

3.7 LAND USE AND PLANNING

This land use analysis evaluates consistency of the Student Housing Project with applicable land use plans and policies. The physical environmental effects associated with the project, many of which pertain to issues of land use compatibility (e.g., noise, aesthetics, air quality), are evaluated in other sections of Chapter 3 of this Draft EIR.

No comments regarding land use and planning were received in response to the NOP.

3.7.1 Regulatory Setting

FEDERAL

No federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws related to land use are applicable to the project.

STATE

State Planning and Zoning Laws

California Government Code Section 65300 et seq. establishes the obligation of cities and counties to adopt and implement general plans. The general plan is a comprehensive, long-term, and general document that describes plans for the physical development of a city or county and of any land outside its boundaries that, in the city's or county's judgment, bears relation to its planning. Cities typically identify a "sphere of influence" in their general plans; these are areas outside the city corporate boundaries that comprise the probable future boundary and service area of the city. The general plan addresses a broad range of topics, including at a minimum land use, circulation, housing, conservation, open space, noise, and safety. In addressing these topics, the general plan identifies the goals, objectives, policies, principles, standards, and plan proposals that support the city's or county's vision for the area.

The State Zoning Law (California Government Code, Section 65800 et seq.) establishes that zoning ordinances, which are laws that define allowable land uses within a specific zone district, are required to be consistent with the general plan. Local general plan policies and zoning ordinances, as they relate to the project, are summarized below.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Humboldt State University 2004 Master Plan

The *Humboldt State University 2004 Master Plan* is a strategy for modifying the Cal Poly Humboldt campus to accommodate growth and change over the 30- to 40-year planning horizon. Chapter 3, "Planning Principles," of the *Humboldt State University 2004 Master Plan* includes campus planning objectives, requirements and guidelines, which ensure that projects are planned out to contribute to Cal Poly Humboldt's vision of the campus (Humboldt State University 2004). The planning objectives and guidelines serve as a roadmap for guiding future campus development, including new student housing within university-owned property. Currently, approximately 70 percent of students currently reside in off-campus housing, and most live within the city or elsewhere within the county. The lack of student housing within university-owned property has put pressure on the City's and County's single-family housing market (Cal Poly Humboldt 2022). Additionally, the lack of available on-campus student housing has deterred prospective students from accepting enrollment, thereby reducing the total number of enrolled students. As a result, Cal Poly Humboldt has identified a need to provide additional student housing on university property at or near the main campus. Cal Poly Humboldt was also recently designated (as of 2021) as the third Cal Poly university in the CSU system.

LOCAL

Cal Poly Humboldt is part of the CSU, which is a statutorily and legislatively created, constitutionally authorized State entity. As explained in the “California State University Autonomy” section in Chapter 3 of this EIR, the CSU is not subject to local government planning and land use plans, policies, or regulations. Nevertheless, in the exercise of its discretion, Cal Poly Humboldt does reference, describe, and address local plans, policies, and regulations where appropriate and for informational purposes. This evaluation is also intended to be used by local agencies for determining, as part of their permit processes, the project’s consistency with local plans, policies, and regulations.

City of Arcata General Plan

The City of Arcata General Plan Land Use Element provides policies to address land use and planning within the city and to guide sustainable development that meets their land use and planning needs (City of Arcata 2008a). The following policies are relevant to the project.

- ▶ **Policy LU-1: Overall Land Use Pattern: Land Use Plan Map.** Provide an overall land use arrangement that concentrates city-wide uses and functions in the central Plaza Area, linked with a series of neighborhood centers which provide a mix of commercial services, residential uses, and community facilities.
- ▶ **Policy LU-2: Residential Land Use.** Allow for a mix of housing types and densities to meet the physical, social, and economic needs of residents, with new and converted housing designed to be compatible with the established neighborhood character.
- ▶ **Policy LU-4: Industrial Land Use.** Provide for uses which will retain and generate jobs, including labor-intensive manufacturing, processing, assembly, warehousing, services, and complementary non-industrial uses, in appropriate locations.

Other policies provided in the General Plan pertain to specific issue areas (e.g., visual resources) and are provided in other sections of this EIR where appropriate.

As noted in Chapter 2, “Project Description,” the City is currently in the process of updating its General Plan. An NOP of an EIR for the City’s General Plan 2045 and Gateway Area Plan was released in February 2022. As of the writing of this document, draft policies of the new General Plan 2045 have yet to be released, however the project site is identified as an infill opportunity zone for residential development (City of Arcata 2022a).

City of Arcata Land Use Code

The City of Arcata’s Land Use Code establishes zones for residential development and contains development standards to ensure orderly housing development that is consistent with the character of existing residential neighborhoods (City of Arcata 2008b). The following chapters are relevant to the project.

- ▶ **Chapter 9.30:** This chapter expands upon the zoning district development standards by addressing additional details of site planning, project design, and the operation of land uses. The intent of these standards is to ensure that proposed development is compatible with existing and future development on neighboring properties, and produces an environment of stable and desirable character, consistent with the General Plan and any applicable specific plan.
- ▶ **Chapter 9.34:** This chapter establishes requirements for landscaping to enhance the appearance of development projects, reduce heat and glare, control soil erosion, conserve water, screen potentially incompatible land uses, preserve the integrity of neighborhoods, improve air quality, and improve pedestrian and vehicular traffic safety.
- ▶ **Chapter 9.36:** The requirements of this chapter are intended to minimize impervious areas, to ensure that accessible, suitable, and well maintained off-street parking and loading facilities are provided for all uses and development, and that the facilities are properly designed, attractive, and located to be unobtrusive while meeting the needs of the specific use.

- ▶ **Chapter 9.42:** This chapter provides site planning, development, and/or operating standards for certain land uses that are allowed within individual or multiple zoning districts, and for activities that require special standards to mitigate their potential adverse impacts.
- ▶ **Chapter 9.58:** Provide procedures for the filing, processing, and approval or disapproval of applications for tree removal. Establishes minimum standards and regulations to preserve and protect trees which are considered important to the character of the City of Arcata and its neighborhoods.
- ▶ **Chapter 9.59:** Environmentally sensitive habitat areas (ESHA) within the City (Janes Creek, riparian corridors, wetlands, etc.) are important natural resources that provide ecological balance, ecosystem function, biological productivity, and values such as wildlife habitat, water quality, open space and scenic resources, flood control, and opportunities for scientific study and education. This chapter contains requirements that are intended to protect ESHAs through measures including setback restrictions, easements, overlay zones, limitations on uses within ESHAs, and mitigation.
- ▶ **Chapter 9.72 PD:** Provide a method whereby land may be designed and developed as a single unit by taking advantage of modern site planning techniques thereby resulting in a more efficient use of land and a better living environment than is otherwise possible through strict application of the development standards. Ensure that approved development meets high standards of environmental quality, public health and safety, the efficient use of the City's resources, and the purpose, intent, goals, policies, programs, and land use designations of the General Plan, the Local Coastal Program, and any applicable specific plan.

3.7.2 Environmental Setting

Land use planning is used to direct the amount, type, and location of different land uses and to coordinate anticipated development efforts for long-term efficiency of land uses and developed systems (e.g., circulation, infrastructure, and building space) within a planning area. This section describes the existing conditions related to land use and the existing land use designations at and near (within approximately 0.25 mile) of the project site.

PROJECT SITE

The project site is located in the north central portion of the City of Arcata. The majority of the project site is an elevated terrace (approximately 50 feet above mean sea level), and topography dips in the northwestern portion of the project site toward a tributary of Janes Creek. This northwestern portion of the site is 15-20 feet lower than the majority of the site and is an undeveloped area with a variety of native and non-native vegetation, a drainage ditch, concrete culvert, and a small wetland area. The difference in grade also provides a vertical grade separation between the project site and residential neighborhood to the west.

Currently, the project site is occupied by the existing Craftsman's Mall and three residential structures. Structures associated with the Craftsman's Mall are predominantly located in the southwestern portion of the site and consist of a collection of wood-framed warehouse buildings housing artisan and light industrial rental spaces and outdoor storage areas for local contractors. Elsewhere within the Craftsman's Mall property, portable structures (i.e., mobile homes) are scattered throughout. The three residences are located along the northeastern portion of the site. The northwestern portion and western edge of the site are currently undeveloped but provide some on-site detention of stormwater flows. Access to the site is available via St. Louis Road; however, no connection to Eye Street is currently provided.

Per the City's adopted General Plan and Zoning Code, land use and zoning designations within the project are predominantly industrial, with the majority of the site related to the Craftsman's Mall designated and zoned as "Industrial – Limited." However, the southeasternmost parcel is currently designated and zoned as "Residential – Low-Density." In addition and as noted in Chapter 2, "Project Description," the project site has been identified to be redesignated as an Infill Opportunity Zone for higher-density residential development in the City's 2019 Housing Element (City of Arcata 2019) and in updates to the City's General Plan Land Use Updates map (City of Arcata 2022a),

The five parcels located along St. Louis Road, along the project site's northern edge, are designated and zoned as "Industrial – General." Table 3.7-1 lists the designations for the project site and the definition of each.

Table 3.7-1 Zoning and Land Use Designations Used for the Project Site

Name – Type	Location	Definition
Industrial – Limited (IL) – City of Arcata General Plan Land Use and Zoning Designation	Majority of Craftsman's Mall property	The IL designation is applied to areas appropriate for light and moderate impact manufacturing, and limited commercial uses. Residential uses may also be allowed where they are compatible with the nature of the production process, or the related sales of products made on the premises.
Industrial – General – City of Arcata General Plan Land Use and Zoning Designation	Parcels located along northern portion of the site, adjacent to St. Louis Road	The IG Designation is applied to areas appropriate for light, moderate impact, and high impact manufacturing, and limited commercial uses.
Residential – Low-Density – City of Arcata General Plan Land Use and Zoning Designation	Southeastern parcel of the project site, south of St. Louis Road cul-de-sac	The RL designation is applied to areas appropriate for neighborhoods of single-family homes on individual lots and related, compatible uses. The allowable density ranges from two to 7.25 dwellings per acre.

Source: City of Arcata 2022b.

SURROUNDING LAND USES

Surrounding land uses include single-family residential development to the north, west, and south, industrial uses to the north, and US Highway (US) 101 to the east. A tributary to Janes Creek and its associated riparian corridor occurs surrounding the Janes Creek Meadows residential development to the northwest of the site. Arcata Elementary School is located approximately 340 feet to the south of the project site. St. Louis Road borders the project site to the north and provides one lane in each direction within an approximate 40 foot right of way. Adjacent to the project site across St. Louis Road is an industrial facility, Mad River Lumber, that processes and sells wholesale building materials/lumber. The Northwestern Pacific Railroad tracks are located to the east of the site parallel to St. Louis Road. The railroad is currently inactive and owned by the North Coast Railroad Authority.

3.7.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

METHODOLOGY

This discussion focuses on consistency with regional planning, planning designations/zoning, and existing use consistency. Please refer to Section 3.1, "Aesthetics," for a discussion of consistency with pertinent City of Arcata General Plan policies.

Evaluation of potential land-use impacts is based on a review of the planning documents pertaining to the project study area, including the current City of Arcata General Plan, and the City of Arcata Land Use Code. In determining the level of significance, this analysis assumes the Student Housing Project would comply with relevant state and other County ordinances and regulations related to land use.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

A land-use impact is considered significant if implementation of the Student Housing Project would do any of the following:

- ▶ physically divide an established community; or
- ▶ cause a significant environmental impact due to a conflict with any land use plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect.

ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED FURTHER

Division of an Established Community

The project site is currently somewhat isolated from downtown Arcata by distance and the lack of roadway access from the south, and is separated from the Valley East and Valley West neighborhoods to the north and the Sunny Brae residential neighborhood to the east by grade-separated US 101. It is also separated and distinct from the Alliance residential neighborhood to the west and northwest due to the presence of the tributary to Janes Creek and the Janes Creek Meadows riparian wetland, McDaniel Slough, and other open space. Because it is already physically separated from these land uses and centers of commercial activity in the City, there is no potential for the project to physically divide the community. The project would involve an extension of existing residential uses further east, north, and south from the existing single-family neighborhoods. As noted in Chapter 2, "Project Description," access to Eye Street would only be provided for emergency access purposes and project-related vehicular circulation would not use or otherwise disrupt the single-family neighborhood to the south. Therefore, the project would not physically divide an established community, and this issue is not discussed further in this EIR.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact 3.7-1: Cause a Significant Environmental Impact Due to a Conflict With Any Land Use Plan, Policy, or Regulation Adopted for the Purpose of Avoiding or Mitigating an Environmental Effect

The project would involve the redevelopment of an underutilized parcel with residential uses. As noted above, the City of Arcata encourages appropriate redevelopment of certain parcels of land which are either underutilized, brownfields, or vacant but surrounded by existing urban/suburban development. The project site has also been identified by the City, through its Housing Element and in-progress updates to the General Plan, as an infill opportunity zone for high density residential development, both in prior planning documents for the City and currently under consideration updates to the City General Plan. Therefore, the project would not create a conflict with any plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. Impacts would be **less than significant**.

As part of the CSU, a statutorily and legislatively created, constitutionally authorized State entity, Cal Poly Humboldt is not subject to municipal regulations of surrounding local governments, such as the City of Arcata general plans or land use designations, for uses on property owned or controlled by Cal Poly Humboldt that are in furtherance of its education purposes. The project, in and of itself, would provide additional housing opportunities for students proximate to campus and would be generally consistent with the 2004 Master Plan, although the project site itself was not owned by the Humboldt State University Foundation or Cal Poly Humboldt at the time the current campus Master Plan was adopted.

According to the City's General Plan, Arcata encourages appropriate redevelopment of certain parcels of land which are either underutilized, brownfields, or vacant but surrounded by existing urban/suburban development. These locations, of which the project site is one, represent development opportunities using existing infrastructure and have priority for development over vacant sites that are located outside the urban/suburban services boundary which require investment in extension of infrastructure and services. Infill development can include new residential units on upper floors of commercial structures, development of second units on residential lots, and new or expansion of existing residential and commercial structures consistent with the provisions of the applicable land use plan designations (City of Arcata 2008a).

As noted above, both the City's 2019 Housing Element and the updated land use map for the City's General Plan Update that is currently in progress identify the project site as an Infill Opportunity Zone for higher density residential development. More specifically, the General Plan Update's preliminary land use maps identifies the project site to be redesignated for high-density residential uses (City of Arcata 2022a). Further, City policies encourage the

development of new uses proximate to existing uses, which is one of the primary foci of the project. Therefore, the project is considered consistent with the City's current land use planning efforts.

As the project would provide additional student housing proximate to campus that will reduce the student housing burden on the local community, while also accommodating a greater percentage of existing and future students in Cal Poly Humboldt housing on or near the main campus, it is considered consistent with both the 2004 Master Plan and the City's General Plan. The project, therefore, would not create a conflict with any plan, policy, or regulation adopted for the purpose of avoiding or mitigating an environmental effect. Impacts would be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.