

September 30, 2024

To: Lake County Board of Supervisors
Cc: Mireya Turner, Community Development Department Director
Re: Agenda Item 6.6 - Lake County 2050 Update

Dear Supervisors Sabatier, Crandell, Pyska, Simon, and Green:

In the first eight years of this century leading up to the adoption of our current General Plan (and other important planning projects), optimistic projections of up-scale development and bountiful business opportunities created goals and policies that have little relationship to today's needs.

Multiple disasters added to the impacts of nation-wide collapses in banking and building industries during the 2008 "great recession." Your Board, beginning in 2017, developed new leadership directions that brought us here today, with appreciable support from the public across all demographic sectors.

Vision 2028, created in 2018, describes the ideals imagined then, such as "re-branding" the county as a premier outdoor destination — but tumultuous changes in administrative systems have impeded the achievement of those aspirations.

In the intervening time, overwhelming impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic added to the toll on basic health and safety services that we all depend on — law enforcement, medical care, environmental protection, and emergency management.

Also, more than twenty years of collaborative efforts to reverse a century of naively poor land use impacts on the "County's most important asset" — Clear Lake — were sidelined until state management agencies began revisiting the locally suspended programs in 2017 and we collectively regrouped to provide fundable plans for critical projects

including hazard mitigation, infrastructure rehabilitation, and long-term planning.

While the past 8 years of transformation have brought us closer to achieving those goals, bridging the gaps between full capacity in key staffing areas and empowering the public to participate in good governance (through projects such as the General Plan update) remains an unaddressed “challenge” to our forward progress.

Where we are falling short is evident in the apparent lack of public involvement in our major planning projects. This is partly due to the overwhelming work load (and staff losses) in the Community Development Department and in not making wise use of our social capital — organizations and community activists with non-governmental resources to contribute to the common goals we hope to achieve:

First, to restore and protect natural resources and shared public assets so critical to sustainable growth, a healthy population, and a strong economy.

Second, to preserve the unique cultural legacies and agrarian qualities of our rural communities while focusing on opportunities for new development.

And third, to reduce — as greatly as possible — the very high fire hazards threatening our Wildland-Urban Interface towns and cities.

Our common goals bring us together to create a new “roadmap” for Lake County’s future. The process in place should allow for rational course corrections to ensure that the way to get to 2028’s Vision is truly collaborative.

I urge you to consider this opportunity to invest in more effective community involvement for the benefit of our citizens, our undervalued environmental assets, and our critical service providers. [See the post-script below for details.]

Thank you for your time and attention today, and thank you for your dedication to public service and good governance in the County of Lake.

Respectfully yours,

Betsy Cawn
The Essential Public Information Center
Upper Lake, CA

NOTE: Specific issues related to CDD operations are: (1) complex errors found in the Cannabis Ordinance Task Force proceedings; (2) long delays in updating the “Lake County 2050” website and inclusion of the General Plan Advisory Committee recommendations and working drafts to inform Local Area Plan Advisory Committees; (3) unreadable maps (and needed new ones (identifying community-focused jurisdictions); (4) brevity of “community engagement” steps for Local Area Plan community-driven inputs; and (5) missing Municipal Code updates to ensure congruence between Zoning Ordinances and other chapters governing county-wide management systems.

Details about each of these concerns can be provided — and we ask today for your help to do that — to support the Community Development Department, your Board, and the denizens of Lake County.