

## 3 Environmental Setting

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This section provides a general overview of the environmental setting for the project. More detailed descriptions of the environmental setting for each environmental issue area can be found in Section 4, *Environmental Impact Analysis*.

### 3.1 Regional Setting

The City of Ukiah is located along U.S. Highway 101 in Mendocino County, which lies within the Northern Coast of California. Mendocino County spans the Coast Ranges, a group of northwest-southeast oriented mountain ranges with intervening canyons and valleys. Mendocino County's climate is characterized by annual temperatures averaging up to 58 degrees Fahrenheit (°F) and annual rainfall averaging up to 45 inches (County of Mendocino 2008).

Ukiah sits approximately 26 miles east of the Pacific Ocean, 45 miles north of Healdsburg and 35 miles south of Laytonville. The nearest major city to Ukiah is Santa Rosa, located approximately 60 miles south, while the larger urban centers of San Francisco and Sacramento are located approximately 100 miles south and southeast of Ukiah, respectively. The City is generally bounded by rolling hills to the west, the Russian River and rolling hills to the east, and the Redwood Valley to the north (City of Ukiah 2020). Figure 2-1 in Chapter 2, *Project Description*, shows the regional location of Ukiah.

### 3.2 Physical Setting

#### 3.2.1 General Geographic Setting

The City of Ukiah encompasses approximately 4.6 square miles (3,071 acres) and is the largest of four incorporated cities in Mendocino County (City of Ukiah 2020). Several small unincorporated communities surround the City within the greater Ukiah Valley, including El Roble approximately 1.75 miles south, Vichy Springs approximately 1.5 miles east, The Forks approximately 1.5 miles north, and Calpella approximately 4.25 miles north. Mendocino College is also located approximately 1.5 miles north of Ukiah, and the tribal lands of the Guidiville Rancheria and Pinoleville Rancheria are located to the east and north of the City, respectively.

U.S. Highway 101 is a major north-south freeway in Mendocino County that traverses the eastern portion of the City, generally providing two travel lanes in each direction through Ukiah. U.S. Highway 101 provides regional access to major employment and residential centers in Mendocino County, Humboldt County to the north, and Sonoma County to the south. Mendocino Transit Authority (MTA) is a commuter bus line that serves Mendocino County through a variety of fixed routes along U.S. Highway 101, State Route (SR) 1, SR-12, SR-20, SR-128, and SR-253 between Santa Rosa and Fort Bragg. MTA provides connections to Sonoma County Transit, Golden Gate Transit, Lake Transit, and Santa Rosa CityBus (MTA 2022).

According to the City of Ukiah General Plan Update Existing Conditions Workbook and Trends (2020), approximately 33 percent of development within the City of Ukiah is considered residential and is comprised of single-family homes, multi-family developments, and mobile home parks. Public and Quasi-Public uses, including care facilities, churches, schools, shelters, and government-owned

property, make up approximately 19 percent of development within the City. Approximately 12 percent of development in the City is considered commercial uses, much of which is concentrated along Main and State Streets and near U.S. Highway 101, while approximately 10 percent of land uses are designated for parks and open spaces (City of Ukiah 2020).

### 3.2.2 Topography and Drainage

The City of Ukiah is located within the Ukiah Valley where the underlying geologic structure is primarily characterized by unconsolidated clay, silt, sand, and gravel (Caldwell 1965). The landscape of Ukiah is generally flat along its central portion, ranging from approximately 600 feet above mean seal level (amsl) at its southern extent to approximately 660 feet amsl at its northern extent. The hillsides flanking the City to the west can reach up to 2,650 feet amsl, while the hillsides flanking the City to the east can reach up to approximately 3,400 feet amsl. Ukiah is located within the Upper Russian River Valley watershed. Creeks and streams offer some drainage channels in the region, but the majority of surface runoff and waters washed from the hillside slopes generally enter the City's stormwater systems that ultimately drain into the Russian River, which then drains to the Pacific Ocean (Mendocino County 2011).

### 3.2.3 Climate

The City of Ukiah enjoys a temperate Mediterranean climate characterized by hot, dry summers and mild, moist winters. The hottest months in Ukiah span between June and August while the coolest months in Ukiah span between November and February. July is the hottest month of the year with an average temperature high of 91°F. December is the coldest month of the year with an average temperature low of 37°F. Ukiah receives most of its precipitation during the months of October through April, though rainfall is most heavily concentrated between December and February (US Climate Data 2022).

## 3.3 Demographics

The City of Ukiah was incorporated in 1876 and was designated as the seat of Mendocino County. The City was slow-growing and relatively isolated during its early history but became much more accessible to the region and to the country following a railroad extension in 1889. Nonetheless, Ukiah remained slow growing until the end of World War II. The rapid growth following the war has been attributed to the overall growth of the logging industry in California's northern coasts, as the redwood forests to the north of Ukiah became increasingly valuable for lumber. When the logging industry grew, it began supporting an increase in employment and growth in the region. Today, Ukiah remains designated as the county seat and is the largest city in Mendocino County (City of Ukiah 2020).

In more recent years, Ukiah's population has remained stable. The 2010 U.S. Census determined the population of Ukiah was 16,075 residents. In the years following, Ukiah's population decreased below 16,000 residents before growing to an estimated population of 16,296 in 2019. Between the years of 2010 and 2019, Ukiah's average growth rate was 0.15 percent annually (City of Ukiah 2020).

As detailed in the City of Ukiah General Plan Update Existing Conditions Workbook and Trends (2020), the median population age in the City was 34.8 years old in 2017. This median age is down from 35.9 in 2010. Such a change can be attributed to an increased percentage of young adults in the City, which indicates that young families are moving to Ukiah. Comparatively, the median age in the Mendocino County was 41.5 years old in 2010 and 42.4 years old in 2017. Ukiah also retains a

high percentage of working age residents between 25 and 54, which makes up nearly 42 percent of the population combined (City of Ukiah 2020).

The City of Ukiah consists of a mixed racial demographic. Approximately 57.3 percent of residents identify as White, while approximately 32.7 percent of residents identify as Hispanic or Latino. This, too, differs from Mendocino County, where approximately 24.5 percent of the population identifies as Hispanic or Latino. In addition, approximately 30 percent of Ukiah residents speak a primary language other than English, which is higher than the 22 percent of Mendocino County residents who speak a primary language other than English (City of Ukiah 2020). The median household income in the City was \$43,480 in 2017, which is slightly lower than the countywide median income of \$46,528 and significantly lower than the statewide median income of \$67,169 in the same year (City of Ukiah 2020).

As of 2022, household size in the City of Ukiah was 2.4 persons per household (DOF 2022). There were an estimated 6,955 housing units in Ukiah in 2022, consisting of 3,765 single detached units; 436 single attached units; 889 two to four unit homes; 1,405 five plus unit homes; and 460 mobile homes (DOF 2022).

### 3.4 Cumulative Development

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) defines cumulative impacts as two or more individual actions that, when considered together, are considerable or will compound other environmental impacts. Cumulative impacts are the changes in the environment that result from the incremental impact of development of the proposed project and other nearby projects. For example, traffic impacts of two nearby projects may be insignificant when analyzed separately but could have a significant impact when analyzed together. Cumulative impact analysis allows an EIR to provide a reasonable forecast of future environmental conditions and can more accurately gauge the effects of a series of projects.

Because the project is a general plan update, cumulative impacts are treated somewhat differently than would be the case for a project-specific development. *CEQA Guidelines* Section 15130 provides the following direction relative to cumulative impact analysis and states that the following elements are necessary for an adequate discussion of environmental impacts:

A summary of projections contained in an adopted local, regional or statewide plan, or related planning document, that describes or evaluates conditions contributing to the cumulative effect. Such plans may include: a general plan, regional transportation plan, or plans for the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions. A summary of projections may also be contained in an adopted or certified prior environmental document for such a plan. Such projections may be supplemented with additional information such as a regional modeling program. Any such document shall be referenced and made available to the public at a location specified by the lead agency.

By its nature, a general plan considers cumulative impacts insofar as it considers cumulative development that could occur within the City limits and Annexation Areas. For example, the transportation analysis considers the overall change in vehicle miles travelled (VMT) due to implementing several development projects that would add to the Ukiah 2040 buildout. As such, the analysis in this EIR considers the cumulative impacts in the City due to implementing Ukiah 2040. These cumulative VMT calculations are accounted for in the air quality, energy, greenhouse gas emissions, and noise analyses; therefore, these analyses would also be considered cumulative.

Other impacts, such as geology and soils and cultural resources, are site specific and would not result in an overall cumulative impact from growth outside of the City. Therefore, the analysis of project impacts in this EIR also constitutes the cumulative analysis.