

Defining the Future

Lake County General Plan

Newsletter One

March 2003

General Plan Update

In the summer of 2002, Lake County started work on an update of the County's General Plan. This update program, which will complete in the Fall of 2004, will provide a number of opportunities for public input in the shaping of the final plan.

What is a General Plan?

Every county and city in California is required by state law to prepare and maintain a planning document called a general plan. A general plan is designed to serve as the jurisdiction's "constitution" or "blueprint" for future decisions concerning land use and resource conservation. Decision makers in the County will use the General Plan to provide direction when making future land use and public service decisions. All community plans, subdivisions, public works projects, and zoning decisions must be consistent with the General Plan.

Lake County's General Plan will be updated to serve several purposes:

- Provide a description of current conditions and trends impacting the County
- Provide the public opportunities for meaningful participation in the planning and decision-making process
- Identify planning issues, opportunities, and challenges that should be addressed in the General Plan
- Ensure that the General Plan is current, internally consistent, and consolidated for ease of use
- Improve coordination between the County and local, state, and federal agencies and interested groups and organizations regarding land use and resource decisions
- Provide guidance for County agencies in the planning and evaluation of future land and resource decisions

A general plan typically has three defining features:

General. As the name implies, a general plan provides general guidance that will be used to guide future land use and resource decisions.

Comprehensive. A general plan covers a wide range of land use, infrastructure, social, and environmental factors. These include land use, housing, circulation, utilities, public services, recreation, agriculture, biological resources, and many other topics.

Long-Range. General plans provide guidance on reaching a future envisioned 20 to 25 years in the future. To reach this envisioned future, the General Plan will include policies and actions that address both immediate and long-term needs.

How Can You Help

More than any other planning document, the General Plan needs to be a reflection of the collective aspirations of those who live, work, and own property in Lake County. To help get broad public input, there are a number of ways to get involved.

Website www.westplanning.com

A website is available to provide up-to-date information on the General Plan process. This site contains schedules for future meetings and provides a location to download documents prepared during the project.

Newsletters. This is the first of three newsletters that will be prepared to provide updates on the progress of the General Plan.

Community Workshops. Workshops will be held in several locations in the County to gain input on the issues and opportunities facing the County and to gain input on General Plan alternatives.

Advisory Committee. The County has set up a Citizen's Advisory Committee to help in the development of the General Plan. The Advisory Committee is designed to provide a cross-section of the County. These meetings are open to the public.

Public Hearings. Formal public hearings will be held with the Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors to consider the General Plan and environmental impact report.

General Plan Documents

The General Plan update process will complete in about one and a half years, wrapping up in the Fall of 2004. As the General Plan is prepared, a number of major documents will be available for public review and comment. These documents are described below.

Background Report. This document provides a snapshot of the conditions, trends, and regulations that are influencing Lake County today. Compiling this information will involve reviewing existing studies and documents (e.g., existing area plans, special studies, environmental documents) and contacting appropriate agencies and organizations. The information on existing conditions will be used to better understand the issues facing the County and to be able to develop a plan that helps the County address each issue appropriately. This document will also be used as the existing conditions description used in the environmental impact report (EIR) that will be prepared for the General Plan.

Issues and Alternatives Report. Based on public input from the community workshops and the Citizens Advisory Committee, this document will provide a summary of the critical policy and program issues to be addressed in the General Plan. The report will present alternative approaches that can be used to address each issue. This document will be used by the County to provide direction on the General Plan.



What's Covered in the General Plan?

The Lake County General Plan will be organized into the following eight topic areas, called "elements."

Clear Lake. An element in the General Plan will be dedicated to the protection and utilization of Clear Lake for scenic and recreational purposes.

Land Use. This element will cover issues including land use types, distribution, and intensity; population and building density; existing community and specific plans; public land ownership; and provide a land use diagram.

Housing. The Housing Element will contain goals, policies, implementation measures, and quantified objectives to facilitate the development of housing for all economic sectors of the community over the five-year timeframe of this element.

Housing Element. The Housing Element is one of the elements required for inclusion in the General Plan. Unlike other elements, this element has a completion deadline set by the State (December 31, 2003). To meet this deadline, this element will be completed early in the program. This element will include a review and analysis of regional housing needs and how the County can help in the provision of housing for all income groups.

General Plan Summary. This document provides an overview of the General Plan and its component documents. It describes the Planning Area, summarizes the General Plan's goals and policies, provides an overview of existing conditions, summarizes the issues raised during the preparation of the General Plan, and identifies the environmental impacts associated with the General Plan.

Goals and Policies Report. This report is the essence of the General Plan. It contains the goals and policies that will guide future development within the County. It also identifies a full set of implementation measures that will ensure the policies of the Plan are carried out.

Environmental Impact Report (EIR). The EIR prepared for the General Plan will meet the requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors will use the EIR during their consideration of the draft General Plan to understand the potential environmental implications associated with the Plan.

Public Facilities, Services and Utilities. This element provides a comprehensive look at the public facilities, services and utilities that serve the County.

Circulation. The Circulation Element provides guidance on the movement of people and goods in and through the County. This includes planning for roads, transit, boating, bicycles, and pedestrians.

Safety. This element addresses a wide range of public health and safety issues, including air quality, floods, wildfire, seismic/geologic hazards, and emergency response.

Noise. The noise element will address all types of noise, including transportation-related noise (roadway, rail, and air) and industrial and commercial noise sources.

Open Space, Conservation and Recreation. Addresses the conservation, development, and use of natural resources; agriculture; and plans and actions for preserving open space and enhancing outdoor recreation.

General Plan Website

The General Plan website provides a one-stop location to get the latest information on the General Plan program. The website will provide the latest information on upcoming events and will allow anyone to download copies of meeting minutes and agendas, presentations, and documents prepared for the General Plan.



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Project Steps

Project Startup

Coordinate with County staff and present approach to Planning Commission and Board of Supervisors.

1

Existing Conditions

Collect information on current conditions and trends. Prepare Background Report.

2

Issues & Opportunities

Work with Advisory Committee and the public to identify critical issues and opportunities.

3

Alternatives

Based on critical issues and opportunities, what are the alternatives that the County could implement?

4

Housing

Prepare a Housing Element that will assist the County in providing adequate housing to all income levels.

5

Goals & Policies

In order to reach the desired future, what are the goals, policies, and actions that the County needs to follow?

6

EIR

What are the environmental implications of implementing the proposed General Plan?

7

Public Hearings

Review the proposed General Plan before the Planning Commission and City Council.

8

Keep Up To Date

During the General Plan update process, the County will maintain a mailing list of individuals who want to be kept up-to-date on the latest program events. Those on the mailing list will receive future editions of this newsletter and will be notified of upcoming public workshops and hearings. If you would like to be added to this list, please mail or e-mail your request to:

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General Plan Consulting Team

To help prepare a comprehensive General Plan update, the County hired a consulting team lead by URS and Mintier & Associates. The team dedicated to updating the General Plan includes expertise in general plan updates, planning and land use law, housing, transportation, environmental resources, economic development and fiscal assessment, and project management. A brief summary of the qualifications offered by the project team is provided below.

URS. URS brings to this project extensive experience in the management and preparation of general and specific plans in California and the Southwest. URS will also lead in the evaluation of environmental resources. Richard Rust, AICP is the Project Manager for the General Plan.

Mintier & Associates. The Mintier & Associates staff has not only worked on dozens of successful general plans, Larry Mintier, the firm's principal, was the principal author of the original General Plan Guidelines for the State of California.

Applied Development Economics (ADE). ADE assists clients in building a foundation for executing long-term strategies to meet their economic development and business objectives.

TJKM Transportation Consultants (TJKM). TJKM provides professional services to cities, counties, other governmental agencies, and the private sector related to circulation issues.

Vernazza Wolfe Associates (VWA). Specific consulting services provided by VWA include planning for housing, including affordable housing strategies, studies and plans, program evaluation, and technical assistance.



Visit the following website for up-to-date information

www.westplanning.com

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