

34 STUDY AREA 34: NORTH OF GRIDLEY

Study Area 34, North of Gridley, consists of approximately 1,840 acres located north of the City of Gridley. This study area includes a portion of a region identified by the Butte Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) as an Area of Concern. LAFCO is required to notify both the City of Biggs and the City of Gridley of development projects in this area to help coordinate growth. Much of this study area is open agricultural land, primarily used for rice production. Portions of the study area located close to the City of Gridley are developed with single-family residential uses.

- ◆ Alternative 1 follows the existing General Plan, designating the majority of the study area for Agriculture. The existing General Plan also includes about 175 acres of Very Low and Medium-High Density Residential, which allows approximately 300 new homes.
- ◆ Under Alternative 2, the majority of the area between the railroad tracks and Highway 99 would be designated for Medium Density Residential, allowing about 1,225 new homes. This alternative also includes about 110 acres of retail uses along Highway 99, a resource conservation buffer north of the residential area, and a public Designation for the existing cemetery along Highway 99. The remainder of the study area would be designated for Agriculture.
- ◆ Under Alternative 3, the majority of the study area west of Highway 99 would be designated for Medium Density Residential. There would also be a residential/retail mix along Highway 99, a larger retail area east of Highway 99, and some agricultural uses in the northeast portion of the study area. This alternative would maintain the Public designation from Alternative 2. This study area would allow approximately 5,600 new homes and 230 acres of retail uses.

A. Economics

1. Market Viability

a. Alternative 1

With a modest number of homes planned, Alternative 1 would likely be viable over the General Plan time horizon, and receives an A.

b. Alternative 2

While Study Area 34 may have potential to capture demand for the planned residential development, the absorption potential of the large retail component is highly questionable. 1.4 million square feet of commercial development would require a much larger trade area population than what could be expected over the General Plan time horizon. This magnitude of commercial development would need to be regionally-oriented, and the location off of Highway 99 lacks visibility and access that would be conducive to this scale of development. New retail development would more likely be at the scale of convenience stores or fast food restaurants. Alternative 2 receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

The planned residential capacity under Alternative 3 is very aggressive. As discussed under Alternative 2, the 3 million-square-foot planned retail component of Alternative 3 is highly unlikely to be viable in the market during the General Plan time horizon. Since both the residential and retail components are questionable, Alternative 3 receives a D.

2. Fiscal Impacts

a. Alternative 1

According to maps obtained for this analysis, Study Area 34 lies within TRAs in which Butte County receives between 7.9 and 16.5 percent of the property taxes. The lower percentage is exceptional. However, even at the high end of the range, the county's share is lower in Study Area 34 than in many within the unincorporated area. In addition, property values tend to be lower in this part of the county, which leads to relatively low revenue potential from the

residential development featured under Alternative 1. Countering this low revenue potential, this study area is relatively accessible, and would represent an expansion of an area where the county has already established services, meaning that service cost increases should be incremental. Thus, the modest amount of residential development planned under Alternative 1 would likely generate fiscal results ranging from slight deficits to neutral. Alternative 1 receives a C.

b. Alternative 2

Although the costs to serve the 1,225 new homes foreseen under Alternative 2 would be a concern, the large component of planned retail development would offset any potential for fiscal deficits from residential development. If successfully built out, Alternative 2 would likely generate fiscal surpluses. However, since the absorption potential of the large retail component is highly questionable, the potential fiscal benefits of the retail development are unlikely to be fully realized, and Alternative 2 receives a C.

c. Alternative 3

As discussed under Alternative 2, the large retail component of Alternative 3 would likely generate fiscal benefits if successfully built out. However, fiscal benefits might be limited by the fact that such a large concentration of new residential development is likely to trigger demand for upgraded service levels, which would increase costs disproportionately and create the risk of fiscal deficits. Therefore, Alternative 3 receives a D.

3. Jobs/Housing Balance

a. Alternative 1

With 300 new homes, Alternative 1 would slightly exacerbate the existing jobs/housing imbalance in the Biggs/Gridley area so it receives a C.

b. Alternative 2

With a large commercial component, the estimated jobs/housing ratio under this Alternative is two jobs for every one employed resident, meaning it

would improve the jobs/housing balance in the Biggs/Gridley area. However, it is unlikely that a significant number of new jobs would be generated during the General Plan horizon, so Alternative 2 receives a B.

c. Alternative 3

In this alternative, job generating potential and housing development potential are fairly balanced, resulting in a jobs/housing ratio of 1 job for every one employed resident. Thus, jobs and employed residents would both increase, and there would be no net effect on jobs/housing balance. Under a more realistic industrial absorption scenario, job production would be reduced and the development of the area might create a shortfall of new jobs relative to new residents. This would somewhat exacerbate the existing imbalance in the Biggs/Gridley area, so Alternative 3 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 Study Area 34. 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 Study Area 34. The Butte County/CALFIRE Fire Station 76, a volunteer-staffed station, is located less than a ½-mile away.

Study Area 34 has adequate service levels for rural and very low density residential development, as it is located within an eight-minute travel area for first-due units. None of the study area has adequate service levels for suburban residential, retail or industrial development.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 calls for approximately 300 new homes at very low and suburban densities. Although the very low density residential development would have adequate fire and emergency service levels, the suburban residential development would not due to high travel times and a low concentration of fire stations in the immediate area. Because Alternative 1 allows more than a minimal amount of new development, portions of which would not have adequate fire and emergency service levels, it receives a C.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 calls for approximately 1,225 new homes at a suburban density, as well as 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 development under Alternative 2 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. 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, this alternative receives a D.

c. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 calls for approximately 5,600 new homes, as well as some retail uses. This alternative has enough development that it could support a new fire station in the study area. Therefore, Alternative 3 receives a B.

2. Sheriff Services

Study Area 34 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. Although Study Area 34 is located relatively close to the Oroville 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 Study Area 34. Both the City of Gridley Police Department Station and the Butte County Sherriff station in Gridley are located less than a mile away from Study Area 34.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 allows approximately 300 new homes, generating the need for about one new officer in an area with slow response times. Therefore, this alternative receives a C.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 allows approximately 1,225 and 5,600 new homes, respectively, as well as significant retail development, generating the need for more than five new officers in an area with slow response times. Therefore, these alternatives receive a D.

3. Capacity of School Districts

Study Area 34 is served by the Gridley Unified School District (GUSD). The GUSD's total current enrollment is approximately 2,200 students and it has the capacity for approximately 2,200 students, meaning the District has the capacity for approximately 200 more students. Although the GUSD does not have any immediate expansion plans, it owns a site that it purchased over 20 years ago for a new school.

a. Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1, Study Area 34 could generate approximately 150 new students, which could be accommodated by the 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, Study Area 34 could generate approximately 600 new students, about 400 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. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, Study Area 34 could generate approximately 2,750 new students, about 2,550 students beyond current capacity. The new students generated from this study area by this alternative could support about five new K-8 schools and one new high school. This would significantly increase the size of the DUSD and require additional administration and other services.

Because the number of new students generated by this study area could support the construction of new schools, this alternative receives a C.

C. Water

1. Water Supply

Study Area 34 is located within the Sacramento Valley Inventory Unit. As discussed in more detail under Study Area 31, 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 majority of Study Area 34 is located within the Butte Inventory Sub-Unit, and is served by the Butte Water District. The Butte Water District diverts water from the Thermalito Afterbay through the Sutter Butte Canal, and primarily serves the agricultural users in this region.

A small southwest portion of this study area is served by the Biggs-West Gridley Water District, which provides surface water from the Feather River

to the region. The primary water needs are agricultural and environmental, including rice and managed wetlands in the Gray Lodge Wildlife Area.

a. Alternatives 1 and 2

Alternatives 1 and 2 call for residential development, and Alternative 2 also calls for retail development. All of this development would be served by the Butte Water District and Biggs-West Gridley Water District. Therefore, Alternatives 1 and 2 receive an A.

b. Alternative 3

Alternative 3 calls for residential and retail development, the majority of which would be served by the Butte Water District and Biggs-West Gridley Water District. The remaining development would be adjacent to the Butte Water District, and it may be possible in the future for the service to expand to provide water to this area. Therefore, Alternative 3 receives a B.

2. Groundwater Recharge Potential

Study Area 34 is located within the Valley Inventory Unit. It may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 calls for minor residential development in this region that may serve as a moderate or high potential recharge area, and therefore receives a C.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 call for significant development in this 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 Study Area 34. The current wastewater treatment method is individual septic systems.

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Study Area 34 is adjacent to the City of Gridley, which provides wastewater collection and treatment services to its residents. It is possible that, in the future, a portion of this area may be connected to Gridley's municipal sewer system if the City were to annex this area. LAFCO's 2006 Municipal Service Review of Domestic Water and Wastewater Providers in Butte County noted that, because the cities of Biggs and Gridley are expected to grow together over time, this area may benefit from a regional wastewater treatment provider.

The City of Gridley currently has the capacity to collect and treat the wastewater produced within its existing boundaries. However, the force main running between the city and the treatment plant (about 5 miles away) would need to be replaced or supplemented with future growth. Significant developments may be required to upgrade the existing collection system downstream if additional capacity is needed. The City's collection system needs to be repaired to address significant problems associated with the amount of infiltration/inflow found in the City's wastewater collection system.

a. Alternative 1

Alternative 1 calls for approximately 300 new homes at very low and medium high densities. This development cannot effectively be served by septic because it is too dense, nor can it effectively be served by sewer because there would be too few new homes to support the costs of a sewer system. Therefore, this alternative receives a D.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Alternatives 2 and 3 call for approximately 1,225 and 5,600 new homes, respectively, as well as significant retail development. This level of development could create the ability to expand the adjacent municipal sewer system. Therefore, Alternatives 2 and 3 receive a B.

E. Circulation

Study Area 34 is served by one major regional roadway: Highway 99.

1. Proximity to Freeways and Major Roadways

One major regional roadway travels through or adjacent to Study Area 34. Highway 99 runs through the study area. This study area receives an A for access proximity to major roadways.

2. Bicycle Circulation

Within Study Area 34, a bicycle facility is planned along Biggs-Gridley Road. The location of the study area adjacent to the City of Gridley allows for bicycle access to jobs, schools, and services in Gridley. Due to the study area's high level of access to bicycle facilities and location adjacent to the Gridley area, the area receives a B.

3. Transit Service

Transit service is currently provided along Biggs-Gridley Road in the study area. This receives an A.

F. Airport Compatibility Zone Conflicts

Study Area 34 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

In Study Area 34, there are approximately 555 acres identified as Prime Farmland and 1,175 acres identified as Farmland of Statewide Importance. The Prime Farmland is located in the eastern region of the study area and the Farmland of Statewide Importance is located in the central and west regions.

Under Alternative 1, approximately 175 acres would be designated for non-agricultural uses, which would convert a total of 95 acres of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural uses. Assuming the land designated for non-agricultural uses under Alternatives 2 and 3 is directed to non-agricultural acres, the amount of farmland converted to non-agricultural uses would be minimized. Alternative 2 designates 575 acres for non-agricultural uses, which would convert approximately 215 acres of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural uses. Alternative 3 designates 1,600 acres for non-agricultural uses, which would convert approximately 1,405 acres of Prime Farmland and Farmland of Statewide Importance to non-agricultural uses. Therefore, Alternatives 1, 2 and 3 receive a D.

H. Biological Resources

Study Area 34 is located on the valley floor at elevations of approximately 90 feet and is within the Butte Regional Conservation Plan (HCP/NCCP) area. The predominant land cover types are irrigated cropland, rice, and orchard. The lateral canal runs through the north and northwest of the area.

There are no plant or animal occurrences 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
- ◆ Ferris' milkvetch
- ◆ Giant garter snake
- ◆ Greater sandhill crane
- ◆ Lesser saltscare
- ◆ Peregrine falcon
- ◆ Swainson's hawk
- ◆ Tricolored blackbird

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- ◆ Western burrowing owl
- ◆ White-tailed kite

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

No sensitive habitats have been mapped.

There is no deer herd habitat in the study area.

a. Alternative 1

Under Alternative 1 the majority of area would remain in Agriculture (Orchard and Field Crops). Residential development would be located in the southwest, including a small field that provides potential habitat for two special-status plants, Ferris milkvetch and lesser saltscale, although they are not known to occur here. This designation would maintain most of the potential habitat for special-status species that currently exists in the study area, including giant garter snake and raptors. Therefore, this alternative receives a B for Special-Status Animal and Plant Species, an A for Critical Habitat and other protected lands, an A for Sensitive Habitats, and an A for Deer Herd Habitat.

b. Alternatives 2 and 3

Under Alternative 2, approximately 575 acres would be developed: the central portion of the area would be designated Medium Density Residential and the southeast corner Retail, leaving approximately 1,670 acres in Agriculture. Alternative 3 proposes residential development on the majority of the area, retaining approximately 140 acres in Agriculture. These alternatives would develop areas that provide potential habitat for special-status species. Therefore, these alternatives receive a C for Special-Status Animal and Plant Species, an A for Critical Habitat and other protected lands, an A for Sensitive Habitats, and an A for Deer Herd Habitat.

I. Safety and Hazards

1. Fire Hazards

Study Area 34 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

Study Area 34 is not included in the 100-year and 500-year FEMA flood zones. Flood hazards would not affect development under Alternatives 1, 2 or 3, therefore, each of the alternatives receives an A.

3. Geologic Hazards

Study Area 34 has slight erosion potential, significant subsidence potential, zero to low landslide potential, and moderate potential for liquefaction. The majority of the study area has moderate potential for soil expansion and approximately 60 acres in the northwest of the study area have high potential for soil expansion. There are no faults within Study Area 34 or within a 50-foot radius.

a. Alternative 1

Subsidence hazards could potentially affect development of approximately 175 acres of land designated for development under Alternative 1. Alternative 1 receives a D.

b. Alternative 2

Under Alternative 2, subsidence hazards could potentially affect development of approximately 575 acres of land designated for development. Alternative 2 receives a D.

c. Alternative 3

Under Alternative 3, subsidence hazards could potentially affect development of approximately 1,469 acres of land designated for development. Although a portion of lands designated for development in Alternative 3 have high

potential for soil expansion, development could be located to avoid expansive soil hazards. Alternative 3 receives a D.

J. Cultural Resources

Study Area 34 lies within the Biggs and Gridley USGS 7.5' quadrangles. Approximately 10 percent of the land in the Biggs Quadrangle and 3 percent of the land in the Gridley quadrangle has been surveyed for cultural resources. To date, no cultural resource sites have been recorded in Study Area 34. This study area lies within in a valley region, and has no local water source. This, coupled with the lack of previously recorded sites, indicate that this area is of low sensitivity for cultural resources.

a. Alternative 1

Despite the low sensitivity of the study area, Alternative 1 includes a large portion of the study area designated for agriculture and a lack of designated Resource Conservation land use areas that could be used to protect significant cultural resources. The rice, row crops, and orchards that would be allowed under Alternative 1 have a high potential to impact cultural resources because of the ground disturbing activities associated with these crops. Alternative 1 receives a D.

b. Alternative 2

Alternative 2 includes Resource Conservation land use areas that could be used to protect significant cultural resources despite the large portion of the study area designated for agricultural uses. The rice, row crops, and orchards that would be allowed under Alternative 2 have a high potential to impact cultural resources because of the ground disturbing activities associated with these crops. Alternative 2 receives a D.

c. Alternative 3

Due to the portion of the study area designated for agriculture, the density of residential development, and the lack of designated Resource Conservation

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land use areas that could be used to protect significant cultural resources, Alternative 3 receives a D.

K. Notes

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