

CHAPTER 16: EAST SONORA COMMUNITY PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The East Sonora Community Plan dates back to the early 1970's when the East Sonora Area Plan was originally proposed. At that time, the plan was considered as a growth plan for the East Sonora area; a plan was drafted, but was never officially adopted. In 1985, the East Sonora Area Business Association requested the Planning Department to resurrect and revise the earlier community plan. The 1985 proposal mapped out the boundaries of the East Sonora community, focused on the much debated Highway 108 Bypass route, and was to address the issue of melding commercial and industrial activities with surrounding residential neighborhoods.

Today's Community Plan has been downsized in scope due to the concurrent development of the Tuolumne County General Plan. Policies that have been developed to shape Tuolumne County's growth and development through the year 2020, are those which will also define East Sonora's direction.

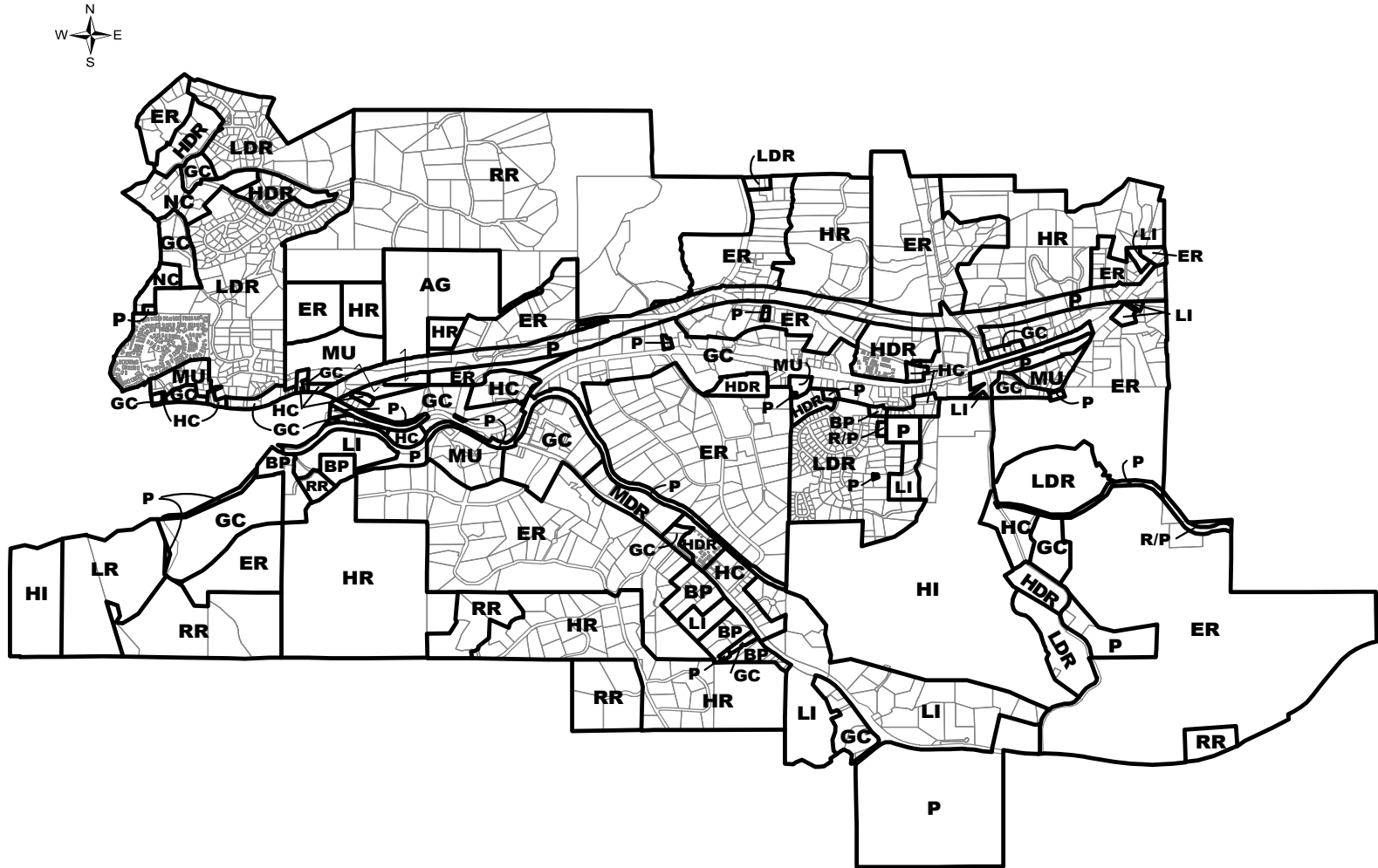
As contained within the 1992 Blue Ribbon Growth Management Report¹, policy recommendations relating to commercial and industrial development, pedestrian accessibility as well as the development of transportation facilities have been incorporated into the East Sonora Community Plan. The Community Plan also emphasizes retaining the rural character along the Highway 108 Bypass route, while redefining and revitalizing the Mono Way commercial corridor.

Unique natural as well as developed areas of East Sonora are recognized for their contribution to the character of the East Sonora Community; such areas include the Sierra Railroad, Elsie's Pool at Sullivan Creek, Curtis Creek, and the town of Standard. The Community Plan focuses specific policies that will serve to conserve these landmarks as well as enhance their stature for the benefit of Tuolumne County.

The Community Plan's physical boundaries are as they were when presented under the 1985 Area Plan. The Plan begins at the City of Sonora's eastern boundary at Greenly Road and proceeds to Standard Road; the width encompasses parts of Phoenix Lake Road and Peaceful Valley Road to the north and Tuolumne Road to the south. Within this area lie the Mono Village, Hess Estates, Greenley Oaks, Quail Ridge Ranch, and Lambert Lake Subdivisions; the retirement community of Sonora Hills; Standard Park; Curtis Creek Elementary School; Mono Village Fire Station; the Junction, Sonora East and Mono Village Shopping Centers; Boulder Plaza, Hillsdale and Indian Rock commercial centers; the Sonora Oaks Convention Center; Pacific Gas & Electric, Tuolumne Utilities District and TCI Cable headquarters; and, the Sierra Pacific Industries sawmill.

1 Blue Ribbon Growth Management Report, County of Tuolumne, April 1992.

EAST SONORA COMMUNITY PLAN BOUNDARY DIAGRAM
[Resolutions 188-98; 25-99; 138-00; 77-01]



SPECIAL PLANNING ISSUES

OVERVIEW OF THE EAST SONORA COMMUNITY

Given the availability of urban services as well as the locational relationship to Tuolumne County's main transportation route, the development of East Sonora has led to the intermingling of residential areas with neighboring commercial and industrial uses. Haphazard development perhaps, but nevertheless, East Sonora has always been defined as an integral part of and a focal point for Tuolumne County's economy.

East Sonora is a crossroads where residents of Tuolumne County can shop, recreate, work, and even recycle. It has become a place to meet, to come together; a resting place and a half way point for visitors heading to the high country. Almost year round, recreational travelers use this route for access to Pinecrest Lake, Beardsley Reservoir, Dodge Ridge, vacation cabins, and camping facilities of the Stanislaus National Forest. As such, East Sonora needs to be an area easily moved through, in and around.

Unlike the communities of Jamestown and Columbia, East Sonora is the metropolitan hub of Tuolumne County. Its focus is not based on the preservation of historical quality or setting, but on progress, on meeting the future head on without reservation. No other community within Tuolumne County has the diversity, infrastructure and, subsequently, the demand as does East Sonora. The vision behind the East Sonora Community Plan is that of flexibility and adaptability to insure that this community remains viable and strong in its role as the economic base of Tuolumne County.

CALTRANS BYPASS

On July 20, 1960, a proposed alignment for Route 108 through East Sonora was adopted as a freeway by the California Highway Commission. By the mid-1960's, a freeway agreement between Tuolumne County and the Division of Highways was signed and plans for an approximately 5 mile long, four-lane freeway that would adjoin the existing highway 108 route at Sanguinetti Road with the existing four lane expressway, west of Soulsbyville Road. Escalating costs and higher priority projects precluded the funding and construction of the project; in the interim, development took off in the East Sonora area. By 1983, bypass plans were resurrected, however due to extensive development, a new route was needed in order to avoid the development that had occurred in the Standard Road area. In March of 1993, a new adopted alignment was brought out for public review. At the time of this writing it appears that the alignment has been finalized with details of the interchange connections still to be worked out, acquisitions are underway and construction is slated to begin in 1998.

The trade off in keeping the commercialization of the Bypass corridor to a minimum is to concentrate the commercial and industrial activities within the Mono Way/Tuolumne Road corridors while establishing development guidelines for properties adjoining the Bypass corridor.

Sierra Railroad

In 1897, the Sierra Railroad was established as the County's first railroad. To this day, the Sierra Railroad is a key transportation link for the lumber industry, as well as for Tuolumne County's film and tourist industries.

In East Sonora, railroad rights-of-way for future public benefit can be preserved in the form of equestrian/pedestrian/non-motorized corridors. Setbacks and landscaping should be required along the operation all portion of the Sierra Railroad in order to protect the viewshed of tourists riding the steam trains.

New Standard

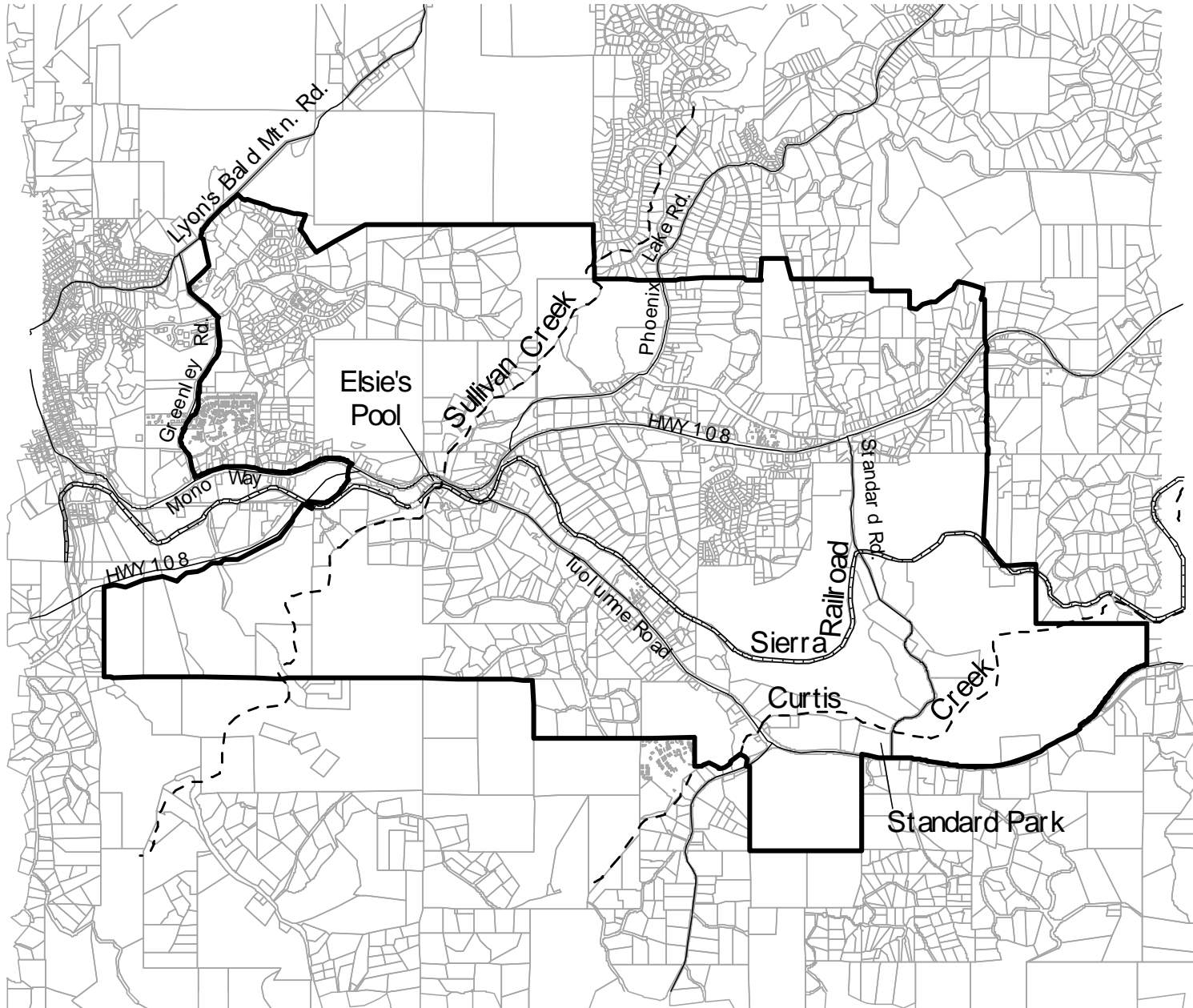
In 1910, the Standard Lumber Company began the establishment of the town of Standard which developed as a company town housing the lumber mill's employees and families. In 1919, Pickering Lumber bought the company and town and continued to operate it until 1964, when Fibreboard Corporation came into ownership. Between 1966 and 1972, the population of Standard declined by half, many of the homes were sold and moved to the south of Tuolumne Road. Today, only seven of the original structures remain.

Plans are underway for the redevelopment and revitalization of the town of Standard. The East Sonora Community Plan recognizes the prospects for this new community and encourages innovative development to obtain a range of residential densities, commercial enterprises, recreational opportunities and "old town" charm.

Sonora, Curtis and Sullivan Creeks

Sonora, Curtis and Sullivan Creeks are considered to be major contributors to the Don Pedro Reservoir and as such, are key components to municipal and domestic water supplies, agriculture, recreation, freshwater and wildlife habitats. Recognition of these perennial streams and the role they play in our everyday lives brings about the need to provide for their future viability. The East Sonora Community Plan outlines policies which not only serve to protect these creeks, but also bring to light their recreational potential.

EAST SONORA PLANNING LANDMARKS



What is the East Sonora Community Plan?

The East Sonora Community Plan is a part of the Tuolumne County General Plan. The East Sonora Community Plan allows for greater local input into the planning, growth and development of the community of East Sonora. This plan has been formulated to be consistent with the Tuolumne County General Plan but contains certain policies and implementation programs to meet specific needs of the East Sonora Community. The East Sonora Community Plan works as to complement the General Plan and, as such, the policies and implementation programs contained herein are to be implemented in addition to those contained in all of the elements of the General Plan. The long-range growth and development policies were framed to guide the East Sonora Community through orderly growth over the next 25 years. The Plan serves as a guide for the Community of East Sonora; it is the community itself, working together, that will determine the direction the Plan will take.

Planning Advisory Group

Each community has its own unique assets, characteristics, identity and goals; as such, each community is in a strong position to assist the County in assessing the extent of the community's particular need to apply County policies regarding the preservation of small town atmosphere and surrounding open space in the community's pursuit of its long-term goals.

The Blue Ribbon Growth Management report found that the County should encourage and establish citizen education and participation in locally based planning groups with the goal of delegating much of the development regulatory approval process to the local bodies. As outlined within the Policies of the East Sonora Community Plan, the formation of a Planning Advisory Group is considered. If adopted, the advisory group should be the lead in formulating and modifying the Goals and Policies of the Community Plan through their recommendations to the Planning Commission.

Updating and Amending the Community Plan

Due to increases in growth rates, increases in demands for services and changes in planning philosophy, there will always be a need to update and amend the East Sonora Community Plan.

Amendments to the Community Plan may include changes to the diagrams as well as to the textual content. These amendments must be reviewed by the Tuolumne County Planning Commission and approved by the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors.

On a periodic basis the East Sonora Planning Advisory Group, with assistance of the Planning Department, will conduct a review of the Community Plan during a public hearing to assess the needs of the community and determine if amendments to the Community Plan should be initiated to direct the growth of East Sonora in order to meet those needs.

Implementation of the Community Plan

Implementation of the East Sonora Community Plan shall be in accordance with the programs described herein and with County ordinances and resolutions establishing standards for growth and development. New County regulations adopted after the effective date of the East Sonora Community Plan, which are more restrictive than said plan, shall be incorporated herein without formal amendment to this Community Plan. The implementation of the County's General Plan will well serve the East Sonora Community into the 25 year planning horizon.

GOALS, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

GOAL 16.A Create a bypass route along the proposed Highway 108 corridor that will maintain the rural setting while allowing for the sensitive integration of community identification signage and residential development.

Policies

- 16.A.1 Consider the establishment of development guidelines for properties along the Highway 108 corridor that will preserve the rural character of the Bypass route.
- 16.A.2 Conserve the natural scenic quality of hillsides and vistas within the Highway 108 Bypass corridor.
- 16.A.3 Encourage the creation of community information signs along the Bypass.
- 16.A.4 Promote the establishment of Park and Ride facilities in conjunction with the Bypass development.
- 16.A.5 Consider the use of design modifications with regards to road design so as to retain the rural character of outlying residential development.
- 16.A.6 Maintain rural and natural qualities of the outlying East Sonora Community through the use of native tree species for landscaping and preservation of blocks of native vegetation, with emphasis along main circulation corridors.

Implementation Programs

- 16.A.a Setbacks and Screening
- Establish setbacks of 100 feet from the Bypass right-of-way line for any newly constructed building. Encourage the screening of materials and equipment within the established setback through the use of landscaping and architectural elements so as not to be of an intrusive nature with the viewshed along the bypass.
- 16.A.b Hillside Conservation
- Encourage hillside development to be designed and located to be compatible with, rather than imposed on, the landscape and environment by minimizing the amount of grading and topographical alteration it necessitates. Formulate guidelines which provide recommendations for integrating new construction with hillsides and hilltops. These recommendations will be made available to assist in the designing of new land development projects which are proposed on hillsides or on ridgetops. The guidelines should address fire-safe construction techniques, vegetation retention, retaining wall enhancement, alternative road construction techniques to reduce cuts and fills, reduced standards for bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and illustrate techniques for blending new construction with the surrounding hillsides and hilltops
- 16.A.c Signage
- Encourage the development of a community sign plan along the Bypass route at on- and off-ramps. Signs should be uniform in design and promote East Sonora Community businesses. Other signage should be limited to Caltrans informational signs so as not to detract from the community signs.

- 16.A.d Park and Ride
- Investigate the development of "Park and Ride" facilities at the entrance points to the bypass route.
- 16.A.e State and Federal Funding
- Pursue State and Federal funding, such as Intermodal Surface Transportation Enhancement Activities (ISTEA), for use in habitat restoration, park and ride facilities, and guard rail replacements along the bypass route.
- 16.A.f Design Modifications
- Develop road design modifications which will work with the natural topography and native vegetation patterns so as to retain the rural character of residential areas along the Bypass corridor.
- 16.A.g Rural Setting
- Develop plans for the preservation of native tree species and blocks of native vegetation to maintain the rural atmosphere along the Bypass route; where appropriate, direct and design off-site habitat mitigation along the Bypass route.

GOAL 16.B Redefine and revitalize the commercial and industrial areas of East Sonora.

Policies

- 16.B.1 Consider the establishment of design standards for commercial and industrial developments.
- 16.B.2 Support mixed use development within the East Sonora Community Plan boundaries to promote infilling by providing for flexibility and innovation in such development.
- 16.B.3 Discourage the spread of strip commercial development along Highway 108 and Tuolumne Road, east of Standard Road.
- 16.B.4 Promote the development of a new industrial and regional business park along Tuolumne Road.
- 16.B.5 Encourage the development of a community wide campaign focusing on the aesthetics of East Sonora.
- 16.B.6 Consider the establishment of an East Sonora Sign Ordinance that provides greater flexibility and more opportunities to increase visibility of East Sonora businesses.
- 16.B.7 Encourage new commercial development to be located along Mono Way and Tuolumne Road by utilizing existing structures and constructing on vacant parcels to infill between existing development.
- 16.B.8 Encourage the consolidation of ingress/egress through shared driveways with regards to new development in order to minimize encroachments on State and County roads.

Implementation Programs

16.B.a Design Guide

Encourage the development of a design guide which outlines desirable site design elements as well as architectural elements for commercial and industrial projects citing the Indian Rock and Boulder Plaza developments as positive displays of such elements.

16.B.b Mixed Use Development

Designate areas on the East Sonora Community Plan land use maps as Mixed Use (MU) to provide for flexibility and innovation in developing infill areas.

16.B.c Strip Commercial Development

Discourage the expansion of strip commercial development along Highway 108 and Tuolumne Road by prohibiting commercial and/or industrial development through the East Sonora Community Plan land use diagrams.

16.B.d Industrial and Business Park Development

Designate areas on the East Sonora Community land use diagrams for new industrial complexes and business parks, including lands within and around Sierra Pacific Industries, to provide employment opportunities for residents of Tuolumne County.

16.B.e Provision of Amenities

Where appropriate, require new commercial and industrial development to contribute in the provision of the following:

1. Pedestrian walkways along one side of all on-site access roads;
2. Street lights in all areas where pedestrian walkways are required and in areas as needed for safety and crime deterrent; and,
3. Shade trees, spaced approximately 25 feet apart, along all street frontages.

16.B.f Community Landscape Program

Consider the establishment of a community wide landscape program to reduce the asphalt impact currently found in East Sonora. Seek local business participation in creating landscaped focal points within existing commercial and industrial centers that lend themselves to employee and visitor use. Promote the planting of street trees along transportation routes and at entrances to commercial centers; create formal landscaped entrances to the Mono Way business corridor.

16.B.g Art in Public Places

Encourage the development of public displays of art within and around existing commercial centers. Consider the incorporation of sculptures and murals depicting local, regional, and historical values of the Sierra Nevadas.

16.B.h Shared Ingress/Egress

Develop criteria which would allow for routine consolidation of ingress/egress points along Mono Way and Tuolumne Road.

GOAL 16.C Conserve unique natural and historical resources that serve as community landmarks for East Sonora.

Policies

- 16.C.1 Consider the establishment of design standards and setbacks along the Sierra Railroad grade, Sullivan Creek, Sonora Creek and Curtis Creek.
- 16.C.2 Minimize the existing conflict between development and wildlife habitat within East Sonora.
- 16.C.3 Protect outstanding scenic resources and viewsheds which contribute to the recreational enjoyment of the East Sonora Community and help define the character of that community.
- 16.C.4 Encourage new development to capitalize on the use of native vegetation for aesthetic and functional purposes.
- 16.C.5 Support the continued use of the Sierra Railroad for expanded freight and passenger transportation services.
- 16.C.6 Support the use of the abandoned Sierra Railroad grade for pedestrian and equestrian recreational use.
- 16.C.7 Encourage and support voluntary efforts to protect and enhance Sullivan Creek, Elsie's Pool, Curtis Creek, Sonora Creek and associated riparian vegetation for scenic and recreational values.

Implementation Programs

- 16.C.a Community Landmarks Survey

Survey the community to establish significant historic, biologic and other landmarks that provide a community "sense of place" that should be preserved as civic facilities.
- 16.C.b Off-Site Mitigation

Where appropriate, create a mechanism whereby proposed new development within the East Sonora Community, may utilize off-site habitat in order to eliminate conflicts with commercial and industrial uses.
- 16.C.c Pedestrian Access

Encourage the dedication of public access easements for the facilitation of a community wide pedestrian accessibility plan to capitalize on the recreational opportunities of Curtis, Sonora and Sullivan Creeks and the Sierra Railroad grade.
- 16.C.d Require Filtration of Surface Runoff

Require as a condition of approval of discretionary entitlements for new development that surface runoff from that development be filtered through sedimentation basins, grease traps or similar devices prior to discharge into Sullivan, Sonora and Curtis Creeks to minimize degradation of their waters.
- 16.C.e Limit Crossing of Waterways

Limit the number of road crossings of streams, creeks and other tributaries of Sullivan, Sonora and Curtis Creeks to minimize impacts of riparian habitat as a condition of approval of entitlements for new development.

16.C.f Habitat Conservation and Recreational Opportunities

Require appropriate mitigation for impacts to biological resources from new development along Sullivan and Curtis Creek and encourage the design of such development to accommodate the provision of non-motorized trails along the creeks for recreational opportunities.

16.C.g Elsie's Pool

Support the development of a regional park at Elsie's Pool which would provide opportunities for nature study and recreational pursuits.

GOAL 16.D Protect the existing residential neighborhoods of East Sonora while providing opportunities for quality higher density residential development.

Policies

16.D.1 Require new development which borders existing residential neighborhoods to provide adequate and appropriate buffers, such as setbacks or vegetative screening, between itself and the neighborhood.

16.D.2 Consider the establishment of design criteria for Medium and High Density Residential developments.

16.D.3 Encourage the use of native vegetation and natural topography in the design of residential developments. Hillside construction should nestle in among trees and use an architectural design to blend with the environment.

16.D.4 Encourage master planned communities as a means of achieving innovative and creative developments. Said communities should be designed with pedestrian focus.

16.D.5 Require new urban residential development to provide amenities such as pedestrian walkways, bicycle paths, street lights, landscaping and recreational facilities.

Implementation Programs

16.D.a Buffers

Require new development bordering existing residential neighborhoods to provide adequate and appropriate buffers between itself and the neighborhood. Such buffers could include areas of recreational opportunities and landscape corridors.

16.D.b Multi-Family Design Guide

Develop design criteria for Medium and High Density Residential developments which create community pride and interaction through architectural integrity and site design. Consider the use of front porches, community gardens, and the separation of pedestrian and vehicle circulation.

- 16.D.c Natural Environment
- Emphasize native vegetation and natural topography as paramount in the design of residential developments. New developments should be reviewed for architectural compatibility with the surrounding environment.
- 16.D.d Master Planned Communities
- Promote the use of Development Agreements in order to offer the most flexible means for creative and innovative design opportunities. Encourage project proponents to consider mixed use, clustering, and recreational use of Open Space habitats, where appropriate to create viable communities.
- 16.D.e Provision of Amenities
- Require, where appropriate, new residential development with a density of three (3) dwelling units per acre or greater to provide the following:
1. Pedestrian walkways along one side of all on-site access roads;
 2. Street lights in all areas where pedestrian walkways are required and in areas as needed for safety and crime deterrent; and,
 3. Shade trees, spaced approximately 25 feet apart, along all street frontages.
- 16.D.f Provision of Recreational Facilities
- Require new residential development of five or more units to participate in the provision of recreational facilities as follows:
1. Recreation facilities for multiple family housing projects will be provided on site;
 2. For recreation facilities for residential subdivisions, the subdivider may provide said facilities on site, pay an in-lieu recreation fee, or dedicate land for public recreational facilities.
- Properties located along Curtis, Sonora or Sullivan Creeks may dedicate recreational access easements towards fulfilling said requirements.

GOAL 16.E Promote the development of community oriented recreational opportunities and facilitate pedestrian accessibility throughout East Sonora.

Policies

- 16.E.1 Consider the incorporation of landscaped berms and medians to separate bicycle and pedestrian facilities from local collector roadways.
- 16.E.2 Establish a master park and recreation plan for the Community of East Sonora with Standard Park as the focus.
- 16.E.3 Support the continued provision of the County's transit system.
- 16.E.4 Establish guidelines that encourage new residential development to be provided with recreational facilities, including useable open space, when creating five or more parcels and/or units.

Implementation Programs

16.E.a Roadway Design Standards

Develop design standards which would allow for the inclusion of sidewalks, street trees, landscape berms and bike paths, where feasible, to separate pedestrian traffic from vehicular traffic along rural collector roads including: Mono Way, Tuolumne Road, Phoenix Lake Road, and Standard Road.

16.E.b Local Transit System

Establish a transit network between park and ride facilities and the local county transit system that is compatible with the location of industrial, commercial, and residential areas.

16.E.c Bus Stops

Provide for the development of sheltered bus stops in conjunction with commercial, industrial and residential developments.

16.E.d Provision of Amenities

Require new development to participate in the provision of the following:

1. Pedestrian walkways along on side of on-site access roads or access roads as they front on the site; and,
2. Street lights or other types of exterior lighting in all areas where pedestrian walkways are provided and in additional areas as required for safety and crime deterrent.

16.E.e Provision of Recreational Facilities

Require, where feasible, new residential development of five or more units to participate in the provision of recreational facilities for their residents as follows:

1. For multiple family housing developments, recreational facilities will be provided on site;
2. For residential subdivisions, the subdivider will have the option to provide recreational facilities on site, pay an in-lieu recreation fee or dedicate land for public recreational facilities.

16.E.f Sullivan, Sonora and Curtis Creeks

Encourage property owners abutting Sullivan, Sonora and Curtis Creeks to consider dedicating recreational access easements. Said easements in no way authorize trespass upon private property, or increase the right of public agencies to gain access to private property without the express approval of the property owner.

16.E.g "East Sonora Park"

Support the expansion of Standard Park as a shared use facility with the Sonora High School future expansion site to create a regional park. Possible facilities to be developed

could include: lighted tennis courts, indoor swimming, track and field, picnic grounds, and an outdoor amphitheater.

Responsibility for Programs: Administration of the Implementation Programs listed in this community plan is the shared responsibility of the Board of Supervisors, Tuolumne County Planning Commission, Tuolumne County Department of Public Works, Department of Building and Safety, Division of Environmental Health, Fire Department, Park and Recreation Department, the citizens of the East Sonora Community, and the Tuolumne County Planning Department serving as the primary administrator.

Funding Sources: Administration of the Implementation Programs listed herein will be funded through the County's General Fund, Road Fund and grants.

Time Frame for Implementation: Implementation of the programs listed in this community plan are ongoing.