

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

In-Person Workshop
Thursday, April 11, 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.

Middletown Workshop Introduction

The Middletown Round 1 LAP Workshop, hosted by the Middletown Area Town Hall (MATH) and the County, with support from AmeriCorps and PlaceWorks, was held on April 11, 2024, from 6:00PM to 8:00PM at the Middletown Community Center in Middletown. 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 Middletown LAP.

The County's Community Development Director, Mireya Turner, opened the meeting by thanking attendees, MATH 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

MATH Chair Monica Rosenthal, Vice Chair Bill Waite, Secretary Ken Gonzalez, and Board member Nanette DeDonato attended the meeting, as well as Lake County Supervisor Moke Simon (District 1), and CalFire Division Chief and South Lake County Volunteer Fire Fighters Association Chief Paul Duncan. Thirty-seven 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 5 to 6 participants, each with a staff facilitator and note-taker, workshop participants discussed four questions about the future of the Middletown 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 Middletown area? What would you like to see supported, preserved, or enhanced as part of this planning effort?

- Land Use and Community Character
 - Preserve and protect the rural character of the area, including its open spaces, large lots, and dark night skies with bright stars.
 - There is a hometown feeling and community base that makes the community strong and supports a locally owned atmosphere. Neighbors know each other. Preserve the area's small-town community and character.
 - Continue to hold events in the town square, such as farmers markets, movies in the park, Middletown Days Rodeo, and Christmastime events.
 - Continue to maintain the Middletown area so that it feels clean and welcoming.
 - Preserve and protect historic resources and the historic character of the area, including the museum.
- Economy
 - Support all the small businesses, like retail and restaurants.
- Environment and Environmental Health
 - Protect and preserve natural resources.
 - Preserve and protect access to the creek.
 - Preserve and protect wildlife in the area.
 - Maintain good air quality.
- Parks and Recreation
 - Maintain access to outdoor recreation areas, such as parks, trails, and bike paths.
- Transportation
 - Maintain the ease of navigation throughout the area and access to nearby population centers.
 - Continue to provide safe and well-maintained roads in the area.
- Infrastructure and Public Services
 - Support the great schools in the area and the variety of student programs they offer.
 - Continue to provide community gathering places, such as the library, senior center, and MAC art center.
 - Protect and enhance senior programs in the area.
 - Support the great first responders in the area.

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

- Land Use and Community Character
 - Install signage that welcomes visitors, creates a sense of place, and recognizes Middletown as the gateway to Lake County.
 - Promote and increase community art and iconography to promote a sense of place in Middletown.
 - Provide more community events and activities in Middletown.
 - Attract a movie theater to Middletown.
 - Increase code enforcement.
 - Reduce red tape and make it easier to rezone properties. When zoning does change, allow more public input.
- Housing
 - Increase the amount of housing in the area, including affordable housing and housing for seniors and people with disabilities.
 - Allow accessory dwelling units on larger residential lots.
 - Consider alternative housing models, such as large employers providing housing on-site or nearby.
- Economy and Tourism
 - Create more jobs in the area, including entry-level jobs (e.g., with Lake Transit Authority) and jobs that retain professionals.
 - Support in-home senior care businesses, which are needed in the area and could expand job opportunities.
 - Support small business and retail stores and reduce the number of big box companies in the area.
 - Create places, like coffee shops, that also serve as community gathering spaces with open mic nights and/or small businesses incubation spaces. These could be open later and should have good internet access.
 - Support more restaurants, particularly those that stay open later.
 - Support small-scale recreational lodging that could also be used for firefighters during emergencies.
 - Promote more local businesses along Main Street where a lot of visitors pass through. Improve the streetscape to encourage visitors to stop and visit.
 - Increase tourism that is that is compatible with the character of Middletown and that supports ecosystem health (i.e., green tourism).
- Cannabis
 - Increase enforcement of illegal cannabis grows, including along Jerusalem Grade and in Jerusalem Valley.
 - Reduce the amount of cannabis cultivation allowed and protect the watershed.
- Environmental Health
 - Address declining tree health.
- Parks and Recreation
 - Expand programs and activities for youth and teens in Middletown, such as a skatepark. Other suggestions include activities that are connected to the land (e.g., agriculture, farm-

- to-table), environmentally friendly, or have a high economic value (e.g., coding, web development, or animation classes).
- Expand programs and activities for seniors (e.g., an aquatic center).
- Create a dog park in Middletown.
- Develop trails that connect Middletown to Hidden Valley, Lower Lake, and potentially further north.
- Safety
 - Establish law enforcement service that is just for Middletown.
 - Increase funding for weed abatement for fire safety, particularly along Spruce Grove Road.
 - Improve community organization around emergencies (e.g., establish a community meeting place for emergencies).
 - Prepare a community-wide evacuation plan and improve evacuation egress.
 - Improve fire roads in Hidden Valley Lake.
 - Support access to wildfire insurance.
- Transportation
 - Improve roadways throughout the area, including adding shoulders to Highway 29, improving roadways and adding signage along the route to Cobb, and installing a roundabout in front of Twin Pine in Butts Canyon.
 - Speeding on Highway 29 is rampant and dangerous. Install traffic calming improvements along Highway 29 to downtown Middletown or consider a Middletown bypass. Enforce speed limits with speed cameras.
 - Improve pedestrian safety infrastructure in downtown Middletown and throughout the area, including installing crosswalks, lighting, signalization, and/or stop signs. This will also slow down pass-through traffic and make downtown more inviting for visitors.
 - Create a walking and bike path in Middletown.
 - There is a lot of school traffic. Create safe routes to schools and more than one route to school in Middletown.
 - Expand transportation options for seniors. Consider establishing a senior transportation service for the area and/or improving and expanding the Lake Links service.
- Infrastructure and Public Services
 - Improve government responsiveness to concerns in this area.
 - Improve the school and school infrastructure and expand after-school programs.
 - Provide more parking and transportation options for the library.
 - Increase access to healthcare, including by constructing a hospital in Middletown.
 - Expand water and sewer connections to the south county line. Encourage water recycling.
 - Address high energy costs.
 - Install countywide broadband and increase the phone coverage in the area.
 - Expand the area for mail delivery service, particularly around Hidden Valley Lake.

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?

- Provide more opportunities for medium- and low-density residential land uses.
- There are 4- to 5-acre opportunities for commercial development along the Highway 29 corridor where land use should allow for locally owned food trucks and coffee kiosks.

- Prohibit cannabis retail uses in the downtown.
- Emphasize slow, smart growth informed by community input. Slow or reduce the rate of growth in Hidden Valley Lake.
- Growth boundaries should be established in alignment with infrastructure (e.g., water and sewer service area boundaries).

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

- There should be a separate planning area for the Middletown and Guenoc area.
- Both Cobb and Loch Lomond could be a part of the Middletown LAP.
- Consider shifting the northern LAP boundary further north to include what is currently the southern portion of Lower Lake, starting at Seigler Springs (see map markup).