



The Scenic Landscapes Element is organized into the following sections:

- Natural and Working Landscapes (Section 7.1)
- Scenic Corridors and Places (Section 7.2)
- Community Design (Section 7.3)
- Design of Infrastructure (Section 7.4)
- Work Plan/Implementation Measures (Section 7.5)

Key Terms

The following terms are used throughout this element to describe scenic landscapes issues:

Community Design. Community design considers the shape, patterns, and visual texture of development. It includes roads, blocks, buildings, land subdivision, and other types of historic and contemporary investment that contribute to the form and quality of communities and cities.

Compatible Development. This includes new public or private development, such as buildings and infrastructure, which is harmonious with natural features and historic structures.

Core Areas. These are traditional centers of communities that often include many cultural, governmental, economic, and residential activities that serve the surrounding area.

County Scenic Routes. These are highways and roads that have been identified by the County as important to tourism and the rural travel experience in valley, foothill, and mountain landscapes.

Cultural Landscapes. A cultural landscape is a geographic area that includes cultural and natural resources associated with a historic event, activity, person, or group of people. They provide scenic, economic, ecological, social, recreational, and educational opportunities.

Edge Conditions. This refers to the way urban uses interface with rural and agricultural landscapes.

Gateway Community. A community that is located along a major transportation route adjacent to a known destination (i.e., Three Rivers and Sequoia National Park). These communities must be passed through to access certain areas or destinations and act as gateways.

Historic Places. These are official National, State, and local historic preservation sites. These identify and acknowledge places of important historical, cultural, and/or architectural importance. A detailed description of these can be found in the Background Report.

Natural Landscapes. An expanse of naturally-formed scenery that contribute to the visual beauty of Tulare County.

Scenic Landscapes. Scenic landscapes include agricultural lands, woodlands, forestlands, watercourses, mountains, meadows, structures, communities, and other types of scenery that contribute to the visual beauty of Tulare County.

State Scenic Highways. Scenic highways exhibit unique natural beauty viewed by travelers. California Scenic Highways may be formally designated based on criteria established in Section 260 et seq. of the Streets and Highway Code. Benefits of “scenic highway” status include protecting environmental assets that encourage tourism and inclusion on travel maps produced by the State Division of Tourism.

State scenic highway nominations are evaluated by Caltrans using the following qualifications:

1. The proposed scenic highway is principally within an unspoiled native habitat and showcases the unique aspects of the landscape, showcase agriculture, or man-made water features,
2. Existing visual intrusions do not significantly impact the scenic corridor,
3. Strong local support for the proposed scenic highway designation is demonstrated, and
4. The length of the proposed scenic highway is not short or segmented.

If Caltrans determines that the highway qualifies for designation, the local government must prepare a scenic corridor protection plan including five minimum requirements, regulating elements such as land use, density, land and site planning, landscaping, and design.

Urban Separators. Urban separators maintain natural and working landscapes between urban areas. They are used to enhance definition of individual communities, hamlets and cities and maintain their identity.

Viewshed. An area of land, water, or other environmental features that is visible from a fixed vantage point. Viewsheds tend to be areas of particular scenic or historic value that are deemed worthy of preservation against development or other change. The preservation of viewsheds is typically the goal in the designation of open space areas, green belts, and urban separators.

Working Landscapes. These are landscapes shaped by human activities that produce economic commodities such as agricultural lands, ranch lands, and timber lands. They may also include picturesque commercial districts in communities, crops, orchards, agricultural structures, stands of timber, and canals.

Existing Conditions

Tulare County has a complex structure of scenic natural landscapes, agricultural landscapes, and urban and rural communities. It possesses many of California’s most unspoiled places and is experiencing rapid population growth and the need to diversify its economy. Tulare County’s natural and working landscapes include growing communities and cities with expanding urban edges.

7.1 Natural and Working Landscapes

SL-1

To protect and feature the beauty of Tulare County's views of working and natural landscapes.

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-1.2 Working Landscapes

The County shall require that new non-agricultural structures and infrastructure located in or adjacent to croplands, orchards, vineyards, and open rangelands be sited so as to not obstruct important viewsheds and to be designed to reflect unique relationships with the landscape by:

1. Referencing traditional agricultural building forms and materials,
2. Screening and breaking up parking and paving with landscaping, and
3. Minimizing light pollution and bright signage.

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.

7.2 Scenic Corridors and Places

SL-2

To protect the scenic views for travelers along the County's roads and highways.

SL-2.1 Designated Scenic Routes and Highways

The County shall protect views of natural and working landscapes along the County's highways and roads by maintaining a designated system of County scenic routes and State scenic highways by:

1. Requiring development within existing eligible State scenic highway corridors to adhere to land use and design standards and guidelines required by the State Scenic Highway Program,
2. Supporting and encouraging citizen initiatives working for formal designation of eligible segments of State Highway 198 and State Highway 190 as State scenic highways,
3. Formalizing a system of County scenic routes throughout the County (see Figure 7-1), and
4. Requiring development located within County scenic route corridors to adhere to local design guidelines and standards.

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.

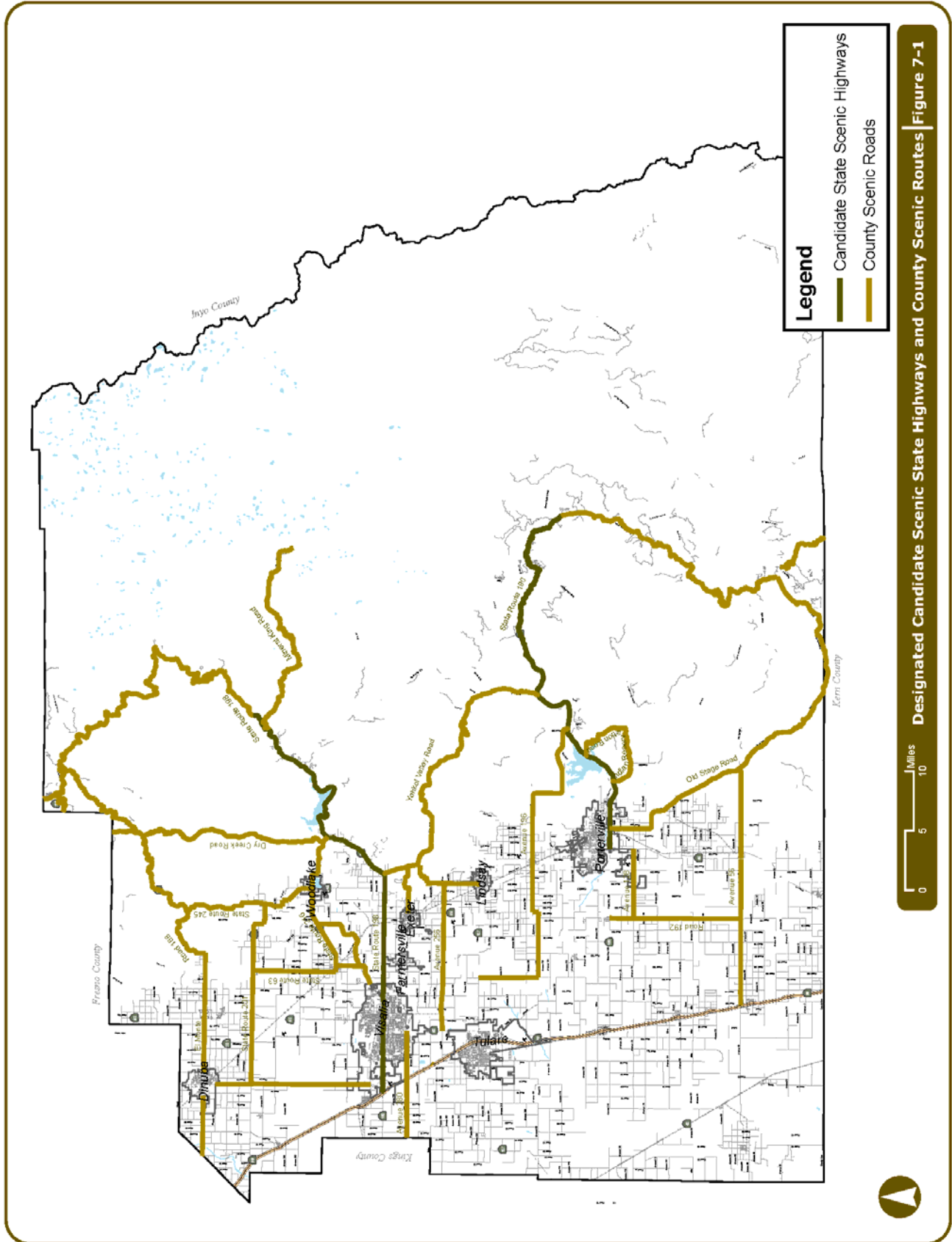
SL-2.3 Historic and Cultural Landscapes

The County shall use the County's scenic routes and highways to connect cultural landscapes, historic landmarks and communities, and points of interest including:

1. Historic travel routes and trails,
2. Historic settlements,
3. Historic places, events, sites, buildings and structures,
4. Prehistoric and archeological features, and
5. Majestic trees, streetscapes, and parks.

SL-2.4 New Billboards

Unless superseded by State law, the County shall prohibit billboards and other forms of off-site advertising along State scenic highways, County scenic routes, and within areas designated for agriculture and open space.



SL-2.5 Billboard Removal

The County shall seek to reduce the number of billboards along State scenic highways and County scenic routes.

SL-2.6 Billboard Placement

The County shall control the placement of billboards throughout the unincorporated County to preserve scenic qualities along major routes.

7.3 Community Design

SL-3

To provide distinctive communities, rural development patterns and character that is compatible with the best features of Tulare County’s traditional community centers and agricultural landscapes.

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.

SL-3.2 Urban Expansion–Edges

The County shall design and plan the edges and interface of communities with working and natural landscapes to protect their scenic qualities by:

1. Maintaining urban separators between cities and communities,
2. Encouraging cities to master plan mixed-density neighborhoods at their edges, locating compatible lower density uses adjacent to working and natural landscapes, and
3. Protecting important natural, cultural, and scenic resources located within areas that may be urbanized in the future.

SL-3.3 Highway Commercial

The County shall require highway commercial uses to be located and designed to reduce their visual impact on the travel experience along State scenic highways and County scenic routes by:

1. Encouraging commercial development to locate in existing communities and hamlets,
2. Designing highway commercial areas as an extension of community street patterns and vernacular design traditions, allowing the individual personalities of each community to extend to the highway edge, and
3. Discouraging development of frontage roads consistent with commercial strips except when consistent with regional growth corridor and community plans.

SL-3.4 Planned Communities

If planned communities are allowed, the County shall require that they are designed to minimize visual impact on scenic working and natural landscapes by:

1. Avoiding development along ridgelines and other highly visible locations,
2. Siting development in a manner that reduces the visibility of new development,
3. Mitigating light pollution on night sky conditions,
4. Utilizing architectural and site planning concepts that appropriately reflect local climate and site conditions, and
5. Integrating cultural, architectural, and historic resources into their plans.

7.4 Design of Infrastructure

SL-4

To design infrastructure to visually enhance the built environment while minimizing visual impact on rural and natural places.

SL-4.1 Design of Highways

The County shall work with Caltrans and Tulare County Association of Governments (TCAG) to ensure that the design of State Highway 99 and other State Highways protects scenic resources and provides access to vistas of working and natural landscapes by:

1. Limiting the construction of sound walls that block views of the County's landscapes (incorporate setbacks to sensitive land uses to avoid noise impacts whenever feasible),
2. Using regionally-appropriate trees and landscaping and incorporating existing landmark trees,
3. Preserving historic and cultural places and vistas,
4. Avoiding excessive cut and fill for roadways along State scenic highways and County scenic routes, and along areas exposed to a large viewing area, and
5. Promote highway safety by identifying appropriate areas for traffic pull-outs and rest areas.

SL-4.2 Design of County Roads

The County's reinvestment in rural County roads outside urban areas should, in addition to meeting functional needs and safety needs, preserve the experience of traveling on the County's "country roads" by:

1. Maintaining narrow as possible rights-of-ways,
2. Limiting the amount of curbs, paved shoulders, and other "urban" edge improvements,
3. Preserving historic bridges and signage, and
4. Promote County road safety by identifying appropriate areas for traffic pull-out.

SL-4.3 Railroads and Rail Transit

The County shall encourage rail infrastructure for freight and passenger service to be planned and designed to limit visual impacts on scenic landscapes by:

1. Concentrating infrastructure in existing railroad rights-of-ways,
2. Avoiding additional grade separated crossings in viewshed locations, and
3. Using new transit stations supporting rail transit as design features in existing and future core community areas.



For information regarding communications systems, See Chapter 14-Public Facilities and Services, Section 13.6: Communication Systems.

Please see next page.

7.5 Work Plan/Implementation Measures

The following table documents the Implementation Measures included with the General Plan to implement the goals and policies included in this Element.

Implementation	Implements what Policy	Who is Responsible	2012-2015	2015-2020	2020-2030	On-Going
1. The County shall work with citizens groups to prepare nomination materials, inventories of visual and scenic resources, corridor protection plans and other documents required to support the adoption of State scenic highway designations for State Highways 190 and 198.	SL-2.1	RMA				■
2. The County shall adopt procedures criteria, formal nomination and designation procedures, and requirements for County scenic routes.	SL-1.1 SL-2.1	RMA	■			
3. The County shall establish site plan review and/or design review processes for development located along designated State scenic highways and County scenic routes.	SL-1.1 SL-2.1 SL-3.1	RMA	■			
4. The County shall prepare design guidelines for County scenic routes in the Valley areas (a scenic corridor overlay already exist for roads in the foothills). For communities, these guidelines will be used to maintain the scenic character of these corridors as they pass through the community.	SL-2.1 SL-3.1	RMA	■			
5. The County shall work with Caltrans on the preparation and maintenance of corridor protection plans that will be used to guide compatible development along designated State scenic highways.	SL-2.1 SL-2.4 SL-2.5 SL-3.3 SL-4.1	RMA				■
6. The County shall work with local communities to prepare "Sequoia Gateway Guidelines" for Three Rivers and Springville. This shall be carried out in conjunction with community plan updates for these areas.	SL-2.2	RMA	■			
7. The County shall work with the Sequoia Regional Visitors Center, the Sequoia Natural History Association, the Economic Development	SL-2.2	RMA, Eco.Dev. Corp.				■

Tulare County General Plan

Implementation	Implements what Policy	Who is Responsible	2012-2015	2015-2020	2020-2030	On-Going
Corporation and local interest groups in Three Rivers and Springville to prepare and distribute promotional materials detailing scenic routes, points of interest, and activities that will entice visitors to stay longer in the County's gateway communities and surrounding areas. Distribution locations for these articles, maps, and other materials might include visitor centers, the internet, safety rest stops, local cafes, and travel publications.						
8. The County shall work with the Tulare County Historical Society, State Parks, and the State Historic Preservation Officer to research historic sites along State scenic highways and County scenic routes and prepare a formal list of cultural and historic resources.	SL-2.3	RMA	■			
9. The County shall evaluate existing amortization rules and explore means to abate and remove billboards, in coordination with Caltrans, as appropriate.	SL-2.5	RMA			■	
10. The County shall create an inventory of existing billboards indicating any signs that are inconsistent with the County Zoning Ordinance.	SL-2.5	RMA			■	
11. The County shall update its Land Development Regulations and Zoning Ordinance consistent with the policies described herein.	SL-3.1 SL-3.2 SL-3.3 SL-3.4 SL-4.1 SL-4.2	RMA	■			
12. The County shall work with the Tulare County Redevelopment Agency, special districts, private developers, and local communities to add "design elements" to community plans and specific plans.	SL-3.1 SL-3.2 SL-3.3 SL-3.4 SL-4.1	RMA				■
13. Whenever new or updated community, hamlet, sub-area or corridor plans are created, the need for urban separators will be considered as part of the process.	SL-3.2	RMA, Planning				■
14. Development of design and	SL-4.2	RMA	■			

7. Scenic Landscapes

Implementation	Implements what Policy	Who is Responsible	2012-2015	2015-2020	2020-2030	On-Going
improvement standards required in the Transportation & Circulation Element (Implementation Measure 4) shall include consideration of the aesthetic principles set forth in Policy SL-4.2: Design of County Roads.						
15. The County shall work with railroads and transportation agencies to review rail planning for freight and passenger service in Tulare County for consistency with Scenic Landscapes Element.	SL-4.3	RMA				■

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