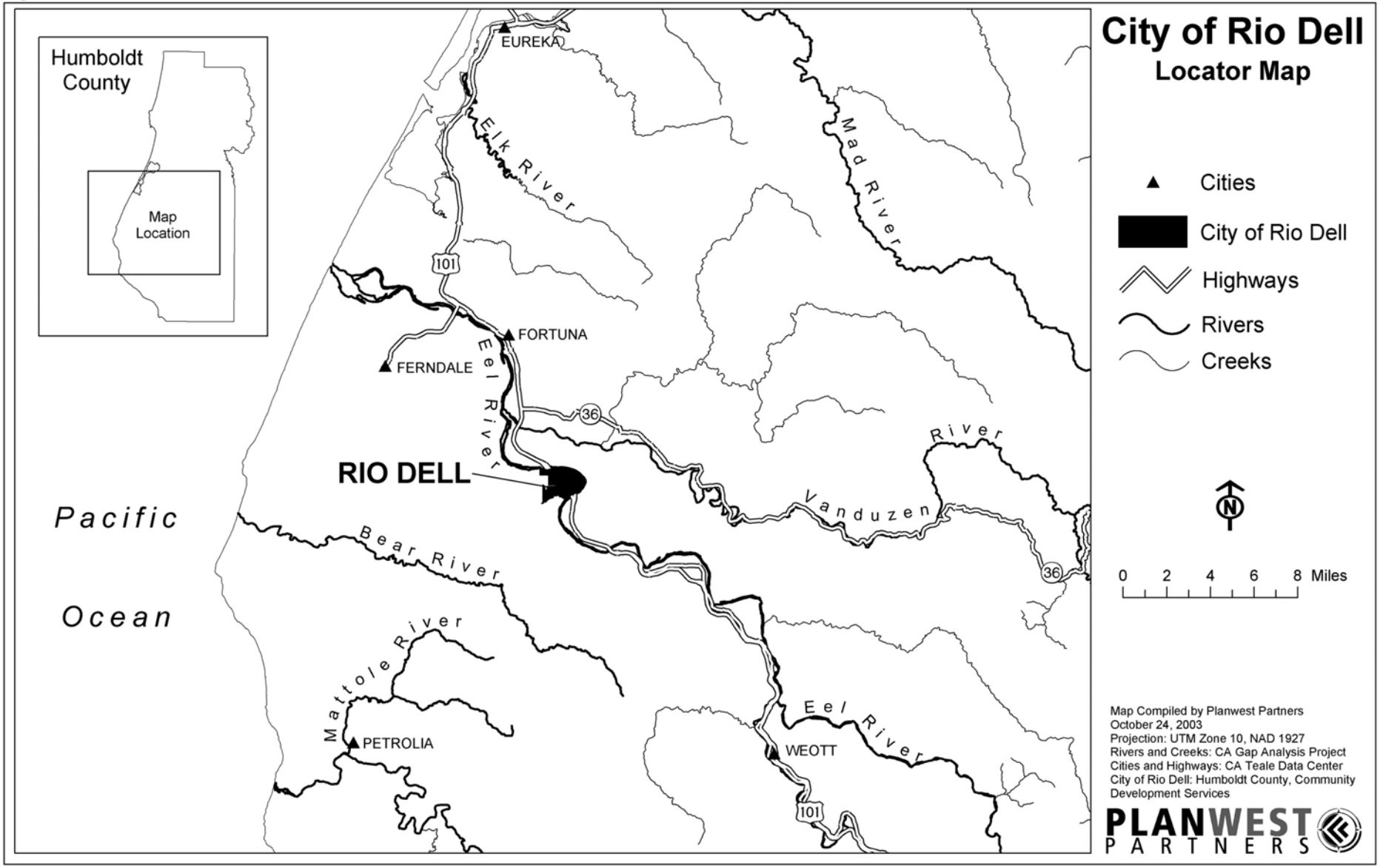
City Limits. The City is two square miles (1,278 acres) in size and is bordered on the north and the east by the Eel River and the south by Dean Creek. The city limits extend to the mid-point of the Eel River channel. The Scotia Bluffs, which make up the eastern bank of the Eel River across from Rio Dell, and the steep, wooded, hillside slopes on the west side of town are the dominant natural features of the City. Highway 101, which bisects the City, is the most prominent man-made feature in the City.

Rio Dell Sphere of Influence. The Sphere of Influence for Rio Dell is coterminous with present City boundaries, with three exceptions: including (1) the Monument Road area; (2) the Dean Creek area; and (3) the peninsula area, together totaling 160 acres beyond the city limits.

Monument Road Area (81 acres)

The Sphere of Influence includes those parcels between Monument Road and the City's southern boundary at the Dinsmore Ranch Annexation. Existing development in this area is predominantly residential use. This area is within the Rio Dell Fire Protection District; however, it is not currently served by a municipal water and sewer system.

Figure 1


City of Rio Dell
Locator Map
Humboldt County
Map Location
Cities
City of Rio Dell
Highways
Rivers
Creeks
EUREKA
Elk River
Mad River
101
FORTUNA
FERNDALE
Eel River
36
RIO DELL
Vanduzen River
Pacific Ocean
Bear River
Mattole River
PETROLIA
WEOTT
Eel River
101
36
0 2 4 6 8 Miles
Map Compiled by Planwest Partners
October 24, 2003
Projection: UTM Zone 10, NAD 1927
Rivers and Creeks: CA Gap Analysis Project
Cities and Highways: CA Teale Data Center
City of Rio Dell: Humboldt County, Community Development Services
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Dean Creek Area (7 acres)
The boundary of the Dean Creek area runs from the present City limits to the Eel River. This area is included in the Fire District, and is presently served by the City's water system. There are four residential lots here, two of which have been developed. No sewer service is provided, but septic systems are functional.

Peninsula Area (72 acres)
The boundary of the Peninsula area is a north-south line connecting the Bellview area with the northwest corner of the Dinsmore Ranch Annexation. The peninsula was created as a result of the Dinsmore Ranch Annexation and is sparsely developed. The area is located within the Fire District but was excluded from the annexation due to resident opposition and the City's current inability to provide services for reasons of topography and finances. As development occurs on the Dinsmore Ranch, pressure for development may increase in this peninsula.

The General Plan will consider existing land uses and establish land use designations for the entire Planning Area, both inside and outside the City limits.

Planning Area. The Planning Area for the City of Rio Dell totals 1,438 acres and consists of the area within the City boundaries plus the City's adopted Sphere of Influence (See Figure 2 for a map of the Planning Area). The general plan must cover a local jurisdiction's entire planning area, and address the broad range of issues associated with a city's development. When establishing its planning area, the State of California General Plan Guidelines recommends that a city consider using its sphere of influence as a starting point. The Humboldt County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) is charged with adopting a sphere of influence for each city in the County to represent "the probable physical boundaries and service area" of that city (§56076). Although there is no direct requirement that the sphere and the Planning Area match, the Sphere provides a convenient measure of the city's region of interest.

1.5 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

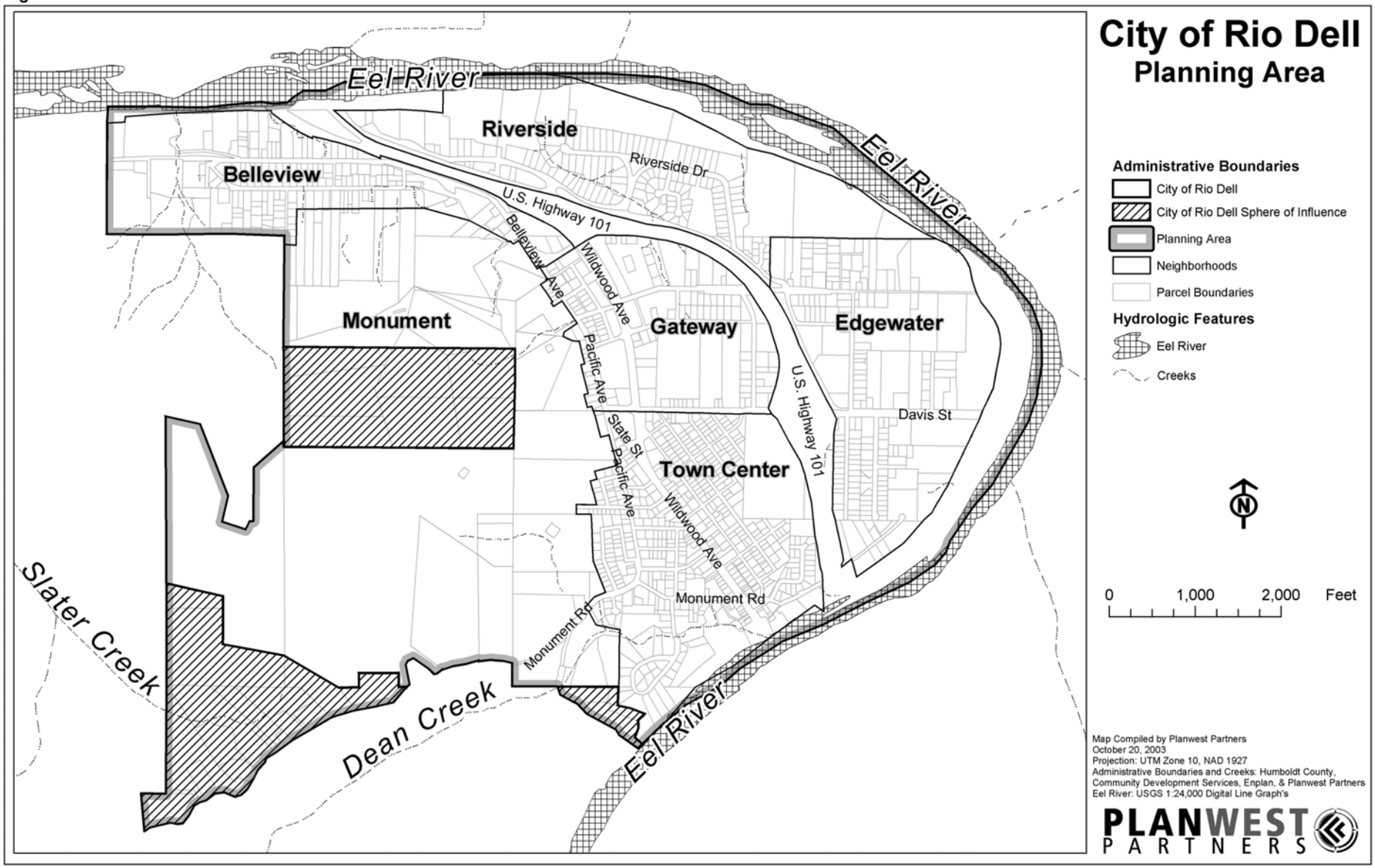
This EIR analyzes the potential impacts of implementing the Rio Dell General Plan 2015 Land Use Element and Housing Element, which constitutes the project as defined by CEQA (Public Resources Code §21065). The EIR assesses the environmental conditions that currently exist and how they could be potentially impacted by the project. This assessment takes into account Rio Dell's size, setting, and other physical characteristics that affect the environment.

Rio Dell General Plan 2015 Land Use Element– Assumptions
The Rio Dell General Plan 2015 Land Use Element will shape the City's look, function, and the way the City manages resources, from the date it becomes effective through the year 2015. Element preparation included a look to the past to consider the history and character of the City, as well as a look to the future. Assumptions identify trends that are expected to continue and future characteristics that reflect the community vision.

The following is a list of assumptions, which relate to local conditions and trends that affect the City, that were used in developing the Land Use Element.

- Given the limited number of available sewer connections and water supply deficiencies, slow growth is projected over the planning period.

Figure 2


City of Rio Dell
Planning Area
Administrative Boundaries
City of Rio Dell
City of Rio Dell Sphere of Influence
Planning Area
Neighborhoods
Parcel Boundaries
Hydrologic Features
Eel River
Creeks
Eel River
Riverside
Belleview
Monument
Gateway
Edgewater
Town Center
Riverside Dr
U.S. Highway 101
Belleview Ave
Wildwood Ave
Pacific Ave
State St
Davis St
Monument Rd
Slater Creek
Dean Creek
0
1,000
2,000
Feet
Map Compiled by Planwest Partners
October 20, 2003
Projection: UTM Zone 10, NAD 1927
Administrative Boundaries and Creeks: Humboldt County, Community Development Services, Enplan, & Planwest Partners
Eel River: USGS 1:24,000 Digital Line Graph's
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- Rio Dell will maintain its small town, single-family residential, image
- The requirement to cure basic infrastructure deficiencies and limited financing alternatives will serve to restrict growth over the first part of the planning period.
- Rio Dell will focus new growth within the existing downtown neighborhoods.
- Minimum lot sizes have been significantly increased in the sloped areas and in the undeveloped fringes along the western part of town along the River in order to preserve the City's rural character and natural resource values.

With few new commercial or residential buildings constructed, there have not been many physical changes within Rio Dell over the last 20 years. The City's population has grown at a steady rate, not exceeding 0.5 percent per year. Reductions in the timber industry have disproportionately affected the City, with the City's unemployment rate (14 percent in 2002) consistently twice the Countywide unemployment rate (6.5 percent in 2002) over the last 10 to 15 years. However, the recent spike in housing prices in Humboldt County indicates that regional influences could bring future change to Rio Dell, an area within the County with among the lowest housing costs. The Rio Dell General Plan 2015 Land Use Element includes goals, policies, and implementation measures that anticipate future changes in an effort to ensure that, through effective planning, they reflect the communities shared sense of values. See Figure 3 for the General Plan 2015 Land Use Diagram.

General plan 2015 – Land Use and Housing Elements

The proposed General Plan 2015 is defined in the goals, policies, and implementation measures of its Elements. The General Plan 2015 includes the Land Use Element and the Housing Element. Subsequent updates of the Rio Dell General Plan will include revisions to the other required elements. In order to find a complete listing of the goals, policies, and implementation measures, the reader should refer to the General Plan 2015.

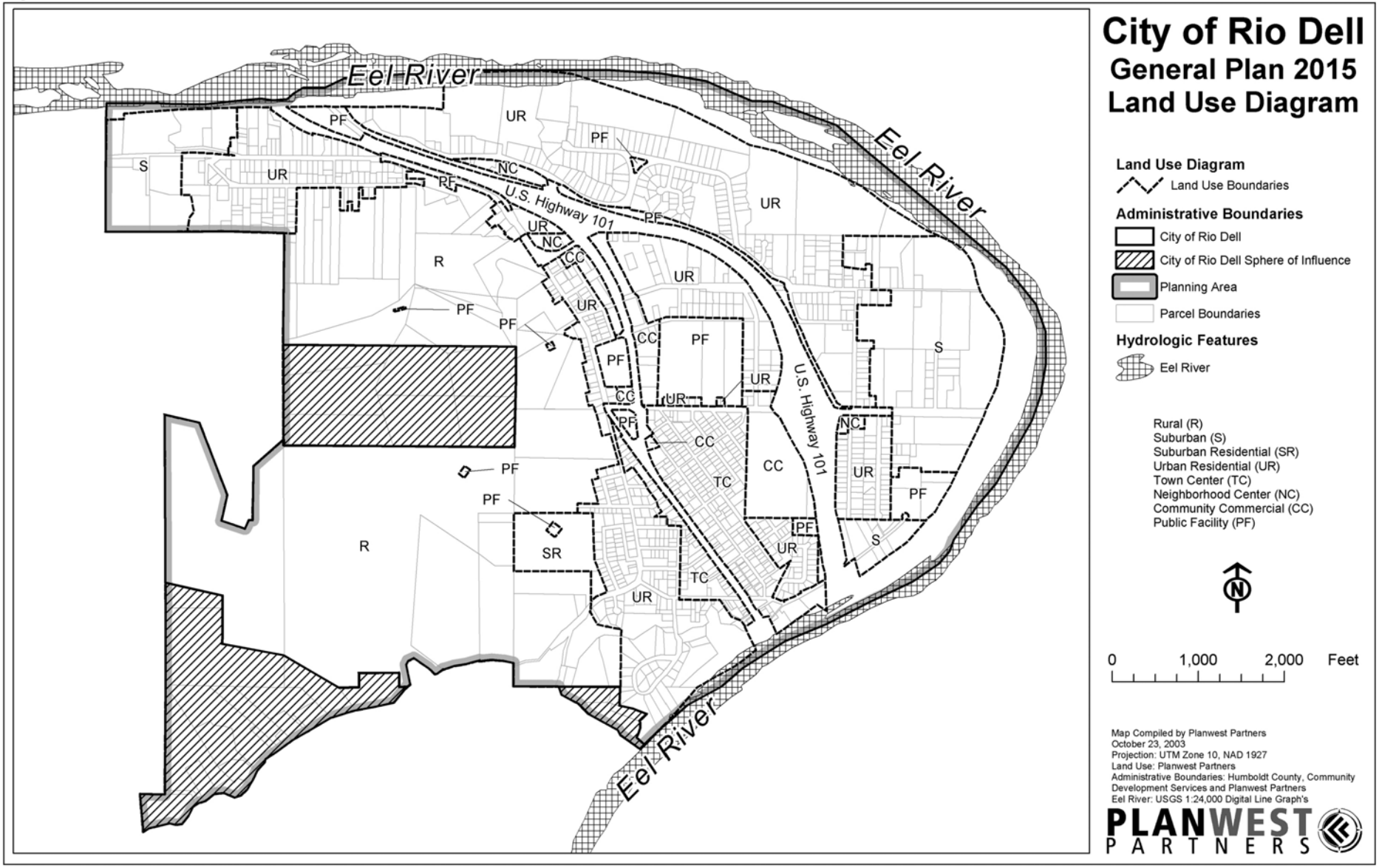
The Land Use Element is intended to guide future land use decisions, preserve the importance of the Town Center, and encourage a diversity of uses. The Land Use Diagram illustrates the proposed distribution of land uses by designation. Table 1.1 includes a listing and general description of the General Plan land use designations.

Table 1.1 Land Use Designations

Land Use Designation	Description
Rural (R)	Agricultural and very low-density residential
Suburban (S)	Mixed small-scale agricultural and low-density residential
Suburban Residential (SR)	Low-density residential
Urban Residential (UR)	Single family attached and detached neighborhood residential uses
Town Center (TC)	Mixed-use district at the heart of Rio Dell that contains residential, commercial, office, lodging, and civic uses
Neighborhood Center (NC)	Small-scale neighborhood shopping areas located within residential neighborhoods
Community Commercial (CC)	Large-scale commercial uses
Public Facility (PF)	Civic and cultural uses

In general, General Plan 2015 Land Use Element focuses growth into areas that are already developed (primarily the Town Center) and uses large minimum lot sizes to preserve the rural character of lands on hill slopes and along the Eel River. The proposed land use designations depart, in some cases significantly, from the land use designations contained in the prior General Plan. Table 1.2 compares the current Rio Dell land use designations to the land use designations

Figure 3


Eel River
U.S. Highway 101
R
S
SR
UR
NC
CC
TC
PF
City of Rio Dell
General Plan 2015
Land Use Diagram
Land Use Diagram
Land Use Boundaries
Administrative Boundaries
City of Rio Dell
City of Rio Dell Sphere of Influence
Planning Area
Parcel Boundaries
Hydrologic Features
Eel River
Rural (R)
Suburban (S)
Suburban Residential (SR)
Urban Residential (UR)
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Neighborhood Center (NC)
Community Commercial (CC)
Public Facility (PF)
0
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2,000
Feet
Map Compiled by Planwest Partners
October 23, 2003
Projection: UTM Zone 10, NAD 1927
Land Use: Planwest Partners
Administrative Boundaries: Humboldt County, Community Development Services and Planwest Partners
Eel River: USGS 1:24,000 Digital Line Graph's
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contained in the General Plan 2015. Table 1.3 projects the buildout of the land use designations contained in the General Plan 2015 into the future.

Table 1.2 General Plan Land Use Designation Changes

Existing General Plan	General Plan 2015	Change
Low Density Residential (LD)	Rural (R) Suburban (S) Suburban Residential (SR)	The new land use designations that replace Low Density Residential (0-4 units per gross acre) range from substantially lower density (R = 0.2 units per net acre and S = 1 unit per net acre) to slightly lower density (SR = 3 units per net acre)
Moderate/Low Density Residential (ML)	Urban Residential (UR)	The new land use designation allows a slightly higher density then Moderate/Low Density Residential when detached housing is constructed (4 to 7 units per net acre compared to 4 to 7 units per gross), but allows significantly higher density when detached single family housing is constructed (7 to 10 net acre)
Medium Density Residential (MD)	Urban Residential (UR) Town Center (TC)	The new land use designations that replace Medium Density Residential (7-21 units per gross acre) range from substantially lower density UR (7 to 10 SF attached units per net acre) to somewhat higher density (TC = 10 to 22 units per net acre plus mixed uses)
High Density Residential (HD)	Town Center (TC)	The new land use designation TC allows a significantly lower maximum density (TC = 10 to 22 units per net acre compared to 21 plus units per gross acre); however, the range of allowable uses changes significantly and provides for residential, commercial, civic, cultural, and limited office, and lodging
Commercial (GC)	Neighborhood Center (NC) Community Commercial (CC)	General commercial uses segregated based on scale and more detail regarding floor to area ratio
Highway Commercial (HC)	Community Commercial (CC)	More detail regarding floor to area ratio and a wider range of allowable uses
Conservation Recreation (CR)	Public Facility (PF)	Wider range of allowable uses
Public/Semi-Public Facility (PF)	Public Facility (PF)	No change
Industrial (I)	Community Commercial (CC)	Industrial uses limited to Light-Manufacturing completely contained within a building.
Floodway (CF)	Public Facility (PF)	Wider range of allowable uses

Table 1.3 PROPOSED PLAN
Land Use Categories and Acreages

								DEVELOPABLE				MAXIMUM BUILDOUT POTENTIAL[1]			
		Total		Developable		Density		Units		Population		Units		Population	
Land Use Designations		Acres	Pct.	Acres	Pct.	Max	Mid	Max	Mid	Max	Mid	Max	Mid	Max	Mid
R	Rural	570	40%	460	81%	0.2	0.1	91	45	236	117	114	57	295	148
S	Suburban	119	8%	85	71%	1.0	0.5	84	42	218	109	119	59	308	153
SR	Suburban Residential	15	1%	14	94%	3.0	1.5	42	21	109	54	44	22	114	57
UR	Urban Residential	332	23%	121	36%	14.0	9.0	1,689	1,086	4,375	2,813	4,649	2,988	12,041	7,739
TC	Town Center	48	3%	8	16%	22.0	16.0	171	124	443	321	1,049	763	2,717	1,976
NC	Neighborhood Commercial	6	0%	2	40%	22.0	11.0	48	24	124	62	121	60	313	155
CC	Community Commercial	33	2%	25	76%	8.0	4.0	197	98	510	254	260	130	673	337
PF	Public Facility[2]	50	3%		0%			-	-						
	Road Rightrs of Way/River	266	18%		0%			-	-						
	Total[3]	**1,438**	**100%**	**714**	**414%**			**2,322**	**1,440**	**6,014**	**3,730**	**6,356**	**4,079**	**16,462**	**10,565**

Source: Planwest Partners, 2003.

[1] Maximum buildout potential means that property within the Planning Area has been developed or re-developed to its maximum allowable density.

[2]Differrneces in Public Facility acreage reflect reclassification of unusable lands adjacent to roadways

[3]Differences in total acreage between Alternatives and the Proposed Plan reflects differences in total acreage of rights of way and incidential mapping errors.

1.6 LAND USE& HOUSING ELEMENTS IMPACT SUMMARY

Impact Topic	Description of Impact	General Plan Response	Significance
EIR CHAPTER 2 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT			
HYDROLOGY AND WATER RESOURCES	Potential flooding, changes to drainage patterns, and floodplain development that impedes the flow of water	**P2.1.2-2** Identify improvements to drainage facilities **P2.1.2-3** Require on-site drainage **P2.1.2-4** **P**romote water conservation.	Less than significant
AIR RESOURCES	Mobile, Point, and Area source pollution	**P2.1.3-1** Establish review procedures for development to reduced emissions **P2.1.3-2** Limiting wood-burning fireplace installations to low emitting	Less than significant
HAZARDS	Hazardous Materials and Emergency Response	**P2.1.4-2** Identify corrective actions to minimize threats to community residents, property, and vital services. **P2.1.4-3** Require hazardous materials storage, use and disposal plan.	Less than significant
ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES	Energy Demand Beyond Capacity of Suppliers and Availability of Mineral Resource Supplies	**P2.1.5-1** Coordinate with energy suppliers to provide energy conservation education. **P2.1.5-2** Distribute information about energy conservation measures. **P2.1.5-3** Require energy efficient construction.	Less than significant
NOISE	Stationary and Mobile Noise Sources	**P2.1.6-2** Require setbacks and attenuation for non-residential uses that are in proximity to sensitive receptors.	Less than significant
BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES	Substantial Reduction in the Habitat of Plan, Fish, or Wildlife Species and Interruption of Movement wildlife	**P2.1.7-1** Identify a system of public parks and open space. **P2.1.7-2** Ensure that environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHAs) are buffered to protect habitat values.	Less than significant
AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES	Loss of Prime Agricultural Land	**P2.1.8-2** Require large lots in the Monument and Belleview neighborhoods.	Less than significant

Impact Topic	Description of Impact	General Plan Response	Significance
EIR CHAPTER 3 COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT			
LAND USE AND PLANNING	Use of Land (Land Use Plan Compatibility	**P2.2.1-1** Encourage better design and more orderly development thru updated zoning and subdivision ordinances. **P2.2.1-2** Develop review procedure to ensure compatible uses. **P2.2.1-3** Encourage new construction Town Center's historic character. **P2.2.1-4** Encourage infill development in Town Center **P2.2.1-5** Adopt a mixed-use plan for the Wildwood Corridor. **P2.2.1-9** Protect residential neighborhoods at the periphery of the town center. **P2.2.1-10** Prevent nuisance situations.	Less than significant
	Potential Loss of Productive Resource (Agricultural Lands)	**P2.1.8-2** Require large lots in the Monument and Belleview neighborhoods.	Less than significant
POPULATION AND HOUSING	Population Growth	**P2.2.1-4** Encourage infill development in Town Center **P2.2.1-6** Encourage residential development in the town center for a variety of social and income groups. **P2.2.1-8** Adopt regulations that help the City meet its facility and infrastructure needs. **P2.2.1-9** Protect residential neighborhoods at the periphery of the town center.	Less than significant
	Housing Supply	**B-1** Encourage private rehabilitation of housing. **B-2** Use Federal and State funding program to rehab lower income households. **B-3** Require minimum health and safety standards for City. **B-4** Expand code enforcement efforts. **B-5** Require abatement of unsafe structures **B-6** Encourage the use of grant funds to remove barriers to housing for persons with disabilities.	Less than significant

Impact Topic	Description of Impact	General Plan Response	Significance
PUBLIC SERVICES	Increased Demands on Police and Fire Protection	**P2.2.3-1** Explore and adopt per capita staffing and response time standards for police and emergency personnel. **P2.2.3-2** Cooperate with the Rio Dell Fire Protection District. **P2.2.3-3** Pursue grant funds to achieve a lower ISO rating. **P2.2.3-4** Encourage new development to contribute its fair share to providing all public services	Less than significant
	Solid Waste Generation	P2.2.3-5 Explore additional techniques for reducing solid waste disposal.	Less than significant
	Water Supply Demands	**P2.2.3-4** Encourage new development to contribute its fair share to providing all public services and infrastructure **P2.2.3-6** Evaluate water supply and demand, and water conservation measures, to plan for future water needs **P2.2.3-8** Use a combination of incentives, educational programs, and ongoing system audits to promote water conservation. **P2.2.3-12** Prepare a five year capital improvement plan	Less than significant
	Wastewater Generation	**P2.2.3-4** Encourage new development to contribute its fair share to providing all public services and infrastructure **P2.2.3-6** Evaluate water supply and demand, and water conservation measures, to plan for future water needs **P2.2.3-7** Evaluate the wastewater system to plan for future wastewater needs of the community. **P2.2.3-8** Use a combination of incentives, educational programs, and ongoing system audits to promote water conservation. **P2.2.3-12** Prepare a five year capital improvement plan	Less than significant
	Demand for Utilities	**P2.2.3-9** Require underground utilities throughout the neighborhoods as new developments are planned and approved. **P2.1.5-1** Educate residents, property owners, and business operators about conserving energy. **P2.1.5-2** Distribute information about energy conservation measures and materials **P2.1.5-3** Require new construction and retrofits to comply with energy efficient construction codes	Less than significant

Impact Topic	Description of Impact	General Plan Response	Significance
PUBLIC SERVICES	Demand for Schools and Other Public Services	**P2.2.3-4** Encourage new development to contribute its fair share to providing all public services and infrastructure **P2.2.3-10** Explore the acquisition of open space land to serve residential neighborhoods in Rio Dell.	Less than significant
CULTURAL RESOURCES	Disturbances to Cultural Resources	**P2.2.4-1** Ensure planning decisions integrate information about cultural resources, and consult with outside entities. **P2.2.4-2** identify, assess, and protected from cultural resources from destruction. **P2.2.4-3** Work with community organizations to develop and staff a local historic museum.	Less than significant
AESTHETICS	Adverse Impacts to Vistas and Scenic Resources	**P2.2.5-2** Encourage the provision of street trees and landscaping in new developments. **P2.2.5-3** Encourage local civic groups to landscape and maintain unused portions of street rights of way . **2.5-4** Preserve land and water areas of historic, unique, or unusual character for use by the general public. **P2.2.5-5** Assist existing businesses with improvements to buildings exteriors/facades. **P2.2.5-6** Adopt design and landscaping guidelines for developments adjacent to U.S. Highway 101. **P2.2.5-7** Develop a landscaping plan along Wildwood Avenue that enhances the Gateway Project.	Less than significant
TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION	Increase in Traffic	**P2.2.6-2** Develop new street right-of-way standards that reduce vehicular speeds and enhance bicycle and pedestrian facilities. **P2.2.6-3** Provide greater access to public transit service **P2.2.6-4** Require new development on vacant land to construct a street grid that connects to existing streets. **P2.2.6-6** Develop standards for alternate access routes including alleys, walking paths, and bicycle routes.	Less than significant

1.7 NOTICE OF PREPARATION

In May 2003, the City of Rio Dell distributed a Notice of Preparation (NOP – CEQA Guidelines 15082) for the preparation of the Rio Dell General Plan 2015 EIR. The City sent the NOP to numerous public agencies including

Federal Agencies

Federal Emergency Management Agency
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency - Region 9
USDA Rural Development Agency
U.S. National Marine Fisheries Service, NOAA
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Six Rivers National Forest, USDA, Rural Community Assistance Coordinator

State Agencies (Distributed through the State Clearinghouse)

California Resources Agency
California Dept. of Fish and Game, Region 3;
California Department of Transportation District 01
California Dept. of Conservation
California State Lands Commission
California Department of Health Services
Native American Heritage Commission
California Department of Parks and Recreation
California State Water Resources Control Board
California Dept. of Water Resources
California Regional Water Quality Control Board, North Coast Region
California Waste Management Board
California Dept. of Forestry and Fire Protection

Local and Regional Agencies, Service Providers, Districts, and Organizations

North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District
North Coastal Information Center of the Historical Resources Information System
Humboldt County Community Development Services
Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO)
Humboldt County Association of Governments
Rio Dell Elementary School District
Fortuna Union High School District
Rio Dell Fire Protection District
City of Fortuna
Pacific Gas & Electric
Humboldt Waste Management Authority
Humboldt County Sheriffs Department
Redwood Region Economic Development Commission

CHAPTER 2
NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The Natural Environment Chapter assesses impacts of development under the Rio Dell General Plan 2015 Land Use and Housing Elements. Issues evaluated in this Chapter include the following:

2.1 Soils and Geologic Resources
2.2 Hydrology and Water Resources
2.3 Air Resources
2.4 Hazards
2.5 Energy and Mineral Resources
2.6 Noise
2.7 Biological Resources
2.8 Agricultural Resources

2.1 SOILS AND GEOLOGIC RESOURCES

Environmental Setting

Rio Dell underlain by undifferentiated non-marine terrace deposits of the Holocene (8,000 years ago to the present) and Pleistocene (1.8 million to 8,000 years ago) Epochs. This material is dissected and/or uplifted gravel, sand, silt, and clay deposited by the Eel River. The slopes surrounding the main terrace are marine and non-marine overlap deposits from the late Pleistocene to middle Miocene (23.8 to 5.3 million years ago).

The banks of the Eel River within the City, located within the 100- and 500-year flood plains, include alluvial deposits of clay, silt, sand, and gravel. There are no active faults identified within the Rio Dell City limits, however, nearby fault zones pose a potential seismic hazard. Landslides and ground shaking from a major seismic event could cause damage within the City. Disturbances to steep slopes with highly erodible soils can lead to ground slippage or landslides.

Ground Shaking and Stability

Rio Dell is located within an active seismic setting. The geology of the area plays an important role in determining the suitability of sites for construction of buildings and infrastructure. In 1992, the City experienced three earthquakes of magnitude 6.7, 6.8, and 7.2 (Richter Magnitude), causing serious damage to infrastructure and non-reinforced masonry and wood buildings. No faults have been mapped in the City; however the Russ Fault exists two miles southwest of the City. In addition, to the west of Rio Dell lies the Mendocino Triple Junction which experiences the highest concentration of earthquake events in the continental United States. There are no Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zones within three miles of the City of Rio Dell. See Figure 4 for Rio Dell geology and faults.

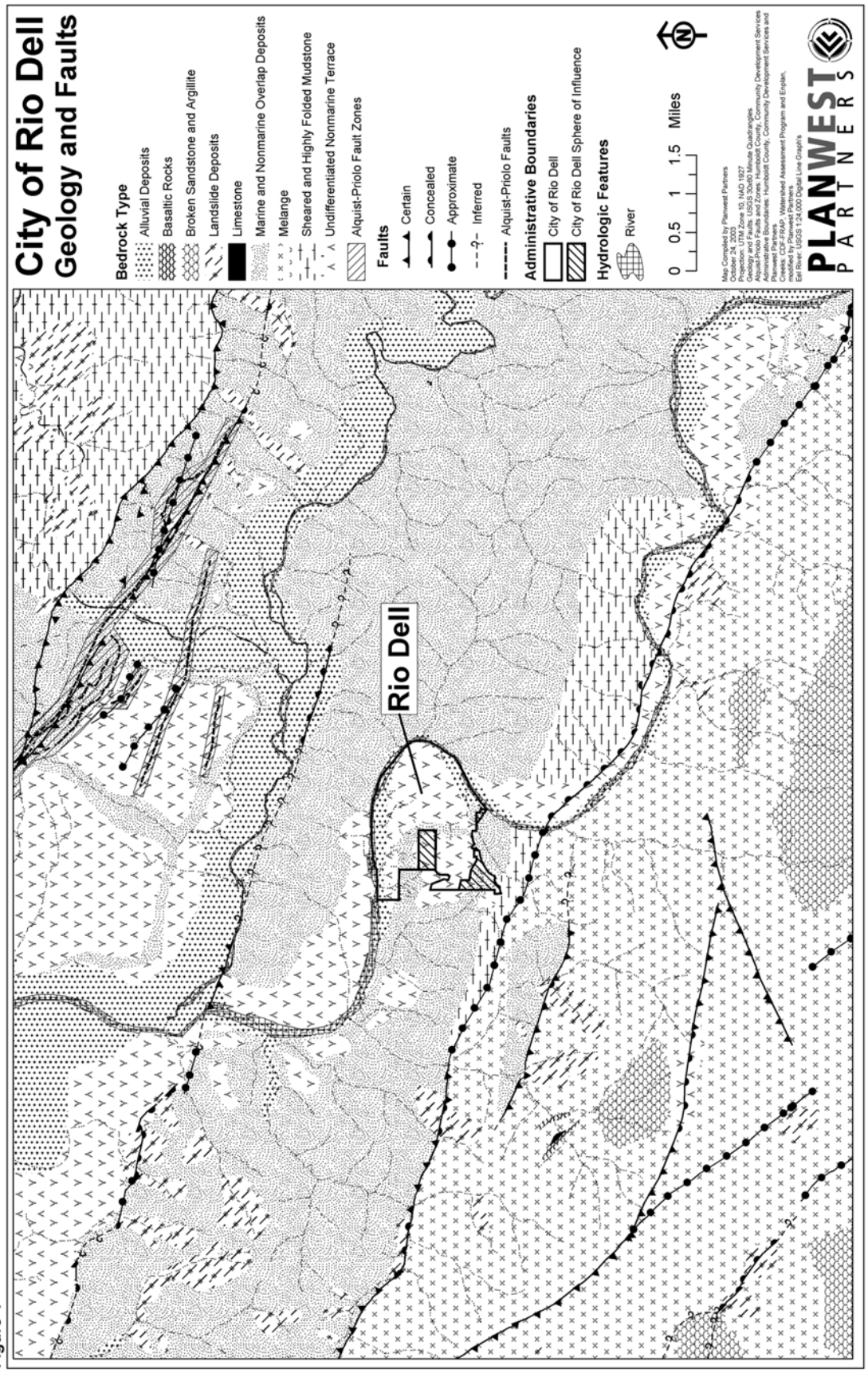

City of Rio Dell
Geology and Faults
Bedrock Type
Alluvial Deposits
Basaltic Rocks
Broken Sandstone and Argillite
Landslide Deposits
Limestone
Marine and Nonmarine Overlap Deposits
Melange
Sheared and Highly Folded Mudstone
Undifferentiated Nonmarine Terrace
Alquist-Priolo Fault Zones
Faults
Certain
Concealed
Approximate
Inferred
Alquist-Priolo Faults
Administrative Boundaries
City of Rio Dell
City of Rio Dell Sphere of Influence
Hydrologic Features
River
0 0.5 1 1.5 Miles
Rio Dell
PLANWEST PARTNERS

Figure 4

Landslides

Mass movement of material on hillsides often accompanies moderate and strong earthquakes. This may occur in the form of landslides, rock avalanches, mud and debris floes, or other types of slope failure. The steep natural or artificial slopes and high water content that is present in portions of Rio Dell may favor such failures. The Monument neighborhood contains the greatest amount of steeply sloped land within the City limits and therefore would appear to have the most stability issues. The Riverside and Edgewater neighborhoods contain the banks of the Eel River and the smaller drainages within the town may have limited stability. The majority of land within the Town Center, Belleview, Riverside, and Edgewater communities is categorized as stable. Liquefaction resulting from earthquakes is not considered as great a risk in the lower slope areas. See Figure 5a for Rio Dell slope hazards.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Ground shaking, Stability, and Landslides

Impact: Ground shaking, Stability, and Landslides

Analysis of Impacts. Faults are found throughout the region and remain a factor to be considered in future development. Structures too close to a fault can be damaged during a seismic event. These events can also affect public services and utilities, damage bridges and roadways, limit emergency response, and endanger persons and property. The scientific understanding and assessment of seismic hazards in the region continues to evolve. Increased awareness of potential seismic impacts has lead to increased seismic safety standards in building and development codes and greater public awareness of risks.

Placement of structures or other improvements in or below landslide zones, or on steep slopes, can affect slope stability and could expose persons to potential danger. Improvements in mapping technology and better soils information are helping to identify unstable areas. High rainfall can saturate soils, making them more susceptible to movement, especially during seismic events. Removal of vegetation and grading, as part of development, can also adversely impact soil stability.

Significance Standard. Seismic impacts are considered significant if implementation of the General Plan would expose people or structures to potential substantial adverse geologic effects, including risk of loss, injury, or death involving:

1. Rupture of a known earthquake fault, as delineated on the most recent Alquist-Priolo Earthquake Fault Zone Map issued by the State Geologist for the area or based on other substantial evidence of known fault.
2. Strong seismic ground shaking.
3. Seismic related ground failure, including liquefaction.

There would also be a potential significant impact if implementation of the General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements resulted in the loss of a unique geologic feature, or allowed new development on

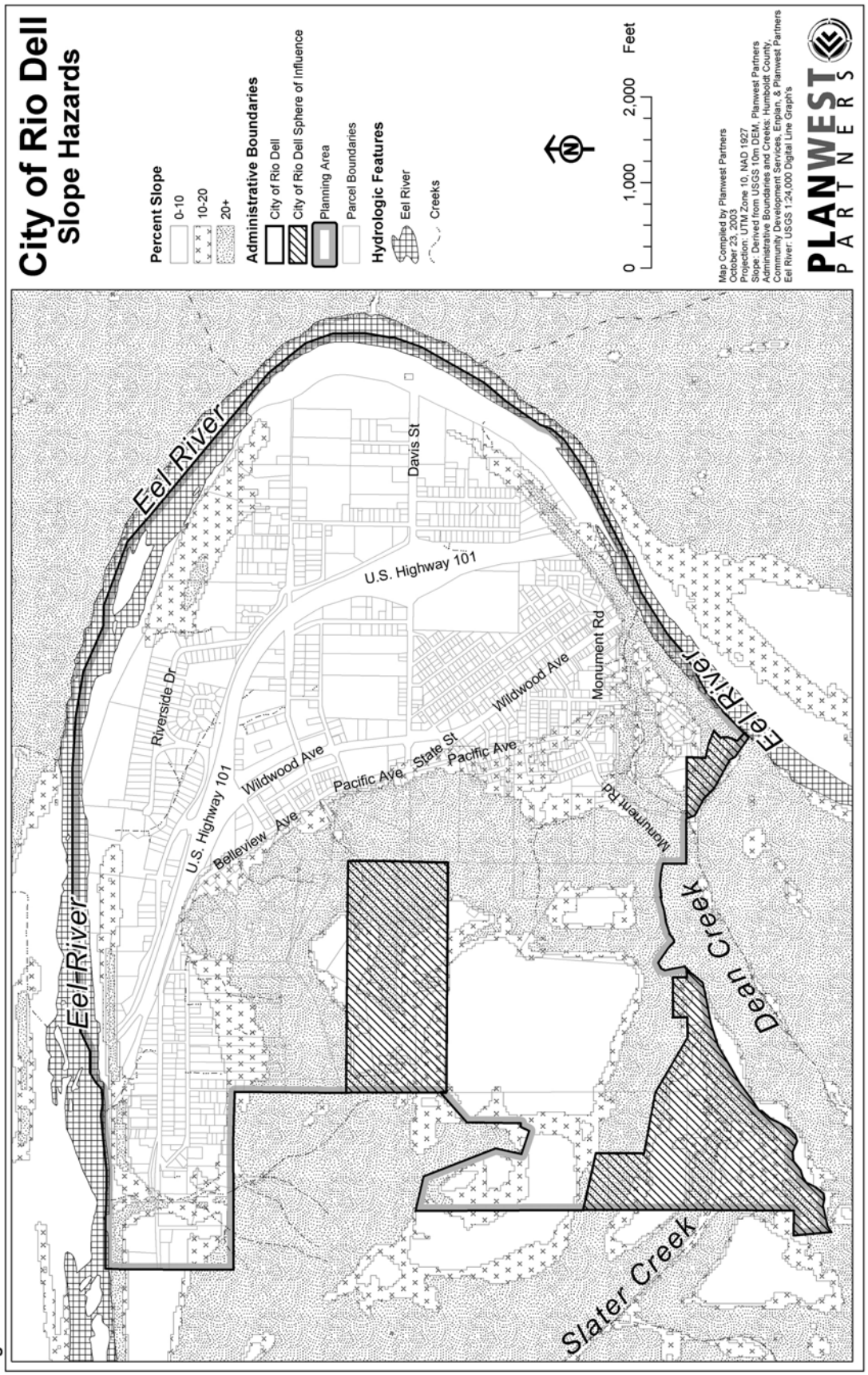

City of Rio Dell
Slope Hazards
Percent Slope
0-10
10-20
20+
Administrative Boundaries
City of Rio Dell
City of Rio Dell Sphere of Influence
Planning Area
Parcel Boundaries
Hydrologic Features
Eel River
Creeks
0
1,000
2,000
Feet
Map Compiled by Planwest Partners
October 23, 2003
Projection: UTM Zone 10, NAD 1927
Slope: Derived from USGS 10m DEM, Planwest Partners
Administrative Boundaries and Creeks: Humboldt County, Community Development Services, Enplan, & Planwest Partners
Eel River: USGS 1:24,000 Digital Line Graph's
PLANWEST PARTNERS
Eel River
Eel River
Davis St
U.S. Highway 101
Riverside Dr
U.S. Highway 101
Wildwood Ave
Belleview Ave
Pacific Ave
State St
Pacific Ave
Wildwood Ave
Monument Rd
Monument Rd
Eel River
Dean Creek
Slater Creek

Figure 5a

strata or soil that is unstable, or that would become unstable, and potentially result in liquefaction, on- or off-site landslide, lateral spreading, subsidence, or collapse, or allowed new development on expansive soil creating substantial risk of loss of life or property.

General Plan Policy. The potential impacts due to seismic events could be potentially adverse if structures or infrastructure are located too close to existing faults. In addition, seismic impacts could be potentially adverse if there was damage to infrastructure or emergency response capabilities. Steep slopes in certain areas, where development could occur, have the potential to become unstable if disturbed. The General Plan includes the following policies to reduce impacts from seismicity:

- Make soils and geologic resources information publicly available.
- Require that geo-technical reports be prepared by qualified professionals for developments in areas of potential slope stability to ensure that slope and soil stability measures are incorporated into project design.
- Reduced development potential on steeper slopes.

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies would help maintain soil stability and restrict placement of structures and people on steep slopes, which would reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

2.2 HYDROLOGY AND WATER RESOURCES

Environmental Setting

The climate in Rio Dell is characterized by moderate temperatures and seasonal precipitation. Temperatures vary little during the year due to the effects of the prevailing onshore winds from the Pacific Ocean. The average temperature in Rio Dell ranges from 48^0 F in January to 61^0 F in July. The majority of precipitation occurs in Rio Dell during the five-month winter and spring period between January and May, and the mean annual precipitation is 47 inches.

Portions of the City of Rio Dell are located within 100- and 500-year FEMA mapped flood plains and there has been flooding and flood related damage from recent flood events. Portions of three small watersheds, which all drain into the Eel River Watershed, are located within the Rio Dell Plan Area. The Eel River is the primary domestic water supply for the City of Rio Dell.

Floodplains

The City is located adjacent to the Eel River, but the majority of the developed land is outside of the 100 and 500-year floodplains (based on FEMA Q3 Flood Data, derived from the most recent Flood Insurance Rate Maps). Numerous large floods have occurred in Rio Dell as a result of intense winter storms and upslope land disturbances. The highest recorded Eel River discharge at Rio Dell is 752,000 CFS in December 23, 1964, with an estimated recurrence interval of 290 years. This and other large floods have caused damage in the City primarily to the lumber industry, railroad property, and roads, and bridges. At this time, no flood control structures exist in Rio Dell. See Figure 5b for Rio Dell flood hazards.

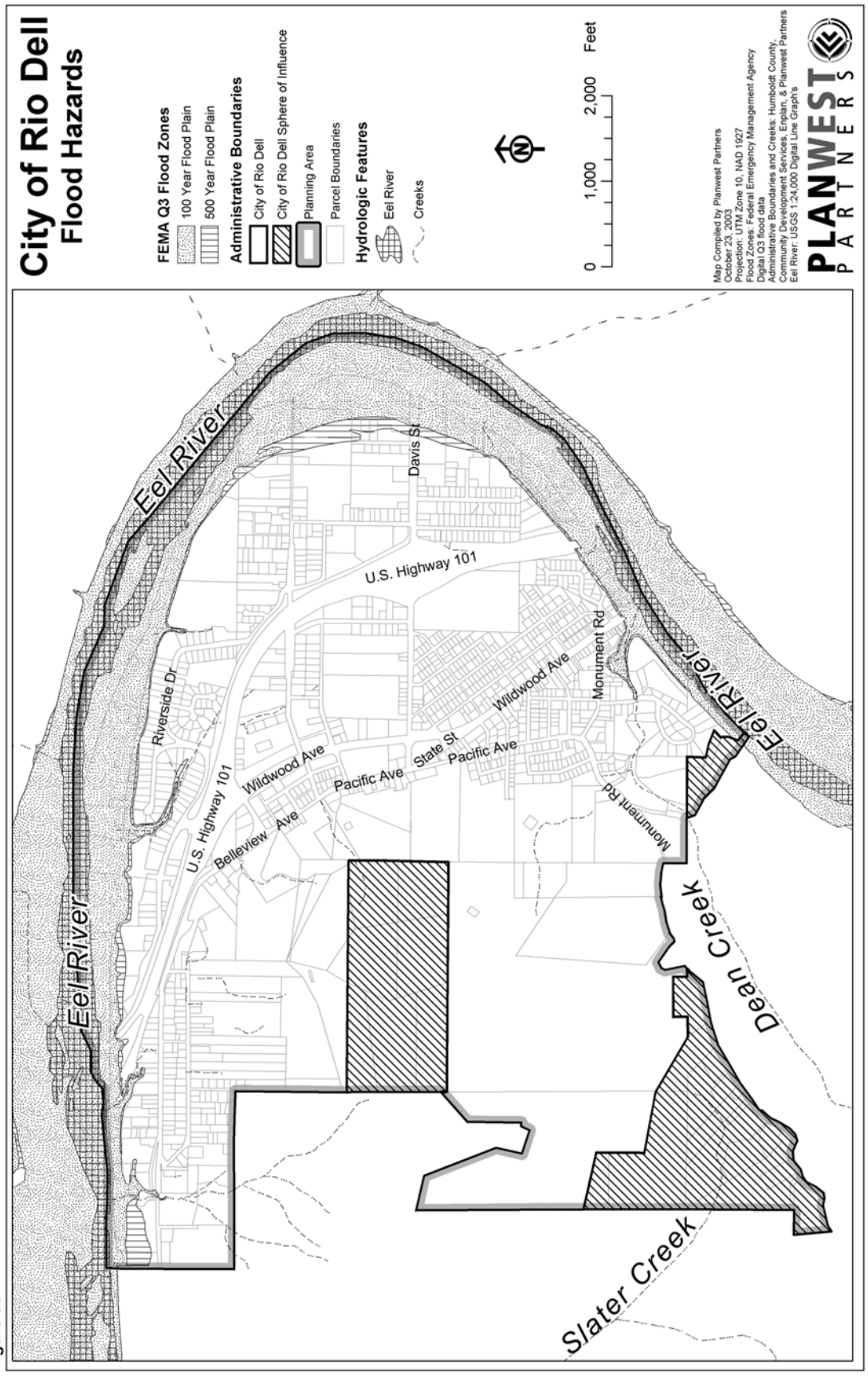

City of Rio Dell
Flood Hazards
FEMA Q3 Flood Zones
100 Year Flood Plain
500 Year Flood Plain
Administrative Boundaries
City of Rio Dell
City of Rio Dell Sphere of Influence
Planning Area
Parcel Boundaries
Hydrologic Features
Eel River
Creeks
0
1,000
2,000
Feet
Map Compiled by Planwest Partners
October 23, 2003
Projection: UTM Zone 10, NAD 1927
Flood Zones: Federal Emergency Management Agency
Digital Q3 flood data
Administrative Boundaries and Creeks: Humboldt County, Community Development Services, Enplan, & Planwest Partners
Eel River: USGS 1:24,000 Digital Line Graph's
PLANWEST PARTNERS
Eel River
Eel River
Davis St
U.S. Highway 101
Riverside Dr
U.S. Highway 101
Wildwood Ave
Pacific Ave
State St
Pacific Ave
Wildwood Ave
Monument Rd
Eel River
Belleview Ave
Monument Rd
Dean Creek
Slater Creek

Figure 5b

Watersheds

There are three primary watersheds that are located at least partially within the Rio Dell Planning Area. These watersheds include No Name Creek in the Belleview neighborhood (which is part of the 990 acre Nanning Creek watershed and includes most of the swales and drainages contained within the City limit); Slater Creek (1,780 acre watershed with 87 acres within the City and an additional 79 acres within the SOI); and Dean Creek (857 acre watershed, with 177 acres within the City and 2.7 within the SOI). All of the watersheds described above are part of the Eel River Watershed which, at 3,684 square miles, is the third largest in the State of California.

With a water right for 2.54 cubic feet per second (approximately 1.6 million gallons per day), the City of Rio Dell relies on Eel River water for its domestic water supply. Therefore, threats to the local drainages and the Eel River watershed in general can significantly affect the City's water supply.

The City of Rio Dell owns and operates a wastewater treatment facility that, during the winter months, discharges treated effluent into the Eel River. During summer months, treated effluent is discharged into two percolation ponds on a gravel bar adjacent to the River. The geology of the gravel bar has allowed effluent to surface on the gravel bar and discharge directly into the River. As described in the Public Facilities section of this document, the North Coast Region of the California Regional Water Quality Control Board issued a Cease and Desist Order (CDO - No. RI-2003-0046) requiring the City of Rio Dell to cease and desist from discharging and threatening to discharge waste in violation of prior waste discharge requirements. The CDO sets forth a series of tasks that Rio Dell must complete within a certain timeframe in order for the Order to be lifted. The CDO further restricts new connections to the existing wastewater treatment system to a maximum of 40 equivalent dwelling units (EDU - where one EDU represents a three-bedroom single-family house and equals 450 gallons of discharge per day or a total of 18,000 gallons per day).

Regulatory Framework

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) provides definitions of "waters of the United States" and "wetlands" at 40 CFR 122.2(a) through (g). Because wetlands and creeks are included under this definition of waters of the United States, their water quality must be protected to meet the mandate of the Clean Water Act articulated in section 101(a), "to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters." The protection and enhancement of water quality must address not only the water chemistry, but also the multiple elements, including aquatic life, wildlife, habitat, vegetation, and hydrology, that together make up aquatic systems. Therefore, relevant issues to address with respect to wetlands and creek protection can include the toxicity and bioaccumulation of pollutants, entrapment of pollutants in sediment, and hydrologic changes (U.S. EPA, 1996).

Army Corps of Engineers

The corps has been involved in regulating activities in navigable waterways through the granting of permits since passage of the Rivers & Harbors Act of 1899. At first, this program was meant

to prevent obstructions to navigation, although an early 20th century law gave the corps regulatory authority over the dumping of trash and sewage. Passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972 greatly broadened this role by giving the corps authority over dredging and filling in the "waters of the United States," including many wetlands. The Clean Water Act added what is commonly called Section 404 authority to the program. The Secretary of the Army, acting through the Chief of Engineers, is authorized to issue permits, after notice and opportunity for public hearings, for the discharge of dredged or fill material into waters of the United States at specified disposal sites. Selection of such sites must be in accordance with guidelines developed by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in conjunction with the Secretary of the Army; these guidelines are known as the 404(b) (1) Guidelines. The discharge of all other pollutants into waters of the U. S. is regulated under Section 402 of the Act. The Federal Water Pollution Control Act was further amended in 1977 and given the common name of "Clean Water Act" and was again amended in 1987 to modify criminal and civil penalty provisions and to add an administrative penalty provision.

The Clean Water Act uses the term "navigable waters" which is defined (Section 502(7)) as "waters of the United States, including the territorial seas." Thus, Section 404 jurisdiction is defined as encompassing Section 10 waters plus their tributaries and adjacent wetlands and isolated waters where the use, degradation or destruction of such waters could affect interstate or foreign commerce.

Activities requiring Section 404 permits are limited to discharges of dredged or fill materials into the waters of the United States. These discharges include return water from dredged material disposed of on the upland and generally any fill material (e.g., rock, sand, dirt) used to construct fast land for site development, roadways, erosion protection, etc.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) is the federal agency charged with regulating and implementing policies related to the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) as well as providing guidance floodplain management and the protection of wetlands. The Floodplain Management and Protection of Wetlands section of the Federal Code of Regulations (44 CFR Section 9.2) states FEMA's environmental review policy. This policy includes Avoid long- and short-term adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains and the destruction and modification of wetlands and other measures to reduce the risk of flood loss and restore and preserve the natural and beneficial values served by floodplains.

Generally, "A revision of floodplain delineations based on fill must demonstrate that any such fill has not resulted in a floodway encroachment" [44 CFR 65.5 (a) (7)]. Although no definition of encroachment was found (by this author) in the relevant sections of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFRs) the State of California model ordinance defines encroachment as "the advance or infringement of uses, plant growth, fill, excavation, buildings, permanent structures or development into a floodplain which may impede or alter the flow capacity of a floodplain".

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Hydrology, Drainage and Flooding

Impact: ·Hydrology, Drainage and Flooding

Analysis of Impacts. Future development in Rio Dell will include additional structures and paved areas that will increase the amount of impervious surface area. This will potentially increase the amount of runoff and could also impact adjacent streams, wetlands, and the Eel River. Two causes can increase flooding: drainage patterns changes that increase the volume and speed of runoff, and floodplain development that impedes the flow of water

Significance Standard. Impacts would potentially be significant if implementation of the General Plan would substantially alter existing drainage patterns in a manner that would substantially increase the rate or amount of surface runoff that results in flooding; creates or contributes to runoff water that would exceed the capacity of stormwater drainage systems; allows housing or structures within the 100-year floodplain, causing flood flows to be impeded or redirected; or substantially deplete groundwater supplies.

General Plan Policy. The proposed Land Use Element includes a number of policies to reduce the effects of development near streams, wetlands, and the Eel River. Further, the proposed Element puts restrictions on development in or near floodplains to reduce impacts, and contains the following policies to address hydrology, drainage, and potential flooding:

- Update the Conservation and Safety Element to include the most current information regarding flood and drainage conditions.
- Identify improvements that can be made to municipal drainage facilities so they can better convey runoff and minimize flood impacts.
- Require new development projects to incorporate on-site drainage features such as retention and infiltration systems to reduce runoff and maximize infiltration.
- Use a combination of incentives, educational programs, and ongoing system audits to promote water conservation.

Level of Impact (Significance). The implementation of these policies will reduce hydrology, drainage, and flooding impacts to a less-than-significant level.

2.3 AIR RESOURCES

Environmental Setting

The City of Rio Dell benefits from generally good air quality. The City has limited industrial and commercial emissions sources and good airflow. Sources of air emissions within Rio Dell include motor vehicle traffic, wood burning, and dust. Rio Dell and the Eel River valley have a low potential for forming ozone smog because of good ventilation from winds and natural air drainage along the Eel River corridor. Sources of ozone precursor emissions are low enough that ozone smog does not rise to significant levels even when there is no wind. Also, the air basin has good vertical mixing in summer months, which helps disperse pollutants before they can

build up to harmful levels. No air quality standards exceedances for Rio Dell have been observed.

Regulatory Framework

The California Air Resources Board (ARB) has primary responsibility for regulating emissions from stationary, mobile, and area sources. The state also delegates many responsibilities to local air districts. The City of Rio Dell is part of the North Coast Unified Air Quality Management District (NCUAQMD), which recommends local mitigations for air quality impacts. The City has ultimate authority and responsibility for adopting and implementing air quality measures.

Air pollution is regulated by two types of standards: emission standards and ambient air quality standards. Emission standards are the levels of air pollutants a source is allowed to release into the air, while ambient air quality standards are levels of air pollutants that should not be exceeded in the air of an area such as a city or county. California sets ambient air quality standards for nine pollutants. Pollutants with ambient air quality standards are known as criteria pollutants. Table 2-1 lists the pollutants that have ambient air quality standards set for them and the status of these pollutant levels on the North Coast.

Table 2-1 North Coast Air Quality Standards and Status

Federal and State Ambient Air Quality Standard Status for Criteria Pollutants		
	Federal	**State**
OZONE	Attainment	attainment
SULFUR DIOXIDE	Attainment	attainment
NITROGEN DIOXIDE	Attainment	attainment
PARTICULATE PM10	Attainment	nonattainment
CARBON MONOXIDE	Attainment	attainment
SULFATES	no standard	attainment
LEAD	Attainment	attainment
HYDROGEN SULFIDE	no standard	attainment
VINYL CHLORIDE	no standard	attainment

Air on the North Coast is in attainment for the majority of the criteria pollutants. Attainment means that the values the government set for clean healthy air are not exceeded in an area. Nonattainment classification means that the air quality for that pollutant does not meet the standard for healthy air. The only standard currently listed as nonattainment on the North Coast is the state standard for particulate PM10. This is particulate matter that is less than 10 microns in size, which is smaller than the human eye can see. Air quality standards are set for particulate this size because particles under 10 microns can get by human lung natural filtration systems. The North Coast, along with most of the rest of California, does not meet the ambient levels the state sets for PM10; the federal PM10 standard is three times the level set by California. There are many particulate matter sources and the District implements control measures for those that are considered significant.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Air Resources

Impact: Air Resources

Analysis of Impacts. Emissions from additional wood stoves and fireplaces would contribute to increases in PM10 and PM2.5 and expose sensitive receptors to wood smoke, a known carcinogen. Construction, demolition, and unpaved roadways will contribute to existing and future violations of state standard.

Future population increases will result in additional vehicle use. While a very small source compared to total area emissions, increased vehicle emissions will make it more difficult to attain air quality standards.

Significance Standard. The impact would potentially be significant if implementation of the General Plan would result in stationary source standards, or contribute to a non-stationary source "hot spot", or expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations.

General Plan Policy. State and federal regulation preempt local control of emissions from cars, buses, trucks, and other vehicles and crafts. The State of California has adopted some of the most stringent requirements in the world on gasoline and diesel fuel, to reduce PM10 and other harmful emissions.

The following policies to reduce air quality impacts:

- Reduce emissions from stationary sources by limiting wood-burning fireplace installations in new construction to low emitting; State and EPA certified fireplace inserts, woodstoves, pellet stoves, or natural gas fire stoves.
- Concentrating growth in and around the town center will reduce vehicle trips.

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies will reduce air quality impacts to a less-than-significant level.

2.4 HAZARDS

Environmental Setting

Potential hazards that could exist in Rio Dell include earthquakes, floods, wildland fires, landslides, extreme weather, hazardous materials, and major vehicle accidents. The City has an adopted Emergency Operations Plan, which identifies the City's emergency planning, organization, response policies and procedures. The plan also addresses the integration and coordination with other local, state, and federal emergency response operations.

Hazards which have caused damage to Rio Dell in the past include earthquakes and flooding. In addition to the damage to Rio Dell caused by the 1992 earthquake, severe winter storms in 1995, 1996, and 1997 caused damage, which included flooding, erosion, siltation of drainages, and damage to streets and utilities. See Figure 4, 5a, and 5b (located earlier in this chapter) for Rio Dell hazards.

A considerable portion of the land within the Monument Neighborhood is at a slope of 20 percent or greater. The steepness of the slope can significantly contribute to soil stability and the susceptibility to landslides. In addition to the steepness of the slope, the structure of the soil, water, and vegetation contributes to susceptibility to landslides. See Figure 5a for slope characteristics within Rio Dell.

Although the City has not experienced any recent wildland fires, the geography of the area and the condition of the adjacent forests cause fire hazards. Rio Dell sits at the edge of forestlands that pose a moderate to high fire risk to the community. As a result, the Humboldt Fire Safe Council has placed Rio Dell on its *Community at Risk Candidate List*. In addition, the proximity of US 101 to residential areas increases the likelihood of impacts from hazardous material spills.

The City has prepared an Emergency Operations Plan, which identifies the City's emergency planning, organization, response policies and procedures.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Hazards

Impact: Hazards

Analysis of Impacts. The projected growth assumed in the General Plan may increase the need for emergency response related to hazardous materials and other hazards identified in the Rio Dell Emergency Response Plan. To maintain police, fire, ambulance, and hospital service ratios at their current levels, additional personnel and equipment will be needed. However, additional facilities such as substations should not be necessary, since the proposed General Plan is based on growth by infill rather than expansion. For the same reason, no significant deterioration in response time is expected since the maximum distance to hospitals, evacuation systems, and fire and police stations is not expected to increase.

Significance Standard. The impact would be significant if the General Plan:

- Impaired implementation of or physically interfered with an adopted emergency response plan or emergency evacuation plan; or
- Created a significant hazard to the public or the environment through the routine transport, use, or disposal of hazardous materials, created a significant hazard to the public or the environment through reasonable foreseeable upset and accident conditions involving the likely release of hazardous materials into the environment, or led to

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

General Plan Policy. Several policies of the proposed General Plan address the risks associated with hazardous substances and emergency preparedness and response:

- Identify corrective actions that can be taken to minimize threats to community residents, property, and vital services. (Safety Element Update)
- Require new commercial and industrial uses that could potentially handle or release hazardous materials develop and implement a hazardous materials storage, use and disposal plan.
- The City shall maintain GIS data on natural and man-made hazards and make available to the public large-scale hazard maps.
- The City shall maintain GIS data on all locations that handle hazardous materials or are required to file a Hazardous Materials Business Plan.

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies will reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

2.5 ENERGY AND MINERAL RESOURCES

Environmental Setting

Electric and natural gas service is provided by Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E) Company, in accordance with rates and rules approved by the California Public Utilities Commission. PG&E operates an electrical substation in the Town Center neighborhood that serves the Rio Dell community. There are no power generation facilities or natural gas production wells within the City limits. Pacific Lumber Company operates a 25-megawatt biomass cogeneration plant at its lumber mill in neighboring Scotia. The power plant runs on mill wastes and produces enough power to run the Scotia sawmills and to provide heat and electricity for the entire Scotia company town. Excess power is sold to PG&E.

Although the Eel River flows through the City and generates approximately 75% of the sand and gravel mined in Humboldt County, no mineral extraction occurs within the City boundaries. The nearest sand and gravel activities to Rio Dell are located at the mouth of the Van Duzen River approximately 10 miles northwest of the City. Little or no mineral extraction occurs within the Plan Area, however there is a gravel quarry located approximately one mile southwest of Rio Dell along Monument Road within the Dean Creek watershed. There are no electric generating facilities or other energy or fuel production facilities within the Planning Area.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Energy and Mineral Resources

Impact: Energy and Mineral Resources

Analysis of Impacts. The growth projected in the General Plan will create an increase in demand for energy. This includes fuel related to transportation and building heating and ventilation. Energy requirements linked to buildings are expected to increase at the same rate as the population. The City's policy of infill development and mixed-use development in the Town Center are expected to reduce the rate of increase of transportation related fuel use to a level less than the rate of increase of the population.

Significance Standard. The impact would be significant if the General Plan would:

- Result in energy demand beyond the capacity of energy suppliers; or,
- Result in the loss of availability of a known mineral resource classified MRZ-2 by the State Geologist that was of value to the region and the residents of the State, or resulted in the loss of availability of a locally-important mineral resource recovery site delineated by a local plan.

General Plan Policy. The only impact of significance to mineral resources is expected to come from the use of aggregates. The General Plan includes the following policies to reduce energy consumption:

- Educate residents, property owners, and business operators about the need for and benefits of conserving energy in coordination with energy suppliers and agencies to.
- Maintain and distribute current information about building insulation, energy efficient appliances, lighting, and heating; other conservation measures and materials; and home power alternatives.
- Require that new construction and retrofits comply with energy efficient construction codes including high-energy windows, water heaters, and furnaces, to reduce energy consumption.

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies will reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Impacts Found Not to be Significant

The proposed General Plan is not expected to result in the loss of availability of any mineral resource of value to the region and the residents of the State, except as noted above (gravel).

2.6 NOISE

Environmental Setting

Community noise is commonly described in terms of the “ambient” noise level, which is defined as the all-encompassing noise level associated with a given noise environment. A common statistical tool to measure the ambient noise level is the average, or equivalent sound level (L_{eq}), which corresponds to a steady-state sound level containing the same total energy as a time-varying signal over a given period (usually one hour). Land uses such as residences, health care

facilities, public libraries, schools, and parks are typically considered sensitive to noise (sensitive receptors).

The primary noise impact in Rio Dell is from traffic on the US 101 corridor and on the highway interchanges. Single event daytime noise levels from sources such as truck traffic and commercial activity in the Town Center are occasionally in excess of noisy urban daytime design standards of 60 dB(A). Delivery and log truck traffic using Wildwood Ave., Monument Road, Pacific Ave., and Davis Street contribute to single event noise and cause levels up to 86dB(A). In addition, local domestic activity can generate a single noise event of 64 dB(A) to 86 dB(A) from chain saws, lawnmowers, and other vehicles. Currently the City does not have a noise ordinance. Overall, the City can be defined as having low ambient noise levels.

Acoustic Terminology

Noise is often defined simply as unwanted sound and thus is a subjective reaction to characteristics of a physical phenomenon. The decibel scale was devised for measuring sound and uses the human hearing threshold of 0 decibels (dB) as a starting point. The decibel scale allows a million-fold increase in pressure to be expressed as 120 dB, which is considered damaging to human hearing. Noise can affect health, both in terms of actual physiological damage such as hearing impairment, and in terms of inhibiting general well-being and contributing to undue stress and annoyance. When community noise interferes with human activities and contributes to stress, public annoyance with the noise source increases.

Researchers have generally agreed that A-weighted sound levels (sound levels) are very well correlated with community noise reaction. The unit of sound level measurement is the decibel (dBA), sometimes expressed as dBA. Variations in sound levels over time are represented by statistical descriptors, and by time-weighted composite noise metrics such as the Day-Night Average Level (L_{dn}), or the Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL). Throughout this analysis, A-weighted sound pressure levels will be used to describe community noise unless otherwise indicated.

The decibel notation used for sound levels describes a logarithmic relationship of acoustical energy, so that sound levels cannot be added or subtracted in the conventional arithmetic manner. For example, a doubling of acoustical energy results in a change of 3 decibels (dBA), which is usually considered to be barely perceptible. A 10-fold increase in acoustical energy yields a 10 decibel change, which is subjectively like a doubling of loudness.

Community noise is commonly described in terms of the “ambient” noise level, which is defined as the all-encompassing noise level associated with a given noise environment. A common statistical tool to measure the ambient noise level is the average, or equivalent sound level (L_{eq}), which corresponds to a steady-state sound level containing the same total energy as a time-varying signal over a given period (usually one hour). The L_{eq} is the foundation of the composite noise descriptors such as L_{dn} and CNEL, and shows very good correlation with community response to noise.

In California, most cities and counties have adopted noise ordinances, which serve as enforcement mechanisms for controlling noise, and general plan noise elements, which are used

as planning guidelines to ensure that long-term noise generated by a source is compatible with adjacent land uses. The California Department of Health Services' (DHS's) Office of Noise Control has studied the correlation of noise levels and their effects on various land uses and has published land use compatibility guidelines for the noise elements of local general plans. The guidelines are the basis for most noise element land use compatibility guidelines. The recommended maximum acceptable noise levels for various land uses are shown in Table 2-2.

Table 2-2 Maximum Allowable Ambient Noise Exposure

Land Use	Suggested Maximum
Residential - Low Density	60 L_{dn}
Residential - High Density	65 L_{dn}
Transient Lodging	65 L_{dn}
Schools Libraries Churches Hospitals	70 L_{dn}
Auditoriums	70 L_{dn}
Playgrounds Parks	70 L_{dn}
Commercial	70 L_{dn}
Industrial	75 L_{dn}

Note: L_{dn} = day-night average sound level.
Source: State of California, Office of Planning & Research 1990.

As shown in Table 2-2, persons in low-density residential settings are most sensitive to noise intrusion, with noise levels of 60 dBA community noise equivalent level (CNEL) and below considered "acceptable". For land uses such as schools, libraries, churches, hospitals, and parks, acceptable noise levels go up to 70 Ldn CNEL. For persons in commercial and industrial settings, acceptable levels of noise go up to 70 and 75 Ldn CNEL respectively.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Noise

Impact: Noise

Analysis of Impacts. The production of noise often results from growth, even when the best available noise control technology is applied. Noise exposures within industrial facilities are controlled by Federal and State employee health and safety standards. Exterior noise levels are usually subject to local standards. Reducing new noise impacts can be achieved by applying noise level performance standards to proposed new noise-producing uses. Limiting exposure from existing uses can be achieved by requiring that new noise-sensitive uses in near proximity to noise-producing uses include mitigation measures to ensure compliance with noise performance standards.
The majority of noise impacts from mobile sources occur adjacent to higher volume roadways, and train tracks. The highest volume roadways in the City include U.S. 101 and Wildwood Avenue.

Significance Standard. The noise impact could be potentially significant if implementation of the General Plan would expose persons to noise levels in excess of applicable city standard, or standards of other agencies.

General Plan Policy. The General Plan includes the following policies to reduce noise impacts:

- Require additional setbacks and attenuation techniques for non-residential uses that are in proximity to sensitive receptors such as nursing homes and convalescent facilities.

Level of Impact (Significance). This policy will reduce impacts to a less-than-significant level.

2.7 BIOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Environmental Setting

Except for the wetland areas along streams and drainage channels, Rio Dell is not considered prime habitat for sensitive plant species. The wetland and riparian areas provide habitat for certain special status plants. See Figure 6 for Rio Dell biological resources.

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, most of the Eel River channel (extending approximately to the 500-year flood plain boundary) is included within the National Wetlands Inventory. The Eel River channel south of Davis Street was not mapped as part of the National Wetlands Inventory but exhibits many of the same characteristics as the River channel north of Davis Street. The 500-year flood plain associated with the River channel within the City and south of Davis Street contains potential wetlands. Portions of the "Peninsula" area of the Rio Dell Sphere of Influence outside of the City limits also contain wetlands listed on the National Wetlands Inventory.

Some amphibians listed as species of special concern may exist in the wetlands and forested areas surrounding Rio Dell. Habitat for threatened and endangered fish species exists in the Eel River and possibly Dean Creek. In addition, The Riparian forests and upslope woodlands surrounding Rio Dell have the potential to support a variety of bird species, including species of special concern, threatened and endangered species; however the majority of the habitat is not ideal and would have a low probability of occurrence. No threatened or endangered mammals or plants are known to exist in the Rio Dell Planning Area.

Within one half mile of Rio Dell, but not within the City limits, the California Department of Fish and Game has mapped the occurrence of the following special status species: Marbled Murrelets; Osprey; Northern Spotted Owls; and Great Blue Heron (CDFG Natural Diversity Database, Spotted Owl Database, Marbled Murrelet Database), . The U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service has further mapped the occurrence of long-beard lichen within the Nanning Creek

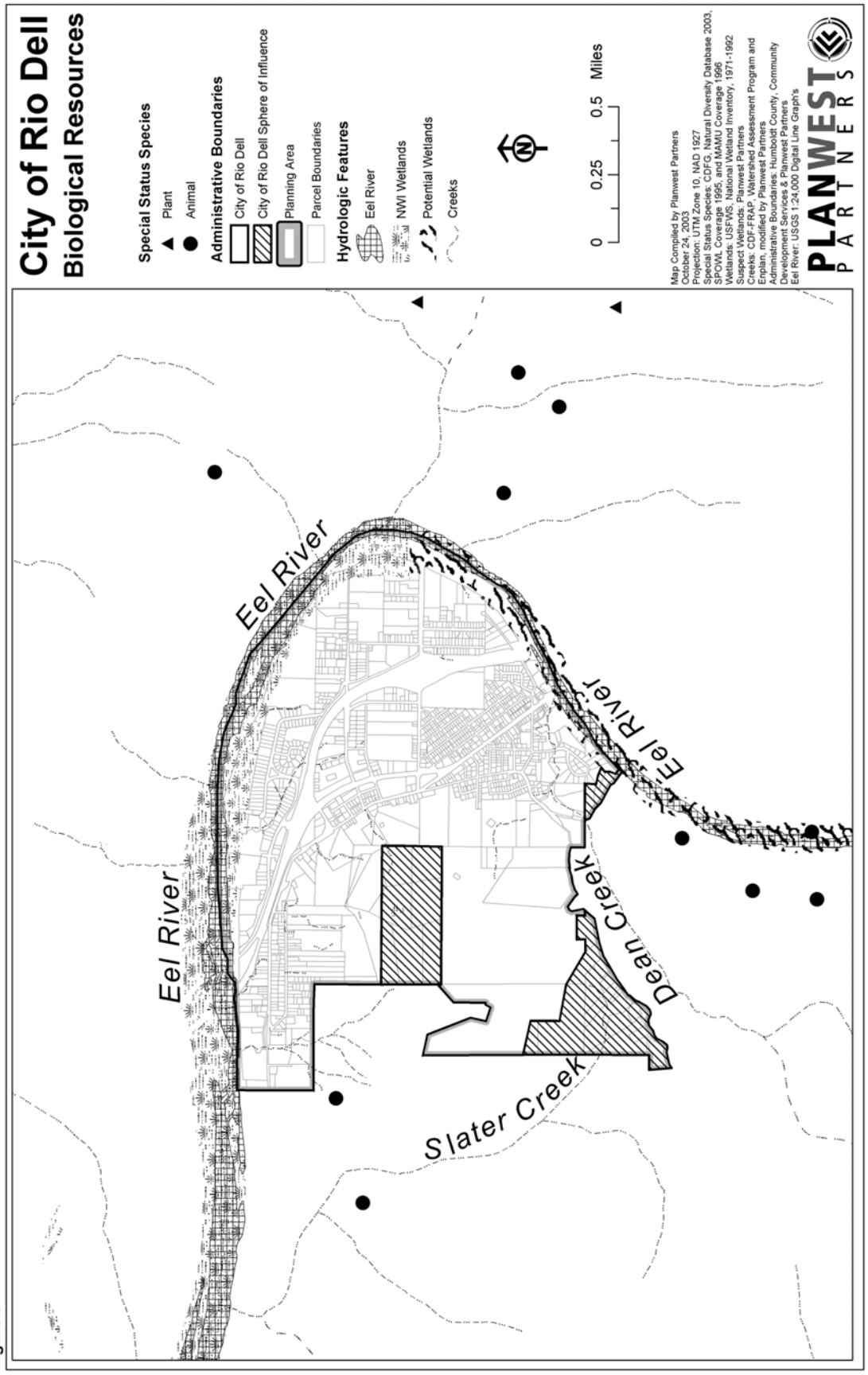

City of Rio Dell
Biological Resources
Special Status Species
Plant
Animal
Administrative Boundaries
City of Rio Dell
City of Rio Dell Sphere of Influence
Planning Area
Parcel Boundaries
Hydrologic Features
Eel River
NWI Wetlands
Potential Wetlands
Creeks
0
0.25
0.5 Miles
Map Compiled by Planwest Partners
October 24, 2003
Projection: UTM, Zone 10, NAD 1927
Special Status Species: CDFG, Natural Diversity Database 2003.
SPOWL Coverage 1995, and MAMU Coverage 1996
Wetlands: USFWS, National Wetland Inventory, 1971-1992
Suspect Wetlands: Planwest Partners
Creeks: CDF-FRAP, Watershed Assessment Program and
Englan, modified by Planwest Partners
Administrative Boundaries: Humboldt County, Community
Development Services & Planwest Partners
Eel River: USGS 1:24,000 Digital Line Graph's
PLANWEST PARTNERS
Eel River
Eel River
Eel River
Dean Creek
Slater Creek

Figure 6

watershed across the Eel River from the City of Rio Dell. There are no special status specie plants or animals mapped within Rio Dell. See figure 6.

Portions of the Rio Dell Plan Area contain wetlands listed on the National Wetlands Inventory. While Rio Dell contains little native vegetation resources, small riparian areas exist in the drainages and local watersheds.

Regulatory Framework

The natural environment in the vicinity of Rio Dell supports a number of "special status species." Special-status species include:

- Plants and animals that are legally protected or proposed for protection under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA) or Federal Endangered Species Act (FESA);
- Plants designated as endangered, threatened, or rare under the California Native Plant Protection Policy;
- Plants and animals defined as endangered or rare under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA);
- Animals designated as species of special concern by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or California Department of Fish and Game;
- Animals listed as "fully protected" in the Fish and Game Code of California (Sections 3511, 4700, 5050 and 5515); and
- Plants listed in the California Native Plant Society's Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California (electronic version 1999).

Special Status Species in Rio Dell Area

Numerous special status plant species have been located in the forest and prairies surrounding Rio Dell by qualified botanists from Humboldt State University. No site specific plant surveys have been conducted in Rio Dell, however, the special status plants that are known to occur in the area include Maple-Leaved Checkerbloom (*Sidalcea malachroides),* Siskiyou Checkerbloom (*Sidalcea malaviflora ssp. patula),*Coast Checkerbloom *(Sidalcea oregana ssp. eximia),* Running Pine *(Lycopodium clavatun),* Small Groundcone *(Boschnia hookeri),* Humboldt Milk-Vetch *(Astragalus agnicidus),*Howell's Montia *(Montia howellii),* Flaccid Sedge *(Carex leptallea), Meadow Sedge (Carex praticola), Erythronium revolutun,* Bensoniella *(Bensoniella oregona), Senecio bolandexi, Pleuropogon refractus, and Carex vividula.* Except for the wetland areas along streams and drainage structures, most of Rio Dell is not ideal habitat for any of the sensitive plant species. The wetland and riparian areas however, provide high quality habitat for special status plants and include the entire bank of the Eel River, the slopes adjacent to Dean Creek and the unnamed creek in the Belleview nationhood, and a few small drainages.

Some amphibians listed as species of special concern may also exist in the wetlands and forested areas surrounding Rio Dell. Amphibians of Special Concern include: Tailed Frog (*Ascaphus Truei), Del* Norte Salamander (*Plethodon Elongatus), Northern* Red-Legged Frog *(Rana Aurora Aurora),* Foothill Yellow-Legged Frog *(Rana Boylii),* and Southern Torrent Salamander *(Rhyacotriton Variegatus*).

Habitat for threatened and endangered fish species exists in the Eel River and possibly Dean Creek. Sensitive fish species known to utilize the Eel River adjacent to Rio Dell include Coast Cutthroat Trout *(Oncorhynchus Clarki Clarki), Coho* Salmon *(Oncorhynchus Kisutch), Summer* Steelhead Trout *(Oncorhynchus Mykiss Irideus),* and Spring-Run Chinook Salmon *(Oncorhynchus Tshawytscha).* Habitat For The Northwestern Pond Turtle *(Clemmys Marmorata Marmorata),* a species of special concern also exists along the banks of the Eel River.

The Riparian forests and upslope woodlands surrounding Rio Dell have the potential to support a variety of bird species, including species of special concern, threatened and endangered species, however the majority of the habitat is not ideal and would have a low probability of occurrence. Birds with a potential to occur in Rio Dell area include Cooper's Hawk (*Accipiter Cooperii),* Northern Goshawk, (*Accipiter Gentilis),* Tricolored Blackbird *(Agelaius Tricolor),* Golden Eagle *(Aquila Chrysaetos),* Great Egret *(Ardea Alba),* Great Blue Heron *(Ardea Herodias),* Black Swift *(Cypseloides Niger),* Snowy Egret (Egretta Thula), Bald Eagle (Haliaeetus Leucocephalus), Black-Crowned Night Heron (Nycticorax Nycticorax), Osprey (Pandion Haliaetus), Bank Swallow (Riparia Riparia), And Northern Spotted Owl (Strix Occidentalis Caurina)

Federal Endangered Species Act

The Federal Endangered Species Act of 1973 (ESA) recognized that many species of fish, wildlife, and plants are in danger of or threatened with extinction and established a national policy that all federal agencies should work toward conservation of these species. The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Commerce are designated in the Act as responsible for identifying endangered and threatened species and their critical habitats, carrying out programs for the conservation of these species, and rendering opinions regarding the impact of proposed federal actions on endangered species. The Act also outlines what constitutes unlawful taking, importation, sale, and possession of endangered species and specifies civil and criminal penalties for unlawful activities.

California Environmental Quality Act

CEQA Guidelines - Section 15380

Rare or endangered species are defined in the CEQA Guidelines (Section 15380) as follows:

(a) "Species" as used in this section means a species or subspecies of animal or plant or variety of plant.

(b) A species of animal or plant is:

(1) "Rare" when either:

(A) Although not presently threatened with extinction, the species is existing in such small numbers throughout all or a significant portion of its range that it may become endangered if its environment worsens; or

(B) The species is likely to become endangered within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range and may be considered "threatened" as that term is used in the Federal Endangered Species Act.

(c) A species of animal or plant shall be presumed to be rare or endangered if it is listed in:

(1) Sections 670.2 or 670.5, Title 14, California Administrative Code; or

(2) Title 50, Code of Federal Regulations Sections 17.11 or 17.12 pursuant to the Federal Endangered Species Act as rare, threatened, or endangered.

A species not included in any listing identified in subsection (c) shall nevertheless be considered to be rare or endangered if the species can be shown to meet the criteria in subsection (b).

California Endangered Species Act
The California Endangered Species Act (Fish and Game Code Sections 2050-2098) established a State policy to conserve, protect, restore, and enhance any endangered species or any threatened species and its habitat. The Fish and Game Commission is charged with establishing a list of endangered and threatened species. State agencies must consult with the Department of Fish and Game to determine if a proposed Project is likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any endangered or threatened species.

California Fish and Game Code Native Plant Protection Policy
The goals of the California Native Plant Protection Policy are as follows:
The intent of the Legislature and the purpose of this chapter is to preserve, protect, and enhance endangered or rare plants of this state (Section 1900). For purposes of this Chapter, a 'native plant' means a plant that grows in a wild uncultivated state, which is normally found native to the plant life of this state (Section 1901).

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Biological Resources

Impact: Biological Resources

Analysis of Impacts. The General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements projects an increase in City population over the course of the planning period. Many of the undeveloped parcels in and around the City that are designated for development are likely to be developed over this time. In general, small isolated parcels surrounded by urban development offer little value in terms of wildlife habitat. Some of the larger parcels and those located adjacent to stream courses or other natural areas do currently provide habitat for plant and wildlife species. Development on these parcels has the potential to reduce wildlife habitat. Reduction in habitat is one of the chief factors leading to the decline of native species and a subsequent decline in biodiversity.

Further, one of the potentially significant cumulative impacts of the development of both small and large parcels is the fragmentation of native habitats. When linkages between open space areas are blocked, the movement of wildlife species can be impaired. When many corridors are blocked, the range of habitat available for certain animals can become severely restricted.

Significance Standard. Implementation of the General Plan may have a significant effect on the environment if it will interfere with the movement of any resident or migrant fish or wildlife species, substantially diminish the habitat for fish, wildlife or plants, or result in impacts to wildlife dispersal or migration corridors.

General Plan Policy. The General Plan includes the following policies to reduce biological resource impacts:

- Ensure that environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHAs) such as the Eel River corridor, streams and drainage channels with riparian habitat, and forested areas that could potentially support sensitive species, are buffered to protect against any significant disruption of their habitat values.

Level of Impact (Significance). As far as reasonably foreseeable, potential adverse impacts causing substantial reduction in wildlife habitat can be held to a less-than-significant level during the course of the planning period by following policies presented in the General Plan to protect natural resource areas. (Inherent in this expectation is the assumption that current regional, state, and federal laws protecting biological habitats will not be substantially altered in the future.)

2.8 AGRICULTURAL RESOURCES

Environmental Setting

Ample precipitation, fertile soils, and the mild coastal climate make for productive farming in the flat alluvial terraces around Rio Dell. The majority of suitable farmland in Rio Dell has already been converted to residential uses, or is surrounded by residential development. Agricultural activity in the City includes small-scale farming, grazing, and timber production, and occurs on large vacant grassy lots in the Monument, Town Center, Belleview, and Edgewater neighborhoods. The Monument neighborhood is predominantly rural. It can be maintained as timber and agricultural land; however, most of the uses would represent supplemental income. Eel River terraces both up and down stream provide higher quality agricultural sites than those in the City.

Based on the Southern Humboldt Prime Agricultural Soils map (Humboldt 2025 General Plan Update Natural Resources and Hazards, September 2002) prepared by Humboldt County for the General Plan update currently in progress, there is a total of 94 acres of prime agricultural land within the City of Rio Dell, all of which is located within the Monument Neighborhood. There is an additional 12 acres of prime agricultural land located within The Rio Dell Sphere of Influence outside of the City limits. The Humboldt County agricultural soils mapping is based on the Soils of Western Humboldt County, 1965, and prime agricultural lands are defined as Storie Index 60 – 100. There are no Williamson Act contracts for lands located within the Rio Dell Plan Area. See Figure 7 for Rio Dell prime agricultural soils.

Regulatory Environment

Farmland Protection Policy Act

The Farmland Protection Policy Act of 1981 (FPPA) requires federal agencies to minimize the extent to which federal programs contribute to unnecessary and irreversible conversion of farmland to nonagricultural uses. Farmland subject to FPPA requirements does not have to be currently used for cropland. Areas under protection include forestland, pastureland, cropland, or other land, but not bodies of water or urban, developed land.

FPPA requirements apply to projects that could irreversibly convert (directly or indirectly) farmland (as defined above) to nonagricultural use, and are completed by a federal agency or

completed with the assistance (e.g., financial assistance) of a federal agency. Projects that are not subject to the FPPA include projects on land already developed for urban uses, land used for

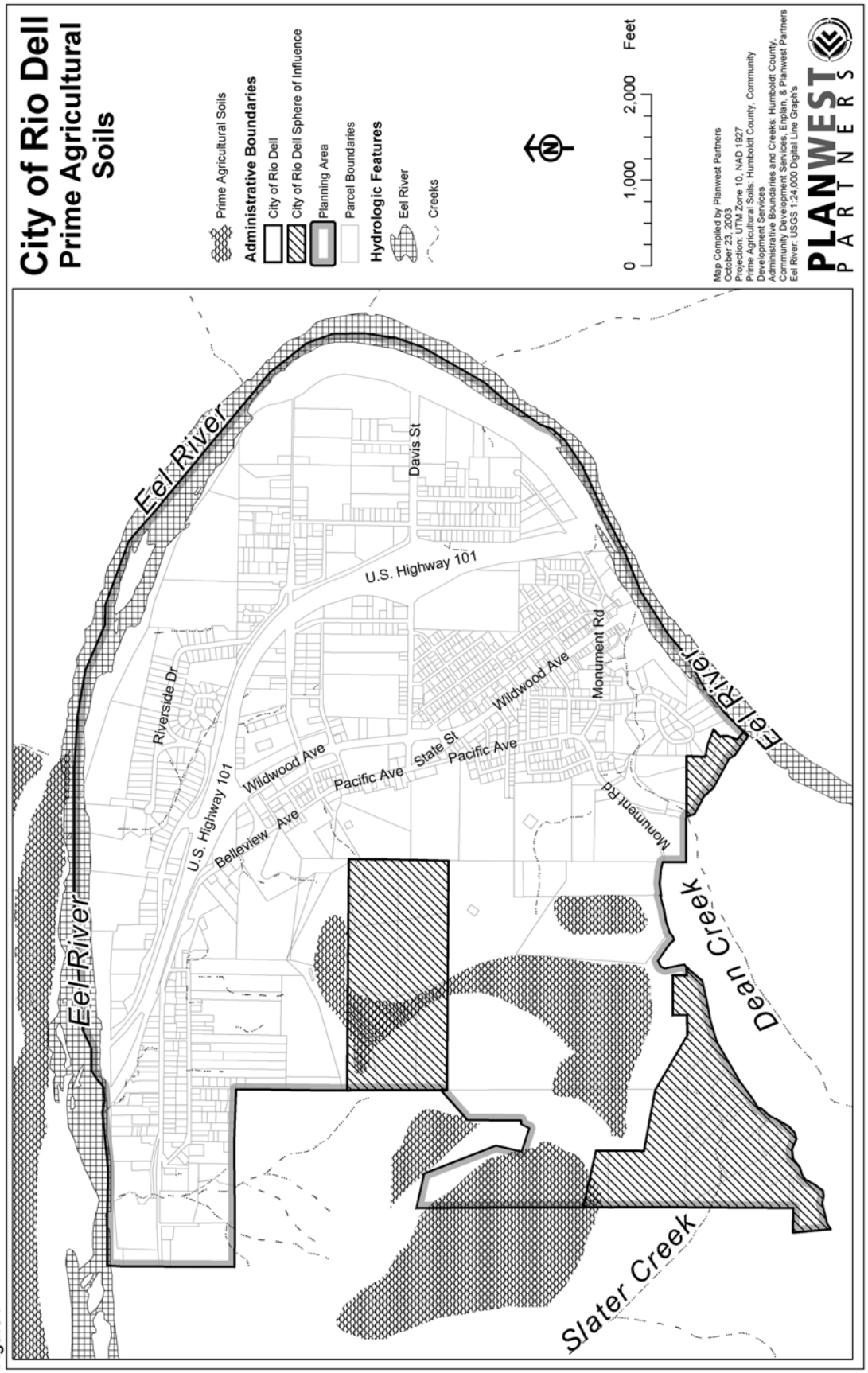

City of Rio Dell
Prime Agricultural Soils
Prime Agricultural Soils
Administrative Boundaries
City of Rio Dell
City of Rio Dell Sphere of Influence
Planning Area
Parcel Boundaries
Hydrologic Features
Eel River
Creeks
0
1,000
2,000
Feet
Map Compiled by Planwest Partners
October 23, 2003
Projection: UTM Zone 10, NAD 1927
Prime Agricultural Soils: Humboldt County, Community Development Services
Administrative Boundaries and Creeks: Humboldt County, Community Development Services, Enplan, & Planwest Partners
Eel River: USGS 1:24,000 Digital Line Graph's
PLANWEST PARTNERS
Eel River
Eel River
Davis St
U.S. Highway 101
Riverside Dr
U.S. Highway 101
Wildwood Ave
Pacific Ave
State St
Pacific Ave
Wildwood Ave
Monument Rd
Belleview Ave
Monument Rd
Eel River
Dean Creek
Slater Creek

Figure 7

water storage, and land used for the construction of on-farm structures needed for farm operations (Natural Resources Conservation Service [NRCS] 2000).

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Agricultural Resources

Impact: Agricultural Resources

Analysis of Impacts. The Rio Dell Plan Area is primarily developed with urban land uses, but includes some prime agricultural lands. The prime agricultural lands are designated as Rural, intended to provide for agricultural and very low-density residential areas, and can be divided into lots only as small as five acres. The proximity of agricultural lands to urban development raises concerns regarding conflicts with surrounding land uses.

Significance Standard. Implementation of the General Plan may have a significant effect on agricultural resources of any of the following occurs:

1. Convert Prime Farmland, Unique Farmland, or Farmland of Statewide Importance (Farmland) to non-agricultural use;
2. Conflict with existing zoning for agricultural use, or a Williamson Act contract, or
3. Involve other changes in the existing environment, which, due to their location or nature, could individually or cumulatively result in loss of Farmland, to non-agricultural use.

General Plan Policy. The General Plan includes the following policies to reduce agricultural resource impacts:

- Increased lot sizes in the Monument and Belleview neighborhoods will limit development and reduce potential conflicts with agricultural operations.

Level of Impact (Significance). This as well as other General Plan policies would reduce agricultural resource impacts to a less-than-significant level.

CHAPTER 3
COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT

The Community Environment Chapter assesses impacts of development under the Rio Dell General Plan 2015 Land Use and Housing Elements. Issues evaluated in this Chapter include the following:

3.1 LAND USE AND PLANNING

The following topics are addressed in the land use and planning section:

- Existing land use patterns
- Land use planning

Environmental Setting

Existing Land Use Patterns

Based on the Rio Dell Land Inventory of 1992, the predominate land use in the City of Rio Dell is residential. Approximately 775 acres (excluding land zoned Flood Plain – 5 acres minimum) of the total 1,278 gross acres of the City are either in, or zoned for, residential uses. The remainder of the City is commercial (approximately 48 acres including apartment professional), and public facilities (approximately 34 acres). See Figure 9 (located in the following chapter) for land use distribution under the prior General Plan.

The majority of the City's commercial development has occurred in the Town Center and Gateway neighborhoods along Wildwood Avenue, where the original US 101 route through town was located. The Town Center developments were focused on providing services to through traffic on US 101 and to Pacific Lumber Company workers from Scotia. Other Commercial use areas are located throughout the City adjoining residential areas.

The current population in Rio Dell is 3,174. The 1980 land use element had a projected population of 5,001 at maximum build-out. At the time it was anticipated that maximum build-out would be unlikely to occur without a major shift in the regional economy. The average annual growth rate for Rio Dell has been less that one percent per year over the last ten years, and the population is estimated to continue to grow at approximately that same rate.

Land Use Planning

Three years after the incorporation of the City of Rio Dell, the Land Use Element of the Rio Dell General Plan was adopted, in 1968, to provide a framework for growth and development of the community. The Land Use Element was revised in April 1980 to reflect many of the changes resulting from the construction of the US 101 freeway. This Land Use Element revision is being prepared to address changes in the social and economic environment.

Before the adoption of the first Land Use Element, a definite pattern of land use had been established based on the location of improvements developed during the past growth. The early development pattern was based on the location of early roads, bridges, railroad, and access to surrounding communities. Natural features such as the Eel River floodplain, the steep forested slopes surrounding the City, and the flat river terrace occupied by the majority of the City have dictated land uses in Rio Dell

An Interim Ordinance adopted by the City Council in January 2003 replaced the 1980 Land Use Element. The Interim Ordinance establishes building and zoning restrictions. The Ordinance provides for community planning until the new Land Use Element Update is adopted. The Ordinance resolved that, for an interim period, no building permit will be issued, no development permit or land division will be granted, and no General Plan or Zoning amendment will be authorized. The Ordinance exempted specific repairs, renovations, lot line adjustments not creating a buildable lot, and construction of units is some districts. See Figure 9 (in the following chapter) for land uses under the Interim Ordinance.

Neighborhoods

Rio Dell is divided into six neighborhoods. The significant features that divide the neighborhoods include the U.S. 101 alignment that extends north and east through the City and the slopes and plateau on the west side of the City. The neighborhoods include Belleview and Riverside in the north, Edgewater in the east, Gateway in the central area, Town Center in the south, and Monument in the west. See Figure 2 (Planning Area - located in the previous chapter) for a map of Rio Dell neighborhoods.

> *Belleview.* The Belleview neighborhood is primarily single family residential with some rural and commercial uses. The Belleview neighborhood is designated Suburban, Urban Residential, and Neighborhood Center. A few of the parcels border on the Eel River and the larger parcels in the west encompass a small tributary stream. There are also a number of intermittent streams that drain the slopes of Monument Hill into the neighborhood. Belleview has a mix of lot sizes with some being small compact lots and others deep, narrow lots that extend back up into the forested hillside of Monument. Lot sizes range from 10,000 square feet to 7 acres.
>
> *Riverside.* The Riverside neighborhood is primarily single family residential with some industrial uses including a heavy equipment storage yard and auto dismantler/materials-recycling yard. The Riverside neighborhood is designated Urban Residential and Neighborhood Center. Many of the parcels in the Riverside neighborhood border along the Eel River and along an unnamed stream that runs through the Fern Court area.

Riverside was once an agricultural area but almost all of the parcels have been developed. U.S. 101 separates the Riverside neighborhood from the Town Center and is accessible from Painter Street. Lot sizes range from 10,000 square feet to 12 acres.

Edgewater. The Edgewater neighborhood is primarily single-family residential with a small mix of other uses. Edgewater is designated Suburban, Urban Residential, Neighborhood Center, and Public Facility. Many of the Edgewater parcels along the Eel River are designated for a minimum lot size of 1 acre. Edgewater contains the City's municipal Wastewater facility. Edgewater is separated from the Town Center by U.S. 101 and is accessible from the Davis Street interchange. Edgewater has some agricultural land and other parcels that could be developed. This neighborhood was once an agricultural area but current residential development patterns have reduced the economic viability of farming. Lot sizes range from 10,000 square feet to 12 acres.

Gateway. The Gateway neighborhood is a mix of single-family residences, mobile home parks, and commercial; and civic uses. Gateway is the location of the Rio Dell School, the Fire Station and other civic uses. This neighborhood is primarily designated Urban Residential, but also contains Community Commercial, and Public Facility. Gateway is located north of the Town Center and has access to U.S. 101 at two locations, Wildwood and Eeloa and at Davis. Gateway has no agricultural or forest resources. Lot sizes range from 12,000 square feet to 10 acres.

Town Center. The Town Center neighborhood is a mix of single-family residential, general commercial, retail, office, lodging, and civic uses, including City Hall. This neighborhood is designated Urban Residential, Town Center, Community Commercial, and Public Facility. It has a recommended minimum lot size of 2,500 square feet to provide the highest density neighborhood in Rio Dell. The Town Center includes Monument Road, Wildwood Ave., and Pacific Ave., and is the main access point to the adjacent town of Scotia. Lot sizes range from 5,000 square feet to 17 acres.

Monument. The Monument neighborhood is primarily timber and agricultural land. It is designated Rural, and Suburban Residential and is located on the terrace and slopes to the west of the Town Center. Monument is accessible from Monument Road and from some small farm driveways. The majority of Monument is on steep forested slopes, with some parcels containing gentle topography suitable for farming. Lot sizes range from 5 acres to 118 acres.

<u>City of Rio Dell Zoning and Other Land Use Ordinances</u>

The City of Rio Dell Zoning Ordinance (Ordinance No. 59), adopted in 1968, establishes zoning districts, regulates uses, and sets building height and bulk standards. Rio Dell Ordinance No. 165 establishes procedures for the subdivision of land.

<u>Humboldt County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance</u>

The Humboldt County General Plan and Zoning Ordinance regulate land use in the unincorporated area surrounding the City of Rio Dell. The County Framework Plan Volume I sets Countywide goals, policies, and standards. General Plan Volume II consists of community

plans for individual areas of the County, and areas of the County within the coastal zone. The City of Rio Dell is not within a Humboldt County community planning area.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Use of Land (Land Use Plan Compatibility
- Potential Loss of Productive Resource (Agricultural Lands)

Impact: Use of Land (Land Use Plan Compatibility)

Analysis of Impacts. The General Plan contains a comprehensive update of goals, policies, and implementation measures guiding the use of land and physical development of the City. A major emphasis of the General Plan is to promote development in the Town Center area and density in area within and around the Town Center, and reduce density and development in the Monument neighborhood and the other neighborhoods at the edges of the City.

The General Plan increases the planning area from the prior General Plan to include the Sphere of Influence. Lands outside the City limits but within the Sphere of Influence are designated by Humboldt County for rural residential uses. The land within the Sphere of Influence has been designated by the proposed General Plan as Rural, which allows half the density as the County's Rural Residential land use designation. The Rural land use designation, compared to the County's Rural Residential zone, will better protect agricultural lands and natural resources by limiting uses to agricultural related residential and requiring larger minimum lot sizes in the Monument neighborhood.

The General Plan 2015 land use designations encourage greater density in the downtown area (Town Center) and preserve the rural character of the hillsides and neighborhoods adjacent to the Eel River. The General Plan 2015 Land Use Element Designations are shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 General Plan 2015 Land Use Designations

Land Use Designations		City of Rio Dell		Sphere of Influence		Total	
		Acres	Pct.	Acres	Pct.	Acres	Pct.
R	Rural	410	41%	160	100%	570	40%
S	Suburban	119	12%	0	0%	119	8%
SR	Suburban Residential	15	1%	0	0%	15	1%
UR	Urban Residential	332	33%	0	0%	332	23%
TC	Town Center	48	5%	0	0%	48	3%
NC	Neighborhood Commercial	6	1%	0	0%	6	0%
CC	Community Commercial	33	3%	0	0%	33	2%
PF	Public Facility[2]	50	5%	0	0%	50	3%
	Road Rights of Way/River					266	18%
	Total	**1013**	**100%**	**160**	**100%**	**1,438**	**100%**

Overall, the amount of commercial land has not changed from the prior plan, but the mixed used zoning in the Town Center significantly increased the amount of land that can be put to commercial use. Land designated for industrial uses has been eliminated. The community commercial land use designation allows light manufacturing related uses. The combination of the following two factors, 1) the availability of a significant amount of industrially zoned land in neighboring Scotia, and 2) the lack demand for industrial land in Rio Dell indicate that the impact of eliminating industrial land will not have significant consequences.

Development of the land that was zoned industrial under the prior General Plan, which is located adjacent to residential uses, could be incompatible with its surroundings and force industrial traffic through a residential neighborhood.

Significance Standard. For the purposes of this EIR, a significant effect on the environment would occur if implementation of the General Plan Land Use Element would result in land use conflicts or potentially conflict with any applicable land use plan, policy, or regulation of an agency with jurisdiction over the Plan Area.

General Plan Policy. The following General Plan policies are intended to promote the efficient use of land, minimize conflicts between land uses, and maintain land use compatibility:

- Update the City of Rio Dell zoning and subdivision ordinances.
- Ensure compatibility between proposed uses and existing uses.
- The City shall prepare and adopt a Wildwood Corridor Plan to identify potential uses, architectural guidelines and streetscape improvements.
- Direct infill development to vacant and underutilized land in the Town Center before amending the General Plan to allow additional commercial and residential land elsewhere.
- Adopt regulations that help the City meet its facility and infrastructure needs through exactions, dedications, impact fees, in-lieu fees, and other development fees and techniques.
- Protect adjacent residential neighborhoods with guidelines that scale down development at the periphery of downtown.
- Prevent and abate nuisance situations such as excessive noise, abandoned or non-operational vehicles, dangerous buildings or uses, and accumulation of refuse through the development and enforcement of the zoning regulations.

Level of Impact (Significance). Implementation of these measures will promote compatible land uses and minimize potential conflicts with adopted land use plans for the areas. Potential impacts will be reduced to a less-than-significant level.

Impact: Potential Loss of Productive Resources (Agricultural Land)

Analysis of Impacts. An increased need for residential development could lead to pressure to convert prime agricultural land to non-agricultural uses. Rio Dell's agricultural lands and other lands with natural resources have important values and provide wildlife habitat and scenic beauty. The General Plan 2015 establishes the Rural land use designation provides for Agricultural and very low-density residential uses.

Significance Standard. The impact would be potentially significant if implementation of the General Plan 2015 caused the conversion of prime farmland, unique farmland, or farmland of statewide importance to non-agricultural uses.

General Plan Policy. The General Plan 2015 Land Use Element establishes larger rural lot sizes in the Monument and Belleview neighborhoods. The following General Plan policy is intended to provide additional agricultural lands protection, and reduce the potential for farmland conversion to a less than significant impact.

- Increased lot sizes (reduced density) in the Monument and Belleview neighborhoods will limit development and reduce potential conflicts with agricultural operations.

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies would reduce impacts to productive lands, from implementing the General Plan Land Use Element, to a less-than-significant level.

3.2 POPULATION AND HOUSING

The population and housing section addresses the following:

- Population Growth
- Housing Supply

Environmental Setting

Population

The population of the City of Rio Dell fluctuates more than the County on a year to year basis because the number of City residents is small is therefore susceptible to changes in the local economy. Therefore, recent closures of the Pacific Lumber Mill in Scotia, and other local mills could have significant impacts on population growth rates over the planning period.

The City continues to function as an economic sub-center accommodating mostly the day-to-day service needs of the local population. Rio Dell remains predominately a bedroom community. The 2000 Census shows that 90.8 percent of the workforce commutes by car to work with an average commute time of 19 minutes. While efforts are underway to make the community a more attractive place for business start-ups, these changes are likely to occur slowly and are not expected to alter the local employment in a significant manner during the planning period. Growth in employment will remain largely dependent on the regional and state economies. The City of Rio Dell had an estimated population of 3,178 in 2003 (State Department of Finance). The demographic characteristics for Rio Dell are shown Tables 3.1 and 3.2.

Table 3.2 Rio Dell Population Compared to Humboldt County

Year	Humboldt County	Percent Change	Rio Dell	Percent Change	Rio Dell as Percent of Humboldt County
1980	108,514		2,687		2.5
1990	119,118	9.7	3.012	12.1	2.5
2000	126,518	6.2	3,174	5.4	2.5
2003[1]	128,347		3,178		2.5

Source: Census 1980, 1990, 2000; State Department of Finance.
[1]State Department of Finance estimate.

Table 3.3 Rio Dell and Humboldt County Population Projections

Year	Humboldt County	Percent Change	Rio Dell	Rio Dell as Percent of Humboldt County
2000	126,518	- - -	3,174	2.5
2010	135,602	7.1	3,390	2.5
2015			*3,459*[1]	
2020	141,092	4.0	3,527	2.5
2030	145,099	4.0	3,627	2.5

Source: State Department of Finance, 2003. Rio Dell projections based on State Department of Finance projections for Humboldt County and Rio Dell's historic percentage of County population.
[1]Rio Dell 2015 population (General Plan 2015 planning horizon) is based on the calculated year to year increase between 2010 and 2020

Housing

Within the City of Rio Dell there are a total of 1,434 housing units, 1,221 of which are occupied, equating to a 14.9 percent vacancy rate. This is higher than the Humboldt County vacancy rate of 8.4 percent. Slightly more than 70 percent of housing units within the City are single-family housing units. The single family percentage of total housing units in the City has declined from 80 percent in 1980 to the current 71 percent.

Between 1990 and 2000, single family percentage of total housing units in the Sphere of Influence increased from 71 percent to 79 percent. The Department of Finance does not project future populations for cities in California, only county populations. In order to project Rio Dell population growth, a formula is used based on the City's historic percentage of County population and a straight-line projection of the growth of the County, as estimated by the State Department of Finance.

The housing characteristics for Rio Dell are shown in the following tables from the General Plan 2015 Housing Element.

Table 3.4 Rio Dell Humboldt County Household and Family Size Comparison

Year	Humboldt County			Rio Dell		
	Households (HH)	Avg. HH Size	Avg. Family Size	Households (HH)	Avg. HH Size	Avg Family Size
1980		3.0		1,018	2.64	
1990	46,420	2.55		1,163	2.59	
2000	51,238	2.39	2.95	1,221	2.59	3.08

Source: Census 2000.

Table 3.5 Rio Dell Housing Stock Composition

Year	Structure Type								
	Single Family		2 - 4 Units		5 + Units		Mobile Home		
	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	No.	Pct.	Total
1980	861	80.0	100	9.0	59	6.0	63	6.0	1,083
1990	939	75.0	169	14.0	24	2.0	112	9.0	1,244
2000	1,031	71.3	151	10.4	36	2.5	229	15.8	1,447

Source: Census 1980, 1990, 2000;

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Population Growth
- Housing Supply

Impact: Population Growth

Analysis of Impacts. The General Plan 2015 Land Use and Housing Elements project moderate population growth, to a planned population of approximately 3,460 persons by 2015. This growth can easily occur within the existing developed portions of the City, which will minimize the amount of roads and other infrastructure that must be constructed. A mix of housing types and densities are proposed in the General Plan. The planned population growth is consistent with past growth rates and would not cause a substantial population increase.

Significance Standard. Implementation of the General Plan would be potentially significant if it induced substantial population growth rates in an area, either directly or indirectly (for example through the extension of roads and other infrastructure).

General Plan Policy and Level of Impact. The General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements includes the following policies to address potential population impacts, including indirect growth impacts from extending roads and infrastructure:

- Direct infill development to vacant and underutilized land in the Town Center before amending the General Plan to allow additional commercial and residential land elsewhere.
- Encourage residential development in and near downtown for a variety of social and income groups.

- Adopt regulations that help the City meet its facility and infrastructure needs through exactions, dedications, impact fees, in-lieu fees, and other development fees and techniques.
- Protect adjacent residential neighborhoods with guidelines that scale down development at the periphery of downtown.

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies would reduce population growth impacts, from implementing the General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements, to a less-than-significant level.

Impact: Housing Supply

Analysis of Impacts. An increased of approximately 110 housing units are planned during the General Plan period, 2003 to 2015. This is in addition to the 1,447 residential units that currently exist. The General Plan includes the City's revised Housing Element which was prepared to meet existing State requirements. The General Plan does not redesignate developed residential areas for non-residential purposes, and would not cause the displacement of existing housing units

Significance Standard. Implementation of the General Plan would be potentially significant if it displaced substantial numbers of existing housing units, or substantial numbers of people, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

General Plan Policy. The General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements include the following policies to maintain the housing supply:

- The City will continue to use loan repayments from closed-out CDBG programs to supplement the City's current CDBG Program, and provide bridge financing for its housing rehabilitation program as grant funds are expended.
- Make maximum use of Federal and State funding program to continue the City's current rehabilitation program for lower income households.
- Require that minimum health and safety standards are maintained for housing in the City.
- Expand code enforcement efforts in conjunction with the availability of federal and state programs for rehabilitation.
- Require abatement of unsafe structures after providing property owners reasonable opportunity to correct deficiencies.
- The City will ensure that the Housing Rehabilitation program guidelines include as an eligible activity the removal of barriers to access in housing serving lower income households with disabilities.

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies would reduce housing supply impacts, from implementing the General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements, to a less-than-significant level.

3.3 PUBLIC SERVICES

The public services section addresses the following:

- Emergency Services: Law Enforcement; Fire Protection; and Emergency Response.
- Public Works: Water; Waste Water; Roads; and Solid Waste Collection and Disposal.
- Utilities: Electric; Natural Gas; and Telecommunications.
- Schools and Other Public Services: Schools; Parks; and Library.

Environmental Setting

Emergency Services

Law Enforcement

The Rio Dell City Police Department provides the City law enforcement services. The Department, headquartered at 675 Wildwood Avenue, provides law enforcement, investigation, and community service. In addition, the Department has a grant to provide Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) to Rio Dell Schools. The Rio Dell Police Department is comprised of the following staff:

1 – Chief	4 – Patrol Officers
1 – Patrol Sergeant	2 – Reserve Officer
1 – Corporal	2 – Cadet/Clerks

The City Police department is working to provide 24-hour police coverage, but is limited in achieving this goal by one Patrol Officer staffing vacancy. With seven sworn officers currently on staff, the Dell Police Department maintains a ratio of 2.2 total officers per 1,000 residents. Rio Dell will have a ratio of 2.5 officers per 1,000 residents when current staffing vacancies are filled. According to the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics 2001 (Federal Bureau of Investigation), the average number of full-time officers per 1,000 residents in cities in the Western Pacific states for cities with less than 10,000 residents is 3.4, with an average of 1.7 officers per 1,000 in all cities in the Western Pacific states. The Rio Dell Chief of Police believes that the City should work to maintain an officer to resident ratio of 2.0 officer per 1,000 residents or greater.

Currently, a State of California grant funds two officer positions and one clerk position (not full time) who performs administrative duties including assistance with report preparation. In prior years, officers responded to calls and returned to the office to complete the paperwork that related to that call. As a result, officers spent less time in the community. With additional residential and commercial activity, there will be a need for the Rio Dell Police Department to seek out funding to support a full time clerk position or experience less officer time in the community as a result of increased time completing required reports.

The Rio Dell Police Department has five marked police vehicles; each equipped with two–way radios. The Department is dispatched by the Humboldt County Sheriff's Department Emergency Communications Center. The Emergency Communications Center received 2,911 calls for service in Rio Dell in 2002. This represents an increase in activity for the Rio Dell Police Department over prior years, which the Police Chief attributes to increased officer visibility

within the community and greater trust by the residents in local law enforcement. As of June 2003, the Rio Dell Police Department has received 1,307 calls for service. The Rio Dell Chief of Police estimates that 80 percent of calls for service are to residential address and the remaining 20 percent are to business addresses.

The City has mutual aid agreements with the City of Fortuna, the City of Ferndale, and the Humboldt County Sheriff's Department. The California Highway Patrol assists Rio Dell Police with technical traffic assistance and officer back up.

Fire Protection

Structural fire protection services in Rio Dell are the responsibility of the Rio Dell Fire Protection District (RDFPD). The District is governed by a five member independently elected board of directors and provides services through the Rio Dell Volunteer Fire Department (RDVFD), with most resources provided by the RDFPD. The RDVFD is able to respond in less than five minutes to all calls for service within the City of Rio Dell. The RDFPD has formal and informal mutual aid agreements with Fortuna Fire Protection District, Scotia Volunteer Fire Department, Ferndale Fire Protection District, and the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CDF). Dispatching for the Fire District is provided by the Humboldt County Emergency Dispatch Cooperative, which contracts with the CDF Fortuna Interagency Emergency Communications Center for services.

The Rio Dell Volunteer Fire Department consists of a twenty-two member all-volunteer crew and operates the following equipment and apparatus:

- Rescue Truck (crew cab 4x4)
- '96 Type I (crew cab/1,000 gal/1,250 gpm)
- '95 Type III (3 passenger/750 gal/1,250 gpm)
- '72 Type III (3 passenger/1,000 gal/1,000 gpm)

With twenty-two members, the RDVFD maintains a ratio of approximately seven volunteer firefighters per 1,000 City residents. According to the Humboldt County Emergency Dispatch Cooperative, the RDVFD responded to 281 incident calls in 2002, 256 in 2001, and 230 in 2000. Approximately 80 percent of the incident calls received by the RDVFD are medical related with approximately five percent fire related calls for service. The remaining incident calls include assistance, smoke check, false alarm, and vehicle accident related calls. All members of the RDVFD have first-responder medical training and three members are Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs).

The RDVFD states that it can respond to all calls within the City limits within three minutes. The maximum response time to incident calls within the Rio Dell Plan Area is between five and seven minutes. On average, 7 firefighters are available to respond to calls during the day time. Most of the houses within the City limits are located within 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant. The current condition of the City of Rio Dell water system has limited the ability RDVFD to train using water from fire hydrants.

Emergency Medical Services

The RDVFD responds to medical emergencies and has members trained as EMTs. However, the RDVFD does not have an ambulance. There are no emergency medical facilities within Rio Dell nor are there any local private ambulance operators. Fortuna Rescue Ambulance Service, a private ambulance company which is part of City Ambulance in Eureka and is located approximately 10 miles north of Rio Dell in Fortuna, provides ambulance and paramedic services in Rio Dell as well as to numerous other communities in the Eel River valley. City Ambulance has a permit from the North Coast Emergency Medical Services Authority to operate throughout a portion of the Humboldt Bay area and southern Humboldt County. Fortuna Rescue Ambulance Service operates a total of three ambulances out of its base in Fortuna, two of which are staffed 24 hours per day. The nearest hospital with an emergency room to the City of Rio Dell is Redwood Memorial Hospital (a part of the St. Josephs Health System) in Fortuna. There are larger hospitals located north of Rio Dell in Eureka and Arcata.

Emergency Response

The City of Rio Dell prepared an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) in April 2001 that identifies the City's emergency planning, organization, and response policies and procedures. The EOP establishes procedures for a variety of hazards and threats including natural and man-made (technological) hazards. Natural threats include earthquake, landslide, winter storms, and fires. Man-made hazards include hazardous materials, major vehicle accidents, airplane crash, civil disturbance, and terrorism.

The Rio Dell EOP is based on the following systems: Standardized Emergency Management System (SEMS); Firefighting Resources of California Organized for Potential Emergencies (FIRESCOPE); and Incident Command System (ICS). The City Council approves the plan and the Chief of Police is responsible for reviewing the plan on an annual basis, coordinating with other City staff and the RDVFD, and recommending revisions to the Council.

Public Works

The City of Rio Dell Public Works Department has responsibility for the City's water and wastewater systems, and road network. The department has a full time staff of six, including certified water and wastewater operators, with one seasonal part time staff member.

The domestic water and wastewater treatment facilities are both located at 475 Hilltop Drive in the Edgewater Neighborhood. Maintenance of the water and wastewater systems is supported through fee revenues.

The Public Works Department performs general roads maintenance functions for the approximately 12.5 miles of City road, and contracts out major maintenance activities. Public Works also maintains City streetlights. The City's roads are maintained through State of California Transportation Development Act funds, gas tax funds, and other tax funds, and the streetlights are maintained through general funds.

The Rio Dell Public Works Department corporation yard is located at the City water/wastewater facility. In addition to the functions described above, the City's Public Works Department maintains the City Hall grounds and the tennis court located at Rio Dell School District.

Water

The City of Rio Dell owns and operates its own water system. Until 2001, water was provided from three wells located to the north of the City across the Eel River. Well production began to decline in the late 1990s causing mandatory rationing and conservation measures to be instituted. The expected recovery of well capacity did not materialize in 2000. Attempts to rehabilitate one of the three wells failed, and an emergency well delivered only minimal yield. A declaration of disaster was issued by the City and followed by a disaster declaration by the Governor. In the summer or 2001 the Emergency Interim Water Supply System (EIWSS) was constructed with assistance from the State Department of Health Services and the Office of Emergency Services.

The EIWSS draws water from the Eel River and has a 500,000 gallons per day capacity, With conservation measures this capacity meets current needs. The recent annual water demand (2002) submitted to the Department of Health Services reported an annual water use of 141 million gallons, with average daily demand equaling 345,000 gallons per day. Using historical water use figures of 130 gallons per capita per day, this capacity would support a residential population of 3,846. Even using a more conservative figure of 150 gallons per capita per day, an estimated 3,334 persons could be served. However, demand peak in summer months and can significantly exceed water production. The 1999 maximum daily water demand was 979,000 gallons and 15.1 million gallons during the maximum monthly water demand.

The City conducted a long-term water needs study, which addressed several supply options, including ground water extraction from wells north of the City, wells within the city limits and surface water. The study found the use of the Eel River as a permanent water source the most reliable and likely to meet the estimated water demands over time. The planning period for this study covered 20 years -- 2001 to 2021. Under the assumptions of the study, Rio Dell's population is expected to reach 4,107 persons by 2021. Nonetheless, it is projected that in 2021 the average day water demand will be 685,095 gallons with a peak maximum day demand of 1,706,000 gallons.

The long-term water supply strategy includes making the infiltration basin and transmission pipeline permanent, upgrading the pumps, and making improvements to the water distribution lines and water storage capacity. The cost of making permanent the water infiltration basin, transmission pipeline and filtration system is estimated to be 3.5 million dollars. The City is exploring possible funding options to complete this work.

Deficiencies within the storage and distribution systems have been identified and are being addressed separately. Much of the water distribution system is constructed of antiquated and undersized pipes. The combination of a lack of storage and limited pumping capacity extended the conservation program, including its odd/even watering restrictions. In 2003 the City was awarded a 5 million dollar grant under Proposition 13 to replace portions of the distribution system and construct new tanks to provide up to 527,000 gallons of additional water storage. When completed, the City's total storage capacity will be 1,054,000 gallons. The City's application to Department of Water Resources, increasing its water right appropriation from 0.62 cubic feet per second to 2.64 cubic feet per second, (1,706,000 gallons per day), was approved in 2003 as well.

The Dinsmore Ranch and upper Monument Flat receive water from two sources: the Dean Creek Springs on a City-owned site, and from a 27,000 gallon tank on the Dinsmore Plateau. The Dean Creek Springs (Monument Springs) by historical accounts was one of several sources of water for the private water company that served the community prior to incorporation.

Wastewater

Sewage treatment is provided by City of Rio Dell, which operates a wastewater treatment plant with a design capacity of 1.0 mgd. Enlarged in 1978, the plant has been assigned to serve a population of 8,385 or an estimated 2,016 additional households over Rio Dell's 2000 population. Excessive storm water inflow and infiltration (I/I) into the collection system continues to limit wet weather plant capacity. I/I entering the system may take up as much as 85 percent of the estimated available capacity, leaving an adjusted capacity of about 302 additional households. Resolution of this I/I problem continues to be a high priority in the City's grant application efforts.

The Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) issued a Cease and Desist Order on May 15, 2003, determining that the present method of treated effluent discharge during summer months does not adequately protect water quality. The City has used two percolation ponds on the gravel bar adjacent to the river as the means of disposing of treated wastewater during the river discharge prohibition season (May 15 to September 30) when direct discharge to the Eel River is disallowed due to low flows.

The RWQCB Order limits new residential service connections to 40 equivalent residential units, or an increase of 18,000 gallons per day. The new flows can be from new residential, commercial, industrial, and/or government connections. It is likely that a majority of these connections will be for residential use, since residential users account for 57 percent of all connections, compared with 18 percent for commercial and 9 percent for industrial uses. However, this limitation does pose a real constraint upon the City meeting its share of the residential new construction allocation.

Measures to insure availability of connections for lower income households may necessitate the enactment of a "hold back" provision to retain a certain percentage of available connections for affordable housing projects, and/or an incentive based program tied to the demolition and reconstruction of affordable housing focused on substandard housing units beyond rehabilitation which have "existing" connections and thereby are exempt from imposed flow limits.

A second part of the RWQCB Order requires that the City make long-term provisions for the disposal of biosolids that are a by-product to the wastewater treatment process. In May 2003, the City executed a 10-year agreement with a local landowner for solids disposal to be placed at agronomic rates on lands on the former Dinsmore Ranch. This disposal agreement and method is pending review and action by the RWQCB, and if approved will satisfy the City's obligations in this area.

Solid Waste Disposal and Collection

Eel River Disposal & Resource Recovery, Inc, of Fortuna, provides curbside residential solid waste and recyclables collection (including plastic and glass containers, aluminum cans,

newspaper, and cardboard) in Rio Dell, under a franchise agreement with the City Council. Eel River Disposal also operates a solid waste transfer station and recycling center in Fortuna. Rio Dell residents can elect to transport their own solid waste to the Fortuna Transfer Station and can also dispose of greenwaste, waste oils, and other household debris at that location. There is no curbside greenwaste collection in Rio Dell.

According to the California Integrated Waste Management Board - CIWMB, approximately 44 percent of total waste generated in Rio dell is from residential sources and the remainder is from business sources. Rio Dell residents generate approximately 0.8 lbs/per day per capita, which results in a total quantity of residential waste of approximately 465 tons per year. Total solid waste from businesses in Rio Dell is approximately 592 tons per year, generated at a rate of 3.1 pounds per employee per day. Total Rio Dell solid waste in the year 2000 was 1,057 tons. Total solid waste generated in Humboldt County is approximately 85 to 90 thousand tons per year. Rio Dell is less than two percent of solid waste generated in Humboldt County.

Rio Dell generates less residential waste than most jurisdictions its size ("Jurisdiction Profile", CIWMB, 2000). However, the City of Rio Dell did not meet its Assembly Bill 939 landfill waste diversion goal of 50 percent by year 2000. In 2000, Rio Dell diverted only 43 percent of its solid waste from disposal. As a result, the City was granted a time extension to achieve its diversion goal of 50 percent by the Waste Management Board due to extenuating circumstances that included high unemployment, budget constraints, remoteness from industrialized centers and markets, and low annual income levels of residents. Rio Dell has adopted plans for source reduction and recycling, as well as for the handing of household hazardous waste that are CIWMB approved.

Utilities

Electric

Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), a public utility regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), owns the electric transmission and distribution facilities within Rio Dell as well as an electric substation at the edge of the Town Center neighborhood. PG&E has about 1,250 residential and commercial electric customers in Rio Dell. PG&E also has approximately 900 residential and commercial gas customers in the City.

New gas and electric services and extensions or expansions of the distribution system will be carried out according to CPUC Rules 15 (distribution line/gas main extension) and 16 (electric/gas service extension).

Telecommunications

SBC Communications, Inc. (formerly Pacific Bell) is the incumbent local exchange carrier (a telephone company regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission that provides local telephone service within a local area local access and transport area or LATA) for most of the Humboldt Bay Area, including the City of Rio Dell.

The SBC Communications central office, the main telephone switching facility for Rio Dell, is located on Sequoia Avenue in the Town Center Neighborhood. SBC Communications provides

basic telephone service to the residents of Rio Dell, but does not yet have the local infrastructure necessary to provide high speed internet access, or digital subscriber line (DSL) service.

Cable TV

Cox Communications, Inc. provides cable TV services in Rio Dell through a franchise agreement with the City Council. Cox Communications services include basic cable, digital cable, and cable internet services. Cable internet services can provide a level of service similar to DSL service.

Schools and Other Public Services

Schools

There are two school districts within the City of Rio Dell: the Rio Dell Elementary School District and the Fortuna Union High School District. Rio Dell Elementary School District has two schools, Eagle Prairie Elementary School and Monument Middle School, both located at 95 Center Street. The school employs 23 people with a total of 21 teachers (2002-03). Fortuna Union High School District, with its Fortuna High School campus and East High School continuation school campus, draws students from Fortuna, as well as Rio Dell, Loleta, Scotia, Hydesville, and Bridgeville.

Rio Dell Elementary School serves students in grades K-6 and, and students in grades seven and eight go to Monument Middle School. The names and structures of the schools have changed recently. Prior to 2001, K-8 students in Rio Dell attended Rio Dell Primary School and Rio Dell Elementary School at the same location. Enrollment in the Rio Dell Elementary School District has declined by 17 percent between 1993 and 2003 while at the same time the population of the City increased by a little over five percent. Rio Dell Elementary School District Enrollments for the last ten years are shown in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 Rio Dell Elementary School District Enrollments 1993 - 2003

	Grade										Yr. to Yr	'93 - '03
School Year	K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Total	Change	Change
1993-94	34	39	49	52	44	38	38	35	44	373		
1994-95	36	34	31	40	45	32	41	39	45	343	-8.0%	
1995-96	43	37	28	25	41	40	33	42	36	325	-5.2%	
1996-97	49	45	37	30	29	39	44	37	47	357	9.8%	
1997-98	45	43	40	39	34	30	43	46	37	357	0.0%	
1998-99	40	34	43	39	30	31	31	41	40	329	-7.8%	
1999-00	36	44	31	37	39	33	33	35	47	335	1.8%	
2000-01	32	37	35	29	36	41	37	31	35	313	-6.6%	
2001-02	35	33	33	33	27	42	44	40	29	316	1.0%	
2002-03	38	29	30	31	31	30	34	37	35	295	-6.6%	-21%

Source: California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit.

According to the California Department of Education, Educational Demographics Unit, average class size is 21.5 students per class, and the pupil to teacher ratio is 15.8. Approximately 8.4%

of students in the District are English learners. There are a total of 22 classrooms with Internet access in the District and 82 computers available for student use.

Parks

Parks and recreation facilities within the City limits include the large playing fields and playgrounds (16.1 acres) located at Rio Dell Elementary District Schools, as well as tennis courts also located on the school grounds but maintained by the City. A small playground and ball park (3.4 acres) are located adjacent to the RDVFD fire hall, and are maintained by the RDVFD.

The National Recreation and Parks Association (NRPA) recommends a minimum standard of 2.5 acres of parklands per 1,000 residents. Rio Dell currently has no parks and recreation facilities and would need to acquire and develop approximately 7.5 acres of parks to meet the NPRA standard, or 9 - 15 acres to meet more intensive recreation standards. There are 19.5 acres of recreation facilities on public property in Rio Dell.

Library

Rio Dell Library, a Branch of the Humboldt County Library system, is located at 715 Wildwood Avenue and is open on Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday. The Main Library and all branches of the Humboldt County Library have computers connected to the Internet and available for public use. According to the Humboldt County Library Annual Report 2001-02, there were 7,407 items borrowed from the Rio Dell Branch during the year, which comprised approximately 1.3 percent of total countywide library lending activity, or 2.33 items borrowed per capita compared to 4.58 items borrowed per capita Countywide.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Increased Demands on Police and Fire Protection
- Public Works
- Utilities
- Schools and Other Public Services

Impact: Increased Demands on Police and Fire Protection

Analysis of Impacts. The population growth will increase the need for Police and Fire protection. To maintain service ratios, additional personnel and equipment will be needed. However, additional facilities such as police substations and new fire stations should not be necessary, since the projected growth is within the existing developed area, rather than expansion beyond the City limits. No significant decrease in response time is expected since the distance to fire and police stations is not expected to increase for the majority of the projected population.

Significance Standard. The impact would be significant if implementation of the General Plan would result in substantial physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered government facilities, need for new or physically altered government facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain

acceptable service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives for Fire and Police protection

General Plan Policy. The General Plan includes the following policies for maintaining adequate Fire and Police protection:

One of the General Plan goals, which will serve to focus growth within the existing developed area, is to "Encourage infill development of vacant and underutilized land in the Town Center before amending the General Plan to allow additional commercial and residential land elsewhere."

- Adopt per capita staffing and response time standards for police and emergency personnel.
- Cooperate with the Rio Dell Fire Protection District to ensure that emergency services are adequate to support the Rio Dell General Plan 2015 Land use Element.
- Pursue grant funds for projects and programs to achieve a lower ISO rating for the City.
- The City shall prepare and adopt a Water and Wastewater Master Plan that addresses build out identified in the General Plan..

Level of Impact (Significance). Implementation of these and related General Plan policies will provide for sufficient Police and Fire protection services and reduce potential impacts from increased demand to a less-than-significant level.

Impact: Public Works – Solid Waste Generation

Analysis of Impacts. The projected growth will increase demand on existing recycling, waste collection, and disposal facilities. Per capita waste generation rates have a tendency to increase proportionately to urbanization levels and population density, as space becomes a more valuable commodity and opportunities for in-house reuse decrease. This means that there is the potential for increased per capita generation from the existing population if densities in existing neighborhoods increase.

Based on an interview of the Eel River Disposal and Resource Recovery, the Fortuna Transfer Station and the landfills to which Rio Dell solid waste is hauled, have sufficient capacity to handle the additional solid waste generated during the planning period and beyond This transfer station includes facilities for greenwaste and recyclables to reduce the amount of non-recyclable solid waste

Significance Standard. The impact would be significant if implementation of the General Plan would result in generation of solid waste beyond the capacity of a landfill with sufficient permitted capacity to accommodate the project's solid waste disposal needs.

General Plan Policy. The following polices contained in the General Plan affect or mitigate expected effects on solid waste management.

- Continue solid waste reduction and waste diversion programs currently in place.

Level of Impact (Significance). These measures will reduce potential solid waste impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Impact: Public Works – Water

Analysis of Impacts. During the General Plan buildout period (2015), the population of Rio Dell is expected to grow to about 3,459 persons. In Rio Dell, water use averages about 130 gallons per capita per day. The increase in population is therefore expected to increase total daily water use from its current 340,000 gallons per day average to approximately 450,000 gallons per day. The City's Emergency Interim Water Supply System is expected to be able to support the water consumption of between 3,846 (based on 130 gallons per person per day) and 3,334 persons (maximum based on 150 gallons per person per day). The City is currently planning water supply system upgrades that can produce a drinking water volume equivalent to the City's Eel River water right of approximately 1.6 million gallons per day. System upgrades are estimated to cost approximately $3.5 million. The City is exploring funding options to complete this work.

There is ample water to supply Rio Dell's growth under its existing Eel River water right. While water supply is adequate and the EIWSS will support population growth during the planning period, system upgrades, including infiltration basin improvements, pump upgrades, and storage, transmission, and distribution upgrades will need to take place to support projected buildout under the General Plan Land Use Element.

Significance Standard. The impact would be significant if implementation of the General Plan would result in new development whose water supply demand would exceed existing system capacity or planned system capacity, if the water supply system would not be adequate to serve projected new development, or substantially degrade or deplete groundwater supply.

General Plan Policy. The following polices contained in the General Plan affect or mitigate expected effects on water supply and delivery.

- The City shall prepare and adopt a Water and Wastewater Master Plan that addresses build out identified in the General Plan.
- Use a combination of incentives, educational programs, and ongoing system audits to promote water conservation.
- Prepare and maintain a five-year capital improvement plan that will guide the financing and construction of infrastructure to support the Rio Dell General Plan 2015.

Level of Impact (Significance). These measures will reduce potential water supply impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Impact: Public Works – Wastewater

Analysis of Impacts. Almost all of the projected increase in Rio Dell's population will be connected to the wastewater treatment system. The City's will continue a program to reduce wet weather flows (Inflow /Infiltration reduction) is expected to offset increased flows due to growth. Dry weather flows are expected to increase due to projected growth.

Due to violation relating to the effluent discharges to the Eel River, the City will complete system improvements by May 2007. In the interim the City may only allow 40 new residential connections (or an increase of 18,000 gallons per day).

Planned wastewater treatment improvements are expected to result fewer exceedances of its suspended solids and BOD removal requirements, because many of these exceedances result from high quantities of dilute inflow. This in combination with the City's recent agreement with a landowner for biosolids disposal will help the City's meet RWQCB obligation. These improvements are also expected to meet demands of future growth.

Significance Standard. The impact would be significant if implementation of the General Plan would cause Regional Water Quality Control Board waste discharge requirements to be violated.

General Plan Policy. The following polices contained in the General Plan, and City programs, affect or mitigate expected effects on water and wastewater systems.

- Upgrade the wastewater system for future wastewater needs of the community;
- Maintain water conservation measures, to minimize future water needs of the community;
- Use a combination of incentives, educational programs, and ongoing system audits to promote water conservation.
- Maintain a five year capital improvement plan that will guide the financing and construction of infrastructure to support the Rio Dell General Plan 2015.

Level of Impact (Significance). These measures will reduce potential water supply impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Impact: Utilities

Analysis of Impacts. The General Plans projected increase in population will increase demand on utilities. Gas, electric, and telecommunications demands are projected to increase as new residential, commercial, and public uses develop during the General Plan period.

Significance Standard. The impact would be significant if implementation of the General Plan would result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new of physically altered government facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, or other performance objectives for gas, electric, and telecommunications service.

General Plan Policy. The General Plan includes the following goals and policies designed to mitigate impact on utilities:

- Coordinate with energy suppliers and agencies to educate residents, property owners, and business operators about the need for and benefits of conserving energy;

- Maintain and distribute current information about building insulation, energy efficient appliances, lighting, and heating; other conservation measures and materials; and home power alternatives;
- Require that new construction and retrofits comply with energy efficient construction codes including high-energy windows, water heaters, and furnaces, to reduce energy consumption;
- Require underground utilities throughout the neighborhoods as public improvements and new developments are planned and approved.

Level of Impact (Significance). These measures will reduce potential solid waste impacts to a less-than-significant level.

Impact: Schools and Other Public Services

Analysis of Impacts. Parks and schools will be impacted by the increased population and associated student enrollment projected in the General Plan. However, school enrollment has declined significantly over the last ten years, with 2002-03 enrollment over 20% below 1993-94 enrollment. The total increase in population within the planning area is not expected to generate local school enrollment beyond the capacity of Rio Dell schools

Although the City of Rio Dell does not have any park facilities, the City does maintain a tennis court and there are park related facilities on school district and fire district lands. The total acreage of recreational facilities located on public land exceeds accepted population based standards for park facilities in Rio Dell.

Significance Standard. The impact would be significant if implementation of the General Plan would result in substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new of physically altered government facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios for schools.

The impact would be significant if implementation of the General Plan would increase the use of existing neighborhood and regional parks or other recreation facilities, such that substantial physical deterioration of the facility would occur or be accelerated, or 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.

General Plan Policy. The General Plan includes the following policies that will reduce potential impacts on schools and parks:

- The City shall prepare and adopt a Conservation and Safety Element of the General Plan to identify open spaces that might be suitable for recreation purposes;
- The City shall prepare and adopt a Park and Recreation Master Plan;
- Promote a variety of recreational uses and multiple use of open space land.

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies will reduce potential schools and other public services impacts to a less-than-significant level.

3.4 CULTURAL RESOURCES

The cultural resources section addresses the following topics:

- Paleontological Resources
- Archeological Resources
- Historical Resources

Environmental Setting

Paleontological Resources

The Scotia Bluffs Formation, a prominent geologic feature visible across the Eel River from the City of Rio Dell, is made up of massive fine and medium grained sandstones, although some pebbly conglomerate and siltstone is also recorded. The Scotia Bluffs is a significant source for many fossils and the types of fossils found suggest water depths of 30 meters or less. Ash layers that can be found in the Scotia Bluffs date to about 1.3 to 1.5 million years ago. In addition to the mollusks and sand dollars commonly found, the Scotia Bluffs are reported to have produced some plants, turtles, starfish and agatized whale bone. Fossils have also been found along the Eel River within the City.

Archeological Resources

According to the Humboldt County 2025 General Plan Update Natural Resources and Hazards Report, the original people of the "Eel River complex" are referred to as Transitional Athabascans, as their culture is a bridge between the Hupa and Whilkut to the north and other tribes to the south. Rio Dell is very close to the aboriginal territory boundaries of several tribes, including the Wiyot (whose southern ancestral territory boundary is believed to have beeen between the mouth of the Van Duzen and Rio Dell), and the southern Athabascan groups including Mattole, Nongatl, and Sinkyone (whose northern ancestral territory boundary is believed to have been in the area of Rio Dell). Based on A.L. Kroeber's Handbook of Indians of California (first published in 1925), Rio Dell appears to be at the edge of the aboriginal territory of the Sinkyone people; whose territory included the coast above Shelter Cove and most of the South Fork of the Eel River extending along the main stem of the Eel River just beyond Rio Dell and the Wiyot people, whose territory includes the Eel valley and coastal plan to the north.

Although not reflected in City or County records, there may be culturally sensitive areas and sites of special importance to Native Americans within the City of Rio Dell. Culturally sensitive areas include village sites, cemeteries, and lithic scatters (concentrations of stone chips, flakes, and tools). The North Coastal Information Center has records of approximately 2,040 cultural resource sites in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties and will be a source of information for archival records of culturally sensitive areas within Rio Dell.

Historic Resources

Rio Dell was originally located by Gregg-Wood party in a southward journey in the 1840's. The area was known as Eagle Prairie until about 1870, when it was renamed Rio Dell by Lorenzo Painter, an early Rio Dell landowner and the founder of the town. Lorenzo Painter laid out the

first plat of Rio Dell and served as its first Post Master, having been named to that position by Ulysses S. Grant in 1876.

The history of Rio Dell is closely tied to the history of Scotia, the neighboring town across the Eel River. Scotia is a "company town" that is still entirely owned by the Pacific Lumber Company (PalCo). Scotia, originally called Forestville, is a largely self-contained community with company-owned houses, local serving stores and businesses, and mill related facilities. The PalCo mill has employed residents of Rio Dell since its establishment, and remains a foundation of the local economy.

Although there are many older buildings in Rio Dell as well as houses constructed prior to 1920, there are no Rio Dell Historic Sites or National Register of Historic Places Landmarks.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Cultural Resources

Impact: Cultural Resources

Analysis of Impacts. Buildout under the General Plan could potentially disturb cultural resources. Increasing activity in undeveloped areas within the planning area could possibly expose or unearth unrecorded archeological sites or paleontological resources.

Significance Standard. The impact to cultural resources would be potentially significant if implementation of the General Plan disturbed or destroyed a unique cultural resource or site, or would cause a substantial adverse change in the significance of a unique cultural resource.

General Plan Policy. The General Plan includes the following measures that will protect cultural resources:

- Integrate information about cultural resources into planning decisions, and provide for consultation and collaboration with outside entities.
- Areas of archeological, paleontological, and architectural significance should be identified, assessed, and protected from destruction.
- Work with community organizations to develop and staff a local historic museum

Level of Impact (Significance). These measures are intended to protect both recognized and unrecorded resources. Adhering to these policies will reduce potential adverse impacts associated with loss or damage in cultural resources to a less-than-significant level.

3.5 AESTHETICS

The following topics are addressed in the aesthetics section:

- Vistas and Scenic Resources
- Visual Resources and Characteristics

Environmental Setting

Rio Dell is located in a portion of Humboldt County with high quality aesthetic value due to its many natural, and community resources. Rio Dell is adjacent to the Scotia Bluffs, which have aesthetic value and are visible from the City. In addition, Rio Dell sits at a transition point where the Eel River Valley's Redwood covered slopes open up to a broad river delta. Sweeping vistas associated with the Eel River Valley contribute to Rio Dell's aesthetic setting. Distinct architecture in portions of the city's older neighborhoods also contribute to a high aesthetic value. However, low quality construction and unplanned development has decreased the aesthetic value of certain areas of the City.

The Rio Dell General Plan Scenic Highway Element states that Monument Road, and Blue Slide-Grizzly Bluff Roads, are both considered scenic by local residents and were suggested for inclusion in any scenic route program. Residents living in the Monument area and the hillside above Pacific Avenue have a broad vista of the "Eel River as it flows past the community" as well as the Scotia Bluffs across the River.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Vistas and Scenic Resources

Impact: Vistas and Scenic Resources

Analysis of Impacts. Buildout of the General Plan 2015 Land Use and Housing Elements would add new residential and commercial structures in the City of Rio Dell. The plan allows for multi-story structures, primarily within the Town Center and Urban General land use designations. The majority of these new structures would be located within existing developed areas. Views across vacant lots designated for urban development could be impacted if new buildings were located there.

The slopes of the Monument neighborhood are designated for rural land uses and some visual impacts are expected due to limited new residential development in that area. This is potentially significant because the Monument neighborhood is a prominent vista in Rio Dell. Uses along the bank of the Eel River will not change significantly; however, some visual impacts may occur as new residential development occurs in that area.

Significance Standard. The aesthetic impacts would be potentially significant if implementation of the General Plan had a substantial adverse impact on scenic, vistas, or viewsheds.

General Plan Policy. The General Plan contains the following policies to protect viewsheds and other scenic resources:

- The City shall prepare implementing development regulations that include landscaping and design guidelines.
- Continue the policy of encouraging landscaping and maintenance of unused portions of street rights-of-way by local civic groups.
- Preserve land and water areas of historic, unique, or unusual character for use by the general public.
- Assist existing businesses with improvements to buildings exteriors/facades through the development of a facade improvement program.

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies would reduce aesthetic impacts from implementing the General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements to a less-than-significant level.

3.6 TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

The following topics are addressed in the transportation and circulation section:

- Streets
- Highways
- Public Transit
- Pedestrian Transportation
- Bicycle Transportation

Environmental Setting

Streets

There are approximately 12.5 miles of existing roads that are maintained by the City of Rio Dell. Approximately 40 percent of the roads are greater than 20 feet in width and two-thirds of the existing roads have additional improvements such as curb, gutter, and sidewalk. See Figure 8 for a map of Rio Dell's circulation system.

Traffic volumes on the City's existing network of streets are low and streets are considered to operate at a free-flowing level. Rio Dell streets are interconnected, providing drivers with numerous alternatives in the event of one-time traffic delays.

Wildwood Avenue is the City's main transportation route. This road has a wide cross-section from end to end and consists of two travel lanes and a center turn lane. Other than at the U.S. 101 off ramp to the north and the bridge across the Eel River to the south, there are no stop signs or traffic lights on Wildwood Avenue.

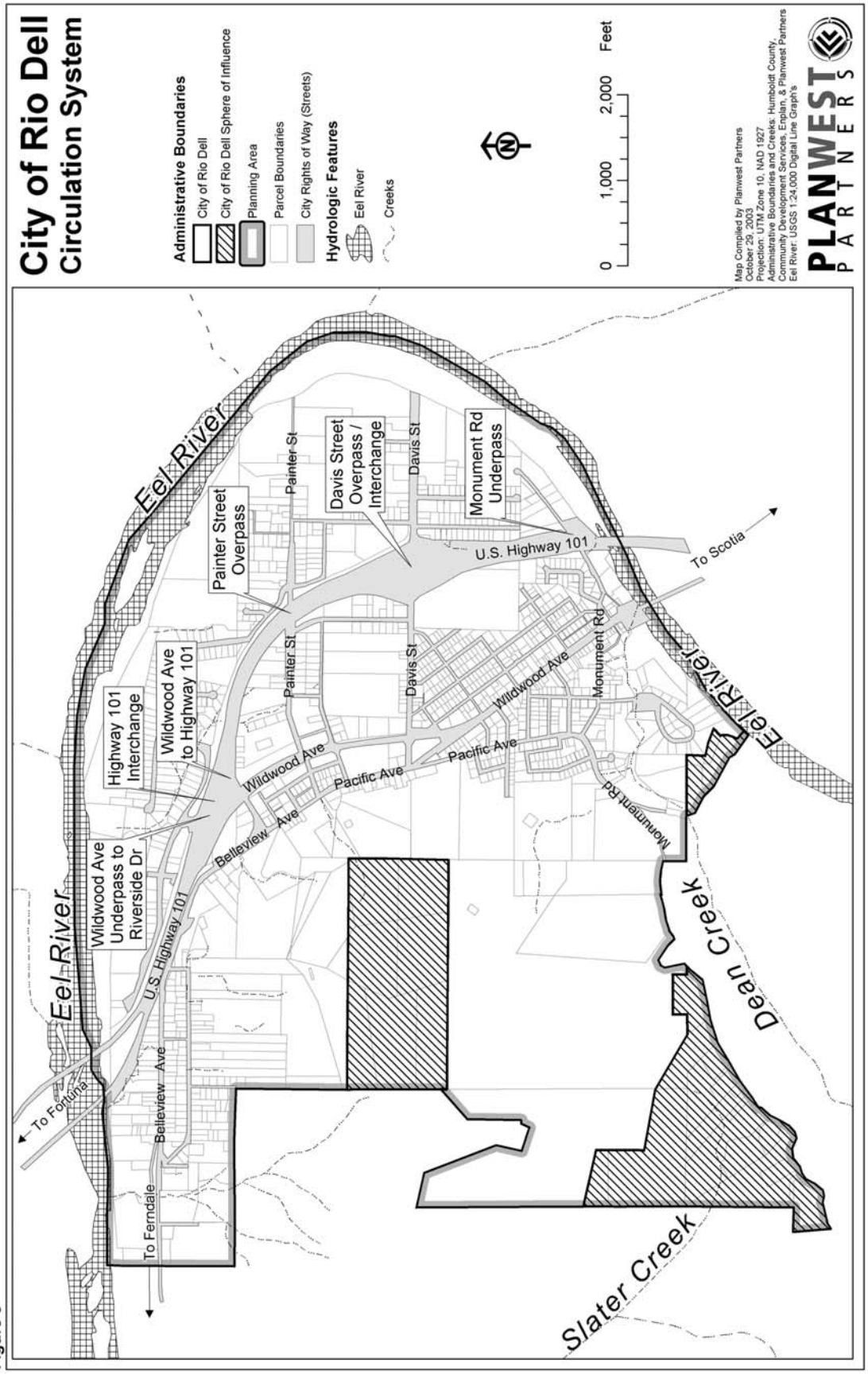

City of Rio Dell
Circulation System
Administrative Boundaries
City of Rio Dell
City of Rio Dell Sphere of Influence
Planning Area
Parcel Boundaries
City Rights of Way (Streets)
Hydrologic Features
Eel River
Creeks
0
1,000
2,000
Feet
Map Compiled by Planwest Partners
October 29, 2003
Projection: UTM Zone 10, NAD 1927
Administrative Boundaries and Creeks: Humboldt County, Community Development Services, Enplan, & Planwest Partners
Eel River: USGS 1:24,000 Digital Line Graph's
PLANWEST PARTNERS
Eel River
Painter Street Overpass
Painter St
Davis Street Overpass / Interchange
Davis St
Monument Rd Underpass
U.S. Highway 101
To Scotia
Monument Rd
Wildwood Ave
Pacific Ave
Eel River
Highway 101 Interchange
Wildwood Ave to Highway 101
Wildwood Ave
Pacific Ave
Bellevue Ave
Monument Rd
Wildwood Ave Underpass to Riverside Dr
U.S. Highway 101
To Fortuna
Bellevue Ave
To Ferndale
Dean Creek
Slater Creek

Figure 8

The City of Rio Dell has designed and is currently constructing improvements to Wildwood Avenue between the U.S. 101 interchange to the north and Davis Street to the South. These improvements include a landscaped center divider, designated bike lanes adjacent to the travel lane in both directions, and pedestrian walkways. This project is intended to reduce vehicle speeds along the City's main vehicle travel route through town and establish the foundation of a pedestrian and bicycle network in Rio Dell. The City is seeking additional funding to plan and construct improvements to the remainder of Wildwood Avenue.

Rio Dell has access to U.S. 101 through multiple highway interchanges, including Wildwood Avenue to the north, Davis Street to the east, and across the Eel River via Wildwood to the south. The Rio Dell highway interchanges operate in a free-flowing manner throughout the day.

Major streets in Rio Dell include:

- Wildwood Avenue is the northern gateway into Rio Dell from Hwy 101 and is the primary mover of traffic through town as well as the main street in the Town Center,
- Davis Street is an important east-west cross connection and has an over pass over Hwy 101 as well as on and off ramps,
- Painter Street, which is another important east west cross connection but does not have Hwy 101 access; and
- Belleview Avenue, which eventually becomes Blue Slide Road, serves as an alternate route to the Ferndale area.

Highways

U.S. 101 is the most prominent transportation facility in the area. Approximately 30 years ago, Wildwood Avenue was the Hwy 101 alignment through the City of Rio Dell. In the 1970,s, the new alignment of Hwy 101 was constructed relieving the Town Center of excess traffic, but also reducing local commercial activity. Currently, the segment of Hwy 101 through Rio Dell supports 13,600 average daily trips and 15,200 daily trips during the peak travel month. There are multiple access points to the highway from City streets, which allow good circulation in and out of the City.

Public Transit

Humboldt Transit Authority, a Joint Powers Authority of which the City of Rio Dell is a member, operates the Redwood Transit System (RTS). RTS offers service from Trinidad to Scotia, including service to Rio Dell, and runs 18 times per day. Rio Dell residents can take seven northbound and five southbound weekday, and four Saturday busses, to Fortuna or the Eureka/Arcata area from three bus stop locations, including: Rio Dell City Hall; Rigby and Davis Streets; and Center and Rigby Streets.

Pedestrian Transportation

Rio Dell's pedestrian facilities are primarily in the form of sidewalks or shoulders on public streets. Only a portion of the City street network includes sidewalks, largely the Wildwood Avenue corridor. Pedestrian improvements are currently being extended along the Wildwood

corridor. There are gaps in the sidewalk system throughout the City. Many streets and rural roads, do not have sidewalks; causing pedestrians to use unpaved shoulders and travel lanes. The City of Rio Dell standard for sidewalks meets the minimum American's with Disabilities Act Standards.

Bicycle Transportation

There are currently no designated bicycle facilities (a bike lane designated by roadway striping or a paved lane separated from motor vehicle use) within the City of Rio Dell. The City is in the process of improving Wildwood Avenue from the off-ramp of Hwy 101 to the Town Center, to include a bike lane and other improvements. In addition, Highway 101 as it passes through Rio Dell and Blue Slide Road and Wildwood Avenues are bike routes regularly used by cyclists riding through Rio Dell.

Impacts Analysis

The following potential impacts are addressed in this section:

- Transportation and Circulation

Impact: Transportation And Circulation

Analysis of Impacts. A revision of the Rio Dell Circulation Element is not part of this General Plan update. The proposed General Plan 2015 Land Use Element focuses new residential growth in areas served by the existing street network. It projects moderate population growth, an increase of approximately 285 persons – or 110 housing units - by 2015. Non-residential growth is projected to increase at a rate comparable to residential growth, less than one percent per year.

Based on the land use designations in the proposed Land Use Element, the majority of new residential and non-residential growth will occur in the Town Center, Gateway, Riverside, and portions of the Edgewater and Belleview neighborhoods. The street network within these neighborhoods has substantial interconnection which allows drivers the choice of multiple routes to and from their destinations. The existing street network operates at a free-flowing level and can accommodate additional traffic. In addition, multiple accesses from City streets to U.S. 101 will allow good circulation in and out of the City.

Planned Land Use Element densities in the outlying areas of the City: the Monument neighborhood and the outer portions of the Belleview and Edgewater neighborhoods, will be reduced. This density reduction would result in the outlying areas not contributing substantial new traffic volumes to the City's main traffic network. No new streets are proposed.

Through the Wildwood Avenue improvements project, the city of Rio Dell has established this street as its primary pedestrian and bicycle route through the City. The street has sufficient width to accommodate these uses.

The existing level of RTS bus service and the City's membership in RTA indicate that additional demand for public transit service resulting from development under the proposed General Plan would be met by current RTS service and modifications to existing routes on existing streets.

Significance Standard. The impacts on the streets and highway system would be potentially significant if implementation of the General Plan would cause an increase in traffic, which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system (i.e., result in a substantial increase in either the number of vehicle trips, the volume to capacity ratio on roads, or congestion at intersections) or exceed, either individually or cumulatively, a level of service standard. The City currently has no street classifications and has not set level of service or capacity standards.

General Plan Policy. There is projected to be a nine percent increase in population within the planning period. Traffic volumes, both peak and average daily, could increase at a rate proportional to population growth. The General Plan includes the following policies to reduce these potential traffic impacts:

- Develop new street right-of-way standards that reduce vehicular speeds and enhance bicycle and pedestrian facilities.
- Provide greater access to public transit service for neighborhood residents, business owners, employees, and customers.
- Require new development on vacant land to construct a street grid that connects to existing streets.
- Develop standards for alternate access routes including alleys, walking paths, and bicycle routes.
- The City shall prepare and adopt a Circulation Element of the General Plan that is consistent with the policy direction developed in the Land Use Element.
- The City shall prepare new General Development Standards and Subdivision Standards that are consistent with the policy direction developed in the General Plan

Level of Impact (Significance). These policies would reduce transportation impacts resulting from implementation of the General Plan Land Use and Housing Elements to a less-than-significant level.

CHAPTER 4
EVALUATION OF PLAN ALTERNATIVES

This Chapter includes the following sections:

4.1 REQUIREMENTS FOR ALTERNATIVES

CEQA Guidelines state that the EIR must describe and evaluate a reasonable range of alternatives to the project. The CEQA Guidelines for alternatives follow.

CEQA § 15126 - Alternatives

(d) Alternatives to the Proposed Action. Describe a range of reasonable alternatives to the project, or to the location of the project, which would feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project but would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project, and evaluate the comparative merits of the alternatives.

(1) Purpose. Because an EIR must identify ways to mitigate or avoid the significant effects that a project may have on the environment (Public Resources Code § 21002.1), the discussion of alternatives shall focus on alternatives to the project or its location which are capable of avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the project, even if these alternatives would impede to some degree the attainment of the project objectives, or would be more costly.

(2) Selection of a range of reasonable alternatives. The range of potential alternatives to the proposed project shall include those that could feasibly accomplish most of the basic purposes of the project and could avoid or substantially lessen one or more of the significant effects. The EIR should briefly describe the rationale for selecting the alternatives to be dis-cussed. The EIR should also identify any alternatives that were considered by the lead agency but were rejected as infeasible during the scoping process and briefly explain the reasons underlying the lead agency's determination. Additional information explaining the choice of alternatives may be included in the administrative record.

(3) Evaluation of alternatives. The EIR shall include sufficient information about each alternative to allow meaningful evaluation, analysis, and comparison with the proposed project. A matrix displaying the major characteristics and significant environmental effect of each alternative may be used to summarize the comparison. If an alternative would cause one or more significant effects in addition to those that would be caused by the project as proposed, the significant effects of the alternative shall be discussed, but in less detail than the significant effects of the project as proposed. (County of Inyo v. City of Los Angeles, 124 Cal. App. 3d 1)

(4) "No project" alternative. The specific alternative of "No-Project" shall also be evaluated along with its impact. The "No-Project" analysis shall discuss the

existing conditions, as well as what would be reasonably expected to occur in the foresee-able future if the project were not approved, based on current plans and consistent with available infrastructure and community services. If the environmentally superior alternative is the "No-Project" alternative, the EIR shall also identify an environmentally superior alternative among the other alternatives.

(5) Rule of reason. The range of alternatives required in an EIR is governed by a "rule of reason" that requires the EIR to set forth only those alternatives necessary to permit a reasoned choice. The alternatives shall be limited to ones that would avoid or substantially lessen any of the significant effects of the project. of those alternatives, the EIR need examine in detail only the ones that the lead agency determines could feasibly attain most of the basic objectives of the project. The range of feasible alternatives shall be selected and discussed in a manner to foster meaningful public participation and informed decision making.

4.2 CEQA PROGRAM EIR GUIDELINES

The Guidelines include the following description of a Program EIR:

CEQA §15168 - Program EIR

(a) General. A program EIR is an EIR which may be prepared on a series of actions that can be characterized as one large project and are related either:
- (1) Geographically.
- (2) As logical parts in the chain of contemplated actions.
- (3) In connection with issuance of rules, regulations, plans, or other general criteria to govern the conduct on a continuing program, or
- (4) As Individual activities carried out under the same authorizing statutory or regulatory authority and having generally similar environmental effects which can be mitigated in similar ways.

(b) Advantages. Use of a program EIR can provide the following advantages:
- (1) Provide an occasion for a more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical in an EIR on an individual action.
- (2) Ensure consideration of cumulative impacts that might be slighted in a case-by-case analysis.
- (3) Avoid duplicative reconsideration of basic policy considerations,
- (4) Allow the Lead Agency to consider broad policy alternatives and program-wide mitigation measures at an early time when the agency has greater flexibility to deal with basic problems or cumulative impacts, and
- (5) Allow reduction in paperwork.

(c) Use with Later Activities. Subsequent activities in the program must be examined In the light of the program EIR to determine whether an additional environmental document must be prepared.

(1) If a later activity would have effects that were not examined in the program EIR, a new initial Study would need to be prepared leading to either an EIR or a Negative Declaration.
(2) If the agency finds that pursuant to § 15162, no new effects could occur or no new mitigation measures would be required, the agency can approve the activity as being within the scope of the project covered by the program EIR, and no new environmental document would be required.
(3) An agency shall incorporate feasible mitigation measures and alternatives developed in the program EIR into subsequent actions in the program.
(4) Where the subsequent activities involve site specific operations, the agency should use a written checklist or similar device to document the evaluation of the site and the activity to determine whether the environmental effects of the operation were covered in the program EIR.
(5) A program EIR will be most helpful in dealing with subsequent activities if it deals with the effects of the program as specifically and comprehensively as possible. With a good and detailed analysis of the program, many subsequent activities could be found to be within the scope of the project described in the program EIR, and no further environmental documents would be required.

(d) Use with Subsequent EIR's and Negative Declarations. A program EIR can be used to simplify the task of preparing environmental documents on later parts of the program. The program EIR can:
(1) Provide the basis in an initial study for determining whether the later activity may have any significant effects.
(2) Be incorporated by reference to deal with regional influences, secondary effects, cumulative impacts, broad alternatives, and other factors that apply to the program as a whole.
(3) Focus an EIR on a subsequent project to permit discussion solely of new effects which had not been considered before.

(e) Notice with Later Activities. When a law other than CEQA requires public notice when the agency later proposes to carry out or approve an activity within the program and to rely on the program EIR for CEQA compliance, the notice for the activity shall Include a statement that:
(1) This activity is within the scope of the program approved earlier, and
(2) The program EIR adequately describes the activity for the purposes of CEQA.

Note: Authority cited: § 21083 and § 21087, Public Resources Code: Reference: § 21003, Public Resources Code: County of Inyo v Yorty (1973), 32 Cal. App.3d 795.

Discussion (provided in the CEQA Guidelines): The program EIR is a device originally developed by federal agencies under NEPA. Use of this approach was recommended for CEQA in the court decision of County of Inyo v. Yorty in the note.

The detailed description of the permissible uses of this document are provided in an effort to encourage its use. The program EIR can be used effectively with a decision to carry out a new

governmental program or to adopt a new body of regulations in a regulatory program. The program EIR enables the agency to examine the overall effects of the proposed course of action and to take steps to avoid unnecessary adverse environmental effects.

Use of the program EIR also enables the Lead Agency to characterize the overall process as the project being approved at that time. Following this approach when individual activities within the program are proposed, the agency would be required to examine the individual activities to determine whether their effects were fully analyzed in the program EIR. If the activities would have no effects beyond those analyzed in the program EIR, the agency could assert that the activities are merely part of the program which had been approved earlier, and no further CEQA compliance would he required. This approach offers many possibilities for agencies to reduce their costs of CEQA compliance and still achieve high levels or environmental protection.

4.3 IDENTIFICATION AND EVALUATION OF ALTERNATIVES

Alternatives are subject to the physical characteristics, natural resources, and demographic conditions for the area. The physical conditions around Rio Dell are limiting factors for developing alternatives that would significantly expand the City. Rio Dell is bordered by the Eel River to the west and north and the hills in the Monument neighborhood to the west. These features pose limitations to the physical expansion of the City.

The steep slopes and productive agricultural soils found in the Monument neighborhood limit the amount of urban development that can occur there. The Eel River banks, which are subject to flooding, also represent physical limits to growth and City expansion.

Two alternatives have been identified to provide a range of options for the long-range physical development of the City:

- No-Project - Prior General Plan (Lower Density Alternative)
- Alternative One - Interim Urgency Zoning Ordinance (Medium Density Alternative)

These alternatives are described and evaluated in the sections below.

No Project

Under the No Project, the existing General Plan would govern growth. The existing General Plan was most recently updated in 1980. See Figure 9 for map of No Project Alternative. The overall assumptions for the No Project Alternative are:

Residential Goals:

- The provision of a variety of housing segregated by densities;
- The prevention of spreading blight and deterioration in the residential areas;
- The encouragement of orderly development and compatibility of residential areas with their surroundings; and,
- The provision of housing for all income groups in the community.

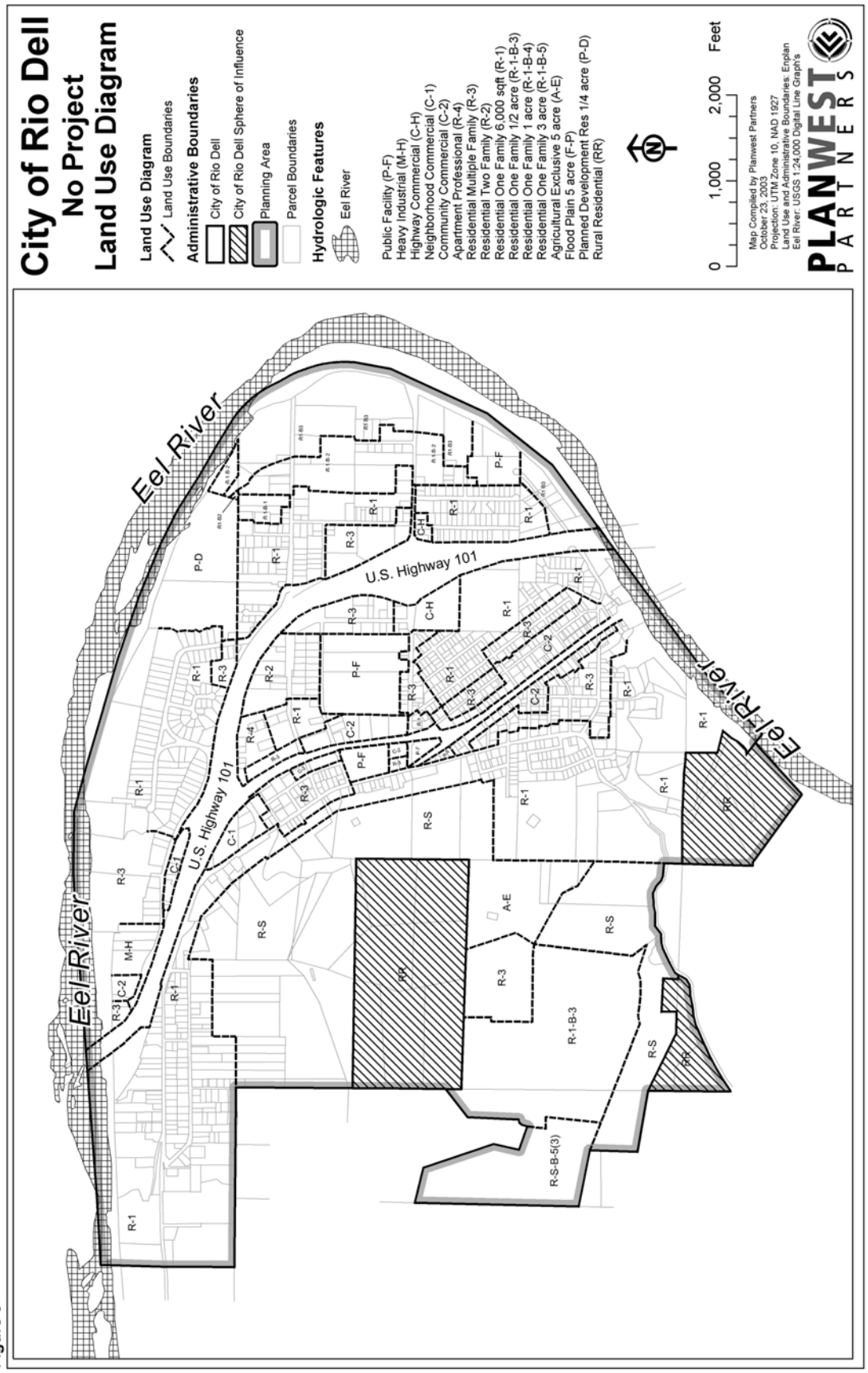

City of Rio Dell
No Project
Land Use Diagram
Land Use Diagram
Land Use Boundaries
Administrative Boundaries
City of Rio Dell
City of Rio Dell Sphere of Influence
Planning Area
Parcel Boundaries
Hydrologic Features
Eel River
Public Facility (P-F)
Heavy Industrial (M-H)
Highway Commercial (C-H)
Neighborhood Commercial (C-1)
Community Commercial (C-2)
Apartment Professional (R-4)
Residential Multiple Family (R-3)
Residential Two Family (R-2)
Residential One Family 6,000 sqft (R-1)
Residential One Family 1/2 acre (R-1-B-3)
Residential One Family 1 acre (R-1-B-4)
Residential One Family 3 acre (R-1-B-5)
Agricultural Exclusive 5 acre (A-E)
Flood Plain 5 acre (F-P)
Planned Development Res 1/4 acre (P-D)
Rural Residential (RR)
N
0
1,000
2,000
Feet
Map Compiled by Planwest Partners
October 23, 2003
Projection: UTM Zone 10, NAD 1927
Land Use and Administrative Boundaries: Englan
Eel River: USGS 1:24,000 Digital Line Graph's
PLANWEST
PARTNERS
Eel River
U.S. Highway 101
R-1
R-2
R-3
R-4
R-S
R-S-B-5(3)
R-1-B-3
C-1
C-2
C-H
M-H
A-E
P-D
P-F
RR

Figure 9

Commercial Goals:

- Preservation and revival of the downtown business district located on Wildwood Avenue; and,
- Provision for several types of commercial centers – Neighborhood Commercial; General Commercial; and Freeway Commercial.

Industrial Goals:

- The provision of industrial sites with adequate public facilities and transportation;
- The protection of these areas from incompatible uses and blight.

Resource Conservation Goals:

- Resource conservation and open space lands shall be maintained in agriculture and timber production to assure the protection of the area's agricultural economy and long-term productivity of the resources; and,
- Resource conservation and open space lands shall be preserved as a buffer around the City to retain the character and sense of community of Rio Dell, and within the City to be enhanced and coordinated with other facilities.

Overall, the No Project Alternative results in lower density development – or lower total population – at buildout than the proposed General Plan. However, the No Project Alternative (the prior General Plan land use designations) allowed for significantly higher densities outside of the Town Center compared to the proposed General Plan Land Use Element. Although the prior General Plan had as a goal to maintain agricultural and timber lands, the zoning districts that were developed from the land use diagram allowed moderate density residential development throughput most of the Monument neighborhood. The Monument neighborhood contains steep slopes subject to landslides and the City's only prime agricultural lands.

The residential densities found in the No Project Alternative are similar to the proposed plan for lands east of U.S. 101. The lands west of U.S. 101 in the Belleview and Monument neighborhoods are substantially more dense. For example, the No Project Alternative densities within the Monument Neighborhood ranged from Agricultural Exclusive (four acre minimum) to R-3, directly adjacent (residential multifamily with a minimum lot size equivalent to seven units per acre.) The proposed General Plan establishes a minimum lot size of five acres in the Monument neighborhood. Residential density is also higher within the western Belleview neighborhood, where land is designated as R-1 (seven units per acre) under the No Project Alternative compared to Suburban (one unit per acre) under the Proposed General Plan.

The No Project Alternative dedicates less land to commercial or mixed-use development in the Town Center. With the exception of a one- to two-block strip along Wildwood Avenue, the downtown area was designated as medium density residential or moderate/low density residential. The proposed plan will allow a greater mix of uses and create the potential for additional Town Center commercial uses.

The No Project Alternative would require a substantial increase in infrastructure development to serve housing outside the Town Center area. New roads, water, waste water, and drainage systems would need to be constructed to serve development in the Monument neighborhood. The development of this infrastructure would require construction on steep slopes and could lead to instability and erosion, as well as the conversion of prime agricultural lands. Development at the density established by the No Project Alternative would increase impacts associated with the development of infrastructure including higher traffic volumes, increased runoff resulting from an increase in impervious surface, and impacts to soils and slope stability.

Population related traffic increases under the No Project Alternative as a whole would not be higher than those projected for the proposed General Plan, but the No Project Alternative would generate higher traffic related impacts in the outlying areas, especially the Monument Neighborhood.

The biological resources of Rio Dell would face potentially greater impacts under the No Project Alternative, because existing policies do not offer as strong biological resources protection as those in the proposed General Plan. The No Project Alternative would require significantly higher levels of infrastructure construction (roads, sewer, water, drainage) in order to serve the higher density development in the Monument Neighborhood especially, and all of the residential neighborhoods around the urbanized area. Increased density in the Monument area would not only change the character of the Monument neighborhood but the entire Rio Dell community because it would alter an important local view shed. In addition, the No Project Alternative has fewer restrictions on proposed development in or near designated sensitive habitat areas than are found in the proposed General Plan. Applicants would not be required to provide as much information about proposed development sites, or be required to provide increased setbacks for development next to riparian areas, wetlands, forests, and other sensitive areas, as they would under the proposed General Plan.

The No Project Alternative's lack of current policies addressing air quality, cultural resources, and aesthetics increases potential impacts in these areas, compared to the proposed General Plan.

Table 4.1 No Project Alternative Buildout

NO PROJECT ALTERNATIVE
Land Use Categories and Acreages[1]

							DEVELOPABLE				MAXIMUM BUILDOUT POTENT		
	Total		Developable		Density		Units		Population		Units		Popul
Land Use Designations	Acres	Pct.	Acres	Pct.	Max	Mid	Max	Mid	Max	Mid	Max	Mid	Max
Public Facility[3]	34	2%					-	-	-	-			
Heavy Industrial	5	0%		*0%*			-	-	-	-			
Highway Commercial	8	1%	6.6	*78%*			-	-	-	-			
Neighborhood Commercial	8	1%	4.0	*53%*			-	-	-	-			
Community Commercial	23	2%	5.9	*26%*			-	-	-	-			
Apartment Professional	4	0%	3.9	*94%*	22.0	11.0	86	43	223	111	92	46	238
Residential Multiple Family	86	6%	32.5	*38%*	21.0	10.5	682	341	1,766	883	1,815	907	4,701
Residential Two Family	12	1%	4.4	*36%*	14.0	7.0	62	31	161	80	173	86	448
Residential One Family (6,000 sf)	342	24%	288.6	*84%*	7.0	3.5	2,020	1,010	5,232	2,616	2,392	1,196	6,195
Residential One Family (1/2 acre)	74	5%		*0%*	2.0	1.0	-	-	-	-	148	74	383
Residential One Family (1 acre)	170	12%	161.4	*95%*	1.0	0.5	161	80	417	207	170	85	440
Residential One Family (3 acre)	47	3%		*0%*	0.3	0.2	-	-	-	-	15	7	39
Agricultural Exclusive (5 acre)	23	2%	26.2	*116%*	0.2	0.1	5	2	13	5	4	2	10
Flood Plain (5 acre)	22	1%		*0%*			-	-	-	-			
Planned Development (Res 1/4 acre)	19	1%	28.1	*149%*			-	-	-	-			
Rural Residential	160	11%	152.6	95%	0.4	0.2	61	30	158	78	64	32	166
Road Rightrs of Way/River	401	28%											
Total[4]	**1,438**	**100%**	**714.2**				**3,077**	**1,537**	**7,969**	**3,981**	**4,873**	**2,435**	**12,621**

Source: City of Rio Dell Land Inventory, 1992.

[1]All information from 1993 Rio Dell Housing Element Revision.

[2]Maximum buildout potential means that property within the Planning Area has been developed or re-developed to its maximum allowable density.

[3]Differrneces in Public Facility acreage reflect reclassification of unusable lands adjacent to roadways

[4]Differences in total acreage between Alternatives and the Proposed Plan reflects differences in the original base maps.

Alternative One

In May 2003, the City of Rio Dell adopted an Interim Urgency Ordinance to limit new development in the City. As part of its action approving the ordinance, the City Council made the following findings:

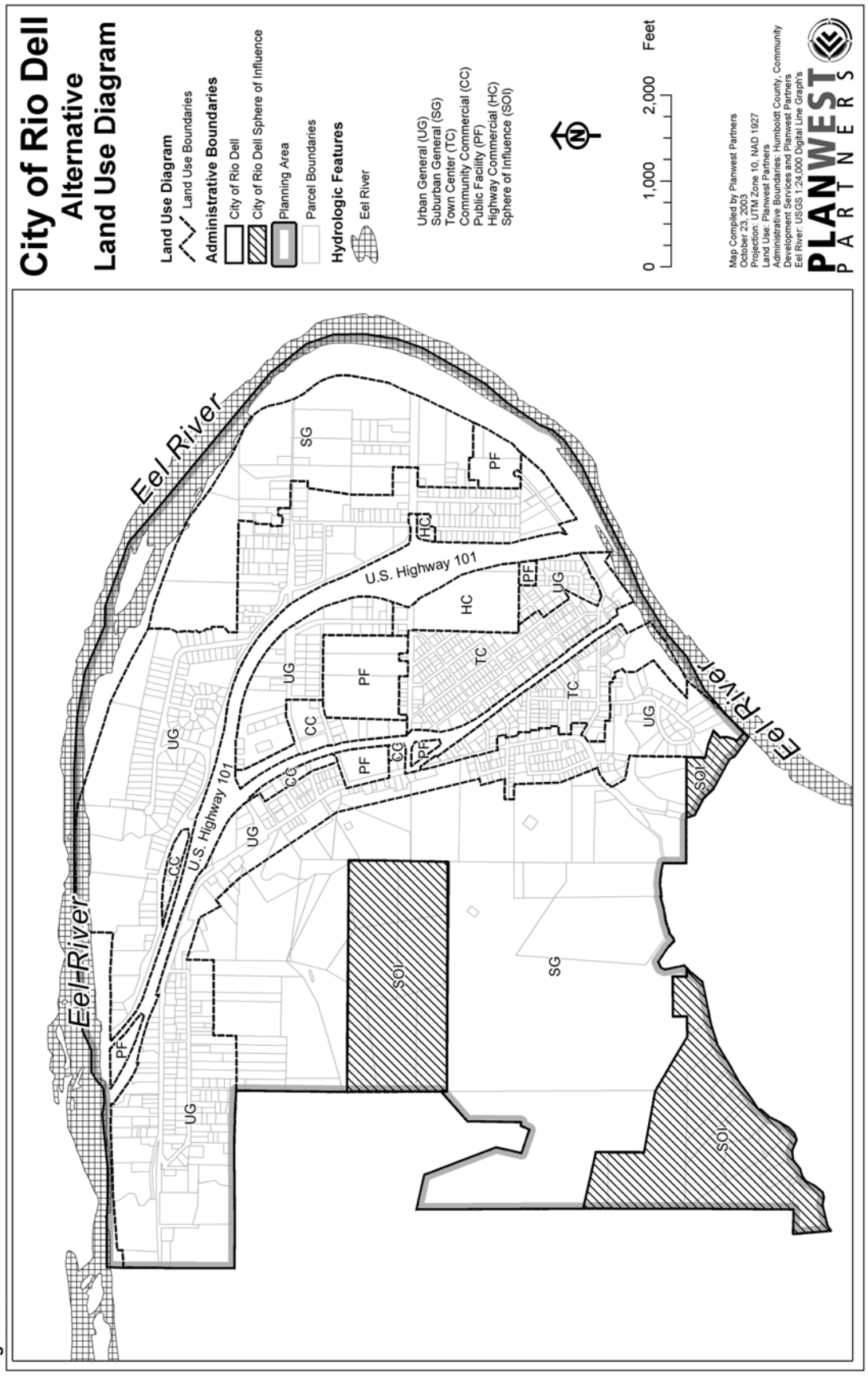
- The City's Zoning Ordinance was last revised in 1968, and the City's General Plan has not had a major revision since 1980. Both of these documents lack up to date development regulations, and there are numerous inconsistencies between the documents
- The scope of multi-family development proposed by the existing General Plan and zoning map discourage investment in the rehabilitation of existing residential areas in the town center. The pattern of multi-family development scattered throughout the community brings the possibility of increased congestion to practically every neighborhood in Rio Dell.
- The City Council would like to consider adoption of a revised Land Use Element of the General Plan to protect the health, safety, and general welfare of the community, and to provide for adequate public utilities in an orderly and consistent manner. The extension of the interim ordinance will allow the City Council to review the impact of proposed developments on the City's character, safety, and utilities.

The Interim Urgency Ordinance expires in January 2004 and is intended to limit development within the City of Rio Dell until the City Council completes its General Plan Update. The Interim Urgency Ordinances establishes new zoning designations and a new zoning map for the City. These zones served as the basis for the development of the land use designations for the proposed General Plan. All of the other 1980 Rio Dell General Plan policies and implementation measures apply. For the purposes of this analysis, the land use designations contained in the Interim Urgency Ordinance are analyzed as an alternative (Alternative One) to the proposed General Plan. See Figure 10 for map of Alternative One

The Alternative One establishes Town Center, Urban General, Suburban General, Community Commercial, Highway Commercial, and Public Facility zones. In most cases, Alternative One establishes lower density zones than the proposed General Plan. However, One exception is the Suburban General (one acre minimum) zoning in the Monument neighborhood area that provides for greater residential density than the prior General Plan (zero to four units per acre).

Alternative One establishes minimum residential lot sizes that will support significantly higher residential densities in the areas surrounding the developed portion of Rio Dell. Alternative One allows one-acre lot sizes throughout the Monument neighborhood, with its hazardous slopes and prime agricultural lands. As a result, Alternative One would result in impacts to prime agricultural lands, could increase hazards associated development on unstable slopes.

Alternative One relies on policies and implementation measures established by the prior General Plan. The lack of policies addressing biological resource, hazards, air quality, cultural resources, and aesthetics contained in the Alternative One increases potential impacts in these areas, compared to the proposed General Plan.


City of Rio Dell
Alternative
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PLANWEST PARTNERS
Eel River
U.S. Highway 101
UG
SG
PF
HC
TC
CC
SOI

Figure 10

Table 4.2 Alternative One Buildout

ALTERNATIVE ONE
Land Use Categories and Acreages

								DEVELOPABLE				MAXIMUM BUILDOUT POTENTIAL[1]			
		Total		Developable		Density		Units		Population		Units		Population	
Land Use Designations[2]		Acres	Pct.	Acres	Pct.	Max	Mid	Max	Mid	Max	Mid	Max	Mid	Max	Mid
SR	Suburban General	659	46%	533	81%	1.0	0.5	532	266	1,378	689	659	329	1,707	852
UR	Urban General	368	26%	143	39%	10.0	5.0	1,430	715	3,704	1,852	3,682	1,841	9,536	4,768
TC	Town Center	68	5%	10	15%	17.0	10.0	175	103	453	267	1,158	681	2,999	1,764
NC	Highway Commercial	20	1%	19											
CC	Community Commercial	18	1%	9											
PF	Public Facility[3]	38	3%												
	Road Rightrs of Way/River	266	18%												
	Total[4]	**1,438**	**100%**	**714**	**135%**			**2,137**	**1,084**	**5,535**	**2,808**	**5,499**	**2,851**	**14,242**	**7,384**

Source: Planwest Partners, 2003.

[1]Maximum buildout potential means that property within the Planning Area has been developed or re-developed to its maximum allowable density.

[2]Interim Zoning Map, February 2003.

[3]Differrneces in Public Facility acreage reflect reclassification of unusable lands adjacent to roadways

[4]Differences in total acreage between Alternatives and the Proposed Plan reflects differences in total acreage of rights of way and incidential mapping errors.

CHAPTER 5
OTHER CEQA SUBJECTS

This chapter addresses the following issues:

5.1 Significant Irreversible Changes
5.2 Growth Inducement
5.3 Cumulative Impacts
5.4 Mitigation Monitoring

Analysis of short-term versus long-term uses of the environment is no longer required by CEQA.

5.1 SIGNIFICANT IRREVERSIBLE CHANGES

EIR's are required by CEQA to describe any significant irreversible environmental changes that would result from the proposed action, which in this case would be the implementation of the General Plan. The scope of this analysis is described in the following CEQA Guideline excerpt:

> § 15126.2 (b) Significant environmental effects which cannot be avoided if the proposed project is implemented. Describe any significant impacts, including those which can be mitigated but not reduced to a level of insignificance. Where there are impacts which cannot be alleviated without imposing an alternative design, their implications and the reasons why the project is being proposed, notwithstanding their effect, should be described.

The EIR identifies a number of potentially impacts that could occur due to implementation of the Land Use Element. The impact analysis contained in this EIR has found that these potential impacts can be mitigated by general plan policies, and ongoing City programs and practices.

The EIR must identify irreversible environmental changes as required in § 15126.2 (c). The following represent the irreversible commitment of resources for the City's development. They include:

- Commitment of materials to construct residences, business and public facilities
- Commitment of materials to construct water, wastewater and drainage facilities; and other infrastructure improvements.
- Consumption of water, energy and fuel.
- Development of land for urban uses
- Release of materials into the air and waterways
- Generation of additional noise

Changes include use of materials necessary to improve streets and intersections, to accommodate projected increased traffic levels. Infrastructure upgrades that will reduce stormwater flows and inflow and infiltration (I/I) in the wastewater system will also consume materials and energy. Additional vehicle trips and domestic energy demands will consume fuel and energy resources.

These and other changes listed above have been analyzed and, to the extent feasible, general plan policies and measures have been proposed to reduce potential impacts to a less-than-significant level.

The General Plan will commit future generations to continued urban use through emphasis on development in the Town Center. The plan projects both the beneficial effects of additional housing (including affordable housing), employment and other urban uses, as well as the potentially significant adverse effects described in this EIR.

5.2 GROWTH INDUCEMENT

CEQA requires that EIR's describe any growth inducing or cumulative impacts that would result from the proposed action.

> § 15126.2 (d) The Growth-Inducing Impact of the Proposed Action.
> Discuss the ways in which the proposed project could foster economic or population growth, or the construction of additional housing, either directly or indirectly, in the surrounding environment. Included in this are projects which would remove obstacles to population growth (a major expansion of a waste water treatment plant might, for example, allow for more construction in service areas). Increases in the population may further tax existing community service facilities so consideration must be given to this impact. Also discuss the characteristic of some projects which may encourage and facilitate other activities that could significantly affect the environment, either individually or cumulatively. It must not be assumed that growth in any area is necessarily beneficial, detrimental, or of little significance to the environment.

General Plan Land Use Element policies will guide future growth in the City, through the year 2015. Implementation of the plan is not specifically intended to induce growth, but to manage and direct growth so that it maintains quality of life, and achieves other important land use goals. The General Plan includes policies to encourage infill development, provide infrastructure, and reduce densities in the outlying areas to help preserve open space.

The General Plan Land Use Element proposes no major infrastructure or public service extensions that are typically considered growth inducing. The growth that is projected is primarily infill, taking advantage of existing infrastructure and services. The potential for growth is considered less than significant due to the lack of growth inducing infrastructure and services, and constraints on development contained in the General Plan.

5.3 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS

§ 15130. Discussion of Cumulative Impacts

A. An EIR shall discuss cumulative impacts of a project when the project's incremental effect is cumulatively considerable, as defined in § 15065 (c).

B. The discussion of cumulative impacts shall reflect the severity of the impacts and their likelihood of occurrence, but the discussion need not provide as great detail as is provided for the effects attributable to the project alone. The discussion should be guided by the standards of practicality and reasonableness and should focus on the cumulative impact to which the identified other projects contribute, rather than the attributes of other projects which do not contribute to the cumulative impact.

The General Plan guides future growth of the City and is intended to direct the type and location of land use and development projected to occur through the year 2015. This EIR represents a cumulative analysis because it analyzes the combined effects of growth projected for Rio Dell over the next fifteen years. The analysis provided in the EIR serves as the cumulative analysis because it considers the overall effects of growth over the General Plan time frame.

Traffic and air quality impacts are the most cumulative in nature because they reflect an aggregation of local and regional effects.

5.4 MITIGATION MONITORING OR REPORTING

CEQA requires the adoption of a reporting or monitoring program to mitigate or avoid significant effects on the environment. The following section of the CEQA guidelines applies to mitigation monitoring or reporting for general plans:

§ 15097 Mitigation Monitoring or Reporting
(b) Where the project at issue is the adoption of a general plan, specific plan, community plan or other plan level document (zoning, ordinance, regulation, policy) the monitoring plan shall apply to policies and any other portion of the plan that is a mitigation measure or adopted alternative. The monitoring program may consist of policies included in the plan-level documents. The annual report on general plan status required pursuant to the Government Code is one example of a reporting program for adoption of a city or county general plan.

The General Plan policies, and other City programs and mitigate the impacts associated with future physical development of the City due to implementation of the Land Use Element. Implementation measures included in the General Plan call for periodic review and updating of management plans and identify other City procedures that will monitor mitigation of impacts. The City will also be conducting periodic reviews of the general plan, pursuant to state law. These measures will serve as the mitigation monitoring and reporting program required by CEQA.

5.5 EFFECTS FOUND NOT TO BE SIGNIFICANT

CEQA Guidelines § 15128 requires that the EIR "contain a statement briefly indicating the reasons that various possible significant effects were determined not to be significant and were therefore not discussed in detail in the EIR." The City determined that an EIR must be prepared

for the General Plan Land Use Element early on in the planning process and, as lead agency, issued a Notice of Preparation and proceeded with preparing the EIR. During the City's Draft EIR preparation process, it was determined that a number of possible environmental effects of the project would be insignificant or could be adequately addressed through the City's normal development review process. These included effects on major energy and mineral resources; effects related to potential aircraft accidents; and effects on non-local government services.

5.6 LONG-TERM BENEFITS VS. SHORT-TERM GAINS

The General Plan Land Use Element takes a long term view of City growth and development, through the year 2025. The general plan policies are intended to guide long-term growth. The EIR finds that there will not be a reduction of long-term benefits for short-term gains.

List of Persons and Organizations Contacted

Joe McIlvain, California Public Utilities Commission

Gerald Kindsfather, General Manager, Humboldt Solid Waste Management Authority

Patricia Medina, Police Chief, Rio Dell Police Department

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