

3 STUDY AREA 3: BELL MUIR

The Bell Muir study area consists of approximately 515 acres located west of the City of Chico. This study area currently is used for agricultural purposes, primarily orchards, as well as low density residential.

- ◆ Alternative 1 is consistent with the existing General Plan and Zoning Ordinance, designating the entire study area as Rural Residential. This Alternative would allow approximately 100 new homes.
- ◆ Under Alternative 2, the majority of the Bell Muir study area would be designated for a mix of residential densities, allowing approximately 3,000 new homes. This Alternative also designates 10 acres for retail uses.
- ◆ Alternative 3 designates the entire study area as Very Low Density Residential, allowing approximately 200 new homes.

A. *Economics*

1. **Market Viability**

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

Alternatives 1 and 3 would have similarly high market viability.

As with the North Chico Specific Plan (NCSP) study area, this study area should enjoy solid market support for planned residential homes because of the desirability of the Chico community. Due to the more modest amount of development proposed, this study area is more likely to fully buildout during the General Plan time horizon than the NCSP. Alternatives 1 and 3 receive an A.

b. Alternative 2

The 10 acres of commercial development included in Alternative 2 would require a more aggressive market, and may not be fully absorbed. Alternative 2 receives a B.

However, the amount of new homes that would be allowed under Alternative 2 would likely support a limited amount of small convenience

stores or fast-food restaurants to serve new residents in the Bell Muir study area.

2. Fiscal Impacts

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 would have similarly positive fiscal impacts.

The Bell Muir study area lies in a TRA where Butte County receives 17.19 percent of the property tax revenues. Due to the alternatives' focus on single-family homes, and the study area's location in the greater Chico submarket, property values are likely to be relatively high, representing one of the more fiscally advantageous ways for Butte County to develop housing. As with the NCSP study area, service provision should be efficient in this study area, meaning that service cost increases should be incremental. It should be noted, however, that development in this study area would rely on automatic aid responses from the City of Chico Fire Station #6 for fire and emergency medical services (EMS). All alternatives have good revenue potential and would be expected to generate some fiscal surpluses, so all three alternatives receive a B.

3. Jobs/Housing Balance

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

Under Alternatives 1 and 3, this area is planned for residential uses only. Since the Chico area currently has a balance between the number of jobs and the number of employed residents, Alternatives 1 and 3 would have a negative effect on the current jobs/housing balance in the Chico area by providing significant new housing without any new jobs. Both alternatives receive a C.

Alternative 2 includes a quantity of retail space equivalent to a typical neighborhood shopping center. This is a fairly small amount of employment generating land use in relation to the large number of planned homes and may not fully develop during the General Plan horizon; thus, the estimated jobs housing balance is a low 0.1 jobs per employed resident. Since

Alternative 2 would lead to a decrease in the jobs/housing balance in the Chico area, it receives a C.

B. Public Services

1. Fire and Emergency Services

The Butte County Fire Department and CAL FIRE provide fire protection and emergency services to the Bell Muir study area. In general, there is not adequate staffing to handle more than two serious fire events or several less-serious emergencies at once in Butte County. Any new development in the county will impact the level of fire protection and emergency services.

There are no fire stations within the boundaries of the Bell Muir study area. The closest fire station is the City of Chico Fire Station #6, which is located less than a ½-mile away.

The Bell Muir study area has adequate service levels for suburban residential, industrial and retail development. This study area is located within a four-minute travel area for a first-due unit and within an eight-minute travel area for three or more fire stations.

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 would allow approximately 100, 3,000 and 200 new homes, respectively, at rural, very low and suburban densities. In addition, Alternative 2 calls for some retail development, which typically requires high fire and emergency service levels because it includes assets of high economic value and generates customers that depend on those services. Although Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 allow more than a minimal amount of new development, it would all have adequate levels of fire and emergency services. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive a B.

2. Sheriff Service

The Bell Muir study area is served by the Northern Division of the Butte County Sheriff's Office (BCSO). The BCSO is currently understaffed and

has limited capacity for expansion of its services. The Northern Division typically has about two deputies on duty in the Chico area. Because the Bell Muir study area is located near the Chico area, response times to this location are relatively quick.

There is no police station located within the boundaries of the Bell Muir study area. The Butte County Sheriff station in Chico, the closest station, is located within 5 miles of the study area.

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

Alternatives 1 and 3 call for approximately 100 and 200 new homes, which would not generate the need to hire a new officer. Because this development would be located in an area with quick response times, these alternatives receive an A.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 calls for approximately 3,000 new homes, generating the need for more than five new officers in an area with quick response times. Therefore, this alternative receives a C.

3. Capacity of School Districts

The Bell Muir study area is served by the Chico Unified School District (CUSD). As discussed in more detail under the NCSP study area, taking into account the recently-approved Meriam Park and Mountain Vista-Sycamore Glen projects, the CUSD has the capacity for 110 more K-8 students and 90 more 9-12 students. The District also has long-term plans to build a new high school that would likely accommodate approximately 2,000 new students and an elementary school that would likely accommodate approximately 550 new students.

a. Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, the Bell Muir study area could generate approximately 30 new K-8 students and 20 new 9-12 students, which could be accommodated by the existing capacity. The total amount of development foreseen under

Alternative 1 in all of the study areas within the CUSD could generate approximately 1,820 new K-8 students, about 1,710 students beyond current capacity, as well as approximately 890 new 9-12 students, about 800 students beyond current capacity. These additional students would create a need for the planned new elementary and high schools described above.

Because the number of new students generated by this study area can be accommodated by the existing capacity, this alternative receives an A.

b. Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, the Bell Muir study area could generate approximately 990 new K-8 students and 490 new 9-12 students to the CUSD, which would exceed the current capacity. However, the additional high school students could be accommodated by the expected capacity of the planned new high school. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 2 in all of the study areas within the CUSD could generate approximately 4,520 new K-8 students, about 4,410 students beyond current capacity, as well as approximately 2,210 new 9-12 students, about 2,120 students beyond current capacity. These additional students would create a need for the planned new elementary and high schools described above.

Because the high school students generated by this study area could be accommodated by the planned capacity, and the K-8 students generated by this study area would support a new K-8 school, this alternative receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, the Bell Muir study area could generate approximately 70 new K-8 students and 30 new 9-12 students, which can be accommodated by the existing capacity. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 3 in all of the study areas within the CUSD could generate approximately 1,290 new K-8 students, about 1,180 students beyond current capacity, as well as approximately 630 new 9-12 students, about 540 students beyond current capacity. These additional students would create a need for the planned new elementary and high schools described above.

Because the number of new students generated by this study area could be accommodated by the existing capacity, this alternative receives an A.

C. Water

1. Water Supply

The Bell Muir study area is located within the Sacramento Valley Inventory Unit. As discussed in more detail under Study Area 2, the Valley aquifers typically allow greater recharge and access to groundwater than the foothill and mountain aquifers, and they provide water for municipal, irrigation and domestic wells.

The Bell Muir study area is located within the Vina Inventory Unit. As discussed in more detail under Study Area 2, the predominant source of water in the Vina Sub-Unit is groundwater and it is used for both urban and agricultural purposes.

Like the NCSP study area, the Bell Muir study area is located adjacent to the California Water Service Company (Chico District), which serves urbanized areas in Chico. It may be possible to serve urban development in this study area by connecting to the California Water Service Company network. However, the existing demand in the greater Chico area has created a cone of groundwater depression around the municipal water supply wells.

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 call for residential development at a range of densities, and Alternative 2 calls for retail development. Although this development would be located adjacent to a municipal water service district where future annexations could provide municipal water, there is a known cone of groundwater depression in this area. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive a C.

2. Groundwater Recharge Potential

The Bell Muir study area is located within the Valley Inventory Unit. It may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area.

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

Alternatives 1 and 3 call for minor residential development in a region that may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area. Therefore, these Alternatives receive a C.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 calls for significant growth in a region that may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area, and therefore receives a D.

D. Wastewater

There is currently no publicly managed sewer service in the Bell Muir study area. The current wastewater treatment method is individual septic systems.

The Bell Muir study area is adjacent to the City of Chico, which provides wastewater collection and treatment services to its residents. It is possible that, in the future, this study area may be connected to Chico's municipal sewer system if the City were to annex this study area. According to LAFCO's 2006 Municipal Service Review of Domestic Water and Wastewater Providers in Butte County, the wastewater collection system operated by the City of Chico has sufficient capacity to support its current demand, although there are a few deficient sewer lines that could limit future development potential in some parts of the city unless they are upgraded. Furthermore, anticipated growth in Chico over the next several years is expected to cause wastewater flows to exceed existing capacity at the treatment plant unless it is upgraded.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 calls for approximately 100 new homes at a rural residential density. This low level of development can effectively be served by septic. Therefore, this alternative receives a B.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 calls for approximately 3,000 new homes at a range of densities, as well as some retail development. This level of development could create the ability to expand the adjacent municipal sewer system. However, City staff have indicated that this level of development may require a new sewer interceptor line to be constructed to connect to the City's wastewater treatment plant. The existing City sewer impact fees may not cover the costs of constructing a new sewer interceptor line. Therefore, Alternative 2 receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 calls for approximately 200 new homes at a very low density. This development cannot effectively be served by septic because it is too dense, nor can it effectively be served by a sewer system because there would be too few new homes to support the cost of a new sewer system. Therefore, this alternative receives a D.

E. Circulation

The Bell Muir study area is served by two major regional roadways, East Avenue and Nord Avenue (Highway 32).

1. Proximity to Freeways and Major Roadways

Two major regional roadways travel within ¼-mile of the Bell Muir study area. East Avenue is just to the south of the study area and State Route (SR) 32/Nord Avenue is just to the west. Nord Avenue provides connections between I-5, CSU Chico, and downtown Chico. East Avenue provides a

connection to Highway 99. This study area receives a B for access proximity to major roadways.

2. Bicycle Circulation

Within the Bell Muir study area, planned bicycle facilities are located along Nord Avenue and the proposed extension of Eaton Road. The planned facilities along Eaton Road would run through the study area and the planned facilities on Nord Avenue would be within 1 mile of the study area. The location of the study area adjacent to the City of Chico allows for bicycle access to jobs, schools, and services in Chico. Due to the study area's high level of access to planned bicycle facilities and location adjacent to the City of Chico urban area, the area receives a B.

3. Transit Service

Transit service is currently provided in the study area along Highway 32 and East Avenue. This receives a B.

F. Airport Compatibility Zone Conflicts

The Bell Muir study area is not located within an Airport Compatibility Zone. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive an A.

G. Potential Loss of Agricultural Land

The Bell Muir study area is located on the agricultural side of the Chico Area Greenline, an important policy consideration under the existing General Plan. The existing General Plan establishes different requirements for adjusting the Greenline around the Bell Muir study area so that it is on the urban side of the Greenline. The Board of Supervisors may make this change by a simple majority vote without the necessary findings typically required to change the Greenline location.

Of the approximately 515 acres in the Bell Muir study area, 270 acres are identified as Prime Farmland. These agricultural acres are located in the central part of the study area. Under Alternatives 1, 2 and 3, the entire approximately 515 acres in the Bell Muir study area would be designated for non-agricultural uses, which would convert 270 acres of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural uses. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive a D.

H. Biological Resources

The Bell Muir study area is located on the valley floor and is in the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area. The predominant land cover types are open ranchettes, orchard/vineyard, and urban.

There are no CNDDDB plant or animal occurrences or Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP)-modeled habitats in this study area.

There is no Critical Habitat or protected lands in this study area.

There are no sensitive habitats in this study area.

There is no deer herd habitat in this study area.

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 all receive an A for all subtopics.

I. Safety and Hazards

1. Fire Hazards

The Bell Muir study area is located in a low fire hazard region and therefore fire hazards would not impact development under Alternatives 1, 2 or 3. Therefore, the alternatives would receive an A.

2. Flood Hazards

The Bell Muir study area is in close range of the Sacramento River, which is managed by a number of federal, State and local flood control projects. Flood control projects along the Sacramento River, such as dams, weirs and canals, protect the Bell Muir study area from inclusion in the 100-year and 500-year FEMA flood zones.

Flood hazards would not impact development under Alternatives 1, 2 or 3; therefore, these alternatives receive an A.

2. Geologic Hazards

The Bell Muir study area has slight erosion potential, zero to low subsidence potential, zero to low landslide potential, low to moderate potential for soil expansion, and moderate potential for liquefaction hazards. There are no fault lines located within the Bell Muir study area or within a 50-foot radius.

Within the Bell Muir study area, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 would be subject to similar geologic hazards and similar potential effects on development. Erosion, subsidence, landslide, expansive soils and fault hazards would not impact development under any of the alternatives. Liquefaction hazards, though moderate in the Bell Muir study area, would not seriously constrain development under any of the alternatives.

Within the Bell Muir study area, none of the alternatives include development in areas of highly and very highly constrained geologic hazards and, therefore, all of the alternatives receive an A.

A. Cultural Resources

The Bell Muir study area lies entirely on the valley floor, within lands depicted on the Nord and Ord Ferry USGS 7.5' topographic maps. Approximately 15 percent of the lands in the Nord quadrangle and 10 percent of the lands in the Ord Ferry quadrangle have been previously surveyed for

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cultural resources. No cultural resources have been recorded in the study area. Coupled with the lack of previously recorded sites, and this study area's location on the valley floor with few water resources available, this study area is considered one of low sensitivity for prehistoric resources.

a. Alternatives 1 and 3

Although neither Alternative 1 nor 3 includes Resource Conservation land use areas that could be used to protect significant cultural resources, because the low density of residential development and the low sensitivity of the study area for cultural resources decrease the chances for impacts to cultural resources, Alternatives 1 and 3 receive a B.

b. Alternative 2

No Resource Conservation land use areas that could be used to protect significant cultural resources are proposed as part of Alternative 2, and the entire study area would be developed at a mix of residential densities. Therefore, Alternative 2 receives a D.

B. Notes