
Chapter 5. Community Infrastructure and Services Element

5.1 Purpose

This Element identifies community infrastructure and service issues that affect Plan implementation. The Board of Supervisors opted to prepare this Element because of the pivotal role that infrastructure and services play in the growth of the County. The Element provides direct focus on existing infrastructure and service capacity, future demand, levels of service, timing, and funding issues.

5.2 Relationship to Other Elements

Infrastructure and services are important to many Plan elements, especially Land Use, Circulation, Safety, and Economic Development. The Telecommunications Element is also closely associated. The Community Infrastructure and Services Technical Report provides background information and policy support for this Element.

5.3 Background

Community Infrastructure and Services and Land Use

Adequate public infrastructure and services provide a foundation for growth and are essential for community health, safety, and quality of life. The availability of land for development and the pattern of land development within the County over the next 20 years will depend more on the availability of infrastructure than any other single factor. But the ability to maintain existing infrastructure and finance infrastructure has decreased over time and will remain limited in the future. In this fiscal environment it is absolutely essential to focus finite resources on clear priorities.

Finding new funding resources is also essential. This Plan proposes multiple approaches to fund capital projects and maintenance, including “pay as you go” standards for new development, assessment programs, and competing for state and federal infrastructure funds.

While the County has a direct role in maintaining or providing roadways, law enforcement, and drainage, various other providers are responsible for delivering the remainder of infrastructure and services. This Element includes policies that will strengthen partnerships between the County and local service providers.

Combining efforts and resources on mutually agreed upon infrastructure and service priorities is one of the most important goals of this Plan.

Roadways

Humboldt County contains approximately 1,400 miles of County and city roads, state highways, and roadways on federal lands. Issues affecting the County road system include roadway safety, capacity, and condition. Maintaining the condition of existing roads during the planning period will be a significant challenge. Urban roads are heavily used and are in constant need of maintenance. In rural areas, lower population densities and long travel distances mean that limited road maintenance funds are spread across an extensive network of roads. Roadway capacity is generally less of an issue for rural areas due to the lower population densities. However, some roadways in urbanized portions of unincorporated areas (such as those surrounding Eureka and McKinleyville) are subject to existing and projected areas of congestion.

Lack of funding is the limiting constraint on maintenance and increases in roadway capacity. The Public Works Department has identified a \$100 million current roadway maintenance backlog on County maintained collector and arterial roads. Statewide budget shortfalls in transportation improvement funding have severely limited new roadway improvement projects. Developing funding mechanisms for roadway capacity improvement projects is critical to the successful implementation of this Plan.

Storm Drainage and Flood Control

The Humboldt County Public Works Department is responsible for storm drainage within the unincorporated areas of the County and is responsible for the maintenance of flood control levees along the Eel River at Sandy Prairie, the Mad River at Blue Lake, and Redwood Creek at Orick. Aside from McKinleyville and the unincorporated area around Eureka, the majority of the County does not have improved stormwater conveyance systems. Outside of the County's urban areas, stormwater follows a natural drainage pattern before either infiltrating or entering a waterway. The County also maintains a significant number (estimated in the thousands) of culverts under roadways, which are located throughout the many drainage swales, creeks, and streams.

The County's stormwater system varies in condition. Much of the infrastructure is very old and is reaching the end of its design life. The County lacks a dedicated source of funding for drainage maintenance and does not have sufficient funding to make improvements to this system. A systematic master planning and replacement program intended to upgrade and expand stormwater infrastructure is needed, but funding to do so is lacking.

Law Enforcement

The Humboldt County Sheriff's Office is responsible for law enforcement in the unincorporated area and provides a range of law enforcement services throughout the County as well, including criminal investigation, court services, and corrections. Sheriff's Office facilities are insufficient for current needs and the Department does not have adequate funding to maintain generally accepted officer-to-population ratios.

Fire Protection Services

Fire protection services include more than fire suppression. Fire departments provide a range of services, including emergency medical services (approximately 80% of calls for service are emergency medical), auto extrication, technical rescue (rope, swift water, and confined space rescue), hazardous materials, and general public assistance responses. In responding to emergencies, local fire departments work closely with law enforcement, public utilities, the County Office of Emergency Services, and ambulance companies. Fire departments and ambulance companies are both dispatched to medical calls. In most cases, fire departments arrive on scene prior to the ambulance and are expected to gather vital signs, stabilize the patient, and prepare the patient for transport.

For the purposes of this General Plan Element, fire protection is defined to include all of the response types described above. Fire protection in Humboldt County includes one County Service Area (CSA), five Community Service Districts (CSDs), sixteen Fire Protection Districts (FPDs), one Resort Improvement District (RID), and two city fire departments. There are also 18 non-profit corporations which are volunteer fire departments not associated with a district. All but four of these departments are staffed entirely by volunteers. In spite of the array of fire-related districts and non-district related departments providing service to Humboldt County communities, substantial portions of the County are outside district boundaries. Fire departments regularly provide service to areas outside district boundaries. In addition, many areas within fire-related district boundaries are underserved.

The most critical issue facing fire protection service providers is the lack of adequate funding. Lack of funding for fire service providers results in limited administrative capacity; inadequate facilities, equipment, and apparatus; and contributes to the lack of adequate personnel. The Master Fire Protection Plan, 2006 (2013 Community Wildfire Protection Plan) and Community Infrastructure and Services Technical Report outline a series of actions intended to address these issues. This Element focuses on improving existing fire protection funding, requiring that new development pays its fair share of fire protection costs, and expanding fire-related districts to help ensure stable ongoing sources of funding.

Water and Wastewater Systems

There are 17 cities and special districts in Humboldt County that currently provide wastewater services, 14 of which operate wastewater collection systems and treatment plants; the remaining 3 operate only collection systems. In addition, there are two privately owned water and wastewater systems in company towns that are not regulated by the California Public Utilities Commission, that are transitioning to municipal systems. At least two additional special districts are considering developing new wastewater systems to address public health concerns in their community. The remainder of the County is served by on-site septic systems. Almost all of the wastewater service providers also provide water service. In addition, there are 18 other entities that provide water service, including cities, special districts, and public utility companies.

Most water and wastewater systems in the County were constructed using grant funds in the 1950s and 1960s. In general, the systems are quite old and deteriorating and are in need of improvement. Without exception, all service providers face the need to invest in maintenance and upgrades required to keep their systems in compliance with state

standards. Almost all service providers lack the funding to make the necessary improvements. Furthermore, many of the service providers in small communities have limited managerial, financial, or technical resources to draw from.

Developing new wastewater treatment and conveyance capacity in Urban Development Areas will be necessary to meet regional housing needs, particularly in the Eureka Community Plan Area. As such, wastewater system expansion and extension is a high priority of this Plan.

Parks and Recreation

As a rural area, Humboldt County has a wealth of outdoor recreational opportunities. More than 20% of the County's 2.3 million acres are protected open space, forests, and recreation areas. Within the County boundaries, there are federal and state parks, 16 County parks and beaches operated by the Humboldt County Parks Division, recreational areas and reserves, city parks, and parks operated by special districts and non-profit organizations. These areas contribute to the quality of life in Humboldt County and provide needed recreation opportunities for residents of neighboring counties and visitors from all over the world. However, most parks in Humboldt County are regional in scope. Outside the seven Humboldt County cities, there are few local community or neighborhood parks. Providing neighborhood parks in conjunction with new development is a goal of this Plan.

Street Lighting

Carefully placed street lighting can reduce accidents in urban and suburban areas where there are intersections and concentrations of pedestrians. In addition, lighting may serve as a crime deterrent, may aid law enforcement agencies, and contribute to a sense of safety and community pride. In Humboldt County, street lighting is provided by each of the seven cities, three community services districts, and eight street lighting districts formed by Humboldt County and governed by the Board of Supervisors. Street lighting services are available in only about half of the urbanized areas of the County. Streetlights should avoid unnecessary glare and night sky pollution, light trespass, and energy waste.

Other Public Utilities and Services

Communities are also served by public schools, libraries, social services, as well as public and quasi-public utilities providing energy and broadcast, cable, solid waste collection and recycling, and telecommunication services. Land use decisions should be closely coordinated with other service providers, particularly school districts and public utilities, to ensure that capacity is available when development occurs.

5.4 Goals and Policies

Goals

- IS-G1. Adequate Infrastructure and Services.** Well maintained public infrastructure and services supporting existing development.
- IS-G2. Sustainable Funding.** Adequate and sustainable revenue sources for capital improvements and maintenance of infrastructure and services.
- IS-G3. Interagency Coordination.** Coordinated planning, prioritization, funding, and implementation of infrastructure and public service projects across jurisdictional boundaries.

Policies

- IS-P1. Coordination with Service Providers.** The County shall work cooperatively with cities and service providers to identify needs and service limitations, secure funding, and implement infrastructure and public service projects consistent with this Plan and capital improvement plans.
- IS-P2. Public Infrastructure and Services Standards.** Use objective public infrastructure and service standards to:
- A. Assess service conditions;
 - B. Identify deficiencies; and
 - C. Rank priorities.
- IS-P3. Requirements for Discretionary Development.** The adequacy of public infrastructure and services for discretionary development greater than a single family residence and/or Accessory Dwelling Unit shall be assessed relative to service standards adopted by the Board of Supervisors, local service providers, and state and federal agencies. Such discretionary development may be approved if it can be found that:
- A. Existing services are adequate; or
 - B. Adequacy will be attained concurrent with project implementation through project conditions; or
 - C. Adequacy will be obtained over a finite time period through the implementation of a defined capital improvement or service development plan; or
 - D. Evidence in the record supports a finding that approval will not adversely impact health, welfare, and safety or plans to provide infrastructure or services to the community.
- IS-P4. Fiscal Impact Assessment.** The fiscal impacts of discretionary development (i.e. projects that require the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report that may have significant impacts on existing and planned public infrastructure and services) shall be considered during the project review process. Significant adverse effects shall be mitigated to the extent feasible.

- IS-P5. Mitigation of Cross-jurisdictional Impacts.** The County shall work with the cities to ensure impacts associated with new development are mitigated for each affected jurisdiction.
- IS-P6. Infrastructure and Services Capacity.** In coordination with service providers, the County shall periodically monitor the capacities of infrastructure and services in relation to existing and planned demand.
- IS-P7. Capacity of Facilities and Land Use Decisions.** The County shall evaluate the capacity and sizing of road and drainage facilities in coordination with water and wastewater service providers to determine adequacy for proposed land uses and discretionary development.
- IS-P8. State and Federal Advocacy.** Coordinate with local service providers' efforts to influence legislation or regulations to achieve outcomes consistent with the goals and policies of this Plan.
- IS-P9. District Boundaries, Spheres of Influence, and Community Plans.** District boundaries, spheres of influence, municipal service reviews, and community plans shall be mutually compatible and support the orderly development and timing of infrastructure and services.
- IS-P10. Changes in District Boundaries.** Support the adjustment of service district or city boundaries to eliminate service area gaps, align district boundaries with already served areas, consolidate districts, improve service delivery, or to address an existing or impending threat to the public health or safety of the residents of the affected territory, consistent with this Plan.
- IS-P11. Out of Area Service to Address Threats to Public Health.** Encourage the Humboldt LAFCo to amend its policies and procedures to allow local agencies to provide new or extended services outside jurisdictional boundaries and outside spheres of influence to respond to existing or impending threats to the public health or safety, consistent with Government Code 56133, without requiring an annexation agreement.
- IS-P12. Road and Drainage System Funding Sources.** Develop funding mechanisms and sources to support the construction and maintenance of road and drainage facilities consistent with the policies and standards of the Circulation and Water Resources elements.
- IS-P13. Drainage and Flood Control.** Develop and maintain a countywide drainage and flood control plan to guide capital improvements and maintenance and serve as a basis for long-term sustainable funding mechanisms.
- IS-P14. Law Enforcement.** The County shall continue to monitor law enforcement needs and coverage.
- IS-P15. Expanded Fire Protection Services.** Encourage and support the expansion of existing special district boundaries, or the formation of County Service Areas with agreements to fund contract fire services, as a means to provide fire protection services to areas outside of fire district boundaries.

- IS-P16. Water and Wastewater System Capital Improvement Programs.** Support the efforts of service providers to develop and maintain capital improvement programs for construction of water and wastewater systems.
- IS-P17. On-Site Sewage Disposal Requirements.** Maintain regulations governing construction and maintenance of on-site sewage disposal systems to protect health and safety and to reflect changes in state law and advances in treatment technologies. Recognize and allow the use of alternative onsite sewage disposal systems that meet state standards.
- IS-P18. Parks and Recreation Service in Urban Development Areas.** Encourage and support special districts to provide neighborhood parks and recreation services within Urban Development Areas.
- IS-P19. Private Recreation Facilities.** The development of private or joint public-private sector recreation facilities shall be encouraged.
- IS-P20. Street Lighting.** Street lighting shall be required when necessary to improve public safety in urban and suburban areas and Village Centers.
- IS-P21. County Facilities.** Proposed County capital projects and facilities shall be analyzed for consistency with this Plan and applicable city general plans.
- IS-P22. County Library Facilities and Services.** Continue to assess needs of the County's residents and expand library facilities and services as necessary.
- IS-P23. Conversion of School Facilities.** Conversion of closed school sites and facilities to other uses shall be compatible with existing or planned land uses of adjacent areas and involve affected residents in the decision-making process.
- IS-P24. Building Permit Referrals.** Provide building permit referrals to the appropriate local fire chief for new buildings within the fire related district boundary and/or the identified response area.
- IS-P25. Fire Service Impacts from New Development.** During review of discretionary permits within fire related district boundaries or identified response areas, utilize recommendations from the appropriate local fire chief as feasible mitigation measures to reduce impacts to emergency response and fire suppression services from new development.
- IS-P26. Unincorporated Legacy Communities.** On or before the due date for each subsequent revision of its Housing Element, the County shall review, and if necessary amend, the General Plan to update the analysis of unincorporated legacy communities.
- IS-P27. Parks Master Plan.** In cooperation with other park service providers, the County shall establish and maintain a Parks Master Plan that would assess current facilities within each inland and coastal planning area, determine appropriate locations for new facilities, and identify funding options.

5.5 Standards

- IS-S1. Adequate Public Infrastructure and Services Ordinance.** Adequate public infrastructure and services standards shall be used to determine the level of infrastructure and services necessary for discretionary development greater than a single family residence and/or Accessory Dwelling Unit or minor subdivision. Standards shall be specified by ordinance for County provided services. County standards shall be consistent with Plan policies. Standards for non-County services should be consistent with levels of service adopted by local service providers or, if standards have not been adopted, the County shall work in coordination with the local service providers to identify generally accepted standards.
- IS-S2. Service Inadequacies and Development Limitations.** The County shall request that water and wastewater service providers submit formal notice approved by their governing body of any newly identified capacity limitations within Urban Development Areas that have the potential to result in a development moratorium or other limitation of development otherwise allowed by this Plan. The County shall take appropriate actions as necessary to reflect new capacity limitations in land use and permitting decisions and communications to the public.
- IS-S3. Infrastructure Project CEQA and NEPA Land Use Consistency Determinations.** Policies of this Plan which avoid or mitigate environmental effects shall be considered by CEQA lead agencies and federal agencies conducting NEPA evaluations in the evaluation of the environmental impacts of proposed infrastructure projects. Policy conflicts should be considered potentially significant land use impacts pursuant to California Public Resources Code 21083 and Code of Federal Regulations Title 40, Part 6.
- IS-S4. Subdivisions Outside of Fire District Boundaries.** Subdivisions outside of fire district boundaries shall be conditioned to ensure the findings required by Government Code Section 66474.02 can be made.
- IS-S5. Other Development Outside of Fire District Boundaries.** New industrial, commercial, and residential development, excluding subdivisions pursuant to the Subdivision Map Act, outside of fire district boundaries shall be responsible prior to permit approval, to obtain from an appropriate local fire service provider written acknowledgement of the available emergency response and fire suppression services and recommended mitigations.
- If written acknowledgement indicates that no service is available or no acknowledgement is received, the following shall apply:
- A. For building permits, a note shall be placed on the permit indicating that no emergency response and fire suppression services are available.
 - B. For discretionary permits findings shall be made that no service is available and the project shall be conditioned to record acknowledgment of no available emergency response and fire suppression services.
- IS-S6. Water and Wastewater Service Commitment for Proposed Development Projects.** Discretionary development served by public water and/or

wastewater service shall receive written service commitments from the appropriate district or agency prior to receiving final approval from the County.

- IS-S7. Parkland Requirements** New residential subdivisions shall dedicate land or pay in-lieu fees for parkland pursuant to the Quimby Act, which requires up to five (5) acres of parkland per thousand persons, consistent with parkland dedication standards.
- IS-S9. Street Lighting.** Where development is required to install streetlights, they shall be designed to block upward transmission of light, avoid light trespass, and achieve design illumination in prescribed areas with limited scatter.
- IS-S10. Interim Parks and Recreation Standards.** Parks and recreation standards contained in the Government Code Section 66477 shall be used as the standard for parkland dedication in the review of divisions of land for which a tentative map is required pursuant to Section 66426, until such time that the County has established parks and recreation standards for new development that differentiate between urban and rural settings; specify acreage of park land of 3 acres per 1,000 residents; and specify land dedication, in-lieu fee, or other mechanisms to fund park and recreation improvements and funding for operation and maintenance.

5.6 Implementation Measures

- IS-IM1. Coordination with Service Providers.** Coordinate as appropriate with special districts, cities, LAFCO, and other local service providers by reviewing and commenting on capital improvement plans, proposed spheres of influence, municipal service reviews, annexations, and changes in organization. Enter into formal cooperative relationships when appropriate to plan, fund, and implement infrastructure and service delivery projects.
- IS-IM2. Adequate Public Infrastructure and Services Standards.** Develop and adopt an ordinance establishing adequate public infrastructure and services standards.
- IS-IM3. Fiscal Impact Assessment.** Prepare guidelines for the preparation and evaluation of fiscal impact assessments for large scale discretionary projects. Establish threshold criteria to identify applicable large-scale projects.
- IS-IM4. Reimbursement.** Develop the ability to enter into voluntary agreements to reimburse developers over time as subsequent development is approved for expenditures in excess of the developer's fair share costs.
- IS-IM5. State and Federal Legislation, Appropriations, and Grant and Loan Programs.** The County shall actively advocate for state and federal legislation, appropriations, and grant and loan programs that increase funding for community infrastructure.

- IS-IM6. State and Federal Advocacy.** Maintain a list of legislative and regulatory priorities that include infrastructure and service issues and advocate actions that benefit the County and local service providers.
- IS-IM7. Drainage and Flood Control Plan.** Prepare a countywide Drainage and Flood Control Plan that inventories existing facilities, and prioritizes needs.
- IS-IM8. Fire Protection Levels of Service.** Support the development of a level of service standards by the Humboldt County Fire Chief's Association.
- IS-IM9. Standards of Fire Protection Response.** Encourage fire districts to prepare Standards of Coverage Studies and address substandard conditions. These studies may include: establishment of baseline conditions, risk assessment, level of service standards and objectives, critical task capability assessment, reliability assessment, and policy recommendations.
- IS-IM10. County Service Area-Fire Protection.** In close coordination with fire-related districts, non-agency fire departments, and CAL FIRE, establish county service areas and adequate ongoing fire protection funding sources in areas with developed and developable land that cannot be served by existing fire-related districts and where new districts cannot feasibly be established. Utilize fire protection service agreements with existing fire service providers, where appropriate. Utilize County Service Areas to augment the level of service and capacity of existing fire service providers, where appropriate.
- IS-IM11. Fire Protection Municipal Service Review.** Support the preparation of a comprehensive countywide fire protection municipal service review by the Humboldt LAFCO to determine the best approaches to improving levels of service countywide and expand service to areas outside existing fire-related district boundaries.
- IS-IM12. Monitor Infrastructure and Services Capacity.** Coordinate with water and wastewater providers to monitor the capacities of infrastructure and services to ensure that growth does not exceed acceptable levels of service.
- IS-IM13. Organization of Water and Wastewater Providers.** Assist in the establishment of an organization of local water agencies, such as an association or authority, to improve water quality, service capacity, and level of service of all water and wastewater services providers.
- IS-IM14. Sizing of Water and Wastewater Systems.** Provide this Plan and land inventory data to service providers for system planning, facility sizing, and CEQA evaluations of land use consistency. Coordinate with service providers to update the County land inventory.
- IS-IM15. Use of Parkland and Fees.** The County shall develop a schedule for the use of land and fees collected under parkland dedication provisions, including mechanisms for tracking the expenditure of funds for a five-year period in coordination with special districts providing parks and recreation.
- IS-IM16. Parks and Recreation.** Prepare parks and recreation standards for new development that consider community preference and differentiate between urban, suburban, and rural settings; specify acreage of park land

per 1,000 residents; and specify land dedication, in-lieu fees, or other mechanisms to make park and recreation improvements.

- IS-IM17. Street Lighting.** Prepare street lighting standards that allow for community-specific priorities and standards and that specify when streetlights are required based on intersection type and functional classification. Establish lighting design criteria, considering AASHTO and International Dark-Sky Association guidelines.
- IS-IM18. Public Facilities and Services Funding Sources.** Investigate and implement funding sources for public facilities and services, such as state or federal appropriations, grant and loan programs, special taxes, special assessments, tax increment financing, and fees, as directed by the Board of Supervisors.
- IS-IM19. Fire Protection Services Funding Sources.** Support the development of funding sources, such as state or federal appropriations, grant and loan programs, special taxes, special assessments, and fees to support fire protection services, as directed by the Board of Supervisors.

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