

## **5. Review of Rural Character Definition(s).**

**(a) Tulare County General Plan Policies  
(Rural Character).**

# RURAL CHARACTER

## TULARE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN 2030 UPDATE POLICIES

### LAND USE ELEMENT

#### **LU-2.3 Open Space Character**

The County shall require that all new development requiring a County discretionary approval, including parcel and subdivision maps, be planned and designed to maintain the scenic open space character of open space resources including, but not limited to, agricultural areas, rangeland, riparian areas, etc., within the view corridors of highways. New development shall utilize natural landforms and vegetation in the least visually disruptive way possible and use design, construction and maintenance techniques that minimize the visibility of structures on hilltops, hillsides, ridgelines, steep slopes, and canyons.

#### **LU-7.14 Contextual and Compatible Design**

The County shall ensure that new development respects Tulare County's heritage by requiring that development respond to its context, be compatible with the traditions and character of each community, and develop in an orderly fashion which is compatible with the scale of surrounding structures.

### SCENIC LANDSCAPES ELEMENT

#### **SL-1.1 Natural Landscapes**

During review of discretionary approvals, including parcel and subdivision maps, the County shall as appropriate, require new development to not significantly impact or block views of Tulare County's natural landscapes. To this end, the County may require new development to:

1. Be sited to minimize obstruction of views from public lands and rights-of-ways,
2. Be designed to reduce visual prominence by keeping development below ridge lines, using regionally familiar architectural forms, materials, and colors that blend structures into the landscape,
3. Screen parking areas from view,
4. Include landscaping that screens the development,
5. Limit the impact of new roadways and grading on natural settings, and
6. Include signage that is compatible and in character with the location and building design.

#### **SL-1.3 Watercourses**

The County shall protect visual access to, and the character of, Tulare County's scenic rivers, lakes, and irrigation canals by:

1. Locating and designing new development to minimize visual impacts and obstruction of views of scenic watercourses from public lands and right-of-ways, and
2. Maintaining the rural and natural character of landscape viewed from trails and watercourses used for public recreation.

#### **SL-2.2 Gateways to the Sequoias**

The County shall ensure that the "gateway highways" (State Highway 190 and State

Highway 198) to the Sequoias feature the County's unique history and scenery by:

1. Maintaining the rural character of roadway rights-of-ways, highway signage, and related roadway and structure design,
2. Protecting primary viewsheds from development,
3. Prohibiting development of highway commercial projects that do not respond to their physical or cultural context, and
4. Featuring the community centers/main streets of the gateway communities of Three Rivers and Springville.

### **SL-3.1 Community Centers and Neighborhoods**

The County shall support investments in unincorporated communities and hamlets to improve the image, quality of urban infrastructure, amenities, and visual character by:

1. Encouraging restoration of existing historic buildings and developing new buildings that reflect the local culture and climate,
2. Creating or enhancing overall community design frameworks with a hierarchy of connected block and street patterns, open spaces, town centers, neighborhoods, and civic facilities,
3. Reducing the need for sound-walls and gated neighborhoods by having residential and non-residential uses interface along streets and open spaces (not adjoining property lines) and locating residential uses on local-serving streets,
4. Planning residential development as interconnected neighborhoods with definable social and physical centers that incorporate parks, schools, and commercial services,
5. Enhancing the comfort and scenic experience of transit riders, cyclists, and pedestrians, and
6. Developing open spaces, streets, and pedestrian facilities that include landscaping and streetscaping that improve the image of the community and make it a more comfortable pedestrian environment.

## **FOOTHILL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLAN**

### **FGMP-6.2 Identification of Scenic Highways**

The County shall continue to seek and identify County routes, which due to their scenic and rural characteristics, should receive a County "scenic routes" designation.

### **FGMP-6.4 Development Within Scenic Corridors**

The County shall require that projects located within a scenic corridor be designed in a manner, which does not detract from the visual amenities of that thoroughfare. The County shall support through the use of its authority and police powers, the design of infrastructure that minimizes visual impacts to surrounding areas by locating roadways in areas that minimize the visual impact on rural and natural places whenever feasible.

### **FGMP-8.12 Vegetation Removal**

The County shall prohibit unnecessary removal of native trees on development sites prior to approval of development plans to control erosion, preserve wildlife habitat, and maintain the natural character of developing areas.

**(b) County of San Diego General Plan (Land Use Element).**



development in achieving consistency with the goals and policies of the General Plan. A Town Center will typically contain one or more of the following:

- Pedestrian-oriented commercial area
- Mixed-use development: residential, retail, and office/professional uses
- Higher-density residential developments
- Community-serving private and public facilities

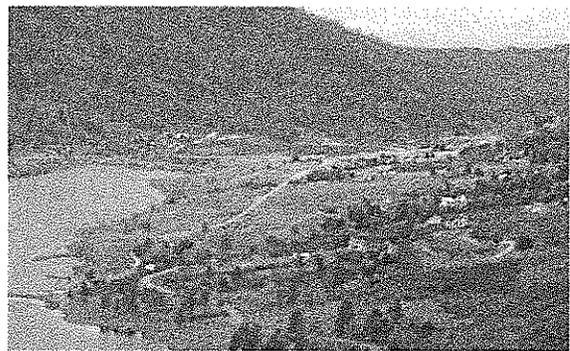
**Transit Nodes** typically encompass lands within walking distance—approximately one-half mile—of future rapid transit stations and should be located within a Village. These may be planned as diverse, mixed-use areas with a range of residential, commercial, and where appropriate, employment-generating land uses (e.g., office/professional or industrial) as well as parks and civic spaces. However, planning must be consistent with the type and quantity of ridership expected of the node as well as the surrounding community. Potential Transit Node locations are based on long-range transit plans and include rail stations as well as express bus stops that feed into rail systems.

## SEMI-RURAL

The Semi-Rural category identifies areas of the County that are appropriate for lower-density residential neighborhoods, recreation areas, agricultural operations, and related commercial uses that support rural communities. Semi-Rural areas often function as a transition between the Village and Rural Lands categories, providing opportunities for development, but without the intensity and level of public services expected in Villages and with design approaches that blend the development with the natural landscape. Semi-Rural residential densities are derived in consideration of the physical conditions, community character, and availability of public services, roads, and other infrastructure. Higher densities within the allowable range should be located near Village areas, while lower densities should be located near Rural Land areas. Site design methods that reduce on-site infrastructure costs and preserve contiguous open space or agricultural operations are encouraged.



*Semi-rural development patterns in Bonsall community*



*View of the Cuyamaca Reservoir and rural community*

## RURAL LANDS

The Rural Lands category is applied to large open space and very-low-density private and publicly owned lands that provide for agriculture, managed resource production, conservation, and recreation and thereby retain the rural character for which much of unincorporated County is known. Rural areas are not appropriate for intensive residential or commercial uses due to significant topographical or environmental constraints, limited access, and the lack of public services

## LAND USE FRAMEWORK

or facilities. Further, the undeveloped nature of Rural Lands benefits all of San Diego County by doing the following:

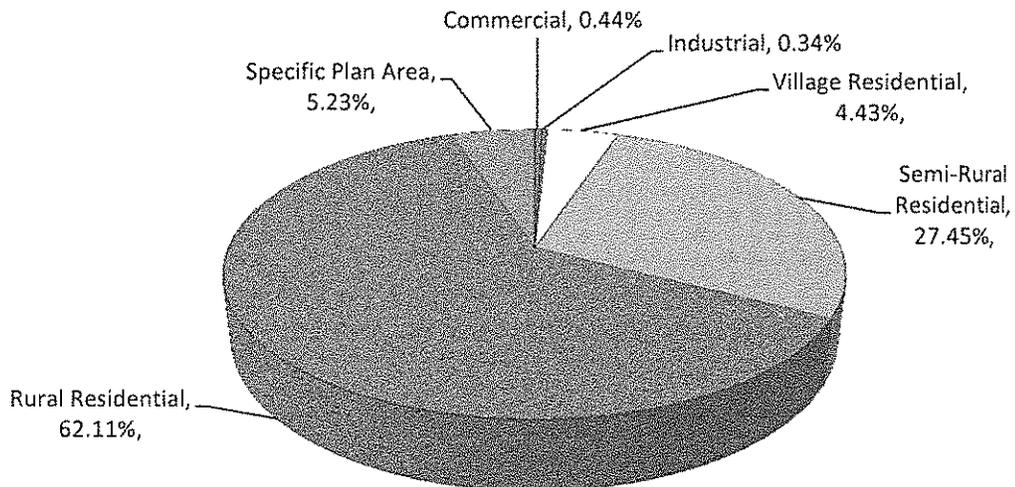
- Preserving the County’s rural atmosphere
- Protecting land with significant physical or environmental constraints or hazards
- Preserving open space, farmland, and natural resources
- Providing open space buffers and a visual separation between communities
- Preserving and providing land for agricultural opportunities
- Preventing sprawl development, which reduces vehicle miles traveled and greenhouse gas emissions

## Land Use Designations

Where the Regional Categories represent a broad framework for the form and organization of development, the Land Use Designations are property specific and identify the type and intensity of land uses that are allowed. The Land Use Designations are defined by the land use type—Residential, Commercial or Industrial—and the maximum allowable residential density or nonresidential building intensity. The designations are applied throughout the County, as shown on Land Use Maps, which are located in the Land Use Maps Appendix. More specific standards may be established for each Land Use Designation to implement the goals and policies of the General Plan, through such tools as the Zoning Ordinance, to address impacts related to specific land uses or the needs of an individual community.

Assignment of the land use designations to lands in the County is guided by the goals and policies contained in this element, which reflect the Guiding Principles presented in Chapter 2. A general summary of the designations is shown on the Land Use Maps in the Land Use Maps Appendix. The pie chart shown below depicts how the privately owned lands are designated.

### Land Use Designations for Privately Owned Lands in the Unincorporated County



**(c) Partnerships for Change Sustainable  
Communities (Rural Character).**

# PARTNERSHIPS for CHANGE Sustainable Communities

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## What is Rural Character?



The following information was adapted from "Watershed Resource Papers" developed for the Dowagiac River Watershed Project by Langworthy, Strader, LeBlanc, & Associates, Inc.

Michigan's diverse landscapes, including its shorelines, riparian areas, open fields, forests, and farmlands, draw residents to a variety of rural areas throughout the state. Rural character is many times a perception unique to the individual. One person may interpret rural character as having a low density of development; another may only recognize it where there is a complete absence of man-made features, such as signs and buildings.

But regardless of any individual interpretation of rural character, it remains true that as more people are attracted to rural areas, preserving the unique character of an area becomes more of a challenge.

Ultimately, it is the community's own definition of rural character that is the single most important part of its preservation. It is up to each community to decide what its rural character is and subsequently, how it can be preserved. For example, definitions of rural character may include the following elements:

- tree-lined streets
- farmlands
- woodlands
- clean air and water
- undeveloped open space
- natural streambanks
- natural lake shorelines
- outdoor recreation opportunities
- small villages and communities

[Land Development Options](#)  
[Development Regulations](#)

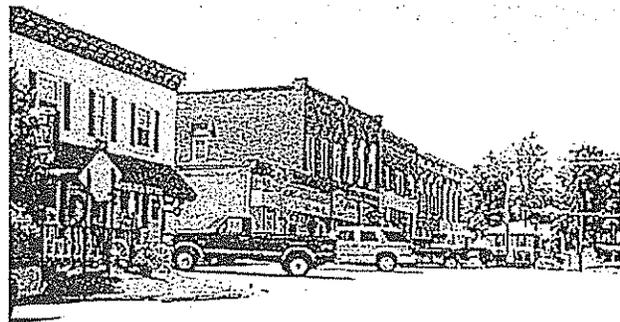
### Land Development Options

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#### LOT WIDTHS:

Increasing lot widths can have the effect of separating the distance between homes to allow for a more "open" feeling. This would require changing the applicable zoning requirements along certain defined roadways (generally county arterial roads). Other applicable provisions for these fronting lots could include such elements as:

- Increased lot width and/or area.
- Greater setback requirements.
- Provisions minimizing urban vegetation (manicured lawns, flower gardens, etc.) and preservation of larger trees in areas visible from the roadway.



However, simply changing the district requirements would mean that the width requirements would apply to all roadways.

**(d) Wolcott and Eagle Area Community Plan,  
Eagle County Colorado.**

**Definition of “Rural Character”**  
from  
**Wolcott Area Community Plan and Eagle Area Community Plan**

**Rural Character** embodies a pattern of land use and quality of life based on traditional rural landscapes, activities, lifestyles and aesthetic values. In Eagle County, rural character implies an area or place where most if not all of the following predominate and/or are present:

- *Expansive natural views and undeveloped lands*
- *Agricultural uses, pastures, structures, fencing, livestock*
- *Small rural centers (post office, church, meeting hall)*
- *Excepting small rural centers, a lack of structures or developed areas other than those related to agricultural uses*
- *Elements of local history, heritage, culture*
- *Free flowing streams and rivers*
- *Wildlife and wildlife habitat*
- *Public lands*
- *Opportunities for dispersed recreation*
- *Lack of urban infrastructure and services*
- *A dark night sky*
- *Roads with low traffic volumes*