

24 STUDY AREA 24: STRINGTOWN MOUNTAIN

The Stringtown Mountain study area consists of approximately 2,750 acres located east of the City of Oroville. This study area includes the Stringtown Mountain Specific Plan and its surrounding area. The Stringtown Mountain Specific Plan was adopted in 1994 to address design criteria and development standards for the future development of a health resort and residential area. The Plan has not been built out due to a lack of services, but the project proponents are exploring options for implementation. Portions of the study area are developed with rural residential and some agricultural uses. The majority of the study area is undeveloped and characterized by relatively steep terrain with a variety of landcover types.

- ◆ Alternative 1 follows the existing General Plan, designating the Stringtown Mountain study area a mix of Very Low, Medium and Medium-High Density Residential, as well as about 15 acres of Retail. The area outside of the study area is designated for Very Low Density Residential and Resource Conservation. The existing General Plan allows approximately 1,000 new homes.
- ◆ Under Alternative 2, the area within the Stringtown Mountain Specific Plan would maintain the existing General Plan designations of residential and retail uses. All of the area outside of the study area would be designated for Resource Conservation. As with the existing General Plan, this alternative would allow approximately 1,000 new homes and about 15 acres of Retail.
- ◆ Under Alternative 3, the area within the Stringtown Mountain Specific Plan would maintain the existing General Plan designations of residential and retail uses. The area outside of the study area would be designated for Low Density Residential and Resource Conservation, allowing approximately 1,800 new homes. The 15 acres of Retail would remain.

A. Economics

1. Market Viability

The residential component of all three alternatives builds upon the established Kelly Ridge residential market. Over the long term of the General Plan planning period, this study area should be capable of capturing the necessary market support to build up to 1,800 new residential units.

However, the 15-acre retail component of each alternative calls for an amount of new retail development that is equal to a relatively large neighborhood shopping center. This might include a full-sized grocery store, a drugstore, and an array of smaller shops and restaurants. Typically such a center would require a population of 12,000+ residents within 1.5 to 2 miles; however, this location, at the edge of the greater Oroville urbanized area would only provide about 2,500 new residents. Other existing and planned housing in the areas to the west of this study area would be served by their own retail facilities; thus, the market support for the full buildout of this alternative's retail space is likely to be weak and the study area would likely support a small amount (5,000 to 10,000 square feet maximum) of convenience retail. Due to the questionable market viability of this retail component, all alternatives receive a C.

2. Fiscal Impacts

a. Alternative 1

This study area is located in TRAs where the county's share of property taxes ranges from 16.4 to 17.5 percent of the total, a moderate share. With a focus on new single-family residential and retail development, the revenue generating potential of all three alternatives appears solid. Additionally, with a thoughtfully designed street network, it appears that the study area would also be largely within the eight-minute travel time range of Butte County Fire Station #64, meaning that if the existing level of service is acceptable, service costs increases may be only incremental in nature. Since all three alternatives would have the potential to generate fiscal benefits for the county, all receive a B.

3. Jobs/Housing Balance

All alternatives would have substantially similar impacts on the local jobs/housing balance.

The estimated jobs/housing ratio for new development under Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 would be less than one job per employed resident, meaning that the alternatives would contribute to an existing lack of jobs relative to the amount of housing planned for the Oroville area. Therefore, all three alternatives receive a D.

B. Public Services

1. Fire and Emergency Services

The Butte County Fire Department and CAL FIRE provide fire protection and emergency services to the Stringtown Mountain 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 would impact the level of fire protection and emergency services

There are no fire stations within the boundaries of the Stringtown Mountain study area. The closest fire station is the Butte County/CALFIRE Fire Station 64, a career- and volunteer-staffed station located less than a mile and a half away.

The majority of the Stringtown Mountain study area does not have adequate fire and emergency service levels for any type of development; however, the roadway frontages along Forbestown Road and Highway 162 have adequate service levels for very low density residential development, as they are within eight minutes of a first-due unit. None of the study area has adequate service levels for suburban residential, retail or industrial development.

Alternatives 1 and 2 call for approximately 1,000 new homes, and Alternative 3 calls for approximately 1,800 new homes, all at very low and suburban densities. Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 also call for retail uses, which 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 of the suburban residential and retail development would not have adequate fire and emergency service levels due to high travel times and a low concentration of fire stations in the immediate area. In addition, the majority of the very low density residential development would not have adequate fire and emergency service levels due to high travel times. Moreover, the level of development under this alternative would not support a new fire station, so there would be little opportunity to improve fire protection. Therefore, these alternatives receive a D.

2. Sheriff Services

The Stringtown Mountain study area is served by the Southern Division of the Butte County Sheriff's Office (BCSO). The BCSO is currently understaffed and has limited capacity for expansion of its services. The Southern Division typically has about three to four deputies on duty in the Oroville area. Because the Stringtown Mountain study area is located near the Oroville area via Highway 162, response times to this location are relatively quick.

There is no police station located within the boundaries of the Stringtown Mountain study area; however, the Butte County Sherriff station in the City of Oroville is located less than 2 miles away from the Stringtown Mountain study area.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Alternatives 1 and 2 call for approximately 1,000 new homes and retail development, generating the need for about three new officers in an area with quick response times. Therefore, these alternatives receive a B.

b. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 calls for approximately 1,800 new homes and retail development, 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 Stringtown Mountain study area is served by the Oroville City Elementary School District (OCESD) (K-8) and the Oroville Union High School District (OUHSD) (9-12).

The OCESD's enrollment has been steadily declining since 1997. As discussed in more detail under the Stringtown Mountain study area, the District currently has capacity for approximately 520 additional students.

The OUHSD has also been experiencing declining enrollment. As discussed in more detail under the Durham and Thermalito study areas, the District currently has capacity for approximately 440 additional students, with a project underway that would expand capacity by another 100 students.

a. Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, the Stringtown Mountain study area could generate approximately 330 new students within the OCESD, 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 OCESD could generate approximately 7,590 new students, more than double the current enrollment and about 7,070 students beyond current capacity.

Under Alternative 1, the Stringtown Mountain study area could generate approximately 160 new students within the OUHSD, 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 OUHSD could generate approximately 7,250 new students, more than double the current enrollment and about 6,810 students beyond current capacity.

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

b. Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, the Stringtown Mountain study area could generate approximately 330 new students within the OCESD, which could be accommodated by the existing capacity. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 2 in all of the study areas within the OCESD could generate approximately 1,490 new students, about 970 students beyond current capacity.

Under Alternative 2, the Stringtown Mountain study area could generate approximately 160 new students to the OUHSD, which could be accommodated by the existing capacity. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 2 in all of the study areas within the OUHSD could generate approximately 2,040 new students, more than double the current enrollment and about 1,600 students beyond current capacity.

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

c. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, the Stringtown Mountain study area could generate approximately 590 new students within the OCESD, which would exceed its current capacity by about 70 students. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 3 in all of the study areas within the OCESD could generate approximately 3,140 new students, about 2,620 students beyond current capacity.

Under Alternative 3, the Stringtown Mountain study area could generate approximately 290 new students within the OUHSD, which could be accommodated by the existing capacity. The total amount of development foreseen under Alternative 3 in all of the study areas within the OUHSD

could generate approximately 3,220 new students, about 2,780 students beyond current capacity.

Because this study area could generate more students than could be accommodated by the existing capacities, but would not generate enough students to support the construction of a new K-8 school, this alternative receives a D.

C. Water

1. Water Supply

The majority of the Stringtown Mountain study area is located within the Mountain Inventory Unit. The steep terrain in the mountains limits groundwater accessibility and the fractured aquifers limit localized recharge potential, contributing to very low groundwater supplies. In the past, there has been limited development in the mountain area, so the water demand is low.

About half of the Stringtown Mountain study area is served by the South Feather Water and Power Agency, which provides water for agricultural, residential and commercial purposes using surface water from four major reservoirs, including Sly Creek, Lost Creek, Ponderosa and Miner's Ranch. Although the South Feather Water and Power Agency does not use groundwater, there are some pockets of land within the District that have independent private wells.

Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 allow significant residential and retail development. A portion of this development would be served by the South Feather Water and Power Agency. The remaining development would be adjacent to this provider, and it may be possible in the future for the service to expand to provide water to these areas. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive a B.

2. Groundwater Recharge Potential

The Stringtown Mountain study area is located within the Mountain Inventory Unit. It is unlikely to serve as a potential recharge area due to steep slope and/or low permeability. Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 call for significant residential and retail development in this study area, and therefore receive a B.

D. Wastewater

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

The Stringtown Mountain study area is located adjacent to the Lake Oroville Area Public Utility District (LOAPUD), which provides wastewater collection services to unincorporated areas east and south of the City of Oroville. LOAPUD is also part of a Joint Powers Agreement with the Sewerage Commission – Oroville Region (SC-OR), which handles wastewater treatment and disposal. Proponents of the Stringtown Mountain Specific Plan, which was approved in 1994 and covers a portion of this study area, have been working to expand LOAPUD's sewer system to provide wastewater collection service to the Specific Plan study area. According to LAFCO's 2006 Municipal Service Review for Domestic Water and Wastewater Providers in Butte County, LOAPUD is aware of these development plans.

LOAPUD's collection system currently has no significant capacity issues and is generally in good condition. However, significant developments may be required to upgrade the existing collection system downstream if additional capacity is required.

Recently, SC-OR has indicated that their connection fee structure does not adequately cover the costs of providing sewer service to the new development.

Alternatives 1 and 2 call for approximately 1,000 new homes, and Alternative 3 calls for 1,800 new homes, all at a variety of densities. Alternatives 1, 2, and 3 also call for retail uses. This amount of development could create the ability to expand the sewer system.

Although development under Alternatives 1, 2 or 3 could create the ability to expand the sewer system, SC-OR's connection fees do not adequately cover the costs of providing service to new development. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive a C.

E. Circulation

The Stringtown Mountain study area is served by two major regional roadways, Highway 162 and Forbestown Road.

1. Proximity to Freeways and Major Roadways

Two major regional roadways, Highway 162 and Forbestown Road, run through the study area. Highway 162 provides a connection to Highway 70. This study area receives an A for access proximity to major roadways.

2. Bicycle Circulation

Stringtown Mountain study area is within 1 mile of planned bicycle facilities, but more than 1 mile from Oroville, which is the closest urban area that would offer job- or service-related destinations. Due to the study area's lack of access to bicycle facilities (there are no planned facilities within the study area, although there are some nearby) and location more than 1 mile from existing urban areas, the study area receives a D.

3. Transit Service

Transit service is currently provided along Highway 162 (Olive Highway) to Tyme Way. This is more than a mile from the Stringtown Mountain study area. This receives a D.

F. Airport Compatibility Zone Conflicts

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

G. Potential Loss of Agricultural Land

Of the approximately 2,750 acres in the Stringtown Mountain study area, about 440 acres in the western portion are identified as Grazing Land.

Alternatives 1 and 2 designate the Grazing Land portion for Resource Conservation. Alternative 3 designates this study area for Residential/Resource Conservation. It is assumed that the residential development would be located on the portion of the study area that is not Grazing Land. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 would not contribute to the conversion of Grazing Land to non-agricultural uses, and they receive an A.

H. Biological Resources

This study area is located in the lower foothills. Most of the study area is outside the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area; the lower (southeast) portion of the study area is within the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area. The predominant land cover type is mixed oak woodland and montane hardwood forest, with small patches of

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grassland and conifer woodland intermixed. Lake Wyandotte, formed by a dam on Honcut Creek, is located in the south of the study area.

No occurrences of special-status plants or animals are recorded in the study area. The higher elevation mixed oak woodland and montane hardwood forest outside the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area provide potential habitat for several special-status plants, including Brandegee's clarkia and Mosquin's clarkia.

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

- ◆ Bald eagle
- ◆ Foothill yellow-legged frog (Hawk Ravine)

No Critical Habitat or other protected lands are present in the study area.

Lake Wyandotte and Honcut Creek may support sensitive aquatic and riparian habitats, but site field work would be needed to verify whether those habitats are present.

Most of the study area is within Critical Winter Range habitat for deer herd, with a small portion of the southwest corner falling within Winter Range habitat; the extreme southwest corner is outside the study area designated as deer herd habitat.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Alternatives 1 and 2 are similar and would allow 1,000 new homes on 200-300 acres in the north of the study area with 15 acres of retail use. Both alternatives would retain approximately 85 percent of the study area in Resource Conservation uses. Although most of the study area would be preserved, development would occur within Critical Winter Range for deer herd. Therefore, these alternatives receive a C for Special-Status Animal and Plant Species, an A for Critical Habitat and other protected lands, a C for Sensitive Habitats, and a D for Deer Herd Habitat.

b. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 is broadly similar to the other alternatives, but would allow an additional 800 homes over an additional 300 acres of Low Density Residential designation. This alternative also retains the majority of the study area in Resource Conservation. Alternative 3 would have a negative effect on deer herd Critical Winter Range. Therefore, this alternative receives a C for Special-Status Animal and Plant Species, a an A for Critical Habitat and other protected lands, a C for Sensitive Habitats, and a D for Deer Herd Habitat.

I. Safety and Hazards

1. Fire Hazards

The Stringtown Mountain study area includes in moderate, high and very high fire hazard severity zones. Most of the southern half of the study area is in high fire hazard severity zone, and the north of the study area is in a very high fire severity zone.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Fire hazards would affect Alternatives 1 and 2 similarly. Alternative 1 designates approximately 275 acres of land within the high fire severity zone, and approximately 160 acres of land in the very high severity zone, for development. Alternative 2 designates approximately 210 acres of land in the high fire severity zone, and approximately 125 acres of land in the very high severity zone, for development. Therefore, these alternatives receive a D.

b. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 designates approximately 2,000 acres of land are in the high fire severity zone, and approximately 800 acres of land in the very high severity zone, for development. Therefore, this alternative receives a D.

2. Flood Hazards

The southeast and southwest corners of the Stringtown Mountain study area are within the 100-year FEMA flood zone.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

No land designated for development would be impacted by the 100-year FEMA flood zone under Alternatives 1 and 2. Therefore, Alternatives 1 and 2 receive a B.

b. Alternative 3

Approximately 80 acres of land designated for development are included in the 100-year FEMA flood zone. Therefore, this alternative receives a D.

3. Geologic Hazards

There is moderate and severe erosion potential in the Stringtown Mountain study area. Approximately 1,870 acres of land have severe erosion potential. There is zero to low subsidence potential and the northeastern part of this study area has high landslide potential. Approximately 1 acre in the south of the study area has high potential for soil expansion. There are no faults within the Stringtown Mountain study area or within a 50-foot radius. This study area has low potential for liquefaction.

Development under all three alternatives would be subject to severe erosion potential. Under Alternative 1, approximately 295 acres of land designated for development have severe erosion potential. Under Alternative 2, 245 acres of land designated for development have severe erosion potential. Under Alternative 3, 635 acres have severe erosion potential. All of the alternatives receive a D.

J. Cultural Resources

The Stringtown Mountain study area lies within portions of the Oroville Dam and the Bangor USGS 7.5' quadrangles. Approximately 50 percent of

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the land in the Oroville Dam Quadrangle and 25 percent of the land in the Bangor quadrangle has been surveyed for cultural resources. To date, a total of 54 cultural resources sites have been recorded in the Stringtown Mountain study area. This number includes 17 prehistoric sites, two sites containing both prehistoric and historic period artifacts, and 35 historic sites. The number of previously recorded sites indicates this study area is highly sensitive for the presence of historic and prehistoric resources.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Although Alternatives 1 and 2 both include a large area of designated Resource Conservation that could be used to protect significant cultural resources, because of the extent of low density residential development, Alternatives 1 and 2 receive a C.

b. Alternative 3

Although Alternative 3 includes some designated Resource Conservation that could be used to protect significant cultural resources, it would be substantially less than in Alternatives 1 and 2. Therefore, Alternative 3 receives a D.

K. Notes