

17 STUDY AREA 17: DURHAM

The Durham study area consists of 1,749 acres located in western Butte County. The community of Durham falls within this study area, which is developed with low and medium density residential uses, retail and industrial uses. This study area also includes the Durham Unified School District campus for its elementary, intermediate and high schools. The portions of the study area outside of town include rural residential and agricultural uses, including orchards as the primary crop.

- ◆ Alternative 1 follows the existing General Plan, designating the center of Durham for Medium and Medium-High Density Residential, Retail, Industrial and Public. The outer portions of the town are designated for Very Low Density Residential, and the remainder of the study area is designated for Agriculture. This alternative would allow approximately 50 new homes and about 50 acres of retail/industrial uses.
- ◆ Alternative 2 would increase the residential density in the center of Durham from Medium to Medium-High, allowing approximately 300 new homes. The remainder of the study area would maintain the designations from the existing General Plan, including the other residential, retail, industrial, public and agricultural uses.
- ◆ Under Alternative 3, the agricultural region would change to residential uses, allowing approximately 500 new homes. The other residential, retail, industrial and public designations from the existing General Plan would remain.

All of Durham east of the railroad tracks is within a FEMA-designated 100-year floodplain. In addition, the study area is at risk of subsidence, and there are almost 900 acres of Prime Farmland in the eastern part of the study area. Therefore, the extensive residential development allowed under Alternative 3 would require development in both a FEMA floodplain and on Prime Farmland.

A. Economics

1. Market Viability

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Alternatives 1 and 2 call for very similar amounts of residential development along with identical amounts of agriculture, retail and industrial acreage.

Both Alternatives 1 and 2 call for a relatively small number of new housing units in an established and desirable community. Within the General Plan planning horizon, market viability should not be a problem for the residential component of Alternatives 1 and 2.

Alternatives 1 and 2 are somewhat ambitious with plans for retail and industrial development and market viability may be questionable for these components. For example, the amount of new retail development under these alternatives is comparable to a typical neighborhood shopping center anchored by a full-sized supermarket and including a variety of other smaller “inline” shop spaces and freestanding commercial establishments that primarily serve the study area within a 1½- to 2-mile radius. Such a shopping center typically requires about 12,000 residents within the trade area radius. Durham’s current population is likely between 5,000 and 6,000 people. Even with the new residential development anticipated under Alternatives 1 and 2, the study area would fall significantly short of the population needed to support 9 acres of retail development.

The roughly 700,000 square feet of industrial space planned under this alternative would represent a large amount of new industrial activity for the Durham community. Because the community is small and lacks good accessibility for heavy trucks as compared to locations on the Highway 99 corridor, absorption would likely be slow but might be possible given the General Plan planning horizon and a concerted effort to develop agriculture-related industrial uses that would be tied to the surrounding farmlands.

Since there is a significant question about the market viability of the retail component of Alternatives 1 and 2, but the residential and industrial components are likely to be absorbed, Alternatives 1 and 2 receive a C.

b. Alternative 3

As discussed above under Alternatives 1 and 2, market viability for the residential component of Alternative 3 should be sound. While development of the full amount of industrial space may be a challenge, it may be feasible over the long-run. As in Alternatives and 2, the viability of the full amount of 9 acres of planned retail development is questionable, although helped slightly by the addition of 500 new residential units, compared to only 50 in Alternative 1 and 300 in Alternative 2. Overall, Alternative 3 receives a C.

2. Fiscal Impacts

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 all contain a mixture of residential, retail and industrial uses. All three alternatives would be expected to have modestly positive fiscal impacts.

The Durham study area lies in TRAs in which Butte County receives an above-average share of property tax revenues, ranging from 19.1 to 20.5 percent. Each of the three alternative includes a mix of land uses, including single-family residential, and retail, that should create solid revenue generating potential. In addition, existing development this study area is already provided with services, including a full-time staffed fire station (Butte County Fire Station #45), meaning that service cost increases should be incremental. Overall, all three alternatives should be capable of generating modestly positive fiscal impacts for the county, even if the retail components were not fully absorbed. Therefore, all alternatives receive a B.

3. Jobs/Housing Balance

a. Alternative 1

The estimated jobs/housing ratio under Alternative 1 is 19 jobs for every one employed resident, meaning that this development would help to offset the

existing jobs/housing deficit in the Durham study area. Alternative 1 receives an A.

b. Alternative 2

While Alternative 2 would have a smaller job surplus than Alternative 1, due to the increased numbers of planned new housing units, it would help improve the jobs/housing balance in the Durham study area. Alternative 2 receives an A.

c. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 would have a smaller job surplus since it includes 500 planned new housing units along with new industrial and retail development. While Alternative 3 would still help improve the jobs/housing balance in Durham, it would make a less significant improvement than Alternatives 1 and 2, and so receives a B.

B. Public Services

1. Fire and Emergency Services

The Butte County Fire Department and CAL FIRE provide fire protection and emergency services to the Durham 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 is one fire station located within the boundaries of the Durham study area, Butte County/CALFIRE Station 45, a career- and volunteer-staffed station located in the western portion of the Durham study area.

The Durham study area has adequate service levels for rural and very low density residential development, as it is within eight minutes of a first-due unit. Although the majority of the downtown area is also within four minutes of a first-due unit, it is within eight minutes of only one to two fire

stations, which is not an appropriate concentration for suburban residential, retail or industrial development.

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 call for residential development at suburban densities, as well as industrial and retail uses, in the downtown area of Durham. The industrial and retail uses typically require high fire and emergency service levels because they include assets of high economic value and generate customers that depend on those services. All three alternatives also call for residential development at rural to very low densities outside of the downtown area.

The suburban residential, industrial and retail development in the downtown area under all alternatives would not have adequate fire and emergency service levels due to the low concentration of fire stations in the immediate area. The rural and very low density residential development outside of the downtown area would have adequate service levels. Because Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 allow more than a minimal amount of new development, portions of which would not have adequate fire and emergency service levels, they receive a C.

2. Sheriff Services

The Durham 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. Although the Durham study area is located relatively close to the Chico area, access can be difficult due to road and traffic conditions, which can compromise response times.

There is no police station located within the boundaries of the Durham study area; however, the Butte County Sherriff station in the City of Chico is located less than 5 miles away from the study area.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 would allow approximately 50 new homes and some retail and industrial development in an area with quick response times. Because this development would not generate the need to hire a new officer, this alternative receives an A.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 would allow approximately 300 and 500 new homes, respectively, and some retail and industrial development, generating the need for approximately one to two new officers in an area with quick response times. Therefore, these alternatives receive a B.

3. Capacity of School Districts

The Durham study area is served by the Durham Unified School District (DUSD). This District has been experiencing declining enrollment, but is operating near capacity. As described in more detail under the Paradise Urban Reserve study area and Study Area 15, DUSD currently has capacity for approximately 30 additional students and does not have any specific expansion plans.

a. Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, the Durham study area could generate approximately 30 new students, which could be accommodated by the current capacity. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 1 in all of the study areas within the DUSD could generate approximately 40 new students, about ten students beyond current capacity.

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

b. Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, the Durham study area could generate approximately 150 new students, which would exceed its current capacity by about 120 students. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 2 in

all of the study areas within the DUSD could generate approximately 4,690 new students, four times the current enrollment in the District and about 4,660 students beyond current capacity.

Because this study area could generate more students than can be accommodated by the existing capacity, but would not generate enough students to support the construction of new schools, this alternative receives a D.

c. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, the Durham study area could generate approximately 250 new students, which would exceed its current capacity by about 220 students. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 3 in all of the study areas within the DUSD could generate approximately 1,690 new students, about 1,660 students beyond current capacity.

Because this study area could generate more students than could be accommodated by the existing capacity, but would not generate enough students to support the construction of new schools, this alternative receives a D.

C. Water

1. Water Supply

The Durham study area is located within the Sacramento Valley Inventory Unit. As discussed in more detail under Study Area 14, 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 western portion of the Durham study area, including the Durham town center, is located within the Durham/Dayton Inventory Sub-Unit. The primary source of water is groundwater, although some water suppliers in

this Sub-Unit have water rights on Butte Creek. This water is used for both urban and agricultural needs. The majority of this western portion of the study area, including the area in and around Durham's town center, is served by the Durham Irrigation District. The District owns three groundwater wells to serve its mostly residential users. It may be possible to serve urban development throughout the remainder of this study area by connecting to the Durham Irrigation District network.

The eastern portion of the Durham study area is located within the Esquon Inventory Sub-Unit. The primary land use in this Sub-Unit is agriculture, including rice, almonds, corn and pasture. This eastern portion of this study area is served by the Durham Mutual Water Company, which provides surface water for agricultural uses from Butte Creek.

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 call for residential, retail and industrial development. Because this development would be located adjacent to a water supplier, they receive a B.

2. Groundwater Recharge Potential

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

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Alternatives 1 and 2 allow minor residential, retail and industrial development in a region that may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area. Therefore, these alternatives receive a C.

b. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 allows significant residential, retail and industrial development in a region that may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area. Therefore, this alternative receives a D.

D. Wastewater

There is currently no publicly managed sewer service in the Durham study area. The current wastewater treatment method is individual septic systems. Major development that would produce more than 1,000 gallons of wastewater per acre per day in the Durham Developed Community Area is subject to approval by the Central Valley Regional Water Quality Control Board (CVRWQB) or the Board of Supervisors.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Alternatives 1 and 2 call for approximately 50 and 300 new homes, respectively, at a range of densities, as well as some retail and industrial development. This development cannot effectively be served by septic because it would be too dense, nor can it effectively be served by a sewer system because there would be too few homes to support the costs of a new sewer system. Therefore, these alternatives receive a D.

b. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 calls for approximately 500 new homes at a range of densities, as well as retail and industrial development. Although this development could conceivably be served by septic or package plants, the existing parcelization and infill type of much of this development would make this difficult. Therefore, this alternative receives a C.

E. Circulation

The Durham study area is served by two major regional roadways, Durham-Dayton Highway and Midway.

1. Proximity to Freeways and Major Roadways

Two major regional roadways travel through or adjacent to the Durham study area, Durham-Dayton Highway and Midway, run through the study area. Durham-Dayton Highway provides a connection to Highway 99 and

Midway provides a connection to the City of Chico. Minor roadways serving the study area include Lott Road and Jones Avenue. This study area receives an A for access proximity to major roadways.

2. Bicycle Circulation

Within the Durham study area, an existing bicycle facility is located on Durham-Dayton Highway between Midway and Lott Road. Bicycle facilities are also planned for Midway and Durham-Dayton Highway to the west of Midway and east of Lott Road. Due to the study area's high level of access to bicycle facilities and location more than 1 mile from existing urban areas, the study area receives a B.

3. Transit Service

Transit service is currently provided along Highway 99 within 1 mile of the study area. This receives a C.

F. Airport Compatibility Zone Conflicts

The Durham study area is not located within an Airport Compatibility Zone. Therefore, airport compatibility issues would not limit development under Alternatives 1, 2 or 3.

G. Potential Loss of Agricultural Land

Of the approximately 1,750 acres in the Durham study area, about 900 acres are identified as Prime Farmland. These agricultural acres are located throughout the northern portion of the study area.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Under both Alternatives 1 and 2, about 700 acres in the Durham study area would be designated for non-agricultural uses, which would convert about

160 acres of Prime Farmland to non-agricultural uses. Therefore, Alternatives 1 and 2 receive a D.

b. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, about 900 acres of Prime Farmland would be converted to residential uses. Therefore, Alternative 3 receives a D.

H. Biological Resources

The Durham study area is located in western Butte County, and is generally bounded by Garden Road to the north, Esquon Road to the east, Hanlon Road to the south, and Turner Lane to the west.

This study area is located on the valley floor and is within the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area. The predominant land cover type is orchard, with areas of open ranchettes; the urban area of Durham occupying the western portion of the study area. Butte Creek runs through the eastern portion of the study area.

Occurrences of three special-status plants (adobe lily, Butte County checkerbloom, and Butte County fritillary) have been recorded in the study area, but all have been extirpated.

There is one occurrence of a western mastiff bat in the study area.

There is Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP)-modeled habitat in this study area for the following ten species:

- ◆ Bald eagle in Butte Creek
- ◆ Bank swallow in Butte Creek
- ◆ Fall run Chinook
- ◆ Giant garter snake in Butte Creek
- ◆ Northwestern pond turtle in Butte Creek
- ◆ Peregrine falcon in Butte Creek

- ◆ Spring run Chinook
- ◆ Steelhead
- ◆ Swainson's hawk
- ◆ Valley elderberry longhorn beetle along Butte Creek

There is Critical Habitat for both Central Valley steelhead and Central Valley fall and spring run chinook in Butte Creek.

Butte Creek runs through the study area and supports extensive areas of willow scrub and emergent wetlands.

There is no deer herd habitat in the study area.

1. Alternatives 1 and 2

There are numerous sensitive biological resources in the study area, including Critical Habitat and Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP)-modeled habitat for a number of species. Alternatives 1 and 2 would allow new dwelling units on one side of Butte Creek and would retain approximately 1,000 acres each of agriculture. Most of the sensitive biological resources are associated with Butte Creek, which would not be affected by the agricultural land designation and would be insignificantly affected by residential development. Therefore, these alternatives receive a C for Special-Status Animal and Plant Species, a C for Critical Habitat and other protected lands, a C for Sensitive Habitats, and an A for Deer Herd Habitat.

2. Alternative 3

There is a significant level of proposed development on both sides of Butte Creek, and there is a presence of Critical habitat, sensitive habitats, and potential for special-status species. Therefore, this alternative receives a D for Special-Status Animal and Plant Species, a D for Critical Habitat and other protected lands, a D for Sensitive Habitats, and an A for Deer Herd Habitat.

I. Safety and Hazards

1. Fire Hazards

The Durham study area is located in a low fire hazard severity zone. Fire hazards would not limit development under Alternatives 1, 2 or 3, therefore, these alternatives receive an A.

2. Flood Hazards

Approximately 1,330 acres of the Durham study area is included in the 100-year FEMA flood zone.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Under Alternatives 1 and 2, approximately 330 acres of land designated for development is in the 100-year FEMA flood zone. Therefore, these alternatives receive a D.

b. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, approximately 1,340 acres of land designated for development is in the 100-year FEMA flood zone. Therefore, this alternative receives a D.

3. Geologic Hazards

The Durham study area has slight and moderate erosion potential, zero to low landslide potential, very low to moderate potential for soil expansion, no faults within the study area or within a 50-foot radius, and moderate potential for liquefaction. The only significant geologic constraint to development in the Durham study area is subsidence hazards, which are potentially significant throughout the study area.

In all three alternatives, lands designated for development have the potential for significant subsidence: approximately 700 acres under Alternatives 1 and 2, and approximately 1,749 acres under Alternative 3. All of the alternatives receive a D.

J. Cultural Resources

The Durham study area lies within the Chico USGS 7.5' quadrangle. Approximately 20 percent of the land in the Chico Quadrangle has been surveyed for cultural resources. To date, a total of two cultural resources sites have been recorded in the Durham study area. This number includes one site containing both prehistoric and historic period artifacts, and one site containing historic period artifacts. One site has been evaluated as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the site containing both prehistoric and historic artifacts. This study area lies within valley and foothill regions, and has a creek running through it and a slough nearby. This, coupled with the number of previously recorded sites, indicates that this study area is of medium sensitivity for the presence of prehistoric resources, particularly on terraces above drainages, and of low sensitivity for undiscovered historic period resources.

1. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 does not provide for any Resource Conservation land use that could be used to protect significant cultural resources. Additionally, the agricultural land is assumed to be for rice, row crops and orchards, which result in impacts to cultural resources because of extensive irrigation and deep ripping used in cultivating these crops. Because of the impacts of this type of agriculture, the moderate sensitivity of the study area, and the lack of resource conservation, Alternative 1 receives a D.

2. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 does not provide for any Resource Conservation land use that could be used to protect significant cultural resources. Additionally, the agricultural land is expected to be for rice and orchards, which result in impacts to cultural resources because of extensive irrigation and deep ripping used in cultivating these crops. Because of the impacts of this type of agriculture, the moderate sensitivity of the study area, and the lack of resource conservation, Alternative 2 receives a D.

3. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 does not provide for any Open space/Recreation land use that could be used to protect significant cultural resources. Because this alternative would result in significant residential development and does not include any designated resource conservation, Alternative 3 receives a D.

K. Notes

BUTTE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN 2030
ALTERNATIVES EVALUATION
STUDY AREA 17: DURHAM