

4. COMMUNITY CHARACTER ELEMENT



This element focuses on maintaining the unique characteristics, including the rural character, small-town feel, and quality of life, that distinguishes the individual unincorporated communities within Colusa County. A community character policy set, including goals, objectives, policies, and actions, is established for the communities of Arbuckle, College City, Grimes, Maxwell, Princeton, and Stonyford-Lodoga-Century Ranch, and the unincorporated areas around Colusa and Williams. The Community Character builds on the Land Use Element by identifying the form, design characteristics, and desired mix of uses within the County's communities. The desired relationship between people and the built environment, including the relationship, scale, and character of buildings and outdoor public areas, is identified. The Community Character Element is an optional element of the General Plan.

Goal CC-1: Protect the Rural Qualities that make the County and its Communities Distinct from other Counties in California, and Conserve and Enhance the Elements that Contribute to a Favorable Quality of Life

Objective CC-1A: *To Maintain and Enhance Distinct and Desirable Communities*

Policy CC 1-1: Protect the rural atmosphere and historic character of Colusa County's towns and unincorporated communities.

Policy CC 1-2: Emphasize the unincorporated communities as retail, service and employment centers for local residents, as well as residents of surrounding rural (agricultural) areas. Where appropriate, promote economic development in the unincorporated communities that serves County visitors and regional tourism.

Policy CC 1-3: Encourage a range of shopping, dining, service, civic, and cultural uses in the downtown areas of the unincorporated communities to keep the community centers and downtown areas as the main focal point for activity, shopping, entertainment, business, pedestrian travel, tourism and culture.

Policy CC 1-4: Each community should have a "town center" or downtown core that serves as a social center where the public has access to schools, libraries, parks, community centers, civic buildings, and fire and law enforcement services.

Policy CC 1-5: Plan land uses within communities so that more intense land uses with higher development densities and community-oriented services, retail, and employment uses are located within the downtown or community center areas, transitioning to less intense land uses around community edges.

Policy CC 1-6: Require new commercial development to complement the character of the area in which it is proposed, to provide a pleasing aesthetic appearance and high-quality finishes, and to be designed with buildings, landscaping, and signage that enhance the community and surrounding uses, and to not detract from the character of existing communities.

Policy CC 1-7: Design commercial development so that buildings in downtown areas have zero front setbacks, except for approved plazas, seating areas, and entry nooks, and on-site parking located to the rear of the parcel (away from street and pedestrian access).

Policy CC 1-8: Implement the mechanisms and strategies identified in the Conservation and Open Space Elements of the General Plan as tools to actively protect open space and agricultural areas between cities and communities throughout the County.

Policy CC 1-9: Define community edges and boundaries through the use of the Agriculture Transition (AT) and Urban Reserve Area (URA) land use designations.

Policy CC 1-10: Encourage infill development and the appropriate redevelopment of vacant and underutilized properties within existing unincorporated communities and prioritize infill projects over development on land at the planned community edge.

Policy CC 1-11: Through application of zoning districts and development standards, encourage the development, of higher density housing, multi-story buildings, and mixed-use development in the downtown areas of the unincorporated communities.

Policy CC 1-12: Encourage mixed use development in commercial areas in order to create ancillary residential opportunities, particularly in the upper floors of multi-story buildings.

Policy CC 1-13: Encourage the preparation of Specific Plans for developments of large areas of land within the unincorporated communities to ensure that a mix of land uses, a range of housing types/densities, and adequate public facilities, and infrastructure improvements are provided.

***Action CC 1-A:** Identify and provide incentives for infill development over development on the fringe of a community.*

***Action CC 1-B:** Maintain an inventory and map of vacant and underutilized parcels within the downtown areas of the unincorporated communities, in conjunction with the site inventory efforts associated with Action ED 1-B and Housing Element Program 2-2.*

A specific plan is a tool for the systematic implementation of the General Plan. It effectively establishes a link between implementing policies of the General Plan and the individual development proposals in a defined area.

Objective CC-1B: *To Maintain and Enhance the Aesthetic Beauty of the County*

Policy CC 1-14: Encourage private landowners to maintain their property in a way that contributes to the attractive appearance of the County, while recognizing that many of the land uses in the County, including agriculture and light industry, require a variety of on-site structures, equipment, machinery and vehicles in order to operate effectively.

Policy CC 1-15: Preserve and enhance the rural landscape as an important scenic feature of the County.

Policy CC 1-16: Require all new development to protect the scenic beauty of the County, incorporate high quality site design, architecture, and planning so as to enhance the overall quality of the built environment in the County's communities and create a visually interesting and aesthetically pleasing built environment that respects the rural nature of the County.

Policy CC 1-17: Establish design standards, including community-specific policies, to encourage visually attractive development and lessen the visual impact of existing non-conforming uses.

Policy CC 1-18: Upgrade the visual appearance and quality of development on the approaches to each community and prevent development which degrades the aesthetic quality of scenic roadways elsewhere.

Policy CC 1-19: Require architecture and site design to reflect a human-scale that is sensitive, compatible and distinctive to both the site and the community.

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Policy CC 1-20: Avoid the repetition of residential facades and designs within subdivisions and abrupt changes in facades between adjoining developments.

Policy CC 1-21: Architecture in the downtown areas of the unincorporated communities should have a pedestrian scale, with varied and articulated facades. Entries should be oriented to the sidewalk and front facades should include numerous windows.

Policy CC 1-22: Regulate the size, quantity, location, and design of signs to maintain and enhance the visual appearance of the unincorporated communities.

Policy CC 1-23: New freestanding off-site advertising along rural roads shall be limited. Existing non-conforming advertising shall be eliminated whenever possible.

***Action CC 1-C:** Prepare and implement general countywide design guidelines and minimum design requirements (standards) for new residential and commercial development as described in Action LU 3-C. The design guidelines should include more specific and detailed standards for new development in the communities of Arbuckle and Maxwell. The design guidelines should provide for attractive growth that respects the cultural heritage and character of each community and should be developed with input from each community.*

***Action CC 1-D:** Update the County Code to develop standards for the location, size and design of signage along rural roadways within the County.*

***Action CC 1-E:** Revise the County Code to update standards for the location, size and design of signage to identify specific design standards for visitor-oriented commercial uses, the downtown areas of Arbuckle and Maxwell that complement the standards included in the design guidelines (Action CC 1-C) and to streamline the permitting process for signs less than 15 square feet to encourage businesses to regularly update their signs, within the unincorporated communities.*

GOAL CC-2: Ensure that New Growth Addresses the Needs, Challenges and Opportunities Unique to Each Community

Arbuckle

Policy CC 2-1: Support efforts to revitalize the downtown area east of Interstate 5.

Policy CC 2-2: Encourage the preservation, rehabilitation and creative use of historic structures, including the railroad depot.

Policy CC 2-3: Encourage the development of boutique shops, including restaurants, local retail establishments, and non-highway tourist-serving uses, mixed-use development, and high density residential development in the downtown area.

Policy CC 2-4: Promote the development of highway commercial uses adjacent to Interstate 5 at the northern and southern edges of the community.

Policy CC 2-5: Encourage new development proposals to include a balanced mix of jobs and housing.

Policy CC 2-6: Require new residential development to connect to municipal water and sewer services.

Policy CC 2-7: Increase pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between residential areas and the downtown area.

Policy CC 2-8: Vacant and underdeveloped lands within the Arbuckle Public Utility District Service Area should be developed before additional undeveloped lands are annexed into the PUD's Service Area.

Policy CC 2-9: Previously approved, yet still undeveloped, residential subdivisions should be developed before significant new residential development is approved.

Policy CC 2-10: Encourage the clustering of homes and businesses to protect open space, trees, creeks and other natural resources.

Policy CC 2-11: Encourage mixed use development in the downtown area.

Policy CC 2-12: New residential development should include areas for neighborhood parks and other residential community facilities.

Policy CC 2-13: Discourage new residential development adjacent to Interstate 5. Where such development already exists, the possibility of further noise insulation through sound walls or vegetative screening should be explored.

Policy CC 2-14: Reserve locations for future rail or transit stations to promote public transit connectivity to other communities.

Policy CC 2-15: Create a gateway to Arbuckle that reflects the characteristics that distinguish the community and directs residents and visitors to the community center.

***Action CC 2-A:** When preparing the Bicycle and Pedestrian Plan (Action CIRC 1-I), include opportunities for additional pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between the residential areas located west of Interstate 5 and the downtown area located east of Interstate 5.*

***Action CC 2-B:** Provide assistance to local organizations, business groups, and community leaders in securing funding and resources to assist with building restoration and community identity and revitalization efforts.*

***Action CC 2-C:** Support the Chamber of Commerce and other community organizations' efforts to attract and retain businesses and expand employment opportunities in Arbuckle.*

College City

Policy CC 2-16: College City should remain a small rural community with an emphasis on agricultural operations within and adjacent to the town.

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Policy CC 2-17: Encourage additional local-serving retail and services businesses in the commercially designated areas of College City.

Policy CC 2-18: Discourage new residential development on parcels two acres in size and smaller until centralized wastewater services are available.

Policy CC 2-19: Prohibit lot splits or subdivision of land into new parcels smaller than two acres until centralized water and wastewater services are available.

Colusa – Unincorporated Area

Policy CC 2-20: Continue to cooperate and provide mutual assistance between the City of Colusa and the County with respect to land use planning and the provision of services within the City's Sphere of Influence.

Policy CC 2-21: Ensure that new development within the Sphere of Influence is planned and designed to be compatible with adjacent lands within the Colusa city limits.

Policy CC 2-22: Municipal services should not be extended into unincorporated areas of the Sphere of Influence until those areas are annexed. When unincorporated areas planned for future residential uses are developed, services should be provided by the City of Colusa.

Policy CC 2-23: Commercial, industrial, and other job-generating land uses shall be encouraged in the Sphere of Influence.

Policy CC 2-24: The use, expansion and development of private or mutually owned water and wastewater systems serving large-scale commercial and industrial land uses or multiple users shall be supported within the Sphere of Influence, provided that the systems meet the requirements outlined in Policy PSF 1-26 and all applicable State regulations.

Policy CC 2-25: Encourage urban residential development within the City's Sphere of Influence to connect to municipal sewer and wastewater service and discourage the use, expansion and development of private or mutually owned water and wastewater systems serving residential uses within the Sphere of Influence.

Policy CC 2-26: Encourage new commercial and industrial operations to locate along the State Route 20 corridor, west of the City, and along the State Route 45/20 corridor south of the City.

Policy CC 2-27: Encourage improvements, expanded access, and increased recreational opportunities along the Sacramento River and at the Colusa-Sacramento State Recreation Area.

***Action CC 2-D:** Support the Chamber of Commerce and other community organizations' efforts to attract and retain businesses and expand employment opportunities in the Colusa Sphere of Influence.*

Grimes

Policy CC 2-28: Grimes should remain a small rural community with an emphasis on agricultural operations within and adjacent to the town.

Policy CC 2-29: Limit future residential and commercial development within Grimes to the area within the utility district Sphere of Influence.

Policy CC 2-30: Additional local-serving retail and services businesses should be encouraged in the commercially designated areas of Grimes.

Policy CC 2-31: Discourage new residential development on parcels two acres in size and smaller unless centralized or shared wastewater service is available.

Policy CC 2-32: Encourage the use, expansion and development of private or mutually owned wastewater systems serving residential and commercial uses within the Sphere of Influence.

Policy CC 2-33: Support the restoration and re-use, particularly with community-oriented commercial and civic uses, of vacant historic buildings in the Grimes commercial district.

Policy CC 2-34: Encourage improvements, expanded access, and increased recreational opportunities along the Sacramento River and at the Grimes Boat Landing.

Maxwell

Policy CC 2-35: Support the downtown area as the central hub of the community.

Policy CC 2-36: Encourage and facilitate the rehabilitation and beautification of historical properties in the downtown area.

Policy CC 2-37: Encourage the development of vacant parcels in the downtown area with resident- and visitor-serving commercial, retail, and service uses.

Policy CC 2-38: Recognize and expand Maxwell's role as a "gateway" to numerous recreational opportunities in western Colusa County.

Policy CC 2-39: Require new development in Maxwell to include design and aesthetic characteristics that complement and enhance the existing community. Design features may include components that reflect the small-town, rural, historic and agrarian character of Maxwell in an attractive manner.

Policy CC 2-40: Encourage new and expanded industrial operations to locate along the Interstate 5 corridor north and south of Maxwell.

Policy CC 2-41: Support the establishment of highway commercial land uses near existing Interstate 5 interchanges in Maxwell.

Policy CC 2-42: Require new urban development in Maxwell to connect to the municipal water and wastewater systems.

Policy CC 2-43: Explore the feasibility of establishing a service district for the beautification or revitalization of Maxwell. Volunteer or community fund-raising efforts to beautify the community should be supported.

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Policy CC 2-44: Encourage new development proposals to include a balanced mix of jobs and housing.

Policy CC 2-45: Increase pedestrian and bicycle connectivity between residential areas and the downtown area.

Policy CC 2-46: Vacant and underdeveloped lands within the Maxwell Public Utility District Service Area should be developed before additional undeveloped lands are annexed into the PUD's Service Area.

Action CC 2-E: Assist residents and businesses in Maxwell in establishing a service district for the beautification and revitalization of Maxwell, if such a district is feasible. Provide County support through efforts to create a district and assist with securing State or Federal funds for improving the buildings, streetscapes, and public areas within the community.

Action CC 2-F: Assist the Maxwell Parks and Recreation District in updating their development impact fees to provide additional funding for the expansion of parks facilities in Maxwell.

Action CC 2-G: If the Sites Reservoir project is approved, develop a Maxwell Community Plan to capitalize on economic development opportunities, including lodging, shopping, dining, and other tourism uses, created by increased visitors and County residents using Sites Reservoir. The Maxwell Community Plan shall emphasize aesthetic and design standards that recognize the historic character of Maxwell and importance of the area as the gateway to recreation opportunities in the western County.

Princeton

Policy CC 2-47: Require new residential development in Princeton to connect to the municipal water and wastewater systems.

Policy CC 2-48: Support opportunities for tourist- and recreation-serving development and uses in Princeton.

Policy CC 2-49: Emphasize the use of riverfront land to increase opportunities for public access to the Sacramento River and provide waterfront amenities, including lodging, dining, and other tourism and entertainment-related commercial activities.

Policy CC 2-50: Encourage and facilitate the rehabilitation and beautification of historical properties in the downtown commercial area.

Policy CC 2-51: Encourage the development of vacant parcels in the downtown area with resident- and visitor-serving commercial, retail, and service uses.

Policy CC 2-52: Support the development of job-generating land uses in Princeton.

Policy CC 2-53: Maintain a buffer of lands designated Agriculture Transition (AT), surrounding the lands designated Urban Residential (UR).

***Action CC 2-H:** Explore opportunities to develop the historic Princeton Ferry Crossing to provide river access and serve as a recreation and tourism supporting use.*

***Action CC 2-I:** Seek funding to develop a public boat launch and recreational facilities within lands classified as Designated Floodway (DF) adjacent to the Sacramento River.*

Stonyford-Lodoga and Century Ranch

Policy CC 2-54: Preserve the rural character of the Stonyford-Lodoga area. New development should respect the area's visual and environmental qualities.

Policy CC 2-55: Discourage future subdivisions of land into parcels smaller than two acres in the Stonyford-Lodoga area.

Policy CC 2-56: Encourage development of a community wastewater treatment or clustered septic systems to serve lots smaller than two acres.

Policy CC 2-57: Require applicants requesting land subdivisions or parcel splits in the Stonyford-Lodoga area to provide proof of adequate water supply for domestic use and fire protection. Additionally, sewage disposal meeting the County's standards and frontage for each parcel on a road built to County standards shall be ensured.

Policy CC 2-58: Future commercial development should be concentrated in the existing commercial districts of Stonyford, Lodoga, and Century Ranch. Strip commercial development on the road between the communities should be prohibited.

Policy CC 2-59: Support opportunities for tourist-serving or recreational development in the Stonyford-Lodoga area, including East Park Reservoir.

Policy CC 2-60: Allow the subdivision of land designated Agriculture Transition (AT) and zoned Upland Conservation, 10 acre minimum (UC-10) into 10 acre parcels, provided that the project can demonstrate sufficient roadway access, water supply, septic capacity, no significant aesthetic impacts, and that no significant risk associated with wildland fires or slope stability would occur.

Policy CC 2-61: Encourage the development of job-creating land uses, including forestry, wildlife viewing and hunting, and outdoor recreation.

Policy CC 2-62: Support private and governmental efforts to expand logging and timber harvesting activities in the Stonyford and Mendocino National Forest area.

Policy CC 2-63: Provide land use standards and regulations that provide opportunities for rural, remote living.

Policy CC 2-64: If adequate water and sewer capacity can be identified, encourage the exploration of the potential for the vicinity (Stonyford, Lodoga, Century Ranch, or East Park Reservoir area) to accommodate a regional retreat and lodging or camping facility that capitalizes on the area's forest and wildlife resources and outdoor experiences.

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Action CC 2-J: Work with the U.S. Forest Service in coordinating activities on private lands within the Mendocino National Forest and encourage the accommodation of private homes within the forest.

Action CC 2-K: Review development proposals for consistency with the 1983 Stonyford-Lodoga Area Plan.

Action CC 2-L: Review and update the 1983 Stonyford-Lodoga Area Plan.

Williams – Unincorporated Area

Policy CC 2-65: Continue to cooperate and provide mutual assistance between the City of Williams and the County with respect to land use planning and the provision of services within the City's Sphere of Influence.

Policy CC 2-66: Ensure that new development within the Sphere of Influence is planned and designed to be compatible with adjacent lands within the Williams city limits.

Policy CC 2-67: Encourage urban residential development within the City's Sphere of Influence to connect to municipal water and wastewater service.

Policy CC 2-68: Encourage commercial, industrial, and other job-generating land uses, particularly in locations that are readily accessible by I-5.

Policy CC 2-69: Discourage the use, expansion and development of private or mutually owned water and wastewater systems serving residential uses within the Sphere of Influence.

Action CC 2-M: Support the Chamber of Commerce and other community organizations' efforts to attract and retain businesses and expand employment opportunities in the Williams Sphere of Influence.