

MEMORANDUM

TO: Lake County Planning Commission

FROM: Mireya G. Turner, Community Development Director
Shannon Walker-Smith, Deputy Community Development Administrator

DATE: August 13, 2026

SUBJECT: Presentation and Consideration of Lake County 2050 General Plan and Local Area Plans Update - Workshop

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After more than two years of extensive community engagement and careful research, analysis, and planning, the Lake County 2050 General and Area Plan Update is presented for Planning Commission review and consideration. The two regular Planning Commission meetings in August have been entirely dedicated to this purpose, with the August 13 meeting for review of the countywide and area plan elements, and the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) and consideration of recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on August 27, 2026.

Background

California law requires that every city and county adopt a general plan that expresses the community's goals for the future and sets policy to guide decisions and actions in a way that supports the long-term vision. The 2008 General Plan was adopted by the Board of Supervisors in September 2008. Since that date, Lake County has undergone major events, namely the 2015 Rocky, Jerusalem, and Valley Fires, 2016 Clayton Fire, 2017 Sulphur Fire, 2018 Pawnee Fire, 2018 Mendocino Complex (River and Ranch Fires), and the 2020 LNU Lightning Complex and August Complex, which have significantly impacted our communities.

California law also requires the regular update of the General Plan, acknowledging the need for this communitywide visioning document to adapt as the community adapts. The 2008 General Plan is set to expire in 2028.

Lake County's unincorporated areas (excluding the cities of Lakeport and Clearlake) are divided into eight local planning areas, each with its own local area plan. The purpose of a local area plan is to highlight the resources, special characteristics, and challenges, of each community, along with the specific community's vision for goals, policies and objectives. The planning areas and adoption dates of the corresponding local area plans are as follows:

- Cobb Mountain (1989)
- Kelseyville (1995)
- Lakeport (2000)
- Lower Lake (1988)
- Middletown (2010)
- Rivas (2007)
- Shoreline Communities (2009)
- Upper Lake/Nice (2002)

Given the outdated state of all the local area plans, the Board took ambitious action to include updates of all local area plans as part of the Lake County 2050 General Plan Update. In response to a voiced community concern that the local area plans were not considered with the same weight as the General Plan, going forward the local area plans have been incorporated into the Lake County 2050 General Plan, with each as its own Planning Area Element.

Separate from the General Plan Update process, the Housing Element is on a separate timeline, to be updated by September 2027. Additionally, the Board recently directed Staff to prepare an Energy Resources Element, which will also proceed on a separate timeline.

Planning Area

As previously stated, the Lake County 2050 planning area includes the entire unincorporated area of Lake County, which is inclusive of everything within the County limit less the areas of the two incorporated cities of Lakeport and Clearlake. The unincorporated county comprises approximately 1,244 square miles (795,418 acres), the majority of which public lands, farmland, grazing land, and other non-urbanized land.

Existing Conditions

To inform the General Plan Update, specifically the Health and Safety Element and separate, Climate Adaptation Plan, the project team, made up of County staff and consultants, prepared an updated Lake County General Plan Health and Safety Element Background Report, Lake County Evacuation Study, and Climate Vulnerability Analysis.

The Lake County 2050 General Plan process was a comprehensive update, including updates of the eight local area plans, focusing on creating a more resilient future, while also addressing new State legislative requirements regarding general plan content. Where community-specific focus was beneficial, elements which are typically presented as Countywide Elements (Land Use and Circulation) have been included in each Planning Area Element. The General Plan Update includes comprehensive revisions to the Health and Safety Element, and introduces a new Environmental Justice topic – also included within each Planning Area Element.

Land use map changes recommended by the Local Area Plan Advisory Committees (LAPACs) and approved, in concept, by the Board in March 2025, as well as later recommendations from later public input have been included in the proposed land use designation map. Additionally, where property owners have voiced opposition to recommended changes, these letters are included as Attachment 3 to this report.

General Plan Contents

The Lake County 2050 General Plan includes 13 separate elements (not including the Housing Element) that establish goals, policies, and action for each given topic. The elements cover the topics required by California State Government Code Section 65302. In addition, the General Plan includes chapters that introduce the Plan, acknowledge our seven federally recognized Tribal governments and their ancestral lands and history, lists the Lake County Values, Assets, and Treasured Qualities, describe Lake County, provide a glossary, list preparers and advisory committee members of the General Plan, and includes the Aggregate Resource Management Plan, not included in the update process, and the aforementioned Health and Safety Element Background Report, Evacuation Study, and Climate Vulnerability Analysis as appendices.

A brief explanation of each Lake County 2050 General Plan core component and appendix is provided below:

- Water Resources features policy guidance to preserve and regenerate the ecological integrity and sustainability of the county's watershed, including all groundwater and surface water.
- Agricultural Resources sets policies to protect and sustain local agriculture as an economic driver, food source, and core component of Lake County's identity.
- Health and Safety provides policies to protect the people and resources of the county from risks associated with natural and human-made hazards such as seismic, geological, flooding, and wildfire. The chapter addresses the needs for hazard mitigation, including resilience to climate change hazards, to minimize risks to property, the natural environment, and human life.
- Geothermal Resources provides policy guidance to support the efficient, sustainable, and safe use of the county's geothermal resources.
- Noise identifies major noise sources and contains policies intended to protect the community from exposure to excessive noise levels.
- Land Use designates the general distribution, intensity, and ranges of appropriate land uses in the county.
- Circulation identifies the general location and extent of existing and proposed transportation facilities, supporting all modes of travel, including walking, biking, and driving, for a more sustainable and connected Lake County.
- Open Space, Conservation, and Recreation addresses the integrated planning, management, conservation, and sustainable utilization and stewardship of open space, natural lands, and cultural resources. This element also provides for public recreation and enjoyment of the county's natural beauty.
- Environmental Justice identifies Lake County communities facing acute burdens from environmental factors, such as limited access to resources and services and engagement in community decision making processes, and establishes a framework of policies and programs to address these burdens in impacted communities.
- Public Facilities and Services works to maintain and enhance service delivery for water, solid waste, wastewater, electricity and gas, fire protection, and law enforcement. This chapter also supports effective communication systems and the siting of educational and community facilities to meet local needs.
- Economic Development supports the fiscal health of Lake County communities, prioritizing a local, circular economy comprised of complementary commercial and industrial enterprises.
- Special Study Areas and Design Guidelines provide detailed policy and/or design guidance for specific geographies of some planning areas.
- Aggregate Resources Management Plan identifies the location of aggregate resources (i.e., sand and gravel), the types of mining operations in the county, and management policies for aggregate mining activities.
- Climate Vulnerability Analysis evaluates how climate change hazards could harm the unincorporated areas of the county as well as the cities of Clearlake and Lakeport.
- Health and Safety Element Background Report offers detailed information for each of the health and safety element issue topics.
- Lake County Evacuation Study provides a broad assessment of the capacity of the transportation system during evacuation scenarios.

Tribal Consultation and Engagement

Pursuant to Senate Bil 18 (SB 18), requirements of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), and Assembly Bill 52 (AB 52), The County engaged with Tribal governments in the region on development of the Lake County 2050 General Plan update and the EIR.

On May 22, 2024, County staff sent AB 52 and SB 18 notices to the following Tribes, offering an opportunity to engage in formal consultation: Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians/ Big Valley Rancheria, Cachil Dehe Band of Wintun Indians of the Colusa Indian Community, Cahto Tribe, Cloverdale Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Cortina Rancheria - Kletsel Dehe Band of Wintun Indians, Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Dry Creek Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Elem Indian Colony of Pomo Indians of the Sulphur Bank Rancheria, Estom Yumeka Maidu Tribe of the Enterprise Rancheria, Grindstone Rancheria of Wintun-Wailaki, Guidiville Rancheria of California, Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake, Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, Koi Nation of Northern California, Manchester Band of Pomo Indians of the Manchester Rancheria, Middletown Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California, Mishewal-Wappo Tribe of Alexander Valley, Noyo River Indian Community, Paskenta Band of Nomlaki Indians, Pinoleville Pomo Nation, Potter Valley Tribe, Redwood Valley or Little River Band of Pomo Indians, Robinson Rancheria of Pomo Indians of California, Round Valley Reservation/ Covelo Indian Community, Scotts Valley Band of Pomo Indians of California, Sherwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo, Yocha Dehe Wintun Nation, Yokayo Tribe.

The County engaged in formal Tribal consultation with the following Tribes:

Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake

- Consultation Initiation letter received from Habematolel 7/3/24.
- Consultation Meeting 1 with Habematolel held 8/15/24.
- Consultation Meeting 2 with Habematolel was held 9/26/24.
- Consultation Conclusion letter sent to Habematolel 10/25/24.
- Final Conclusion letter sent 4/27/26.

Koi Nation of Northern California

- Consultation Initiation letter received from Koi 10/2/24
- Consultation Meeting 1 held 10/23/24
- Consultation Meeting 2 held 1/6/25
- Conclusion letter sent 4/27/26

Robinson Rancheria of Pomo Indians

- Consultation meeting 1 held 11/15/24
- Conclusion letter sent 4/27/26

Additionally, County staff held meetings with Tribal government representatives throughout the update process, often prior to release of the public review documents, consulting for proper land acknowledgment and Tribal history for inclusion in the Countywide and Planning Area elements, as well as the EIR. Edits on the elements and EIR were submitted by multiple tribes for staff consideration, and were integrated into the final documents. Regular updates were given to the Tribal Historic Preservation Officer/County meetings. Also, the Board of

Supervisors created a seat for Tribal representation on each of the Local Area Plan Advisory Committees (LAPACs) and the General Plan Advisory Committee.

Lastly, as a part of the outreach process, staff held meetings with Tribal governments to discuss and review other Countywide initiatives such as the Climate Adaptation Plan and Housing Action Implementation Plan.

Community Outreach and Engagement

Lake County 2050 included a comprehensive community engagement plan that included the following community outreach, workshops and meetings:

From March 11 to May 8, 2024, a 15-question survey was distributed to Lake County community members to inform Lake County 2050, the County's comprehensive General Plan Update. The goal of the survey was to understand resident sentiment towards existing quality of life, natural and human caused hazards, and environmental justice issues and solicit feedback to support General Plan policies, programs, and implementing actions. The survey was promoted on the project website (LakeCounty2050.org), in public meetings, and canvassing activities administered by County AmeriCorps service members. A total of 718 community members participated in the survey.

From August 5 through September 13, 2024, a comprehensive survey was conducted in each Planning Area to inform Lake County 2050, the County's General Plan Update. The goal of the survey was to gather input on land use, policy, and related changes to the General Plan. There were also questions included to inform the County's Housing Action and Implementation Plan (HAIP). The survey was available on the project website, and was distributed by County AmeriCorps service members and LAPAC members.

The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), established by the Board of Supervisors to review and gather and provide input on Countywide Elements, met seven times in publicly noticed, hybrid meetings in 2024, 2025, and 2026.

Presentations on the Lake County 2050 Update Process were made to each of the 11 Municipal Advisory Councils in April 2024.

August 2024: The Lake County 2050 Update Process Presentations were made in Open House in-person on August 5 and 6, in Webinar style on August 13 and 15, and surveys were administered to the public at the Blackberry COBBler Festival (August 24) and at the Lake County Fair (August 29 – September 1). The survey was also available online at the Lake County 2050 website (LakeCounty2050.org).

County staff held a Spanish Stakeholder meeting on September 16, 2024. The meeting was conducted in Spanish and presented the update process and gathered public input about priorities in our Spanish-speaking communities.

The Board established Local Area Plan Advisory Committees (LAPACs) for each of the eight Planning Areas. 42 LAPAC meetings were held in October and November, 2024.

County staff held the Agriculture Stakeholder meeting on December 19, 2024.

In 2025, County staff held an Open House for property owners whose land was included in the General Plan Land Use Designation Amendments. Each property owner was notified by direct mail, and was able to view the proposed maps and give their input. A few letters of opposition were subsequently received and are included as Attachment 3. The letters were also presented to the corresponding LAPACs for their consideration.

In 2026, staff visited the Municipal Advisory Councils again in March. 25 LAPAC meetings were held in March and April, and the second Spanish Stakeholder meeting was held on April 28, 2026.

Also in 2026, three advertisements were placed in the Record-Bee to notify property owners of the land use designation amendment in the “SOS” Substandard Older Subdivision Overlay parcels, from Rural Residential and Suburban Reserve, to Resource Conservation.

Public Comments

The draft Lake County 2050 General Plan was made available for public review starting in June 2026. Copies were distributed to each County Library, and at the front counter of the Community Development Department. Comments submitted since June 2026 have been collected and are included as Attachment 2.

While the draft General Plan was out for review, the project team initiated its required consultation with the California Board of Forestry and CAL FIRE for the Health and Safety element. Comments were received and integrated into the final draft, scheduled for consideration at the Board of Forestry meeting on August 18, 2026.

Airport Land Use Commission consideration of the Lake County 2050 General Plan and its compatibility to the Lake County Airport Land Use Compatibility Plan is required by law. This meeting will be scheduled prior to final consideration by the Board of Supervisors.

Lake County 2050 Action Plan

The project team is in the process of preparing an Action Plan to guide the County’s implementation of the Lake County 2050 General Plan Update. The Action Plan lists all actions included in the General Plan and provides details on which department(s) is/are responsible for implementation of the action, the desired timeframe to complete the action, and funding sources to implement the action. The Action Plan is a tool for staff and elected leaders to implement Lake County 2050. The Action Plan is not part of the General Plan, but is a separate guiding document, and will accompany the Lake County 2050 documents at the Board of Supervisors meeting.

Environmental Determination

The Lake County 2050 General Plan, including the Planning Area Elements, and their accompanying actions have been analyzed under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Pursuant to CEQA, a Notice of Preparation was prepared on January 9, 2024, indicating that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) would be prepared for the Lake County 2050 General Plan project. An initial Scoping Meeting was held by the Community Development Department on January 24, 2024.

A Draft EIR (DEIR; State Clearinghouse No. 2024010158), available online at: <https://lakecounty2050.org/documents/> and <https://ceqanet.lci.ca.gov/2024010158/2> was prepared to assess the environmental effects associated with implementation of the proposed project. The six main objectives of the DEIR, as established by CEQA are:

- To disclose to decision makers and the public the significant environmental effects of proposed activities.
- To identify ways to avoid or reduce environmental impacts.
- To prevent environmental impacts through implementation of feasible alternatives or mitigation measures.
- To disclose significant environmental effects.
- To foster interagency coordination in the review of projects.
- To enhance public participation in the planning process.

An EIR provides the information needed to assess the environmental consequences of a proposed project, to the extent feasible. EIRs are intended to provide an objective, factually supported, full-disclosure analysis of any environmental consequences associated with a proposed project, which may have the potential to result in significant, adverse environmental impacts. An EIR is also one of various decision-making tools used by a lead agency to consider the merits and disadvantages of a project that is subject to its discretionary authority. Prior to approving a proposed project, the lead agency must consider the information contained in the EIR, determine whether the EIR was properly prepared in accordance with CEQA and the CEQA Guidelines, determine that it reflects the independent judgement of the lead agency, adopt findings concerning the proposed project's significant environmental impacts and alternatives, and if needed, adopt a Statement of Overriding Considerations if the proposed project would result in significant impacts that cannot be avoided or mitigated. The Lake County 2050 General Plan DEIR was prepared in accordance with and in fulfillment of the CEQA requirements.

The DEIR is a countywide program EIR that analyzes potential environmental impacts of the adoption of the proposed Lake County 2050 General Plan. Program EIRs are not project-specific and do not evaluate the impacts of specific development projects that may be proposed under Lake County 2050. Program EIRs are distinct under CEQA as follows:

For a General Plan, a Program EIR examines broad policy objectives, alternatives, impacts and mitigation measures.

- A Program EIR provides an opportunity for more exhaustive consideration of effects and alternatives than would be practical within individual project-level EIRs.
- By using a tiered approach, the environmental review for the subsequent projects can be limited those project-specific significant effects not analyzed in the General Plan's Program EIR.
- Subsequent projects may rely upon a Program EIR; however, impacts for a specific project will generally require additional CEQA review.

The DEIR considered three alternatives to the proposed Lake County 2050 General Plan project, one of which was selected for further analysis:

- No Project/Existing General Plan Alternative – selected for further analysis
- Focused Growth and Reduced Non-residential Alternative – selected for further analysis
- Reduced Housing Alternative – rejected due to ongoing housing crisis
- No Development in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones Alternative – rejected because the County has a responsibility to meet other, conflicting obligations, including increasing the number and type of housing available and allowing reconstruction of homes burned by wildfires.

A complete description of the Alternatives is contained in Chapter 4 of the DEIR.

The DEIR was made available for public review on March 9, 2026. A 45-day public review period ensued, concluding on April 24, 2026. Thirteen comments were received during the review period from state and regional agencies and individual members of the public.

The Final EIR (FEIR) for Lake County 2050 was released for public review on August 10, 2026, and is available online at <https://lakecounty2050.org/documents/>. The FEIR is the CEQA document that addresses all comments provided during the public review of the DEIR. The FEIR revises the DEIR as necessary in response to these comments. None of the revisions result in significant changes to the Project Description or findings of the DEIR that would trigger the need to recirculate the DEIR.

The FEIR, together with the DEIR, constitutes the FEIR if the Board of Supervisors certifies it as complete and adequate under CEQA.

The FEIR consists of

- Revisions to the DEIR
- List of Commentors
- Response to Commentors

Lake County 2050 has been developed to be largely self-mitigating, in which the goals, policies, and actions help to minimize and avoid significant impacts. While Lake County 2050 strives for self-mitigation, the FEIR determines that Lake County 2050 has the potential to generate 15 significant environmental impacts.

All impacts identified under the DEIR are considered Significant and Unavoidable under CEQA, because they cannot be avoided, even with the implementation of feasible mitigation measures. Impacts were identified for the following topic areas:

- Agriculture and Forestry Resources
- Air Quality
- Transportation
- Utilities and Service Systems
- Wildfire

For this reason, a Statement of Overriding Consideration is recommended for inclusion in the required CEQA findings setting forth the economic, social, and other benefits of the proposed project that render these significant effects acceptable.

Attachments

Attachment 1: Lake County 2050 General Plan

Attachment 2: Public Comments on the General Plan Update

Attachment 3: Letters received from Property Owners regarding Land Use Designation Amendments

II. RECOMMENDATION

No formal action is requested. This meeting is a workshop to discuss and review the General Plan and Local Area Plans.