



July 13, 2018

Rob Holmlund, Director  
Development Services, City of Eureka  
531 K Street  
Eureka, CA 95501

**RE: Comments on Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for City of Eureka 2040 General Plan Update**

Mr. Holmlund:

Humboldt Baykeeper works to safeguard our coastal resources for the health, enjoyment, and economic strength of the Humboldt Bay community, and is a member of the California Coastkeeper Alliance and the international Waterkeeper Alliance.

We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the City's 2040 General Plan Update, which establishes a roadmap for the long-term physical, social, and economic future of Eureka; provides goals, policies, and programs to direct land use and development decisions, manage resources, deliver public services, and provide infrastructure; and provides the City's decision makers with guidance in setting priorities for the conservation of resources, provision of services and infrastructure, and allocation of public expenditures.

The Plan will shape Eureka's future, and includes many forward-thinking policies, but the implementation measures for many policies are unusually vague for a 20-year planning document. In general, we recommend more specific implementation measures for many of the policies discussed below. Our specific comments are as follows:

**Stormwater Drainage**

We support the policy that continues to encourage the use of green infrastructure in new construction as well as retrofitting of existing development (U-1.5), as well as the policy that requires new development and redevelopment to minimize stormwater runoff and pollutants entering drainage facilities and drainage courses by incorporating Low Impact Development measures and appropriate Best Management Practices (U-3.11).

We question whether it is consistent with state and federal regulations to allow manmade drainage to be dredged etc. even if classified as wetlands (U-3.5). The document does not

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appear to include a definition of wetlands, which should be included. We strongly support the adoption of the single-parameter wetland definition used by state agencies and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, since it is much more effective in protecting water quality and habitat values for protected species.

Adequate infrastructure to accommodate stormwater runoff and prevent flooding (U-3.1) should also take into consideration erosion and sedimentation related to peak flows, and should incorporate long-term plans to prepare for sea level rise.

### **Biological Resources**

We support the plan to develop guidelines for gulch greenway preservation and management (NR-2.2). Given that this was an intended outcome of the last General Plan and has yet to be completed, specific implementation measures should be adopted to ensure that this is completed in a timely manner.

The policy that allows limited development in gulches and greenways states that vegetation removal must not occur below the high water mark (NR-2.1). This is wholly inadequate to protect water quality, habitat values, and wildlife corridors that riparian buffers provide. The related policy on buffers is also inadequate (NR-2.6); it requires the provision and maintenance of “reasonably-sized buffers,” which has no meaning whatsoever. It also states that the buffers need not be larger than recommended by a “qualified professional ecologist,” which is not a licensed or certified professional classification and again has no specific meaning. We strongly support adoption of quantifiable buffer widths for riparian, wetland, and sensitive habitat areas that are consistent with established standards.

### **Marina District**

We support policies LU-3.8 and LU-3.9 as well as the vision of the Marina District as expanding the look and feel of Old Town to the west, instead of expanding the look and feel of Broadway to the north (p. 21). Full characterization of contamination at this the site is long overdue, and the zoning enacted by Measure N is inconsistent with the City’s LCP and Coastal Act standards. Any comprehensive planning for the site should involve early consultation with the Coastal Commission to ensure that coastal resources, particularly wetlands, are protected.

### **Hazardous Materials and Toxic Contamination**

We generally support the policies on site identification (HS-3.2) and remediation (HS-3.3), although again, implementation measures are vague. We also support the policy on known areas of contamination (HS-3.4), but a policy on suspected contamination at former industrial sites should be added. Many of these sites, including but not limited to historic lumber mill sites, contain soil and groundwater contamination that has not been identified. Any historic or extant industrial sites that have not been subject to appropriate site assessment should be investigated before any ground-disturbing activities are permitted.

### **Sea Level Rise Adaptation Measures**

We support the policy that calls for integrating resilience to anticipated sea level rise impacts into City project designs when repairing and replacing aging infrastructure (SL-1.12). However, the Plan fails to describe the long-term planning for capital improvements to vulnerable infrastructure. The City’s land use and development plan for the next two decades ought to

begin planning in earnest for the flooding, erosion, and rising groundwater that is projected in the coming decades.

Policy SL-1.9 calls for placing “safe” fill material in the Bay to protect existing and planned development should specify what is considered safe. Given our work on contamination issues, we assume it to mean “uncontaminated,” but the policy should be made more clear, perhaps by references standards that govern fill placement in Humboldt Bay.

We strongly support the inclusion of policies to limit new development in low-lying areas that will be subject to the projected impacts of sea level rise. Instead, the Plan proposes to simply kick the can down the road to future generations by enlarging shoreline protective structures (SL-1) and incorporating a “Protection Management Strategy” (SL-1.8). This strategy calls for protecting “developed areas and areas designated for urban uses” from sea level rise “until such time as the magnitude of sea-level rise is such that the protection management strategy can no longer be achieved.” At best, this is poor planning; on its face, it appears infeasible, unlikely to be funded, and will create more problems than already exist by putting more life and property in hazardous zones. We strongly recommend that the City take a more conservative approach by planning for protection in strategic areas of existing developed areas while launching the long-term planning process to move critical infrastructure to higher elevations, restore low-lying areas to preserve, restore, and enhance coastal wetlands that will absorb wave action, and limit new development in vulnerable areas.

Again, we appreciate the opportunity to comment on the City’s 2040 General Plan Update.

Sincerely,

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