

2.2 COMMUNITY CHARACTER

Community character is about community preservation and enhancement. It concerns the built character, order, and psyche of Mariposa County. It is the interrelationship of various components (buildings, the transportation system, open space, vistas, human interaction with each other and the natural environment, heritage, housing and economics) that together make up a total community.

Community character concerns range from how to grow in towns to planning pedestrian ways that are safe for children to walk to school or for the elderly to cross the street. Design addresses key issues as how to maintain the downtown areas as a place where local people, as well as visitors want to go. Good community design respects the natural environment, as well as economic gain, and strives to create places for people to feel comfortable with each other and with the built environment.

The following sections include observations generated during tours of the County in December 2000 and January 2001. Following the discussion on each area of the County are a series of possible enhancements designed to retain and enhance positive attributes found in Mariposa County. These enhancements are based on accepted planning practices and are not proposed policies.

2.2.01 HIGHWAY 140 – COUNTY LINE TO MARIPOSA

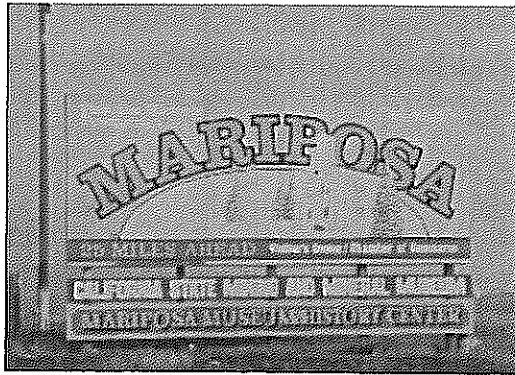
Highway 140 in Mariposa County, starting at the county line with Merced County, is characterized by rolling grasslands, climbs into steep chaparrals and then drops into the Mariposa Creek Valley to the town of Mariposa. The west-end of the highway is characterized by beautiful oak studded grasslands with rock outcroppings. There are a number of picturesque barns and agricultural outbuildings. In summary, the area contains large ranches and open spaces with little development, very low population densities and unspoiled natural environments.

COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARACTERISTICS

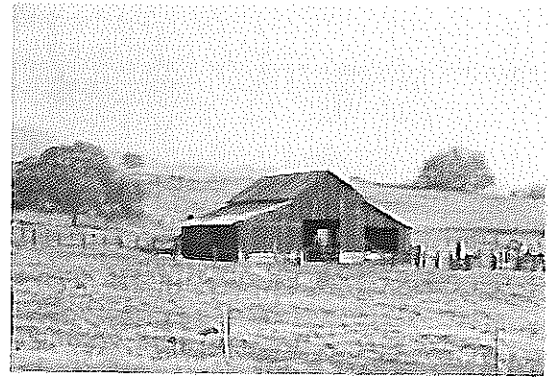
- Oak trees, rolling grasslands and natural vegetation
- Natural features such as rock outcroppings and small streams
- Historic structures

ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Historic barn and farming structure preservation
- Deep building setbacks along highways and County roads
- Highway 140 as a scenic highway
- Sign management
- Community organization monument sign at the entrance of the town of Mariposa
- Modernization of the County Fair hillside sign with monument sign at Highway 140 & 49
- Agricultural Land Use Policies



*Entrance to Mariposa County on
Highway 140*



*Historic Barn on Highway 140 in
Catheys Valley*

Photographs by Mogavero Notestine Associates

2.2.02 HIGHWAY 49 – MARIPOSA SOUTH TO COUNTY LINE

The Mariposa County Fairgrounds, the sewer treatment plant and several industrial uses are located at the south end of the community of Mariposa. Varain Road is considered the south end of the Mariposa Town Planning Area. The state highway is wide and in good condition. At this point vegetation is a combination of varieties of oaks, digger or bull pines, Ponderosa pines and manzanita. Several locations have wonderful forest views to the south. Development is spotty and mostly residential in character. The residential development is generally small, modest, ranch style homes and mobile homes.

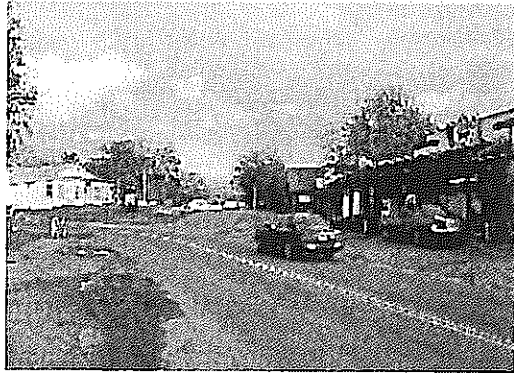
There is small-scale commercial development in Bootjack and Woodland, and an elementary school in Woodland. There is a nonconforming wrecking yard at the southern most end of the County. Highway 49 intersects with Highway 41 in Oakhurst (Madera County). Highways 49 and 41 in Oakhurst can best be described as being “strip commercial” in nature.

COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARACTER

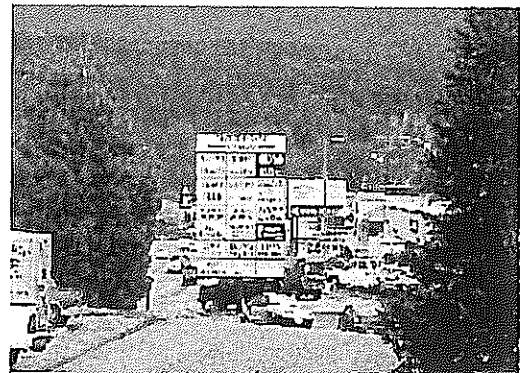
- Views
- Natural vegetation
- Sparsely visible populations
- Small scale commercial development

ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Deep building set-backs in heavy vegetation areas to screen new development
- Highway 49 (north and south of Mariposa) as a scenic highway
- Non-conforming use ordinance (currently non-conforming uses can change in ownership, increase by 50% and be out of business for a three year period)
- Community entrance sign or feature south of Mariposa
- Clustering of any commercial development in Bootjack and Woodland



Darrah Road



Commercial Development in Oakhurst

Photographs by Mogavero Notestine Associates

2.2.03 FISH CAMP

Fish Camp is a small community along Highway 41 that serves as the south entrance to Yosemite National Park. The community has a year round population of approximately thirty. The residential structures can be characterized as “mountain cabins” (both A-frames and more contemporary designs). There are two major lodging developments. The Apple Tree Inn comprises approximately fifty-three units, in multiple two-story buildings and a small lodge where breakfast is served. The Inn is nestled among the pines and most of the buildings are not visible from the highway. The other major lodging facility is the Tenaya Lodge, a 244-room lodge in a single four-story building. Construction of the lodge required massive grading, and part of the site is located on an old landfill. The area has been replanted but will be many years in maturing. Other than an attractive entrance arch and sign, the Tenaya is not visible from the highway. Tenaya Lodge was acquired by Delaware North Corporation, owners of Yosemite Concession Service (YCS).

A new lodge and conference center, SilverTip Resort Village, is proposed in Fish Camp. The proposed lodge includes 137 guest units in a single four-story building, a conference center, four resort conference centers, a two story commercial building and 40 two and three bedroom cottages. The lodge is proposed to be constructed in a picturesque meadow with the cottages scattered among the trees.

There are no design standards adopted for Fish Camp other than a reference to “Mountain Character” in the Community Plan, so individual projects are reviewed on an ad-hoc basis with inconsistent results.

Fish Camp is a resort community with a combination of individually owned vacation cabins and homes and destination resort facilities in a mountain setting.

COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARACTER

- Forested
- Small resort communities
- Vacation cabins and resort facilities

ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Design guidelines for commercial and residential uses
- Update of the Town Plan for Fish Camp
- Relationship of large resort facilities to low-density scattered residential and commercial development.

2.2.04 WAWONA

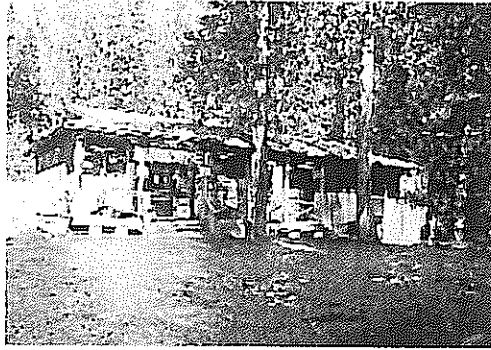
The Wawona basin area is located at an elevation of approximately 4,000 feet in a generally flat area with a meadow, woodlands, and the South Fork of the Merced River. This is a predominately residential resort community but includes the Wawona Hotel, golf course, elementary school, ranger station, small commercial area, and the Pioneer Yosemite History Center. The character is that of a very small village with modest mountain cabins and homes. Full-time residents number approximately 100. Many of the dwelling units (over 120) are transient rentals. With the exception of lighting and fencing standards, the Wawona Specific Plan does not include architectural design standards. Wawona is best characterized as residential resort community in an alpine setting.

COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARACTER

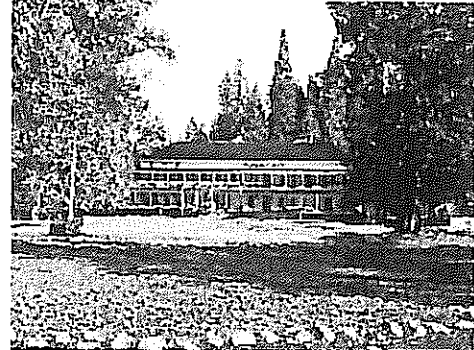
- Forested with a picturesque meadow and river
- Small resort community
- Vacation cabins and resort facilities

ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Development of design guidelines for commercial and residential uses
- Update of the Wawona Town Plan (which is essentially an area-specific zoning ordinance)
- Screening of propane tanks and dumpsters
- Utility undergrounding
- Coordination of the National Park Service and private land management



The Pine Tree Market in Wawona



The Wawona Hotel

Photographs by Mogavero Notestine Associates

2.2.05 PONDEROSA BASIN AND LUSH MEADOWS

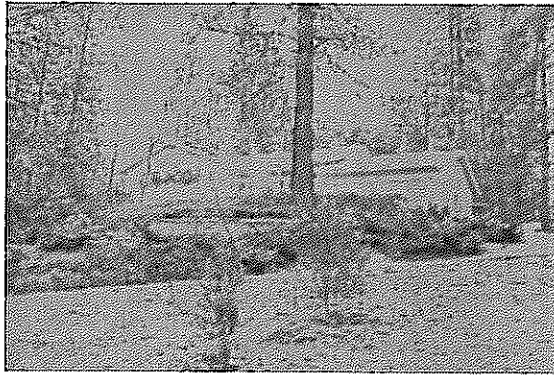
These areas contain predominately single-family ranch style homes and mobile homes on one-half to five-acre parcels. The communities are located in a ponderosa pine forest with some oaks and manzanita. Roads (County maintained) are in various states of repair with some improved in gravel and most others in asphalt pavement. There are approximately 320 lots in Lush Meadows and 370 lots in Ponderosa Basin. There are small convenience stores on Meadow Lane near Triangle Road in Lush Meadows and on Triangle Road about two miles from Highway 49 South. There are two restaurants – one at East Westfall Road and the other located adjoining the convenience store on Triangle Road. The communities are best described as attractive rural residential subdivisions.

COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARACTER

- Ranch style homes in rural developments
- Mixed forest
- Small scale commercial

ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Fire prevention design and landscape standards (building materials and brush and tree maintenance)
- Modest enlargement of the commercial area to accommodate additional services and community space



Typical Home in Lush Meadows



The Lush Meadows Market

Photographs by Mogavero Notestine Associates

2.2.06 AIRPORT

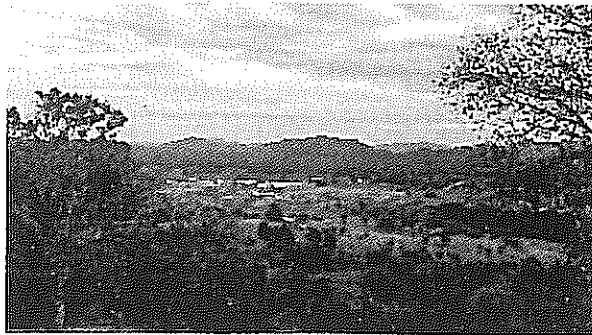
The area in which the airport is located is predominately flat with few trees.

COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARACTER

- Predominately flat terrain
- Sparsely wooded

ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Development of a County initiated industrial park master plan and feasibility analysis with industrial design standards that could be incorporated into the master plan



The Mariposa County Airport near Mt. Bullion
Photographs by
Mogavero Notestine Associates

2.2.07 MOUNT BULLION

This residential area is immediately adjacent to the airport. Many of the structures (single-family homes and mobile homes) are in need of repair or rehabilitation. The area can be characterized as a relatively compact residential community.

COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARACTER

- Compact development pattern
- Small scale commercial

ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Undertake a revitalization program, possibly a targeted residential rehabilitation program
- Maintenance of the current development patterns
- Allow small scale commercial to support the residential uses

2.2.08 BEAR VALLEY

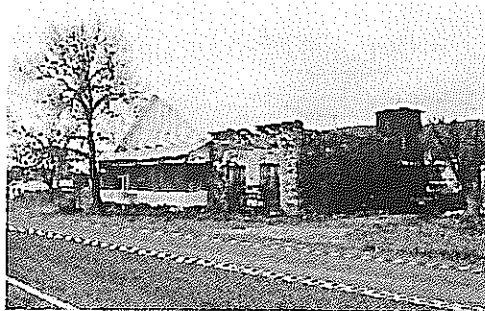
Bear Valley is located at the intersection of Highway 49 and Bear Valley Road. This community contains several historic structures and ruins. There are a few commercial uses in the community. The area can be characterized as a relatively compact residential community

COMMUNITY DESIGN CHARACTER

- Compact development pattern
- Small scale commercial
- Historic structures

ENHANCEMENT OF COMMUNITY CHARACTER

- Undertake a historic inventory, prepare historic design standards and initiate a proactive historic preservation program
- Preserve ruins and stabilize substandard structures
- In addition to structures in existing communities, preserve agricultural structures such as old barns, silos and windmills
- Maintenance of the current development pattern



Bear Valley Commercial Area With Historic Structures and Mobile Homes