

Lake County 2050 Round 1 Local Area Plan (LAP) Workshop Series Lower Lake Workshop Summary

In-Person Workshop
Wednesday, April 10, 2024

Workshop Series Overview

In April 2024, Lake County hosted the first round of community workshops kicking off the Local Area Plan (LAP) updates as part of Lake County 2050, the comprehensive update to Lake County's General Plan. The County hosted in-person workshops in each of the eight LAP areas. Each workshop was held as part of a meeting of the established advisory body for the LAP area.

Lower Lake Workshop Introduction

The Lower Lake Round 1 LAP Workshop, hosted by the Lower Lake Community Action Group (LLCAG) and the County, with support from AmeriCorps and PlaceWorks, was held on April 10, 2024, from 5:30PM to 7:30PM at the Russell Ristici Park Clubhouse in Lower Lake. Virtual attendance was not available at this meeting due to a lack of internet connection.

The workshop introduced community members to the project and gathered initial input to inform the updates to the Lower Lake LAP.

The County's Community Development Director, Mireya Turner, opened the meeting by thanking attendees, LLCAG members, and project staff and emphasizing the importance of community involvement in the Lake County 2050 project. PlaceWorks project consultants then presented an overview of the General Plan Update process, which includes updates to all eight LAPs and preparation of the General Plan EIR. The presentation included information about State requirements for the General Plan, the organization of the General Plan with countywide elements and LAP topics, the project timeline, and ongoing opportunities to participate. Following the presentation, the project team held a question-and-answer session before considering the discussion questions.

For the meeting slides, a recording of the meeting, and more information about the project, visit <https://lakecounty2050.org/past-meetings-materials/>.

Workshop Attendees

LLCAG President Russ Cremer, Treasurer Karen Suenram, Board Member Mike Salter, Board Member Becky Salato, Board Member Teresa Harborth, and Board Member Sharon Schmidt attended the meeting, as well as Lake County Supervisor Moke Simon (District 1), Lake County Supervisor Bruno Sabatier (District 2), Lake County Fire Chief William Sapeta, and CalFire Division Chief and South Lake County Volunteer Fire Fighters Association Chief Paul Duncan. Twenty-eight members of the public attended.

Small Group Discussion

Following the presentation, project staff answered questions from participants and then introduced the four discussion questions, which participants broke into small groups to discuss while project staff facilitated and recorded answers.

Small Group Discussion Summary

Working in small groups of 4 to 5 participants, each with a staff facilitator and note-taker, workshop participants discussed four questions about the future of the Lower Lake area. Participants were encouraged to collaborate and discuss their perspectives and emerging ideas in response to each question while notetakers recorded responses on large flip-chart paper.

The four questions are presented below, each followed by a bulleted list of ideas community members shared in their responses.

What do you like most about the Lower Lake area? What would you like to see supported, preserved, or enhanced as part of this planning effort?

- Land Use and Community Character
 - Maintain the quiet, low-key, and rural character and lifestyle in the area. Maintain low densities and single-family residential areas.
 - Preserve the quaint atmosphere and the small old-town charm of Main Street. Maintain the culture of respect for the town's history.
 - The community is small, accepting, welcoming, and safe. Neighbors know and help each other. People are friendly and proud to live in Lower Lake; they have spirit for the area. Preserve this sense of community.
 - The Lower Lake community is civically engaged (e.g., through the LLCAG). Preserve the culture of civic engagement and government reaching out to the community.
 - Preserve the high quality of life in Lower Lake.
- Economy
 - There are many small businesses in the area. Preserve and maintain support for small business over big box stores.
- Agriculture
 - Recognize farming as an important part of Lower Lake's history.
 - Preserve and enhance permaculture and alternatives to monoculture-type farming.
- Environment and Environmental Health
 - Maintain clean air.
 - Protect groundwater.
 - Protect the large swaths of open undeveloped land and healthy ecosystems. Preserve ponds, wildlife habitat (e.g., Anderson Marsh), and wildflowers.
- Recreation
 - Preserve and enhance hiking opportunities.
- Transportation
 - Preserve access to Lower Lake from the highway.
 - Maintain Lower Lake as a walkable community.
- Public Services
 - The community's fire service is active; support and maintain this important service.

- Support quality education in the area. There is a good high school culture and great support facilities.
- Maintain the area's museums.
- Support animal welfare.

What are the challenges facing the Lower Lake area? What would you like to see changed to make it a better place to live and work?

- Land Use and Community Character
 - Prepare a design plan with a cohesive vision for downtown Lower Lake/Main Street. Create a design review board to oversee permitting and design for new development in this area.
 - Install a gateway feature for Lower Lake, such as an arch or welcome sign.
 - Increase education and outreach to homeowners about how to properly maintain property.
 - Increase code enforcement to address issues related to people living in illegal/nonpermitted structures.
 - Address squatters in abandoned properties.
 - Address illegal dumping of bulk waste and abandoned vehicles in the area, particularly along Morgan Valley, west of Lower Lake. Enforce illegal dumping regulations and fine offenders.
 - Encourage community clean up days.
 - Support quick clean-up and rebuilding efforts after fires, debris flows, and other disasters.
 - Streamline the permitting process and reduce permitting fees.
 - Establish a Municipal Advisory Council or Town Council for Lower Lake.
 - Establish an ombudsman role to connect the Lower Lake community to County government.
- Housing
 - Provide affordable, long-term rentals for workers in the area.
 - Build more market-rate single-family housing.
 - Support access to affordable homeowners' insurance.
- Economy
 - Provide economic development and job growth.
 - Set up a consolidated information hub (physical and/or online) where community members can find job and housing opportunities in one place.
 - Support small businesses.
 - Increase retail development in the downtown area.
 - Increase hospitality and entertainment offerings in the area to promote tourism.
 - Promote local wineries, lake sports, and festivals that occur on Main Street.
- Cannabis
 - Address groundwater supply issues (e.g., wells going dry) associated with large-scale and illegal cannabis grows.
 - Address other issues related to illegal cannabis grows, particularly around the Twin Lakes area, including contaminated runoff that destroys ecosystems and poisons groundwater and security dogs that attack local livestock.

- Locate commercial cannabis grows where it makes sense. Avoid oversaturation and issues like human and chemical waste, harmful runoff, invasion of views, and proximity to places where children congregate, like schools.
- Separate cannabis from traditional agriculture. Promote traditional agriculture over cannabis.
- **Parks and Recreation**
 - Enhance youth activities, such as through a boys and girls club or a business foundation for youth. There is a big high school in Lower Lake and more activities and programs for youth are needed.
 - Open a park or water park with walking paths on Morgan Valley Road.
 - Community members expressed concern that the Getaway Lake County glamping site coming to Lower Lake could result in permanent illegal camping. Make explicit and enforce rules against long-term camping to ensure this area is strictly used for visitors and tourism.
- **Safety**
 - Increase law enforcement, including by increasing wages for law enforcement officers.
 - Increase animal control services.
 - Mitigate wildfire risks through home hardening and defensible space. Conduct education and outreach about assistance available to support low-income and elderly homeowners with compliance.
 - Manage vegetation and wildfire fuel sources around Twin Lakes, Noble Ranch, and Bonham Road.
 - Improve all evacuation routes within Lower Lake.
- **Transportation**
 - Construct the following roadway improvements to increase safety: install a traffic signal on Main Street at the Post Office, install a stop sign on Highway 29 at Bell Avenue, improve the Bonham Road/Wagner Road/Morgan Valley Road intersection, improve the Highway 29/Hofaker Lane intersection, construct a turn-off lane at Twin Lakes, and enhance turn-off lanes and add shoulders throughout the LAP area. There were also suggestions to improve the Highway 53/Highway 29/Main Street intersection, as well as concerns that widening the roadway at this intersection could increase truck traffic in an area where children often walk to school.
 - Improve roadway maintenance, including on Lake Street and to remove potholes on Rocky Creek Road and Morgan Valley Road.
 - Increase highway patrol between Lower Lake and Clear Lake to decrease speeding.
 - Install traffic calming and pedestrian improvements throughout Lower Lake, including sidewalks, lighting, and signage. Add a foot bridge across the creek. Install pedestrian safety improvements at the 3-way stop at Jesse Street and Lake Street.
 - Improve roadways near schools (e.g., Lake Street) to make it safe to walk and bike, including by constructing sidewalks near schools. Add a controlled stop on Lake Street at the cemetery before Lower Lake Elementary School.
 - Construct safe bus stops and implement more multi-modal transportation options.
- **Infrastructure and Public Services**
 - Require developers to pay adequate service expansion fees for water and sewer infrastructure, schools, parks, and sidewalks.
 - Work with the school districts to address overcrowded schools.

- Retrofit the museum for earthquake safety.
- Check and assess roads, water pipes, water hooks up, and sewer lines. Provide updated infrastructure to support growth.
- Improve roads and drainage infrastructure to prevent potholes. School traffic creates potholes, which is then worsened by poor drainage.
- Support the Lower Lake County Waterworks District, which needs more resources.
- Preserve access to landline services. Elderly residents rely on landlines.
- Improve internet and address dead zones.

Do you think changes are needed to the planned land uses shown in the General Plan land use map? If so, what changes are needed?

- Some support for not changing the land use designations in Lower Lake.
- Change the land use and zoning maps to increase the housing supply.
- Change the land use and zoning maps in the Twin Lakes area to allow for more housing and more mixed uses.
- Lower Lake needs more community commercial areas like Kelseyville's downtown. Commercial areas that can be developed should be identified on the map or inventoried in some way.
- Add more resort commercial areas in Lower Lake. It would be great to have a bowling alley and roller rink in Lower Lake for youth.
- Change the land use and zoning categories to use "retail" instead of "commercial." "Commercial" connotes a larger scale of development, whereas "retail" sounds more like local shops in a historic downtown, and which is more appropriate for Lower Lake.
- Prohibit cannabis consumption bars in downtown areas and near schools.
- Redesignate the Tuscan Village area to allow for a family activity area.
- Preserve rural lands.
- Consider what areas in Lower Lake are the best places to grow and expand. There is open land that is south of the stop light that is currently undeveloped.
- The community growth boundaries should align with municipal services.
- There are seven highlighted parcels in the marked-up community growth boundary map. These should be added to the growth boundary and zoned to Suburban Residential (SR) or R2.
- Expand areas planned for growth beyond Main Street (not a future cannabis zone).

Do you think changes are needed to the Local Area Plan boundary? If so, what changes are needed?

- The northwest corner of the LAP boundary should be expanded to include the Thorn Hill area up to the shoreline (see marked-up map). Residents of the Thornhill area consider themselves part of Lower Lake, not Cobb.
- The western border of the LAP should conform to the Lake County Fire Protection District boundary, which encompasses some of the Rivas (up to the Westwind Mobile Home Park/Konocti Vista Road).