

Lake County 2050 Round 1 Local Area Plan (LAP) Workshop Series Upper Lake/Nice Workshop Summary

In-Person Workshop
Monday, April 8, 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.

Upper Lake/Nice Workshop Introduction

The Upper Lake/Nice Round 1 LAP Workshop, hosted by the Western Region Town Hall (WRTH) and the County, with support from AmeriCorps and PlaceWorks, was held on April 8, 2024, from 5:30PM to 7:30PM at the Habematolel Pomo Tribal Room in Upper 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 Upper Lake/Nice LAP.

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

WRTH Chair Tim Chiara, Records Keeper Linda Alexander, Member David Eby, Member Thomas Aceves, Member Claudine Pedroncelli, and Member Kathryn Parankema attended the meeting, as well as thirteen members of the public.

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 3 to 4 participants, each with a staff facilitator and note-taker, workshop participants discussed four questions about the future of the Upper Lake/Nice 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 Upper Lake/Nice area? What would you like to see supported, preserved, or enhanced as part of this planning effort?

- Land Use and Community Character
 - Preserve the historic/old town feel in Upper Lake.
 - Maintain the area's small-town and rural character and the ability to know your neighbors.
 - Preserve and enhance festivals in the Upper Lake downtown area.
 - Maintain the good schools in the area.
 - Maintain large setbacks between structures.
- Economy
 - Preserve and enhance the local economy, including local business ownership by people who live in and invest in Lake County.
- Agriculture
 - Preserve and expand agricultural areas.
 - Maintain a diversified agricultural economy.
- Environment and Environmental Health
 - Preserve the area's scenic resources.
 - Preserve conservation areas and open spaces.
 - Maintain good air quality.
 - Maintain good lake quality and healthy ecosystems.
- Recreation
 - Preserve recreational assets in the area.
 - Enhance the reputation of Upper Lake/Nice as a gateway to the Mendocino National Forest.
 - Expand hiking/biking trails to connect community public land, including by establishing public multi-use trails along the levee system. Consider grant opportunities to facilitate multi-use trail development.
 - Preserve and enhance 'blue zone' areas and programs, as well as infrastructure that promotes blue zone activities.
- Safety
 - Maintain a sense of safety and law and order in the community.
- Transportation

- Preserve and enhance the bus routes that connect to Highway 101 (Mendocino Transit) and Calistoga (Lake County transit).
- Preserve and enhance Lake Links (dial-a-ride transit).

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

- Land Use and Community Character
 - Change the stigma around Lake County and the Upper Lake area.
 - Increase community awareness of planning processes.
 - Support an increase in community volunteers.
 - Create an “adopt a grandparent” program for the community.
 - Address concerns related to paper subdivisions in Nice, the hills around Lucerne, and other areas within Upper Lake.
 - Small agricultural parcels are not economically viable. Maintain designated agricultural lands protected from other types of development in Upper Lake and Nice.
 - Improve the Marina area.
- Housing and Homelessness
 - Increase housing stock for community members in Upper Lake and Nice.
 - There are squatters in the area and the unhoused population is increasing. Address issues related to homelessness.
- Economy and Tourism
 - Increase tourism and opportunities for visitors in the area.
 - Main street is an underutilized asset. Expand commercial uses along Main Street.
 - Refresh community signage.
- Cannabis
 - Separate commercial cannabis grows from rural communities, schools, residents, and sensitive populations.
 - Prevent and address pesticide-related pollution in the soil and groundwater from cannabis grows.
 - Reduce large unpermitted cannabis grows, which change the character of the community.
- Environmental Health
 - Restore the Middle Creek area and install informational signage about wildlife.
- Parks and Recreation
 - The community needs early educational programs connecting kids to agriculture and the ecosystem. Consider creating a youth wilderness education program.
 - Separate dog parks from recreational parks.
 - Increase funding for parks and recreation services, including funding to maintain existing parks.
 - Expand outside recreational opportunities for kids.
 - Build a community center in the Upper Lake/Nice area (not just a senior center).
 - Construct pullouts along Highway 20 to increase opportunities for public recreation and views, and provide amenities like water fountains, toilets, and signage.
 - Connect regional trails all the way around the lake with placemaking signs.
 - Bring back attractions at Konocti Harbor Vista.
- Safety

- Address abandoned and unsafe properties, buildings, and cars, which are prevalent in the area, including issues related to squatters inhabiting abandoned properties.
- Address issues related to crime and drug use. Crime from the Bay Area impacts Lake County, including crime related to the cannabis industry and illegal grows. Also, there is a disproportionate need for law enforcement, including from federal agencies, given the area's proximity to the Mendocino National Forest and associated visitors.
- Increase funding and staff for fire protection and law enforcement services.
- Fire insurance is being cancelled in wildfire hazard areas, and homeowners can't insure their homes. Support access to fire insurance.
- **Transportation**
 - Highway 20 is dangerous and noisy. Provide traffic calming and safer crossings on Highway 20 through Upper Lake and Nice and generally all the way to Clearlake.
 - Reduce speeding and provide safe routes to schools and to public parks. Identify corridors for prioritizing safety improvements and safe routes to school and pursue grants to fund improvement projects in these areas. Improvements should include traffic calming measures and sidewalks/crosswalks that reduce traffic around schools and along routes to schools, including installation of a crosswalk and sidewalk at Upper Lake Elementary.
 - Consider improvements in Upper Lake, Nice, and Lucerne similar to those in Clearlake Oaks, including solar lighting, elevated crosswalks, defined signalized crossings.
 - Install pedestrian infrastructure that provides access to transit.
 - Improve transit wayfinding, including better signage at stops with clearly marked transit stop identification.
 - Increase speed and traffic enforcement, including on Elk Mountain Road and the route to Middle Creek Campground.
 - Install separated bike lanes on Elk Mountain Road.
 - Address traffic issues related to school pick-up/drop-off.
- **Infrastructure and Public Services**
 - Align special district service boundaries with where property owners are charged for the service. Consolidate and share special district services.
 - Municipal services are siloed. Improve information-sharing within government.
 - The current water service infrastructure cannot meet fire demands and the individual districts don't maintain the fire hydrants. Improve water service infrastructure to support adequate fire services.
 - Install fire hydrants in the Blue Lake area.
 - Upgrade stormwater catchment and drainage infrastructure.
 - Improve internet/broadband service in Upper Lake/Nice. Many people rely on satellites that don't function when the air is smoky. Improved broadband would also help support expansion of local businesses.
 - Maintain and improve critical landline infrastructure. It is difficult to set up new landline service, but many older people rely on it.
 - Work with cell phone companies to provide cell service in Double Eagle and Spring Valley, where there is currently no service.

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 map at all.
- Increase mixed use, housing, and commercial, including increased commercial along Main Street.
- Area indicated on the marked-up map should be changed from Rural Residential (RR) to Rural Lands (RL).
- Some beach-front areas around the Blue Lakes area subdivision should be designated O instead of R-1 (see areas on the map) to allow for park amenities like picnic benches and shade structures.

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

- Some support for keeping LAP boundaries unchanged.
- Conform LAP boundaries to service district boundaries.
- Consider an adjustment to the southwestern boundary near Blue Lakes that would shift some of the Upper Lake/Nice LAP area into the Lakeport LAP (see marked-up map).