



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT

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**DATE:** May 22, 2021

**TO:** Mendocino County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC)

**FROM:** Jesse Davis, Planning Manager, City of Ukiah

**SUBJECT:** **Recommendation to the Mendocino County Airport Land Use Commission on the Final Draft Ukiah Municipal Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan**

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**BACKGROUND:** The Mendocino County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC) adopted the original countywide compatibility plan, the *Mendocino County Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan* (MCACLUP), on October 21, 1993; this plan was revised on June 6, 1996, to include the Ukiah Municipal Airport. For that update, the MCACLUP utilized the 1996 Ukiah Municipal Airport Master Plan as its source material. Presently, the MCACLUP serves as the guiding document for the Ukiah Airport, even though it no longer fully reflects the City's planning doctrine, or the latest guidance provided by the Caltrans Division of Aeronautics.

In 2016, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) approved the City of Ukiah's adopted Airport Layout Plan (ALP) that included a proposed 465-foot northerly extension to Runway 15-33. The 2016 ALP depicts an ultimate runway length of 4,888 feet. In May 2019, the Caltrans Division of Aeronautics accepted that ALP as the basis for this *Ukiah Municipal Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan* (UKIALUCP).

The planning effort to prepare an updated compatibility plan for the Ukiah Municipal Airport was initiated in 2018 by the City of Ukiah with support from the County of Mendocino and the Mendocino County Airport Land Use Commission (ALUC). As part of the planning process, a Technical Advisory Group was established consisting of County and City Planning staff, the Ukiah Municipal Airport Manager, the County Department of Transportation, and representatives of the ALUC. Throughout 2019 numerous planning meetings and presentations were facilitated, including an introductory presentation to the ALUC on November 21, 2019.

On July 16, 2020, a combined meeting of the City of Ukiah and Mendocino County Planning Commissions resulted in a joint-resolution that recommended to the ALUC the adoption of the draft UKIALUCP.

At their regular meeting on November 18, 2020, the Ukiah City Council approved a recommendation to the ALUC that the Public Draft of the UKIALUCP be updated to include protections for a potential 5,000-foot runway to accommodate possible operations by CALFIRE Lockheed C-130 aircraft in the future.

Subsequently, at their regular meeting on November 19, 2020, the Mendocino County ALUC similarly directed ALUC staff, as well as Mead & Hunt, Inc., to revise the draft UKIALUCP as recommended by the Ukiah City Council.

**DISCUSSION:** To facilitate adoption of the UKIALCP and adhere to direction provided, the public draft and airport compatibility map were revised to incorporate the creation of a new Compatibility Zone (Zone 1\*). As a result of these changes, the initial study and associated draft negative declaration were revised. The conclusions of the revised Initial Study indicate that the environmental impact of the proposed change to the draft UKIALUCP is less than significant. It was determined that recirculation of

the proposed Negative Declaration is not required under Title 14, California Code of Regulation, Section 15073.5(C)(2). Section 15073.5 of the 2020 CEQA Statute & Guidelines, states that recirculation of a negative declaration prior to adoption is required when the document is “*substantially revised after public notice of its availability has previously been given...*” Paragraph (C), however, states that recirculation is not required under the following four circumstances (**emphasis added**):

1. Mitigation measures are replaced with equal or more effective measures pursuant to Section 15074.1.
2. ***New project revisions are added in response to written or verbal comments on the project’s effects identified in the proposed negative declaration which are not new avoidable significant effects.***
3. Measures or conditions of project approval are added after circulation of the negative declaration which are not required by CEQA, which do not create new significant environmental effects and are not necessary to mitigate an avoidable significant effect.
4. New information is added to the negative declaration which merely clarifies, amplifies, or makes insignificant modifications to the negative declaration.

As stated above, the primary change requested by the ALUC and Ukiah City Council was to add a Compatibility Zone 1\* beyond the proposed Zone 1 at each end of the runway. These text and map revisions, together with various minor wording clarifications, are documented in the project materials for review of the ALUC. The environmental impacts of the requested change, including potential displacement, were examined and found to be the same or less than existed under the MCALUCP, and per CEQA were considered less than significant. This supplemental analysis to evaluate and incorporate the provided direction was included in the revised Initial Study and Negative Declaration, which were made public and posted for this ALUC Hearing.

**UKIALUCP PURPOSE & BENEFITS:** The responsibility for the Ukiah Municipal Airport rests with the airport’s proprietor, the City of Ukiah. The UKIALUCP seeks to update the standards for compatible zones to establish consistency with the *2011 Caltrans - Airport Land Use Planning Handbook*. This in turn protects the viability of existing and future airport operations by aligning the compatibility zones with current standards. Upon adoption, this plan will replace the MCACLUP sections that address the Ukiah Municipal Airport.

To aid in planning efforts, a 20-year aircraft activity forecast was facilitated as part of the preparation of UKIALUCP. A projection of 30,916 annual operations was calculated, which is approximately double the activity level recorded in 2019 (15,458 annual operations). The heightened projection is representative of the airport’s current condition and potential for growth, which is important given the likelihood of increased wildfire activity across northern California.

A number of crucial operations exist at the airport including fire protection and aerial support via the California Department of Forestry (CALFIRE); aerial support and rescue operations by the Mendocino County Sheriff and other law enforcement agencies; air ambulance service use; and substantial commercial activity from cargo carriers including Federal Express. A less tangible but no less important benefit is the role the airport plays in attracting business to Ukiah, giving the area a competitive edge over many cities.

Once updated, the UKIALUCP will enable economic development by removing some of the ambiguity presently contained with the MCACLUP. This ambiguity requires supplemental analysis and interpretation by City and County Planning staffs, which ultimately constrains appropriate growth within both jurisdictions, but particularly impacts the City of Ukiah. The UKIALUCP seeks to establish urban overlay zones which will allow for increased flexibility by recognizing the inconsistency between the current MCACLUP, zoning and existing uses within the City of Ukiah, particularly as it relates to density. Additionally, updated terminology and planning considerations, such as Accessory Dwelling Units and Mixed-Use developments have been incorporated or discussed, allowing for fewer policy modifications

and more effective and efficient review timelines. Presently, the MCACLUP lacks terminology for both of the aforementioned planning terms, which are increasingly important to land use considerations and development.

**GENERAL PLAN COMPATIBILITY:** Since the establishment of the ALUC, the City and County have worked collaboratively to address planning issues related to the Ukiah Airport. The City's General Plan, which is in the process of being updated, was last modified in 1995. At that time, the City included an Airport Element to ensure that the needs of the airport and surrounding lands were identified, as well as to facilitate a viable airport well into the future. See below for the associated goals and discussion:

- **Goal AE-1: Promote the airport for the community's benefit both now and in the future**
  - Discussion: *The UKIALUCP seeks to update the compatible zones for consistency with the 2011 California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook, as well as protect the viability of existing and future airport operations by identifying areas critical to the airport's operation.*
- **Goal AE-2: Provide for long-term viability of the airport.**
  - Discussion: *A proposed revision to the draft UKIALUCP includes the addition of a Compatibility Zone 1\* beyond Zone 1 at each end of the runway (Runway 15/33). Inclusion of a Zone 1\* at both runway ends rather than just one preserves the option for the additional runway length to be provided on either the north or the south, which could facilitate use of the airport by larger aircraft from the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, which maintains a significant and important air attack base in Ukiah.*
- **Goal AE-3: Establish uniform ordinances and regulations for land use in the airport's core and peripheral overlay zones.**
  - Discussion: *The City has worked with the County to develop uniform approaches to development in and around the airport, as the UKIALUCP seeks to promote acceptable land uses for both city and county zones in the core and peripheral zone areas.*
- **Goal AE-4: Promote a "good neighbor policy" by the airport and its users.**
  - Discussion: *In accordance with this General Plan Goal, and at the direction of the City Council, the City Airport Manager and Airport Commission developed the noise control plan or "Good Neighbor Policy" for the Ukiah Municipal Airport by February, 2000. Since that time the "Good Neighbor Policy" has been relied upon to ensure a minimization of unwanted noise and nuisances to surrounding properties. Pursuant to the State Aeronautics Act, the purpose of the proposed UKIALUCP is to minimize the public's exposure to excessive noise and safety hazards within the Airport vicinity. Therefore, adoption and implementation of the proposed UKIALUCP would have a beneficial impact by restricting development that would expose people within the Airport Influence Area to Airport-related safety hazards including noise. Future noise contours reflecting an ultimate aircraft activity forecast level of 30,916 annual operations were developed to consider the CALFIRE noise contours representing a typical fire event day.*

The efforts of the County and the City have aligned to these goals and policies, as the UKIALUCP recognizes the important benefits that the airport contributes to the region and provides for its long-term future.

**NEXT STEPS:** If adopted, the UKIALUCP and associated Negative Declaration will replace the MCACLUP addressing the Ukiah Municipal Airport. ALUC Staff will amend the MCACLUP, as well as update the draft UKIALUCP to incorporate the revised components identified in Addendum #1. County and City Staff will also facilitate appropriate updates to the public-facing maps and online tools.

As soon as possible after adoption of the UKIALUCP by the ALUC, City Staff will present the plan to the City Council for adoption as a stand-alone General Plan document. Changes to the community's existing general plan appear minimal, as the MCACLUP is not identified within the existing Airport Element of the City's 1995 General Plan. While subsequent analysis will be required, there do not appear to be any direct land use or other conflicts with compatibility planning criteria that would have to be removed to ensure consistency.

In the coming months, the City intends to further incorporate the UKIALUCP as an integrated component of its updated General Plan, which is presently under development. The UKIALUCP will be most prominently integrated via an updated Airport Element, as well as associated components, such as the Circulation and Land Use Elements. The City hopes to complete the *Ukiah 2040* General Plan update by June 2022.

**RECOMMENDATION:** As part of the update process to the MCACLUP, the City of Ukiah and County of Mendocino present the final draft of the Ukiah Municipal Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan (UKIALUCP) for review, discussion and adoption by the ALUC.

City Staff recommends that based on a review of the adopted Mendocino County Airport Comprehensive Land Use Plan (MCACLUP), California Public Utilities Code Section 21670 et seq., and the California Airport Land Use Planning Handbook that the proposed Ukiah Municipal Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan be adopted for use along with the revised CEQA Negative Declaration and revised Initial Study.