



GREATER HIGGINS AREA PLAN



NEVADA
COUNTY
CALIFORNIA



**NEVADA
COUNTY**
CALIFORNIA

Prepared by:



2040 Bancroft Way, Suite 400
Berkeley, California 94704
t 510.848.3815

ORANGE COUNTY • **BAY AREA** • SACRAMENTO • CENTRAL COAST • LOS ANGELES • INLAND EMPIRE

www.placeworks.com

GREATER HIGGINS AREA PLAN

Adopted March 14, 2023



Acknowledgements

Board of Supervisors

District I Supervisor Heidi Hall
District II Supervisor Ed Scofield, Vice Chair
District III Supervisor Dan Miller
District IV Supervisor Susan Hoek, Chair
District V Supervisor Hardy Bullock

Planning Commission

District I Commissioner Danny Milman
District II Commissioner Laura Duncan
District III Commissioner Robert Ingram
District IV Commissioner Mike Mastrodonato, Vice Chair
District V Commissioner William Greeno, Chair

County of Nevada Planning Department

Brian Foss, Planning Director
Kyle Smith, Associate Planner

Consultant Team

PlaceWorks:

Bruce Brubaker, Principal
Janet Chang, Project Manager
Steve Gunnells, Chief Economist

TJKM:

Nayan Amin, President
Arthur Chen, Transportation Planner

South County Area Municipal Advisory Council (SCMAC)

Erin Sullivan, Chair
James Mathias, Vice Chair
William Checkvala, Member
Tony Gosalvez, Member
Brian Hamilton, Member
Vicki Hawkins, Member
MaryJane Huenergardt, Member
Jake Jacobson, Member
Gloria Siegle, Member
Gary Baker, Alternate Member
Dallan Packard, Alternate Member
Jon Shilling, Previous Member

Table of Contents

Chapter 1 Introduction	7	Chapter 3 Economic Development	59
Purpose of the Area Plan	8	Introduction	60
Organization of the Area Plan	8	Existing Economic Conditions	60
Description of the Plan Area	9	Community Economic Development Vision	64
Vision and Guiding Principles	11	Goals and Policies	65
Plan Preparation	13	Implementation Actions	66
Legal Authority	14		
Relationship to the General Plan	15	Chapter 4 Public Services and Infrastructure	67
		Introduction	68
Chapter 2 Land Use and Community Character	23	Transportation	68
Introduction	24	Utility Infrastructure	76
Existing Land Uses and Community Character	24	Public Services	81
Land Use Regulations	32	Goals and Policies	83
Existing and Proposed Zoning Districts	32	Implementation Actions	86
Design Guidelines	41		
Community Design Districts	41	Chapter 5 Recreation and Trails	89
Residential Development	51	Introduction	90
Goals and Policies	55	Existing Recreation Activities	90
Implementation Actions	58	Trail Recommendations	93
		Parks Recommendations	99
		Goals and Policies	102
		Implementation Actions	104

Chapter 6 Historic, Cultural, Natural, and Scenic Resources	105
Introduction	106
Existing Historic, Cultural, Natural, and Scenic Resources	106
Goals and Policies	111
Implementation Actions	113
Chapter 7 Implementation	115
Introduction	116
High Priority Policies	116
Funding for Potential Improvements and Programs	119
Appendix A Design Guidelines	129
Introduction	130
Scenic and Natural Resources	130
Design Districts	133
Site Planning	136
Building Design	138
Landscaping	142
Public Art	147
Lighting	147
Signage	149
Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)	150
Additional Guidelines for Multi-Family Residential Development	152

List of Figures & Tables

Figure 1.1: Regional Context Map	10
Figure 1.2: Greater Higgins Plan Area	12
Figure 2.1: Community Character Areas within the Plan Area	25
Figure 2.2: Existing Land Uses within the Plan Area	26
Figure 2.3: General Plan Land Use Designations within the Plan Area	33
Table 2.1: General Plan Land Uses Within the Plan Area	34
Table 2.2: General Plan Land Use Designation and Corresponding Zoning District within Plan Area	37
Figure 2.4: Plan Area Zoning Districts Map	38
Figure 2.5: Plan Area Combining Zoning Districts Map	40
Table 2.3: Sites for Potential Development	44
Figure 2.6: Proposed Street Section of "Commercial Lane"	45
Figure 2.7: Existing and Planned Projects within Higgins Corner Design District	47
Figure 2.8: Conceptual Diagram of Potential Development of Higgins Corner Design District	47
Figure 2.9: Existing and Planned Projects within Lake Center Design District	49
Figure 2.10: Conceptual Diagram of Potential Development of Lake Center Design District	49
Figure 2.11: Alternative Development Scheme of Lake Center	50
Table 4.1: Market Potential for New Housing by Number of Units; Greater Higgins Plan Area and Surrounding Area; 2022 to 2042	60
Table 4.2: Recommended New Retail Development in Square Feet of Building Space for the Greater Higgins Trade Area	61
Table 4.3: Market Potential for Non-Residential Use (excluding Retail) in Square Feet of Building Area; 2022-2042	63
Figure 4.1: Vehicular Network and Classification	70

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Figure 4.2: Potential Evacuation Routes	72
Figure 4.3: Existing Nevada County Connects Bus Routes and Stops	75
Figure 4.4: Sanitation Zone 2 Sphere of Influence	78
Figure 5.1: Existing Trails and Paths within the Plan Area	91
Figure 5.2: Proposed Multi-use Path Network	95
Figure 5.3: Existing Street Section of Combie Road (looking east)	96
Figure 5.5: Existing Street Section of Magnolia Road(looking east)	96
Figure 5.4: Proposed Street Section of Combie Road with New Multi-use Path (looking east)	96
Figure 5.6: Proposed Street Section of Magnolia Road with Widened Multi-use Path (looking east)	96
Figure 5.7: Existing Street Section of South Combie Road at Sanitation District Land (looking north)	97
Figure 5.8: Proposed Street Section of South Combie Road at Sanitation District Land with New Multi-use Path(looking north)	97
Figure 5.9: Conceptual Diagram of Multi-use Paths and Potential Parks in the Higgins Corner Design District	101
Figure 5.10: Conceptual Diagram of Multi-use Paths and Potential Parks in the Lake Center Design District	101
Table A.1: Drought-Tolerant, Deer-Resistant, and Low Maintenance Plant List	143



Chapter 1

Introduction

Purpose of the Area Plan

The Greater Higgins Area Plan (Area Plan) describes a comprehensive future vision for the Greater Higgins Plan Area and serves as the comprehensive land use and zoning plan for the Greater Higgins region and community. The Area Plan focuses on future growth in key areas that would contribute to community vitality and create a more compact residential and commercial development.

This Area Plan is an update and expansion to County of Nevada's (County's) 2000 Higgins Area Plan, building upon and superseding the 2000 Plan and augmenting the countywide General Plan. This Area Plan identifies community goals related to different topics such as land use, circulation, and economic development that will be used to help implement private and public projects and programs within the Plan Area to address those needs. Each chapter contains goals, policies, and implementation actions, which are based upon assessments of current and future needs and available resources, that will help guide County stakeholders and decision-makers on implementing future improvements on public and private property in the Plan Area.

Organization of the Area Plan

This Area Plan is organized into seven chapters and an appendix. Each chapter contains goals and policies to help facilitate future development. The contents of each chapter are summarized below.

Chapter 1 - Introduction: This chapter provides an introductory overview to the Plan. It includes a summary of the Area Plan's purpose, organization, preparation process, legal authority, relationship to the

General Plan, description of the Plan Area, and its vision and guiding principles.

Chapter 2 - Land Use and Community Character: This chapter describes the existing and proposed land uses, community character, and zoning districts for the Plan Area, including conceptual diagrams illustrating potential future development in two design districts: 1) Higgins Corner Design District and 2) Lake Center Design District. This chapter also includes the Area Plan goals and policies related to land use and community design, and establishes land use and zoning regulations for the Area Plan boundaries.

Chapter 3 - Economic Development: This chapter includes an overview of the existing economic conditions within the Greater Higgins area, including the potential for population/housing growth and new residential and non-residential development. This chapter also includes the Plan's economic vision, goals, and policies for economic prosperity and sustainability of the local economy for the Plan Area and Areas of Influence.

Chapter 4 - Public Services and Infrastructure: This chapter addresses the public services and facilities that serve development within the Area Plan boundaries, including utilities, vehicular circulation, evacuation routes, and transit services, and contains goals and policies that strive to augment or streamline these services.

Chapter 5 - Recreation and Trails: This chapter describes the existing recreational facilities within the Plan Area and includes a framework and strategy to create opportunities for new facilities or expanded use of existing facilities to meet the needs of the community. This chapter focuses on recommendations for two types of recreational facilities: parks and a multi-use path network.

Chapter 6 – Historical, Cultural, Natural, and Scenic Resources:

This chapter describes the existing historical, cultural, natural, and scenic resources within the Plan Area, including the history of the Higgins area and Ragsdale Creek, which runs through the Plan Area. This chapter also sets forth goals and policies for the Area Plan and lists strategies to achieve improvements in the area’s diverse natural resources, specifically along Highway 49, a designated scenic resource, that promote public enjoyment of the area.

Chapter 7 – Implementation: This chapter contains a prioritized list of recommendations/improvements for the Plan’s implementation in different timing targets of short-term, medium-term, and long-term. This chapter also identifies various sources of public and private funding sources to help implement the Plan’s recommendations and policies.

Appendix A – Design Guidelines: This appendix contains a set of design guidelines, including for multi-family residential development and development along Ragsdale Creek, in the Plan Area that will ensure that projects have an appropriate form and scale that is context sensitive to the surrounding rural character. This chapter also includes guidelines for each of the two Design Districts and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), which is a crime prevention philosophy based on the theory that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, as well as an improvement in the quality of life.

Description of the Plan Area

Context

The Greater Higgins Plan Area (Plan Area) is situated in the southern



View of Holiday Market from Highway 49.

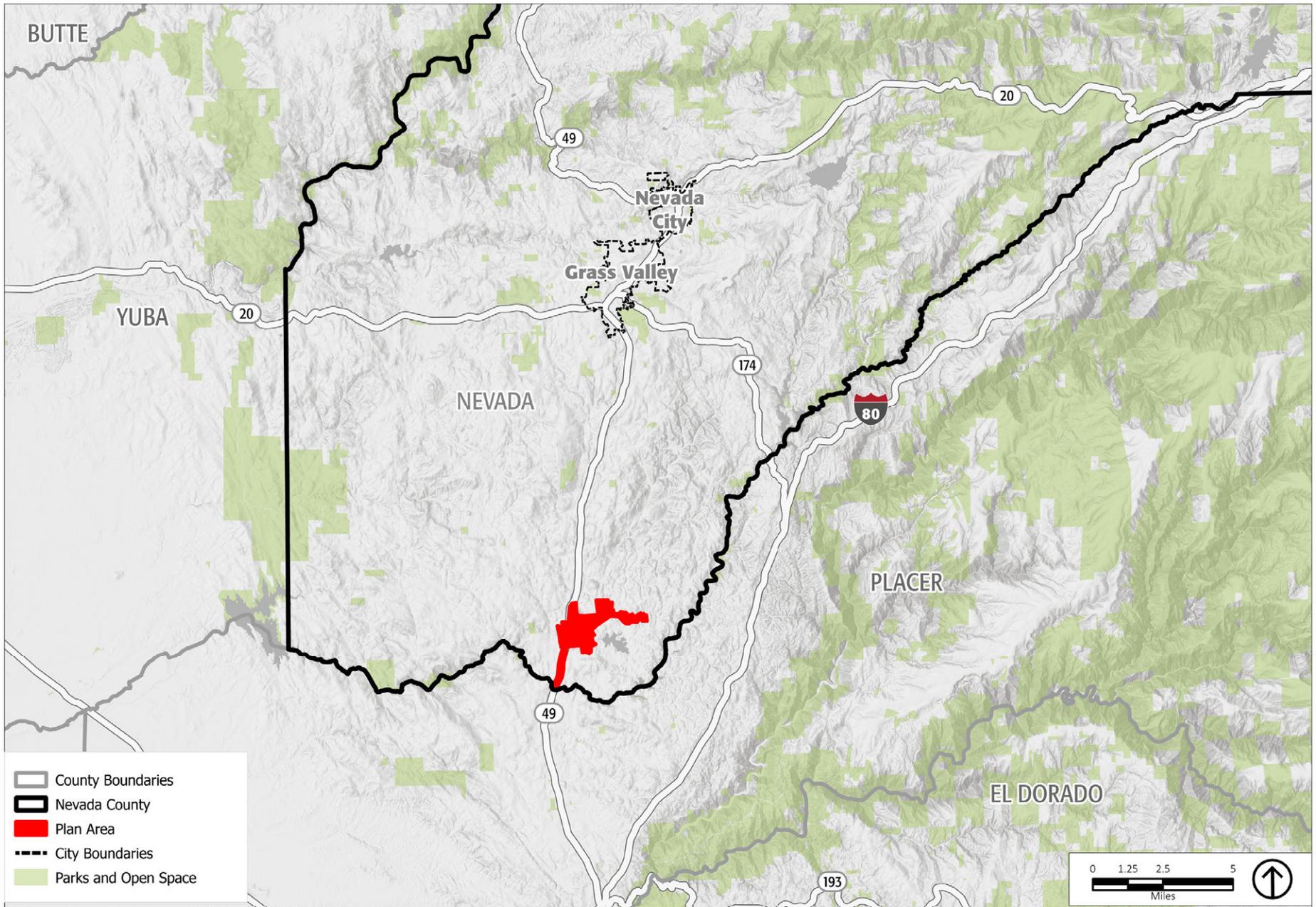
end of County of Nevada (or South County), with Sacramento to the southwest and Placer County to the south and east (see Figure 1.1). The cities of Grass Valley and Nevada City are located to the north, Colfax to the northeast, and Auburn to the south.

Most of the Plan Area is located east of Highway 49 (or State Route 49), which is the main route for north/south ingress and egress. Magnolia Road, which turns into Dog Bar Road, also provides north/south access.

Plan Area

As previously mentioned, this Area Plan is an update and expansion to the County’s Higgins Area Plan, adopted in 2000, whose study area was specifically delineated by the General Plan land use map and encompassed approximately 246 acres extending from the village area along

Figure 1.1: Regional Context Map



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

Combie Road to the entrance to Bear River High School, as well as the Lake of the Pines subdivision (see Figure 1.2). After 20 years, many of the concepts and policies in the Higgins Area Plan are still relevant, but some have been eclipsed by new development and new community needs.

The Plan Area is an expansion of the 2000 Higgins Area Plan’s study area. Both plan areas include parcels fronting Combie Road areas, but this Plan Area also includes peripheral residential and public institutional areas, as well as a portion of scenic Highway 49 that extends from the northern end of the Plan Area to the southern County boundary.

While not a part of the Plan Area, there are several “Areas of Influence” to the southeast of the Plan Area. These Areas of Influence are made up primarily of established residential neighborhoods, including Lake of the Pines (a gated community), Darkhorse, and Lake of the Pines Ranchos (within the South Area of Influence). Lake of the Pines, Darkhorse, and Lake of the Pines Ranchos have their own Homeowners Associations. Furthermore, Lake of the Pines has its own planning document, the 2019 Lake of the Pines Long-Range Strategic Plan. The Plan Area and Areas of Influence are generally surrounded by agricultural land. In addition to residents of the Plan Area, residents of the Areas of Influence are considered those who use or would use existing and future services within the Plan Area. These residents were part of the engagement process that shaped this Plan, and the views of these residents should also be considered when reviewing future development proposals within the Plan Area. All new development should also consider the impacts of development on the Areas of Influence around the Plan Area. Together, the Plan Area and Areas of Influence make up the Greater Higgins community.



A hillside in the residential area of the Plan Area.

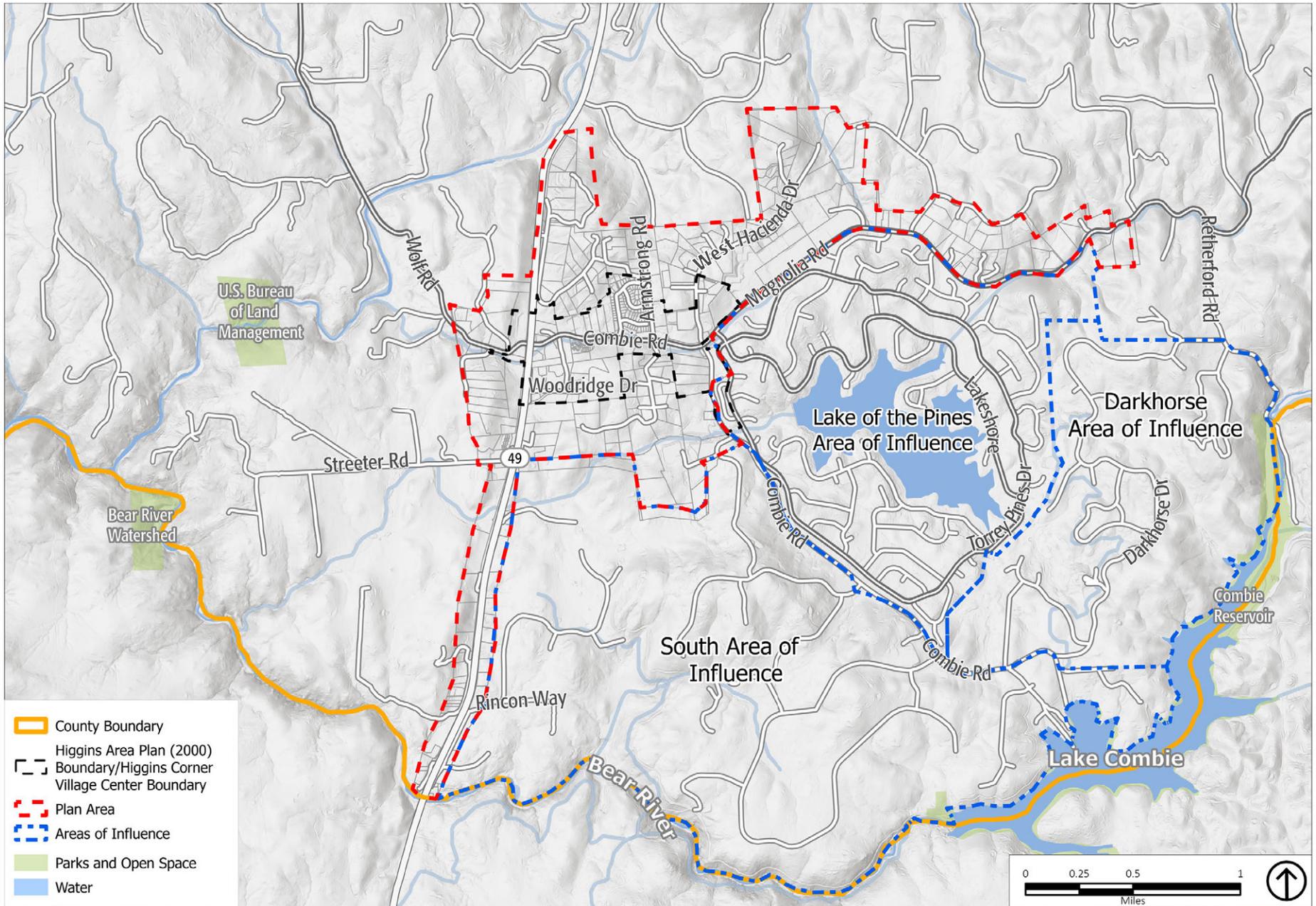
Vision and Guiding Principles

The primary goal of the Plan is to retain the rural, small-town character of the Greater Higgins area, while serving the basic needs of the surrounding community and providing a gateway to those entering southern Nevada County. As it develops, the Plan Area will continue to function as the crossroads of South County and as a gateway to the county from the Sacramento Valley.

The following guiding principles were developed from key takeaways from community discussions at various community meetings, and steered the development of the recommended goals and policies and improvements in this Area Plan:

- Allow the Greater Higgins community to flourish while retaining its unique, rural, small-town character and natural landscape and views.
- Preserve the identity of the Greater Higgins area as a scenic, tranquil, family-oriented community.

Figure 1.2: Greater Higgins Plan Area



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.



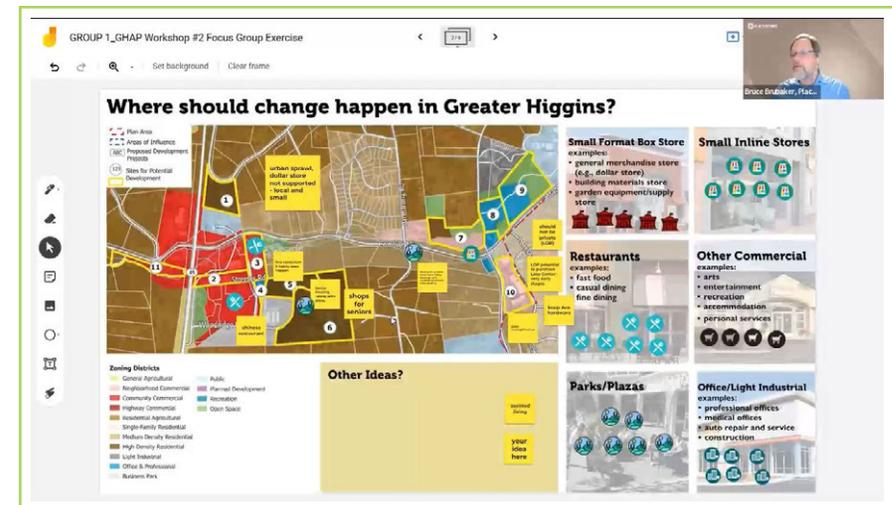
View looking east along Woodridge Drive with Holiday Marketplace to the left.

- Create areas that foster a greater sense of identity and community, such as gathering spaces, retail, and restaurants.
- Concentrate growth in existing commercial areas to minimize development elsewhere and avoid sprawl.
- Prioritize housing opportunities for seniors to allow aging residents to stay in the Greater Higgins area, as well as attract younger families to support the enrollment of local schools.
- Provide safer connections for alternative modes of transportation (i.e., walk, bike, transit, golf cart), from residences to commercial areas and schools.
- Ensure sufficient infrastructure such as power, roads, water, and Internet are provided with new development, and that utilities for current residents are not impacted.

Plan Preparation

The County has prepared the Area Plan with collaboration from the Greater Higgins community, which includes those who live in the Plan Area and just outside of the Plan Area, including the communities of Lake of the Pines, Darkhorse, Lake of the Pines Ranchos, and more.

The South County Area Municipal Advisory Council (SCMAC) served as a key partner in the development of the Plan, meeting monthly to discuss the project and providing comments on product deliverables to incorporate ideas and recommendations into the Plan. Their roles included advising and informing on issues in and around the Plan Area, ensuring the Area Plan promotes the community's vision, engaging the community in an inclusive participatory process, and promoting public workshops.



Screen capture of one of the virtual community workshops.

As part of the planning process, the Nevada County Planning Department conducted an extensive community engagement effort. The project team conducted several interviews with various stakeholders, including County staff, agencies, organizations, businesses, landowners, Lake of the Pines, and Bear River High School staff. At major project milestones, the County hosted four public workshops between October 2021 and September 2022 to keep the community informed about the project and seek input to help guide Area Plan development.

Legal Authority

This Area Plan is designed to meet State of California requirements for specific plans and to facilitate the implementation of development goals and policies by establishing zoning districts, standards, and criteria for development, and to set the distribution, location, and extent of planned land uses consistent with the adopted Nevada County General Plan.

The authority for preparing Area Plans is founded in California Government Code Section 65301(b) which allows the general plan to be adopted as a single document or as a group of documents relating to subjects or geographic segments of the planning area, and in Government Code Section 65303 which allows the general plan to include any other elements or address any other subjects which, in the judgment of the legislative body, relate to the physical development of the county. Local authority is founded in the goals and policies of the Nevada County General Plan. The existing 2000 Higgins Area Plan has outlived its lifespan, and as a result, direction to prepare this Area Plan was provided by County Board of Supervisors.

This Area Plan was developed consistent with California State law which permits cities and counties to adopt specific plans for the “systematic implementation of the general plan” (Government Code Section 65450 et. Seq.). The law requires the following:

- A specific plan shall include a text and diagram or diagrams which specify all the following in detail:
 - The distribution, location, and extent of the uses of land, including open space, within the area covered by the plan.
 - The proposed distribution, location, extent, and intensity of major components of public and private transportation, sewage, water, drainage, solid waste disposal, energy, and other essential facilities proposed to be located within the area covered by the plan and needed to support the land uses described in the plan.
 - Standards and criteria by which development will proceed and standards for the conservation, development, and utilization of natural resources where applicable.
 - A program of implementation measures including regulations, programs, public works projects, and financing measures necessary to carry out the above referenced requirements.
- The specific plan shall include a statement of the relationship of the specific plan to the general plan.

California Government Code Section 65452 provides that the specific plan may address any other subjects which in the judgment of the planning agency are necessary or desirable for the implementation of the general plan.

Relationship to the General Plan

The direction and authority of this Area Plan is founded in the goals and policies of the 1995 Nevada County General Plan (General Plan) with updates to the Land Use Element in 2020, Safety Element and Housing Element in 2019, Noise Element in 2014, and Circulation Element in 2010. This Area Plan also implements County Ordinance 1930, which provides for comprehensive planning for the Higgins Area.

The General Plan divides the County into Community Regions and Rural Regions. Community Regions are areas designated for balanced growth, while Rural Regions are areas for limited growth. The Plan Area includes part of the County's Lake of the Pines Community Region. The Plan Area also includes Higgins Corner (intersection of Highway 49/Combie Road), a General Plan-designated "Village Center" which is a "functional and cultural center" that groups together various uses such as residential, commercial, office, business park, and public or institutional uses to create a visual identity for the community. Area Plans are planning tools in Community Regions that allow for more specific treatment of a Village Center, and support land use policy documents that complement and assist in the further implementation of the General Plan.

Additionally, the "SP" site performance combining districts, described in the County's Land Use and Development Code and Zoning Regulations, designates parcels within the Plan Area for comprehensive planning. As a policy document, this plan supplements the General Plan in guiding future development within the Plan Area. It will provide direction in the decision-making process as development occurs.

The goals, policies, and guidelines are consistent with the overall theme, goals, and policies of the General Plan. Authorized by California planning

and zoning law section 65303, this Area Plan refines the policies of the County General Plan as they relate to the Plan Area.

This Area Plan was specifically designed to be consistent with a number of General Plan policies, which are listed below. Any proposed development should be reviewed for consistency with these policies. All projects in the Plan Area, as in the entire County, shall be consistent with the General Plan.

General Plan Land Use Policies

Policy 1.5.3. The adopted comprehensive Site Development Standards contained in the Land Use and Development Code (Chapter II, Article 4), were established and are implemented as directed by Action Policy 1.17 of the 1995 General Plan. These standards are used during the "project site review" process" to provide a consistent approach for addressing the presence of sensitive environmental features and/or natural constraints, clustering and provision of open space as part of development, the potential for land use conflicts between uses, and the potential for public health hazards.

Applicable to all development projects in the County, the Comprehensive Site Development Standards have been designed to be protective of the County's unique character, providing guidance for:

- a. Protection of environmentally sensitive resources;
- b. Provision of open space as part of site development;
- c. Prevention and reduction of fire hazards;
- d. Maintenance and enhancement of vegetation and landscaping;
- e. Prevention and reduction of flood hazards;

- f. Transitions between uses and multiple-use site development;
- g. Community design;
- h. Buffering and screening to mitigate adverse effects;
- i. Incentives to provide for access to public resources and open space; and
- j. Protection of important agricultural, mineral, and timber resources.

The standards shall identify the basic requirements for site development in the County, including, at a minimum, standards to mitigate the impact of development on the following environmentally sensitive resources:

- Wetlands (as delineated in the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service National Wetlands inventory);
- Major deer migration corridors, critical range, and critical fawning areas (as defined by the State Fish and Wildlife's Migratory Deer Range Maps);
- Landmark oaks (defined as any oak 36" or greater at dbh);
- Landmark groves (defines as areas with 33+% canopy closure based on the State Department of Forestry and Fire Protection's Hardwood Rangeland Maps);
- Rare and endangered species (as found in the California Natural Diversity Database and the California Native Plant Society Inventory of Rare and Endangered Vascular Plants of California);
- Riparian corridors within 100 feet of intermittent or perennial water courses (as shown on the U.S. Geological Survey Quadrangle Topographic Maps);
- Significant cultural resources (as may be defined based upon recommendations by the Native American Heritage Commission or recognized Native American Group, Nevada County Landmarks Commission, or the Nevada County Historical Society);
- Floodplains precluding development and land disturbance within floodways and restricting development within the flood way fringe, through the establishment of floodplain setbacks and associated development regulation (as defined by the Federal Emergency Management Agency's Flood Insurance Rate Maps);
- Important agricultural lands (as defined by the State Department of Conservation's Important Farmland map);
- Significant mineral areas (as defined by the State Division of Mines and Geology's Nevada County Mineral Classification Report Map's referred to as Mineral Resources Zones-2);
- Earthquake faults (as defined by the State Division of Mines and Geology's Fault Map of California the United States Bureau of Reclamation's Seismotectonic Study of the Truckee/Lake Tahoe Area);
- Avalanche hazard (as defined by the Norman Wilson Avalanche Hazard Study);
- Steep slopes (30+%);
- Areas with high erosion potential (as determined by the United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Surveys of Nevada County and the Tahoe National Forest);
- Areas subject to fire hazards (as defined by the State Department of Forestry's and Fire Hazard Severity Map); and
- Visually important ridgelines and viewsheds (as defined by standards developed by Policy 18.3 of the General Plan).

Where such resources are present, the standards shall require that professional field inventory and review shall be undertaken to delineate the extent of the resource and determine the impact of the proposed development. The following siting and design measures shall be implemented as appropriate to meet the performance criteria:

- Identification of building envelopes;
- Conservation easements/deed restrictions;
- Use of common vs. individual driveways;
- Specification of location and type of fencing;
- Identification of setbacks and/or buffers;
- Development restrictions;
- Use of Transfer of Development Rights; and
- Offsite mitigation/mitigation banking.

The County shall approve a project for a discretionary permit only if it can be demonstrated that the project as designed and sited meets the intent of the SDS performance criteria.

Policy 1.5.5. Clustering of development is an effective and direct means to provide for the maintenance of the rural quality of life and protection of environmental resources which are important to Nevada County. Therefore, submittal of a clustering option of all land divisions shall be required within the Estate, Rural, and Forest General Plan land use designation in order to maintain the open, pastoral character of development which gives definition to the Rural Regions, and to protect environmental features by preserving areas containing such features as Open Space. This clustering evaluation shall utilize U.S.G.S. maps as the basic level of information.

In all other residential use designations (including Residential, Urban Single-Family, Urban Medium Density, and Urban High Density, and Continuing Care Retirement Community), clustering of development shall be strongly encouraged to maintain viable open space onsite which will contribute to open space linkages through and between land use areas. In addition, submittal of a clustering option shall be required in these land use designations and clustering shall be encouraged for all discretionary projects where environmentally sensitive resources exist.

Clustering may be achieved by building site clustering with creation of permanent open space; restriction of buildable area on individual lots; or other means which are consistent with the protection of the natural resources and environmental characteristics on the site.

No specific amount or ratio of open space shall be required; however, the amount of open space shall not be less than the amount of land area on the site subject to significant environmental features, as defined in Policy 1.5.3. Where the entire site is affected by significant environmental features, clustered development shall occur on the least sensitive habitat or resource area, as defined by an environmental analysis. Within such defined areas, minimum subdivision parcel size shall be limited to that which is needed to meet water and sewage disposal standards, as determined by the Department of Environmental Health.

Open space created through clustering shall be assured of permanent maintenance as open space by mechanisms such as, but not limited to, dedication, permanent easement, irrevocable trust, deed restrictions, or another mechanism assuring its permanent status.

The allowable number of dwelling units for any clustered development shall not exceed the number of units determined by dividing the total acreage of a parcel by the maximum permitted density for the land use designation in which the parcel is located.

General Plan Public Facilities Policies

Policy 3.21. Where water, sewer and other underground utilities are extended through undeveloped natural area, consideration shall be given to restoration or areas of cut, back-fill and grading. All surfaces shall be revegetated with appropriate ground covers and plant materials.

Policy 3.22. The County shall encourage the purveyors or aerial public utilities to install said utilities underground, pursuant to PUC rules.

Policy 3.23. The visual affects of telephone transmission lines and high voltage utility transmission lines shall be mitigated wherever feasible so that they are inconspicuous from Scenic Highways and viewsheds.

Policy 3.27. Standards for telecommunication facilities shall be included in the Comprehensive Site Development Standards, including but not limited to standards for setback, screening, angle of sight requirements, and visual compatibility.

General Plan Circulation Policies/Programs

Policy LU-4.1.2. The minimum acceptable level of service (LOS) for areas identified as Community Regions in the General Plan shall be LOS D, except where the existing LOS is less than D. In those situations, the LOS shall not be allowed to drop below the existing LOS. Level of service shall be based on the typical highest peak hour of weekday traffic.

Policy LU-4.1.3. The land use pattern reflected in the Nevada County General Plan Land Use Map is correlated with the future ability of the transportation system, including the major roadway network, to adequately serve said land uses based upon the service criteria and levels

of service. All General Plan amendments shall be required to show that the proposed development is also correlated with the future provision of transportation facilities and levels of service according to the same criteria.

Policy LU-4.1.5. Where it is determined by the County that a County road, road segment or intersection no longer provides the desirable acceptable level of service as defined in Policy LU-4.1.1 and Policy LU-5.1.2, the County shall take action to ensure compatibility between future growth and the road system. Solutions to local road system problems may include funding of transportation-related facilities, transportation management techniques, or development limitations or restrictions.

Policy LU-4.1.7. In the absence of an approved plan and funding program to provide needed roadway improvement, and where the County has determined that there is no feasible project mitigation, the County may deny those amendments to the General Plan that exacerbate an identified deficiency in local or State roads or highways.

Policy LU-4.1.8. New roads not shown on the General Plan Land Use Maps as part of the regional and non-through access local road systems identified in the Nevada County Road Functional Classification Plan shall not be constructed at public expense, but shall be provided as site improvements for each development project as necessary to provide safe, appropriate access.

Policy MV-4.2.4. The County shall maintain the function and integrity of arterial and major collector roads by limiting access wherever possible. For all new development, allow access via the lowest roadway classification, consistent with safe operation of the roadways and environmental constraints.

Policy MV-4.2.5. In the review of all discretionary permits, the County shall consider the effect of the proposed development on the area-wide transportation network and the effect of the proposed development on the road network and other transportation facilities in the immediate vicinity of the project site.

Policy MV-4.2.8. The County shall continue to work through the Nevada County Transportation Commission towards an integrated intracounty and intercounty regional transportation system.

Policy MV-4.2.9. The County shall work with Caltrans to implement incremental safety and capacity improvements within the Highway 49 corridor.

Policy RD-4.3.1. All discretionary and ministerial non-residential projects shall consider the feasibility of providing transit alternatives to automobile transportation and ways to reduce the dependence on the automobile. For projects generating 50 or more employees, the applicant shall prepare an analysis documenting means to reduce auto dependence. Wherever feasible, measures documented in the analysis shall be incorporated into the project. This process shall be coordinated with the applicable Transportation Management Association (TMA) or successor agencies.

Policy RD-4.3.2. Expansion of the County's bikeway network shall focus on corridors with high potential demand. These corridors include the Highway 49/20 corridor between Grass Valley and Nevada City (along Nevada City Highway, Old Tunnel Road, and Sutton Way), the La Barr Meadows Corridor between Alta Sierra and Grass Valley, the Penn Valley/Pleasant Valley Corridors between Lake Wildwood and Penn Valley, and the Combie Corridor bikeway.

Policy EP- 4.4.1. Nevada County shall continue to require environmentally sound practices for transportation facility construction and maintenance. New roads or improvements to the existing road system and all trails and pathways shall be located, constructed and maintained in a manner compatible with the environment.

Program LU-4.1.1. Monitor the County and State road system to work toward timely solutions to documented safety problems and appropriate improvements for those components of the road system that are either at or approaching a level of service below D in Community Regions and a level of service below C in Rural Regions.

Program LU-4.1.2. The County Capital Improvement Program (CIP) shall be maintained and updated annually. Such update shall identify and establish a schedule for planned improvement projects and identify sources of funding for each improvement, as the basis for determining the roadway capacity available to support new development.

Program LU-4.1.4. Implement the Nevada County Transportation Commission Regional Traffic Mitigation Fee Program and the Nevada County Local Traffic Mitigation Fee Program. These two programs impose development fees to mitigate the cumulative impact of development on the regional (non-local) highway and roadway network as defined in the Nevada County Road Functional Classification Plan and as shown on the Nevada County Circulation Plan Maps.

Program MV-4.2.1. In areas where congestion is forecast to exceed capacity and capital improvements are not planned, prepare and implement a comprehensive Transportation System Management program, to increase the number of people carried by the local road system without increasing the designed capacity of the system through consideration of measures including but not limited to:

- a. Traffic operations control measures (e.g., re-striping, turn lanes, one-way streets, ramp meters, meter bypass lanes, computerized signals, changeable message signs, etc.);
- b. Measures for the local and State road system, coordinated with Caltrans, designed to maintain circulation during high traffic flow events and holidays and to warn drivers of changing road conditions during inclement weather (use of radio, telephone, and signage); and
- c. Transportation management techniques related to existing and proposed employers (e.g., mandatory employer carpool and/or ride-share programs, business contribution to local public transit, flexible work hours, etc.).

Program RD- 4.3.1. The County shall cooperate with the Nevada County Transportation Commission, to prepare and implement a Pedestrian Master plan that provides for a comprehensive system of sidewalks, pathways and trails within established Community Boundaries that are designed to encourage pedestrian use. Emphasis will be placed on connecting residential areas to commercial and industrial areas; development of direct, efficient, safe and aesthetically pleasing routes; and practical mechanisms for utilizing existing public and quasi-public rights-of-way for pedestrian use.

General Plan Natural Resources Policies

Policy 6.6. Provide for, where feasible, continued access to open space and public resources by ensuring that all discretionary projects are consistent with development of the Nevada County Non-Motorized Trails Mater Plan.

Policy 11.7. Through the development and application of Comprehensive Site Development Standards, and project environmental review, establish and enforce minimum building setback lines from perennial streams and significant wetlands that are adequate to protect stream and wetland resources values.

Policy 11.8. Utilize voluntary clustering of development to preserve stream corridors, riparian habitat, wetlands, and floodplains.

Policy 13.2. As part of the Comprehensive Site Development Standards, include standards to minimize removal of existing vegetation and require installation and long-term maintenance of landscaping in setbacks and buffer areas. These standards shall be applicable to all discretionary projects and to all ministerial projects other than a single-family residence located on an individual lot. Tree removal may be allowed where necessary to comply with public right-of-way development or dedication, or development of required site access and public utilities. Individual trees or groups of trees shall be protected during construction to prevent damage to the trees and their root systems. Vegetation in proximity to structures shall conform to applicable fire protection standards.

Policy 13.3. As part of the Comprehensive Site Development Standards, require the maximum feasible use of drought tolerant native plant species for landscaping of all new multi-family residential, commercial, industrial and public projects. Invasive, non-native plants, as determined by a landscape architect or other similar expert, that may displace native vegetation on adjoining undeveloped lands shall not be used. Landscaping with native trees and shrubs shall be encouraged to provide suitable habitat for native wildlife, particularly in proposed open space uses of future development.

Policy 13.4H. Non-development buffers shall be maintained adjacent to perennial stream corridors through the use of clustering, the designation of a Planned Development, or the implementation of other siting and design tools. Buffers shall be sufficient in size to protect the stream corridor for movement, as well as provide some adjacent upland habitat for foraging.

Policy 13.8. As part of the Comprehensive Site Development Standards, include measures applicable to all discretionary and ministerial projects to minimize disturbance of heritage and landmark trees and groves. These measures shall include, but are not limited to, requirements for on-site vegetation inventories and mandatory clustering of development in areas likely to support such vegetation or habitat.

General Plan Aesthetics Policies

Policy 18.1. The County shall prepare Community Design Guidelines applicable to the various General Plan Designations and zoning classifications, and adopt such guidelines as part of Comprehensive Site Development Standards, to be used in the project site review of all discretionary and ministerial project permits. The guidelines may include, but not be limited to the following:

- a. Community identity
- b. Preservation of natural landforms
- c. Protection and management of viewsheds
- d. Protection and management of river corridors and other significant streams

These Guidelines shall be the base design standards applicable to all projects. Area-specific Design Guidelines, where adopted by the County pursuant to Policy 18.2, shall be applicable in addition to the base guidelines within the specified area.

Policy 18.2. The County may adopt Specific Design Guidelines for areas within Community Regions, Rural Places, and Rural Centers to provide for the maintenance of community identity, scenic resources and historic sites and areas.

The Specific Design Guidelines may include, but not be limited to standards which:

- a. Reflect the distinctions among and transitions between different areas within Community Regions;
- b. Reflect and retain the historic character of the area by requiring designs consistent with historic buildings, areas and sites related to a project;
- c. Reflect and retain the rural and small-town character of the County;
- d. Address building height and bulk at locations of visual sensitivity;
- e. Encourage consistent thematic use of building materials and design elements appropriate to the visual and scenic qualities of specific areas
- f. Encourage cluster-type development of office, commercial uses, and residential uses to enhance open space;
- g. Encourage office and commercial development to provide safe, functional and attractive pedestrian connections and, where appropriate, social places (e.g., seating, landscaped patio areas, etc.);

- h.** Locate parking areas out of view from road traffic where conditions permit and provide measures to reduce the impacts of large paved areas;
- i.** Encourage building designs which provide customer entrance from pedestrian and parking areas, with customer-friendly store fronts facing pedestrian areas;
- j.** Provide uniform criteria for project design review; and
- k.** Encourage landscape treatment to enhance the built environment, including the preservation, long-term maintenance, and use of drought tolerant native species.

Specific Design Guidelines shall be implemented through the regulations of the "D" Design Combining District of the County zoning ordinance.

Policy 18.3A. To provide for scenic stream corridor protection along designated streams, the County shall prepare standards and procedures whereby local groups, associations, or similar organizations can, after first obtaining 66% or more of landowner concurrence, apply for designation of a segment of any stream as a local scenic stream corridor. The applicants sponsoring such designations shall prepare their application consistent with the County prepared standards and procedures, and process their application similar to other planning applications.

Policy 18.4. Nevada County shall not permit the use of billboards due to unmitigable, significant adverse effects upon aesthetic values and upon scenic values which contribute to the value of tourism to the local economy. The County shall adopt regulations requiring the removal of existing billboards on a five-year amortized basis.

Policy 18.5. Nevada County shall not permit the continued use of non-conforming signs. The County shall adopt regulations requiring the removal of existing non-conforming signs on a five-year amortized basis.

Policy 18.6. Discretionary development in Rural Regions and in Community Regions near the Community Boundary shall, wherever possible, preserve natural landmarks and avoid ridge-line placement of structures.

Policy 18.7. Encourage protection of scenic corridors wherever feasible.

Policy 18.7A. The County shall promote a compact development pattern to protect open space buffers between communities and to maintain a geographic distinction between communities.

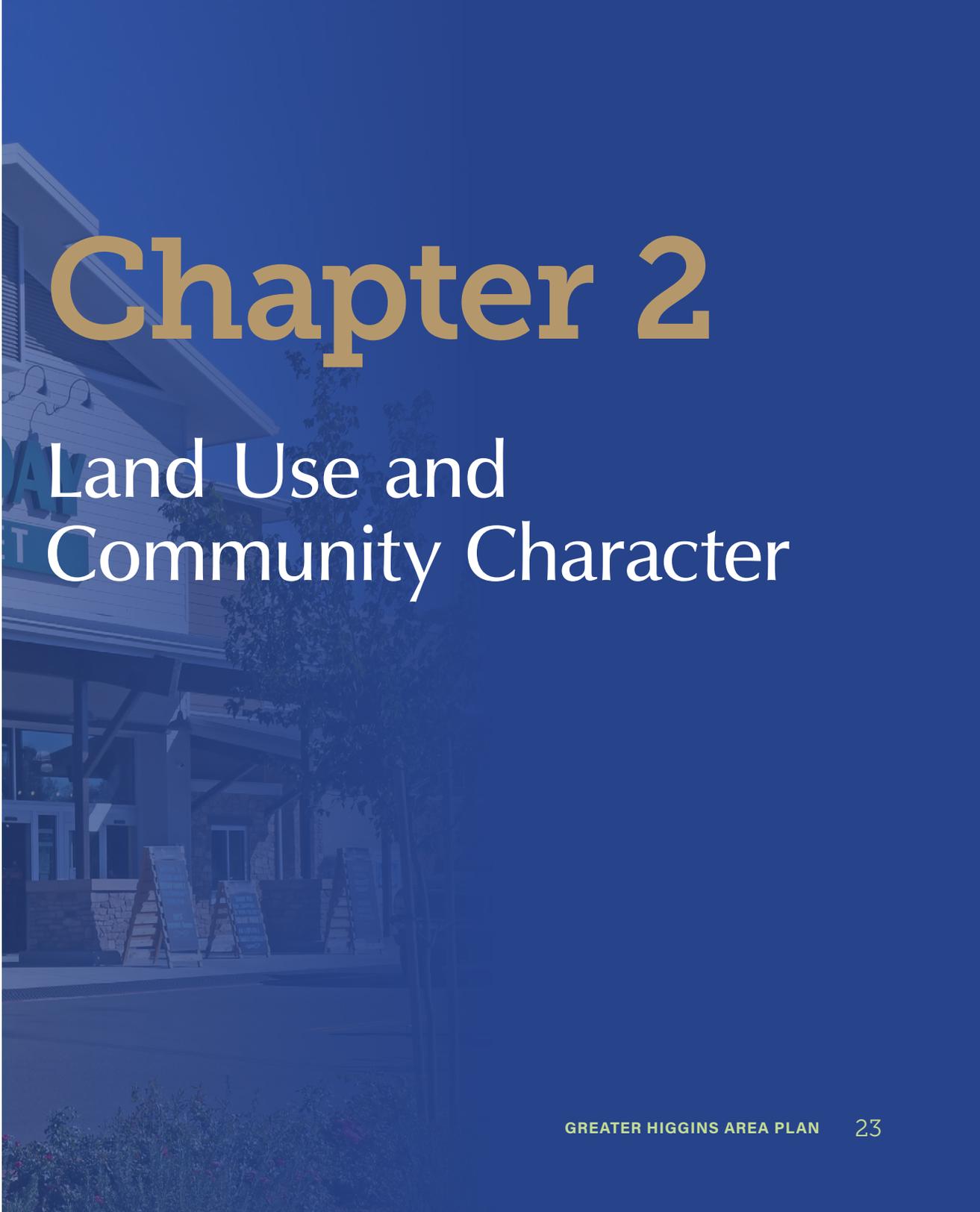
Policy 18.10. New and replacement road system lighting shall utilize fixtures and light sources that minimize night-time light pollution, without compromising traffic safety.

Policy 18.11. New Commercial, Industrial and Multiple Family development shall utilize fixtures and light sources that minimize nighttime light pollution.



Chapter 2

Land Use and Community Character



Introduction

This chapter describes the existing character of the Greater Higgins Plan Area (Plan Area) and defines the framework for future development to foster a vibrant built environment that is consistent with the character and goals of the community. The Plan seeks to concentrate future growth in two Design Districts within the Plan Area, which would provide opportunities for new commercial, high density residential, office, and mixed use development. This chapter features the conceptual designs for the Design Districts and provides a set of strategies to help establish the Design Districts.

Existing Land Uses and Community Character

The community character throughout the Plan Area varies and can be categorized into six discrete areas (see Figure 2.1). This section describes the character of these areas, including their physical form and land uses (see Figure 2.2).

1. Higgins Corner/Combie Road Commercial Area
2. South Combie Road Area
3. Magnolia Road/Bear River High School Area
4. Surrounding Residential Areas
5. West of Highway 49 Area
6. Highway 49 Scenic Corridor

Higgins Corner/Combie Road Commercial Area

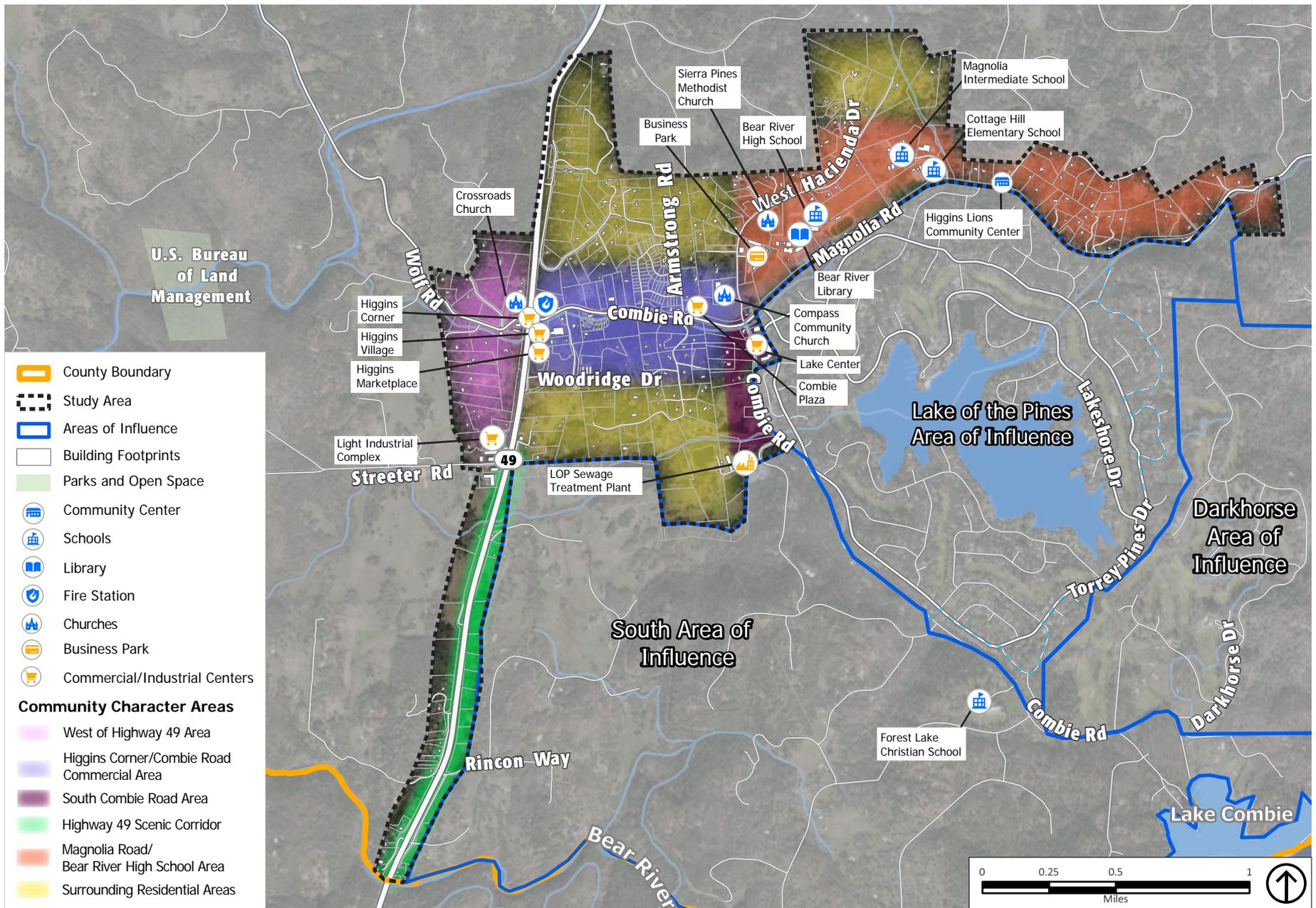
This area is the most visible and commonly frequented area for residents and visitors, as it includes the commercial establishments to the north and south of Combie Road. It includes the major intersection of Combie Road at Highway 49 and extends until the intersection of Combie Road/West Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road.

Combie Road is a three-lane arterial with narrow bike lanes in the shoulder providing access for the entire Plan Area. There are no sidewalks on either side. It is mostly level and sits in a valley with forested hills on both sides. Ragsdale Creek runs parallel to Combie Road in this section. It should be noted that the 2000 Higgins Area Plan includes a design goal to enhance and protect Ragsdale Creek as a common design theme throughout the Higgins Area to preserve drainage, visual, and habitat resources.

Higgins Corner is located at the intersection of Highway 49/Combie Road and has commercial land uses at every corner of the intersection. Additionally, the Higgins Fire Protection District Station 21 is located at the northeast corner. Higgins Village is a significant commercial shopping center on the south side of Highway 49 and includes a commercial center with CVS as the anchor at the southeast corner. Higgins Marketplace shopping center is located south of Higgins Village with the Holiday Market.

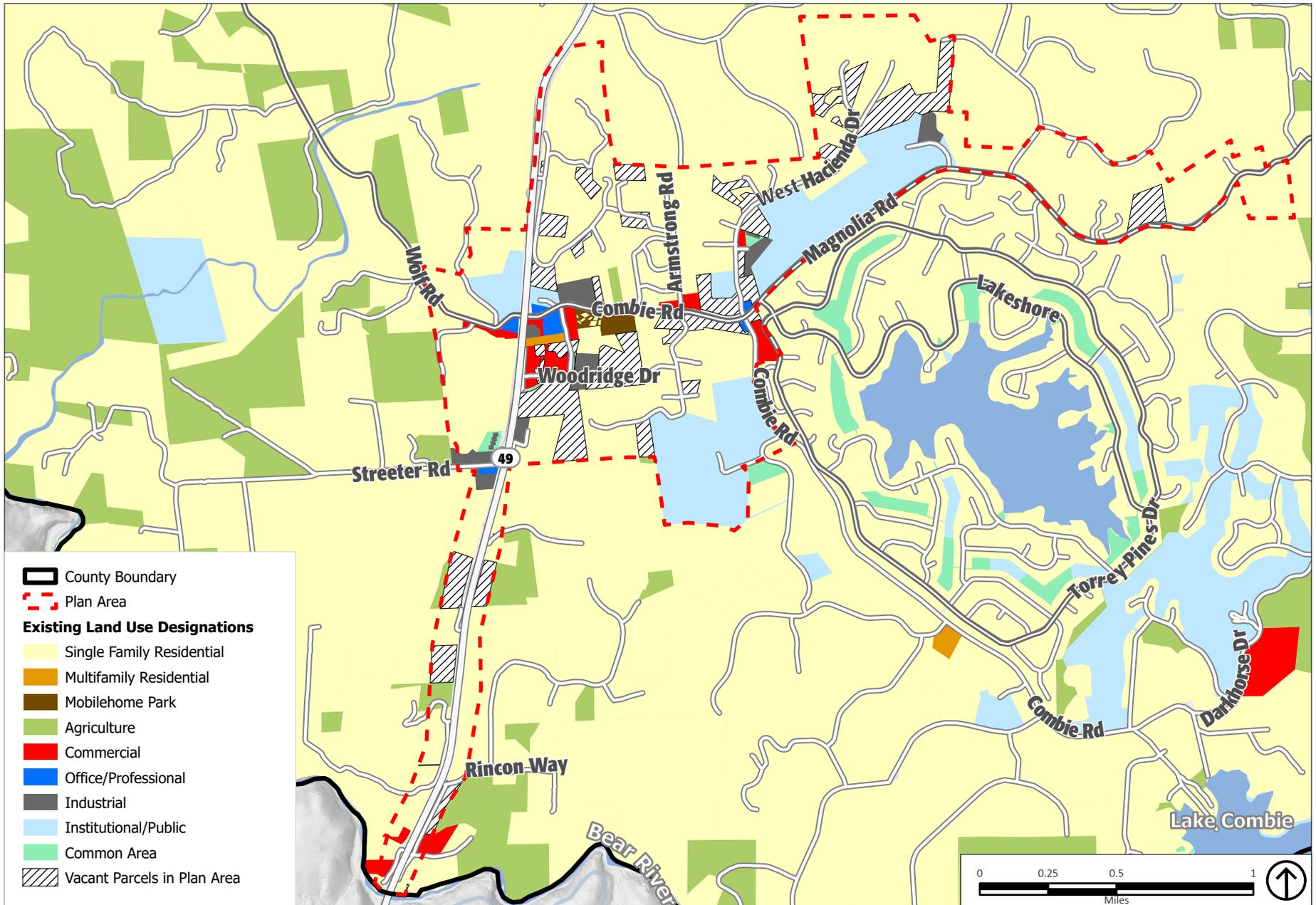
Along Combie Road to the east, there are occasional commercial buildings and a small shopping center (Combie Plaza) along Combie Road, with Armstrong Road serving as its entry drive. There is also a newer single-family residential community (Cascade Crossing), with 80 homes ranging between 1,500 and 3,000 square feet, within the Plan

Figure 2.1: Community Character Areas within the Plan Area



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

Figure 2.2: Existing Land Uses within the Plan Area



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.



Higgins Marketplace shopping center.

Area off Combie Road. Several vacant parcels front onto Combie Road, with several larger vacant parcels between Armstrong Road and West Hacienda Drive.

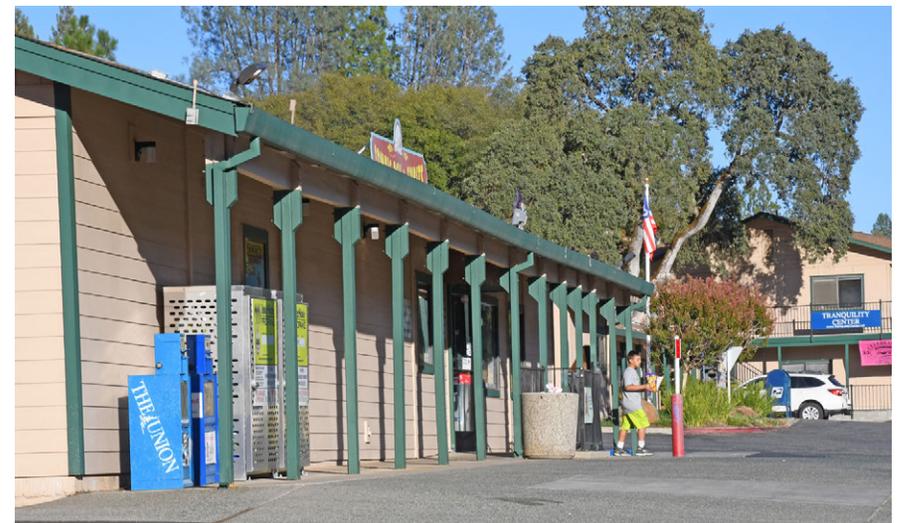
Compass Community Church is located at the northwest corner of the Combie Road/West Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road intersection, but fronts onto West Hacienda Drive and is not directly adjacent to Combie Road.

Higgins Corner is a General Plan-designated “Village Center.” Village Centers are intended to provide for the development of new centers to provide a focus within Community Regions. Such centers should include residential, commercial, office, business park, and public or institutional uses, grouped together and interrelated to form a functional and cultural center and to create a visual identity for the community.

The core area within the Village Center should contain the principal



Commercial at Higgins Corner.



Combie Plaza.

commercial uses serving the community. These uses should provide for a wide variety of goods and services, but with a scale that reflects the desired Village character with a lower intensity of use. Within the core area of the Village Center, secondary residential and office uses should be allowed and encouraged only above the ground floor to maximize the pedestrian scale and function of the core. Within the balance of the Village Center, there should be a mix of residential (predominantly multi-family), secondary commercial, business park and public or institutional uses.

Within the Village Center, and particularly within the core area of the Village Center, sidewalks, multi-purpose pathways, bikeways, greenways, and recreational trails should be internally integrated and provide connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and a regional trail system. The Village Center should be accessible from all parts of the community with convenient, controlled vehicular access from arterial or major collector roads. Local roads within Village Centers should provide for internal access within the center without using the arterial road system.

South Combie Road Area

This area along Combie Road runs south from the intersection of Combie Road/West Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road to Timber Ridge Road. It includes the Lake Center, which is an older shopping center on the east side of Combie Road. South of Lake Center, the backs of houses in Lake of the Pines are visible. There is no access to those houses or to Lake of the Pines along south Combie Road. The area continues south to the entrance to Timber Ridge Drive and the entry to the Lake of the Pines Sewage Treatment Plant, which is surrounded by low density residential and rural land.



Lake Center shopping center.

Throughout this area, Combie Road is a two-lane gently curving road trending downhill as it moves southward. Both sides of the road are distinguished by densely wooded hillsides and meadows lending to a very rural character to the area. There are no sidewalks in the area except for a stretch of sidewalk along the frontage of the Lake Center. There are also no bicycle facilities.

Magnolia Road/Bear River High School Area

This area runs along Magnolia Road from the intersection where Combie Road and Magnolia Road intersect east to just short of Knolls Road, about 2½ miles. In the section closest to the Combie intersection, Magnolia Road runs between a grassy hill on the north side and the

entry to Lake of the Pines with attractive water features below the road on the south side. Along West Hacienda Drive to the north, there is a large business park with a health club/spa, several industrial businesses, and Sierra Pines United Methodist Church. At the intersection of East Hacienda Drive, there is a community center run by the Higgins Lions Community Association called the Higgins Lions Community Center.

Magnolia Road continues past many Lake of the Pines properties with fences close to the street, as the north side opens up to a broad plateau with a series of schools visible from the street: Bear River High School, Magnolia Intermediate School, and Cottage Hill Elementary School. Beyond Kingston Lane, the schools end and Magnolia winds through a bucolic landscape with fences along the road and driveways with gates leading to houses set far back from the road or beyond the field of vision. Some of the intersecting streets are Lakeshore, East and West Hacienda Drive, Kingston Lane, Lakeview Way, Oakwood Circle, and Knolls Drive. All these streets except Lakeshore lead north into hills and canyons; no other street connections are on the south side due to lack of access to Lake of the Pines.

Magnolia Road itself is a two-lane road, straight and fast along the plateau where the schools are located, winding when it gets into wooded hilly areas. There are two pedestrian-activated crossings to allow students to cross between the schools and Lake of the Pines, and there is a section of separated, multi-use pathway from Lakeshore to Kingston Lane in front of the schools, but no other pedestrian or bicycle facilities.



Bear River High School.



Magnolia Road, looking east.

Surrounding Residential Areas

The Plan Area includes residential-zoned properties that surround the major corridors mentioned in the areas above. Most of the parcels are large (generally made up of 4- to 8-acre lots) and the houses are settled into the slopes and trees above the major corridors. For the most part, these residents use connecting streets to access Combie Road or Magnolia Road, and then to Highway 49. While these residential areas are secluded and beautiful, they are also located on dead-end roads and may therefore be susceptible to hazards, including wildfires.

West of Highway 49 Area

Wolf Road is the western leg of the Highway 49/Combie Road intersection. Also called County Road 10, it connects to other roads that lead eventually to Penn Valley and Grass Valley. In the Plan Area, this area includes the commercial and residential areas close to Highway 49 accessed from Wolf Road and the intersecting streets of Jennifer Drive and Brian Lane. Some of the notable establishments are Crossroads Church, a small shopping center with medical and retail stores, and a gas station with associated smaller retail stores and professional offices. There is a Light Industrial area off Streeter Road with many warehouses and businesses, including for auto repair, welding, flooring, and agriculture supply.



Surrounding residential atop hillsides.



Crossroads Church building along Highway 49.

Highway 49 Scenic Corridor

A 200-foot-wide section on either side of Highway 49 (a County-designated scenic corridor) from the Bear River to Higgins Corner is included in the Plan Area. In this area, Highway 49 is a fast-moving four-lane highway with a center turn lane. Although almost all property bordering the highway is zoned for agricultural land, there are some areas zoned Residential Agriculture and a single parcel for commercial at the southern County border. Visible development is mostly intermittent residential or agricultural buildings along the highway.

There are two types of streets leading from Highway 49. Some are arranged like frontage roads paralleling the highway, including Linnet Lane, Oakhurst Drive, and Ranch Road. Other roads access development farther back in the hills, and these connector streets include Rincon Way, Gautier Drive, Sharonjack Road, and two prominent streets already discussed, Wolf Road and Combie Road. Although there are no pedestrian or bicycle facilities on Highway 49, there is evidence of both bicycles and pedestrians using the parallel frontage roads to circulate.



Commercial center off Wolf Road.



Highway Commercial building along Highway 49.

Land Use Regulations

General Plan Land Use Designations

The Nevada County General Plan (General Plan) assigns a general land use category to all Nevada County parcels. Figure 2.3 shows the designated General Plan land uses within the Plan Area map. This Plan does not propose any changes to the designations of General Plan land uses or zoning districts of parcels. Some notable areas within the Plan Area with these General Plan land uses include:

Commercial “Nodes”

Two areas or “nodes” to develop higher density development along Combie Road:

1. Highway 49/Combie Road: Community Commercial (including Higgins Corner and Holiday Marketplace shopping center), High Density Residential, Business Park, and some Office & Professional
2. Combie Road/Magnolia Road/Hacienda Drive: Office & Professional, Community Commercial, High Density Residential, and Open Space (including Lake Center)

Public

The Plan Area contains several areas designated for Public land use. Areas designated for Public use include school property or property owned by the County for public services:

1. A smaller area at the Combie/Highway 49 commercial node (existing Higgins Fire station)
2. A large area along Magnolia Road that is adjacent to Business Park

to the east (existing schools)

3. A large area to the south of Combie Road, adjacent to Residential and Urban Medium Density Residential (Nevada County Sanitation District’s Lake of the Pines Sewage Treatment Plant).

Residential

Lower density residential uses are situated further away, outside of the higher density “spine” of uses along Combie and Magnolia roads. Estate residential is concentrated more on the west side along Highway 49, while “Residential” residential is located to the east of Highway 49, to the north and south of Combie Road and Magnolia Road. Large residential neighborhoods, such as Lake of the Pines and Darkhorse, are located outside and south of the Plan Area within the Areas of Influence.

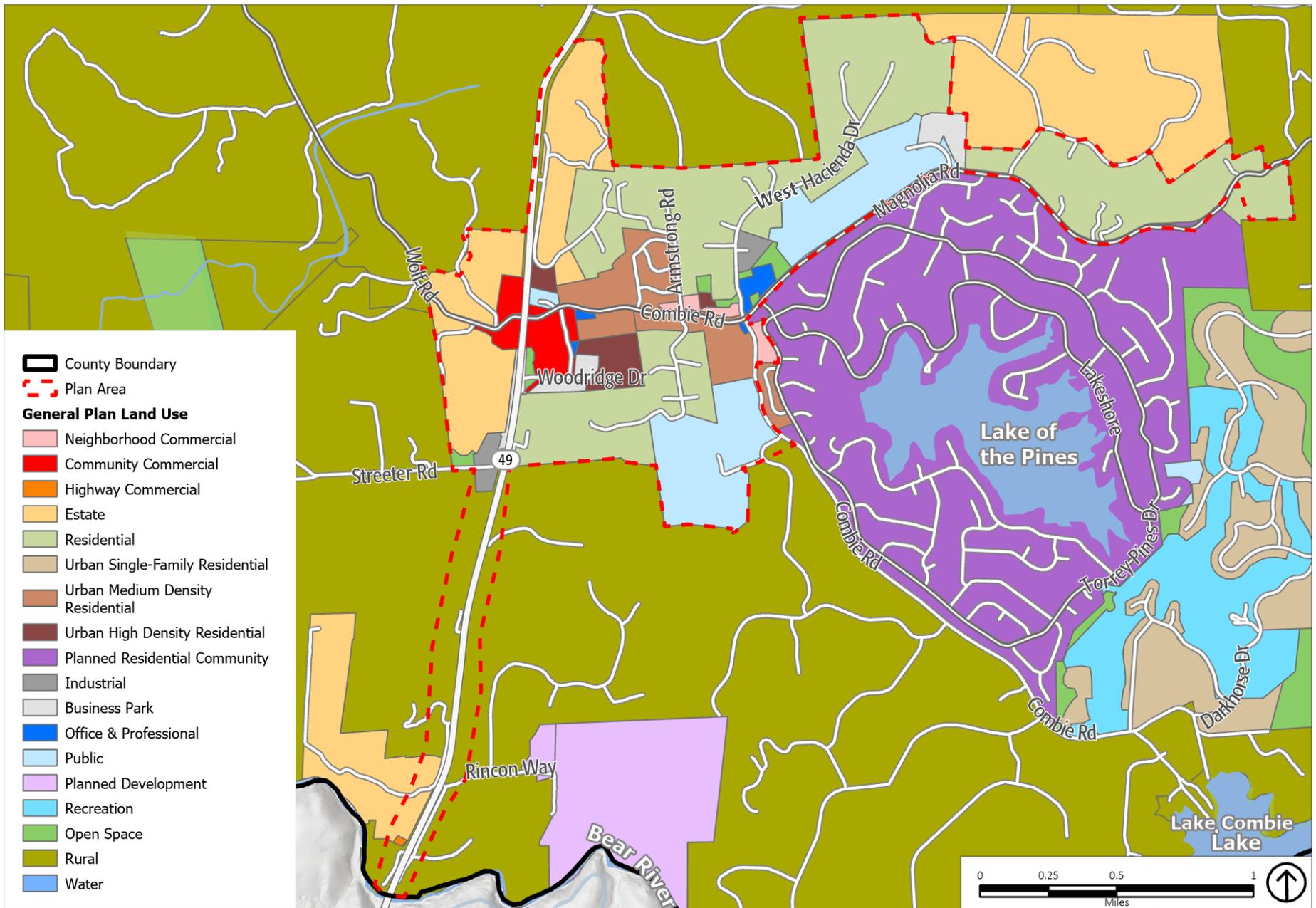
The Plan Area “tail” along Highway 49 primarily contains “Rural” residential but at the most southern end, there is Estate residential and one parcel designated for Highway Commercial.

Table 2.1 provides development standards and appropriate uses for the General Plan land uses within the Plan Area.

Existing and Proposed Zoning Districts

The existing zoning districts within the Plan Area (see Figure 2.4) generally correspond to the Plan Area’s General Plan land use designations with a few minor exceptions. Table 2.2 contains the corresponding zoning districts to the General Plan land use designations within the Plan Area.

Figure 2.3: General Plan Land Use Designations within the Plan Area



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

Table 2.1: General Plan Land Uses Within the Plan Area

	General Plan Land Use	Max. Density	Max. Building Height	Min. Acreage	Appropriate Uses
Residential	Rural (RUR)	Rural residential: 5 to 160 acres per dwelling	3 stories or 45'	-	<p>Development of compatible uses within a rural setting, such as rural residential, agricultural operations and supporting agricultural production, natural resource production and management, and low-intensity recreation.</p> <p>The density of rural residential depends upon the specific development pattern and character of an area, availability of public facilities and services, and environmental constraints.</p>
	Estate (EST)	3 du/acre max.	3 stories or 45'	3 acre minimum parcel size	<p>Low density residential development in areas which are essentially rural in character accessible to shopping, employment and services.</p> <p>Agricultural operations and natural resource related uses, including the production of timber.</p>
	Residential (RES)	3 du/acre max.	3 stories or 45'	1.5 acre minimum parcel size	<p>Lower density single-family residential uses where limited services such as either public water and sewer (but not both) are available; or to reflect existing development patterns or where provision of transition from more intensive urban uses to less intensive rural uses is desirable.</p> <p>Agricultural operations and natural resource related uses, including the production of timber.</p>
	Urban Medium Density Residential (UMD)	6 du/acre max.	3 stories or 45'	-	<p>Affordable single-family dwellings on smaller lots (clustering of single-family residences or other design techniques)</p> <p>Multi-family housing types at moderate densities in locations with convenient access to transportation facilities, shopping and services, employment, recreation, and other public facilities.</p>

	General Plan Land Use	Max. Density	Max. Building Height	Min. Acreage	Appropriate Uses
Residential (cont.)	Urban High Density Residential (UHD)	20 dwelling units per acre maximum	3 stories or 45'	-	<p>Single- and multi-family housing types at higher densities in locations with a high degree of access to transportation facilities, shopping and services, employment, recreation, and other public facilities.</p> <p>Development of affordable housing should be in close proximity to Community Commercial, Business Park, or Industrial areas.</p>
Commercial	Highway Commercial (HC)	4 du/acre max.	45' (1)	-	<p>Retail and services for highway-related and tourist populations, including automotive and travel-related services, recreation, dining, and lodging.</p> <p>Development should be grouped as a contiguous center to preclude strip development, and with convenient, controlled access to Interstate, freeway, or primary arterial routes.</p>
	Community Commercial (CC)	4 du/acre max.	45' (1)	10 acres or more of land area for commercial	<p>Commercial uses, and limited mixed use employment opportunities, to serve large geographic areas with a wider range of goods and services than are available in Neighborhood Commercial areas.</p> <p>Development grouped as a contiguous center to preclude strip development, with convenient, controlled access to arterial or major collector, roads.</p>
	Neighborhood Commercial (NC)	4 du/acre max.	3 stories or 45'	Less than 10 acres of land in any single location for commercial	<p>Commercial uses that provide for local needs of nearby neighborhoods, and limited mixed use employment opportunities.</p> <p>Development should be grouped as a clustered and contiguous center to preclude strip development, with convenient, controlled access to arterial or collector roads.</p>
Office/ Industrial	Office & Professional (OP)	4 du/acre max.	3 stories or 45'	-	<p>Office uses, including business, medical, dental, and other professional, as well as supporting business services, at intensities of development, which complement other commercial centers and are compatible in scale with nearby residential neighborhoods.</p> <p>Development shall have convenient, controlled access to arterial or collector roads.</p>

(1) Discretionary and administrative permits will be required for special uses that would need to exceed the allowable height.

	General Plan Land Use	Max. Density	Max. Building Height	Min. Acreage	Appropriate Uses
Office/Industrial (cont.)	Business Park (BP)	4 du/acre max.	45' (1)	-	<p>Related and mutually supporting manufacturing, distribution, processing, service, and research and development uses.</p> <p>Light industries and supporting business and service activities, which are conducted within enclosed structures and do not create external vibration, noise, glare or other hazard.</p> <p>Accessory uses typical for such development may include residences required for on-site security, dining, or recreational facilities for employees.</p> <p>A comprehensive master plan for the entire site shall be required prior to approval of any development located outside of an adopted Area Plan.</p>
	Industrial (IND)	4 du/acre max.	45' (1)	-	<p>Areas in which goods are produced, distributed and warehoused, along with supporting business and service uses.</p> <p>Locations within this designation should be able to provide buffering from adjacent land uses to minimize incompatibility, and should have convenient, controlled access to arterial or major collector roads without passing through residential areas.</p>
Public/Open Space	Public (PUB)	-	3 stories or 45'	-	<p>Uses in public or quasi-public ownership, including cemeteries, schools and other public and quasi-public buildings and uses.</p>
	Open Space (OS)	-	3 stories or 45'	-	<p>Land, primarily in public ownership, dedicated to recreation, resource and habitat preservation, and protection of environmental resources, and which typically allows only recreation or very low-intensity limited uses, such as, but not limited to, visual corridor preservation, interconnecting wildlife corridors, slope protection, preservation of ditches, railroad rights-of-way, historic trails, agriculture, and timber production. This designation shall also provide for the designation of land in private ownership which is permanently devoted to open space through clustering or other open space requirements.</p>

(1) Discretionary and administrative permits will be required for special uses that would need to exceed the allowable height.

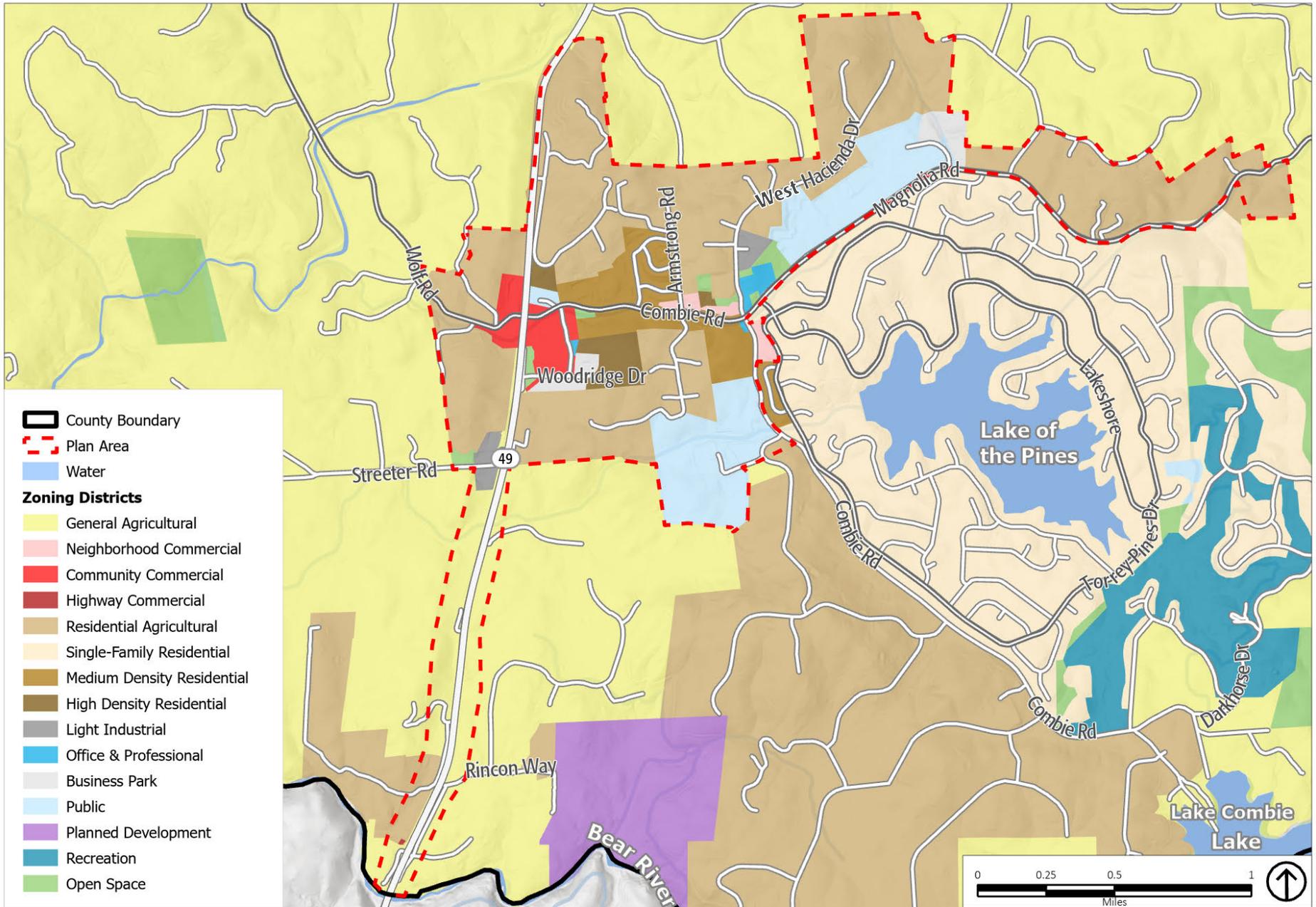
Table 2.2: General Plan Land Use Designation and Corresponding Zoning District within Plan Area

General Plan Land Use Designation	Corresponding Zoning District
Estate (EST)	Residential Agricultural (RA)
Residential (RES)	
Urban Medium Density Residential (UMD)	Medium Density Multi-Family (R2)
Urban High Density Residential (UHD)	High Density Multi-Family (R3)
Highway Commercial (HC)	Highway Commercial (CH)
Community Commercial (CC)	Community Commercial (C2)
Neighborhood Commercial (NC)	Neighborhood Commercial (C1)
Office & Professional (OP)	Office & Professional (OP)
Public (PUB)	Public (P)
Business Park (BP)	Business Park (BP)
Industrial (IND)	Light Industrial (M1)
Open Space (OS)	Open Space (OS)
Rural (RUR)	General Agricultural (AG)

The Residential Agricultural (RA) zoning district surrounding the “spine” of higher density parcels along Combie Road and Magnolia Road encompasses both Estate and Residential land uses, and the “tail” of the Plan Area is currently zoned more specifically as General Agricultural (AG). The AG District provides areas for farming, agricultural support facilities and services, low intensity uses, and open space. Agricultural uses are of primary importance and all other uses are secondary.

There is also more nuance in zoning of the Area of Influence east of the “tail,” with the western half zoned as General Agricultural and the eastern half (adjacent to Lake of the Pines) zoned as Residential Agricultural (also known as the Lake of the Pines Ranchos neighborhood).

Figure 2.4: Plan Area Zoning Districts Map



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

Combining Districts

Nevada County's zoning ordinance also includes Combining Districts, which can be added to a base zoning district to provide specialized consideration of unique or sensitive areas. The standards established in the combining district may require more or less restrictive regulations than the base district. Except as noted, allowed uses within the base district are also allowed within each applicable combining district subject to approval of the same land use permit and level of review. The Plan Area contains parcels with the following combining districts (see Figure 2.5):

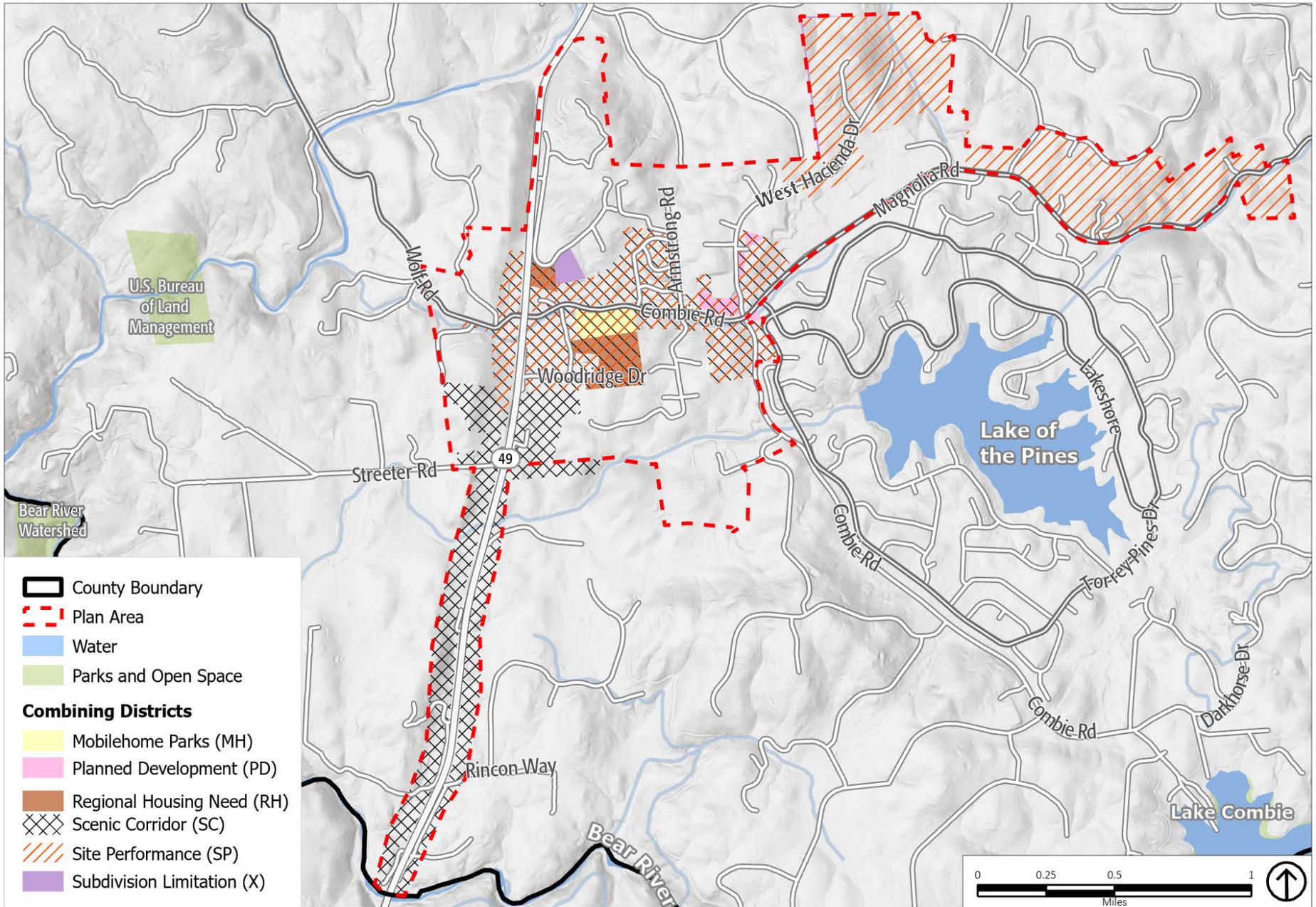
- **Mobilehome Parks Combining District (MH).** This District provides special regulations for the establishing of Mobilehome Parks in those zoning districts that permit residential uses, subject to the issuance of a Use Permit by the Planning Commission.
- **Planned Development Combining District (PD).** This District allows residential development that allows support uses in a planned community and to allow for flexible standards in both residential and commercial/industrial development.
- **Scenic Corridor Combining District (SC).** This District is meant to "protect and preserve the scenic resources of areas which are adjacent to highways and roads which have been identified as having high scenic quality and requiring protection for the benefit of residents and visitors."
- **Site Performance Combining District (SP).** This District provides refinements in the site development standards and/or the permitted uses in the base zone district with which the SP District regulations are combined. Such refinements shall ensure consistency with, and further the intent of, all General Plan policies.



Entrance to Lake Combie Mobile Home Village along Combie Road.

- **Regional Housing Need Combining District (RH).** This District was implemented as part of the County's Housing Element implementation program and contains sites designated for development at 16 to 20 units minimum per acre. The designation of these site as RH help meet the requirements of the Regional Housing Need Allocation (RHNA) as required by State Government Code Section 65584 to increase the supply of affordable and multi-family housing for persons and families within the extremely-low, very-low, and low income categories.
- **Subdivision Limitation Combining District (X).** This District prohibits further subdivision of the property in order to mitigate the cumulative adverse environmental impact of successive divisions of land and to preserve the rural character of the property.

Figure 2.5: Plan Area Combining Zoning Districts Map



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

Outside of the Plan Area and within the Areas of Influence, the approved Rincon Del Rio development along Rincon Way is zoned a Continuing Care Retirement Community Combining District (CCRC). This District provides housing and care services to support “aging in place” communities that promote and encourage a wide range of living arrangements for senior citizens such as independent living, assisted living, nursing care, physical rehabilitation, and memory-impairment housing.

Design Guidelines

This Plan’s Appendix A includes a set of design guidelines that intends to preserve scenic resources, enhance and preserve Ragsdale Creek, and create development that is consistent with the rural character of the area. As part of the update to the 2000 Higgins Area Plan, this Plan includes design guidelines and standards that specifically cater to new multi-family residential development. Through the planning process, many members of the community expressed support for higher density residential that provides housing options, especially for seniors and young families; however, any new housing should be designed in a way that preserves the surrounding rural atmosphere.

Incorporating similar design features in adjacent developments will result in a coordinated and cohesive community appearance. No particular style or theme is mandated for the Plan Area, so the focus of design should be on constructing a high quality development that is sensitive to the small town character and rural nature preferred by the community.

Native oaks and grasses dominate slopes and the flatter, low-lying terrain within the Plan Area, providing definition to the Combie Road and Highway 49 corridors. As development occurs and native vegetation is removed, it is important to replace the native vegetation with landscaping, using native species wherever possible. Well-planned landscaping is an integral element of this plan.

Significant landscaped corridors are encouraged along the two primary roadways, Highway 49 and Combie Road. In addition to providing a visual buffer between roadways and development and between incompatible land uses, well planned landscaping will enhance the aesthetic quality of the built environment.

The goal of the multi-family residential design guidelines and standards are to ensure that new development is in keeping with the scale and rural character of the Greater Higgins area.

Community Design Districts

During the Area Plan outreach process, many community members expressed a desire for more areas to gather, shop, dine, and meet friends and neighbors in a community setting, as well as have convenient access to these places. This Plan establishes two Community Design Districts (Design Districts) within the Plan Area: 1) Higgins Corner Design District around the Highway 49/Combie Road intersection and 2) Lake Center Design District around the Combie Road/Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road intersection. Each Design District includes a conceptual design framework, goals, and policies to formulate the vision of these Design Districts. The locations of the Design Districts were identified as part of the community’s desire to limit overall growth within the Plan Area and concentrate growth in existing commercial areas along Combie Road. These Design Districts aim to satisfy the variety of ideas that were collected during the outreach process, including:

- Create new community spaces and gathering areas to foster community identity.
- Add new commercial spaces to accommodate dining and retail to serve existing residents and attract families to the area.

- Focus development for pedestrians to support a walkable, village-type area in Higgins Corner.
- Create housing opportunities for young families, young professionals, and seniors in the Greater Higgins area. Providing senior housing allows aging residents to stay in the Greater Higgins area, while also freeing up existing housing stock for new, younger residents to move in.
- Include better multimodal access along Combie Road to access commercial areas via walking, biking, rolling, riding transit, and golf cart/Neighborhood Electric Vehicle (NEV).

Concept plans for the two Design Districts were developed to illustrate a long-term vision that will likely take 10 to 20 years before build-out. These concepts do not show an actual development project, as the properties involved are primarily private properties and the property owners would dictate development of their land, if desired. However, these concepts are intended to provide guidance and a flexible roadmap for property owners and developers for future development with a community-supported vision. To provide additional guidance, the Design Guidelines in Appendix A includes specific guidelines for each of the two Design Districts.

Development Opportunity Sites

During the existing conditions process, the Greater Higgins Area Plan team identified several development opportunity sites within the Plan Area, clustered at the two Design Districts. Development opportunity sites are parcels that are currently vacant or underutilized and have a planned General Plan land use designation of commercial, office, or high density residential. Redevelopment of any of the sites would require agreement with the property owner, approval of a development

proposal, and adequate infrastructure.

Several of these sites already have plans for redevelopment, indicated in Table 2.3, which are included in the conceptual design of the Plan's Design Districts. This Plan assumes that these proposed development projects will be approved and constructed. These projects include:

- The Quick Quack Car Wash and Higgins Fuel Station projects are part of the Phase III Higgins Marketplace development, completing construction of the Higgins Market Place development. Final approval of these projects are pending. If these businesses do not come to fruition, other types of development that allow for more active uses, such as for dining or shopping, are preferred by the community.
- The Cameo Affordable Housing project would consist of 48 units, ranging from one to three bedrooms, for tenants earning 30 to 60 percent of the Area Median Income (AMI). The project would be surface parked. Amenities would include a community room and a tot lot. The County's Public Works is working on site prep/infrastructure improvements to the site but there is currently no confirmed developer or project. The site is currently set up to allow for by-right development as a State-mandated rezone site. The project is currently in the concept development phase.
- The Bear River Library will be moving from the Bear River High School to their new location at the Lake Center (10988 Combie Road, Suite 108 and 110). The new space will have about 2,400 square feet and incorporate a main library, children's section, conference room, lobby, and office and three ADA restrooms. The library will also incorporate a new 242 square feet Sheriff sub-station with an office report writing room, which will move from their existing location at 10556 Combie Road. The new, relocated library is an approved tenant improvement project and is anticipated to be completed in 2023.

- There are potential plans by the State for a future station for CAL FIRE at the State-owned parcel at the northwest corner of the Combie Road and Hacienda Drive intersection. The project timeline is currently undefined.

Table 2.3 lists these development opportunity sites and Figures 2.7 and 2.10 of the Design Districts includes the numbers of each opportunity site. It should be noted that Figures 2.7 and 2.10 also show this Plan's proposed trail and park improvements, such as a multi-use path, walking trails, large parks, and pocket parks. These proposed improvements are called out and discussed in more detail in *Chapter 5, Recreation and Trails*.

Other Sites Considered

Two additional locations were discussed by the South County Area Municipal Advisory Council (SCMAC) but were not identified as development opportunity sites: 1) the Industrial node west of Highway 49, and 2) the parcel that creates a break between East Hacienda Drive and West Hacienda Drive.

The Industrial node west of Highway 49 includes three parcels and an industrial park accessed via Streeter Road. All subject parcels are currently developed with existing commercial and industrial businesses on both sides of Streeter Road. Although additional tenant improvements could be successful in creating opportunities for new businesses, this area was not considered a development opportunity site because all parcels within the Industrial node are developed. In addition, the current zoning and land use designations adequately support existing businesses and new operations that would be compatible in the area. Existing businesses could develop a Landscaping and Lighting Maintenance District as described in *Chapter 7, Implementation* to fund streetscape and other tenant improvements to enhance the visibility of the Industrial node.



Illustration of Cameo Drive Affordable Housing project.

Image Credit: Chelsea Investment Corporation.

The parcel that creates a break between East Hacienda Drive and West Hacienda Drive is zoned Residential Agricultural and is currently developed with a single-family residence and accessory structure. Although this location could be an appropriate location for multi-family housing which would be located nearby schools and commercial areas, this parcel was not considered a development opportunity site because sewer, water, and transportation easements and infrastructure do not exist in this area to support more dense residential development. This area could serve as an integral connection between neighborhoods on East Hacienda Drive and West Hacienda Drive and provide essential multi-family housing, but would require significant investment and planning to secure easements and develop the necessary infrastructure. When infrastructure becomes available, a rezone to allow more residential density may be appropriate as described in Policy LU-1.8 of this chapter and Policy TR-2.2 in *Chapter 4, Public Services and Infrastructure*.

Table 2.3: Sites for Potential Development

	Site #	APN	Planned Development	Size (Acreage)	General Plan Land Use Designation	Zoning and Combining Districts
Higgins Corner Design District	1	057-141-029	Cameo Affordable housing	5.0	Urban High Density Residential	R3-RH-SC-SP
	2	057-260-006	-	2.8	Community Commercial	C2-SC-SP
	3	057-141-032	-	3.9	Community Commercial	C2-SC-SP
	4	057-260-021	-	0.8	Office & Professional	OP-SC-SP
	5	057-270-002	-	5.0	Urban High Density Residential	R3-RH-SC-SP
	6	057-270-003	-	18.2	Urban High Density Residential	R3-RH-SC-SP
	7	057-260-008	-	3.01	Community Commercial	C2-SC-SP, RA-3
	8	057-260-026	-	3.09	Business Park	BP-SC-SP
Lake Center Design District	9	021-730-087	CAL FIRE Station	7.1	Neighborhood Commercial	C1-SC-SP-PD, R3-SC-SP-PD, OS-SC-SP
	10	021-730-051	-	4.2	Office & Professional	OP-SC-SP, OS-SC-SP
	11	021-730-083	-	9.6	Office & Professional	OS-SC-SP, OP-SC-SP
	12 (Lake Center)	021-010-025	Bear River Library (tenant improvement)	5.3	Neighborhood Commercial	C1-SC-SP
	13	057 -200- 007, 057 -200- 008 (County Sanitation District)	-	22.53	Public	P

Higgins Corner Design District

The Higgins Corner Design District includes the parcels around the intersection of Highway 49 and Combie Road/Wolf Road. It includes older commercial areas (Higgins Corner) at the corners of the intersection as well as larger shopping centers with CVS and Holiday Market on the east side of Highway 49 (see Figure 2.7). Ragsdale Creek also runs along Highway 49 and is surrounded by wetland open space. Currently, the CVS and Holiday Market shopping centers are separated by an underutilized parcel.

This Plan recommends integrating these two shopping centers into a cohesive commercial area and public gathering space. Figure 2.8 shows a map of the area with design and development concepts for future development. Following are the components of the Higgins Corner Design District:

- Tree-lined street “Commercial Lane” oriented for pedestrians and bicyclists.** This new roadway would run through the middle of the existing Higgins Village and Higgins Marketplace shopping centers to create a cohesive area for shopping and gathering and increase connectivity for all modes of travel, including vehicles, pedestrians, bicycles, and golf carts. Since this new roadway would cross through multiple properties, it would either be a private road or likely require access easements with long-term maintenance agreements. The new “Commercial Lane” would include two 12’-wide travel lanes with bicycle “sharrows” and 10’ sidewalks on either side with street trees in tree gates on the curb (see Figure 2.6). The existing walking path and new multi-use path would both connect to Commercial Lane to provide a continuous pathway of travel.

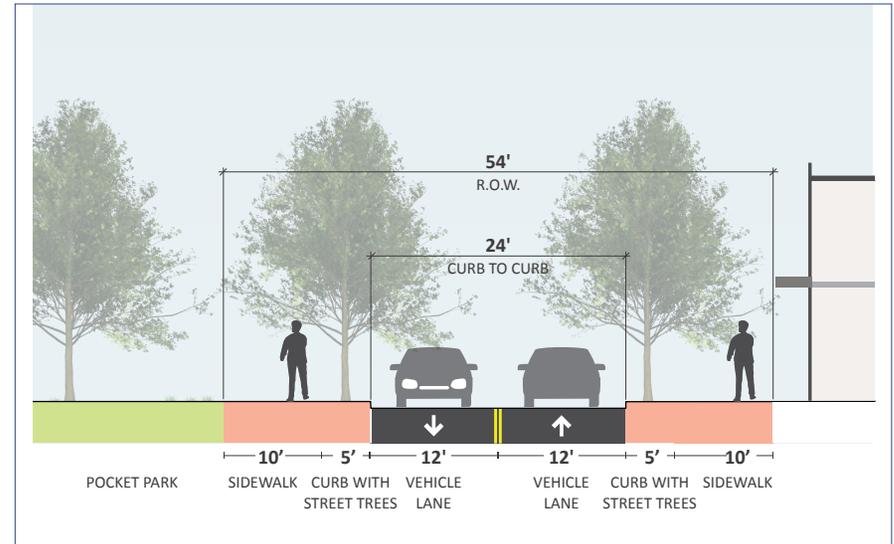


Figure 2.6: Proposed Street Section of “Commercial Lane”

- New Development Between the Existing Shopping Centers.** Integrating the two shopping centers would also activate the central parcel (Opportunity Site #2), which is currently separating the two areas. The central parcel could become space for a new pocket park, plaza, and/or mixed use residential (ground floor retail with housing above), which would help energize this shopping area and allow people to gather and mingle before or after shopping errands. The synergy of new with existing commercial establishments can capitalize on existing customers and bring new ones, benefitting both existing and new establishments.
- Improve East-West Street Connectivity.** To further increase connectivity, help reduce traffic congestion, and improve ingress and egress from this entire shopping area, east-west access streets and alleys through the shopping centers and Woodridge Drive should

be improved (i.e., new landscaping or repaving) and/or widened (if needed) to provide connections to Higgins Road and to potential new multi-family residential uses.

- **New Development Along Higgins Road.** Parcels to the east of Higgins Road are currently underutilized (Opportunity Sites #3 and #4) and create opportunity for new commercial/mixed use and office development per the current zoning district and General Plan land use designation. New uses along Higgins Road would help support new and existing development in this Design District. The northern commercial parcel could be developed into a mixed use residential development with a pocket park, which would provide visible access to those traveling along Combie Road. Since Ragsdale Creek runs along Combie Road, the creek could be integrated into the design of the park.
- **New Gateway Sign at Higgins Corner.** Many residents expressed a desire for the installation of a new sign or monument in this Design District to welcome residents and visitors to the Greater Higgins area and to foster a sense of community identity. This Plan recommends the sign to be located at the northeast or southeast corner of Highway 49 and Combie Road. The northeast location has optimal visibility and space availability. The design and wording of the sign should be determined at a later time by the community. Note that new gateway signage in these locations may require Caltrans approval if they are in Caltrans' right-of-way.
- **Commercial Along Wolf Road.** Opportunity Site #8 along Wolf Road contains an old dairy farm and barn (the "49Er feedstore"), which was previously an area with historic structures as part of the original Higgins Corner. Future development of this site could include rehabilitation of the barn and new commercial, preferably a restaurant or small-scale retail with retention of the wetlands.



Example of a gateway sign for a commercial area.

- **New Hotel Visible Along Highway 49.** A new hotel in the Plan Area could provide local accommodations for visiting friends and family of Greater Higgins residents. Otherwise, the nearest hotel lodging would be found in Grass Valley or Auburn. If future market studies show the feasibility of new hotel development, the hotel should be situated near Highway 49 to promote regional visibility. Two potential locations include: 1) on the parcel with the existing Higgins Fire station, assuming the fire station relocates or 2) on the Business Park-designated parcel south of Woodridge Drive (Opportunity Site #7). It should be noted that the County's zoning ordinance currently does not allow hotel/motel use in Business Park zoning districts, and thus the zoning would need to be amended to allow for this use.

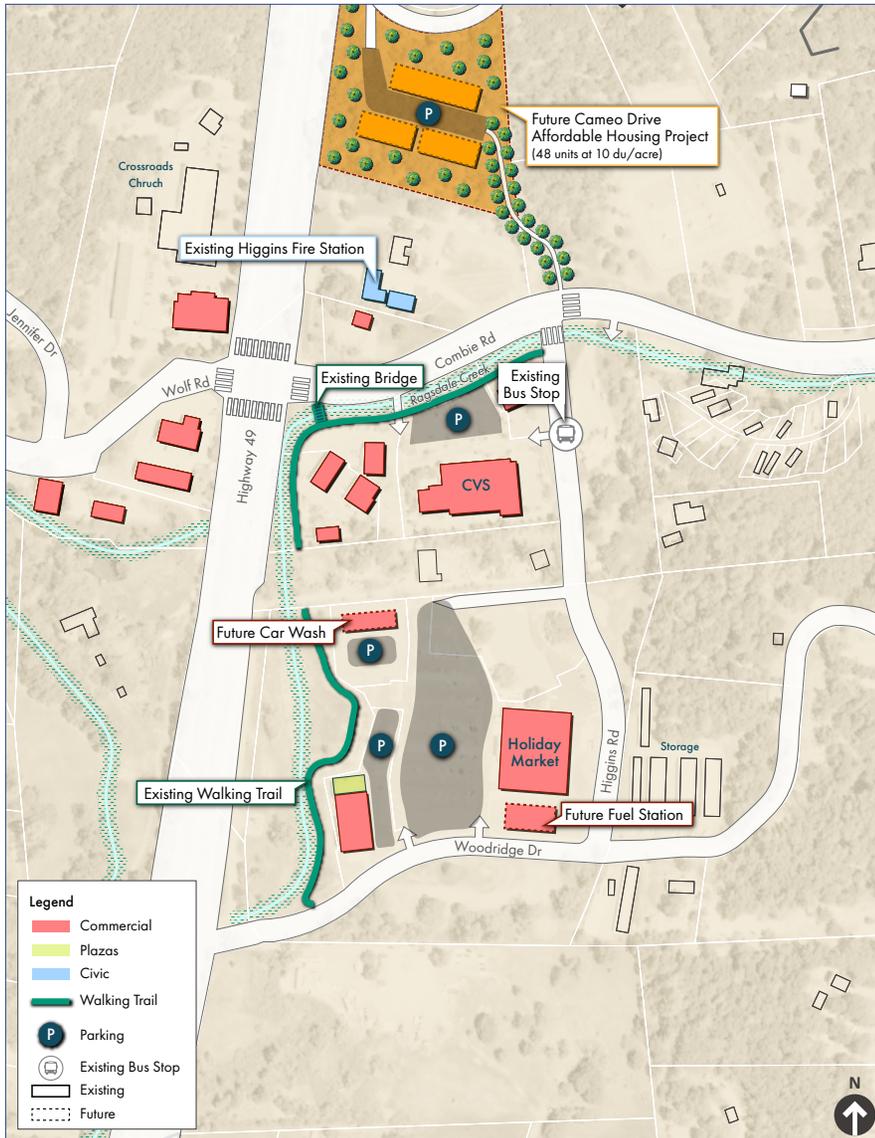


Figure 2.7: Existing and Planned Projects within Higgins Corner Design District

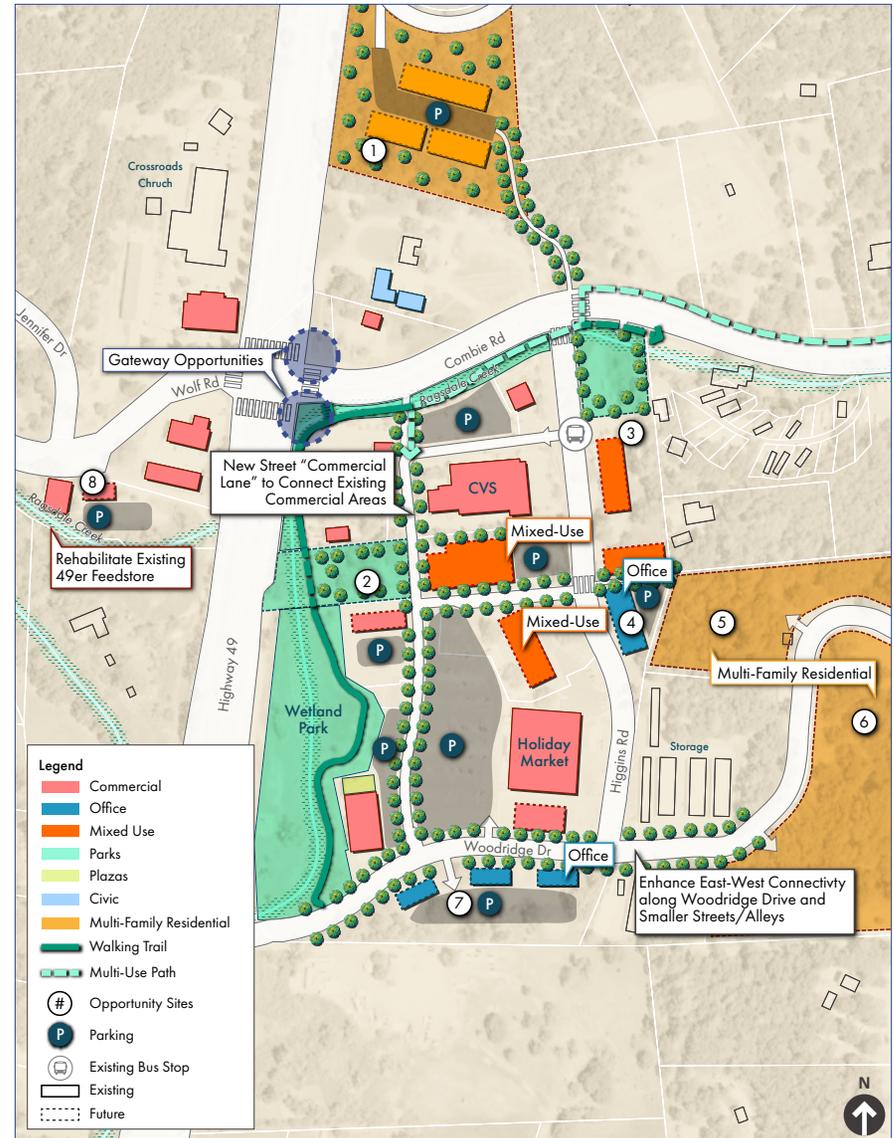


Figure 2.8: Conceptual Diagram of Potential Development of Higgins Corner Design District

Lake Center Design District

The Lake Center Drive Design District includes the parcels around the intersection of Combie Road, south Combie Road, Hacienda Drive, and Magnolia Road (see Figure 2.9). It includes the Lake Center shopping center (Opportunity Site #12) and many underutilized parcels (Opportunity Sites #9, #10, and #11) that are zoned for Office & Professional, Open Space, Neighborhood Commercial, and High Density Residential. Several of these parcels have split zoning. There is an existing 10'-wide multi-use path that was constructed along the north side of Magnolia Road and leads to the schools.

The Plan seeks to create a new town village in this area, including the revitalization of the Lake Center shopping center. Figure 2.10 shows a map of a redesigned Lake Center as well as new development and a large park to the north of Combie Road and Magnolia Road. The potential CAL FIRE station is also assumed to be developed on the northwest parcel at Combie Road/Hacienda Drive. Following are the components of the Lake Center Design District:

- **Redevelopment of Lake Center.** Currently, the Lake Center is designed to be a typical auto-oriented suburban shopping center with large surface parking areas fronting the street. This Plan shows two schemes for potential redevelopment of the Lake Center to create a new mixed use center with senior housing, which are uses desired by the community in this area. Figure 2.10 shows the first scheme with the footprint of the Lake Center and its parking remaining primarily the same but includes the addition of detached residential buildings for senior housing throughout the site. This new mixed use center would be accessible via both Combie Road and Torrey Pines Drive (from Lake of the Pines).

Figure 2.11 shows an alternative design for the Lake Center which creates a new village center at the intersection to activate Combie Road and Magnolia Road. In this scheme, more buildings front onto Combie Road to break up the amount of surface parking that fronts onto the street. Senior housing would be situated further away from the intersection to create more separation between residential and commercial uses. This Plan proposes that a new gathering space should be incorporated into the redevelopment of the Lake Center and/or focused at the Combie Road/Magnolia Road intersection to provide convenient access for existing and future uses at the four corners of the intersection.

In either schemes, it is recommended that the existing structures within the Lake Center be demolished and/or rebuilt with improved aesthetics due to known water issues, age, and poor condition of the existing building stock.

- **Activity Center at Combie Road/Magnolia Road/West Hacienda Drive Intersection.** This intersection should be improved to become an "activity center" or heart of the neighborhood, activated by pedestrians and a mix of existing and new commercial businesses.
- **New Development along West Hacienda Drive.** This Plan shows parcels along West Hacienda Drive with development consistent with the current zoning, including those zoned Office & Professional and Neighborhood Commercial. New development on these parcels will help enhance the Combie Road/ /south Combie Road Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road intersection.

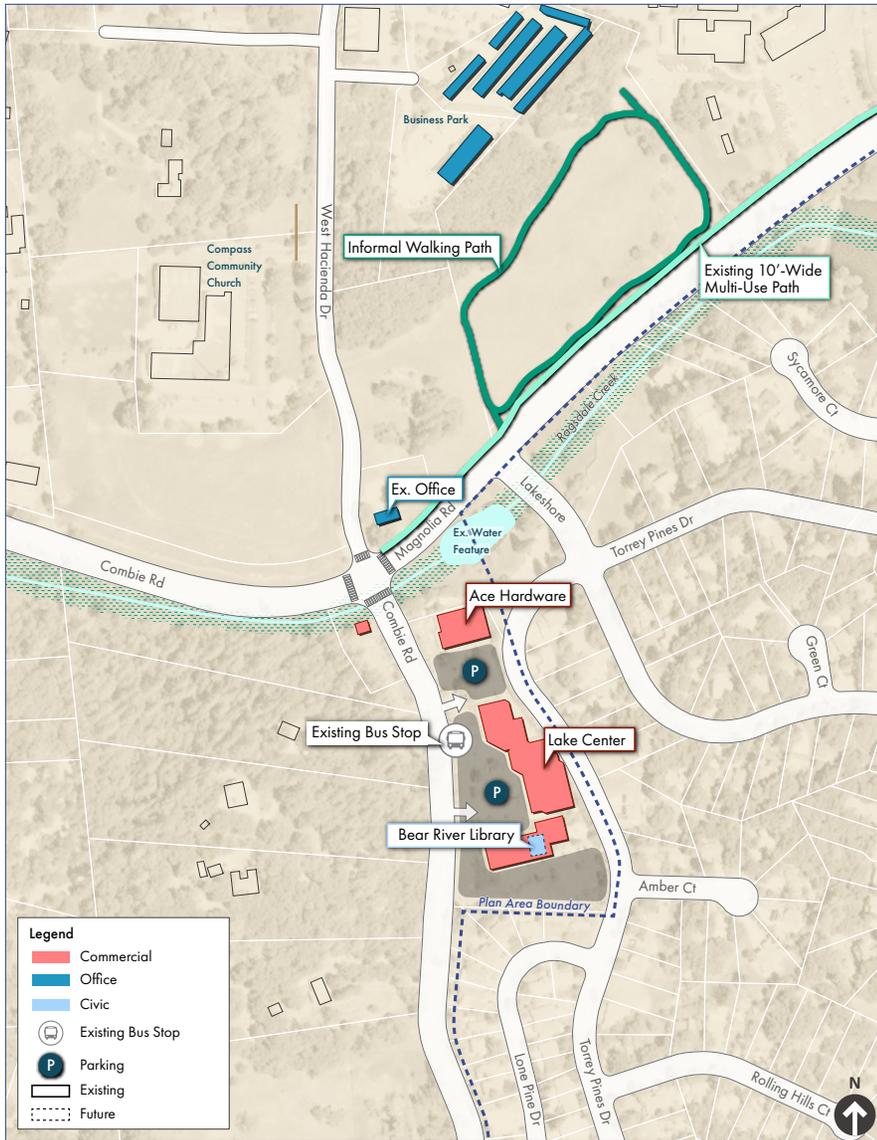


Figure 2.9: Existing and Planned Projects within Lake Center Design District

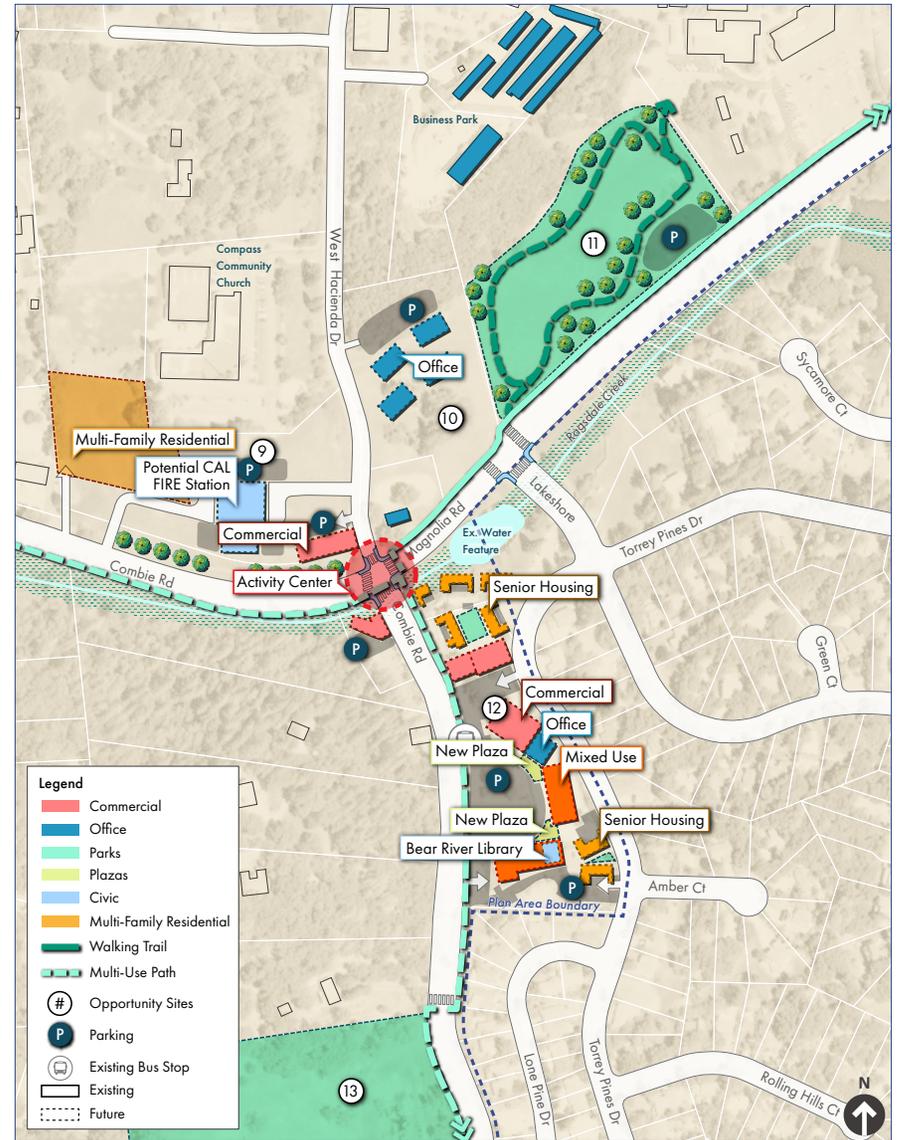


Figure 2.10: Conceptual Diagram of Potential Development of Lake Center Design District



Example of Village Center with retail and outdoor gathering areas.

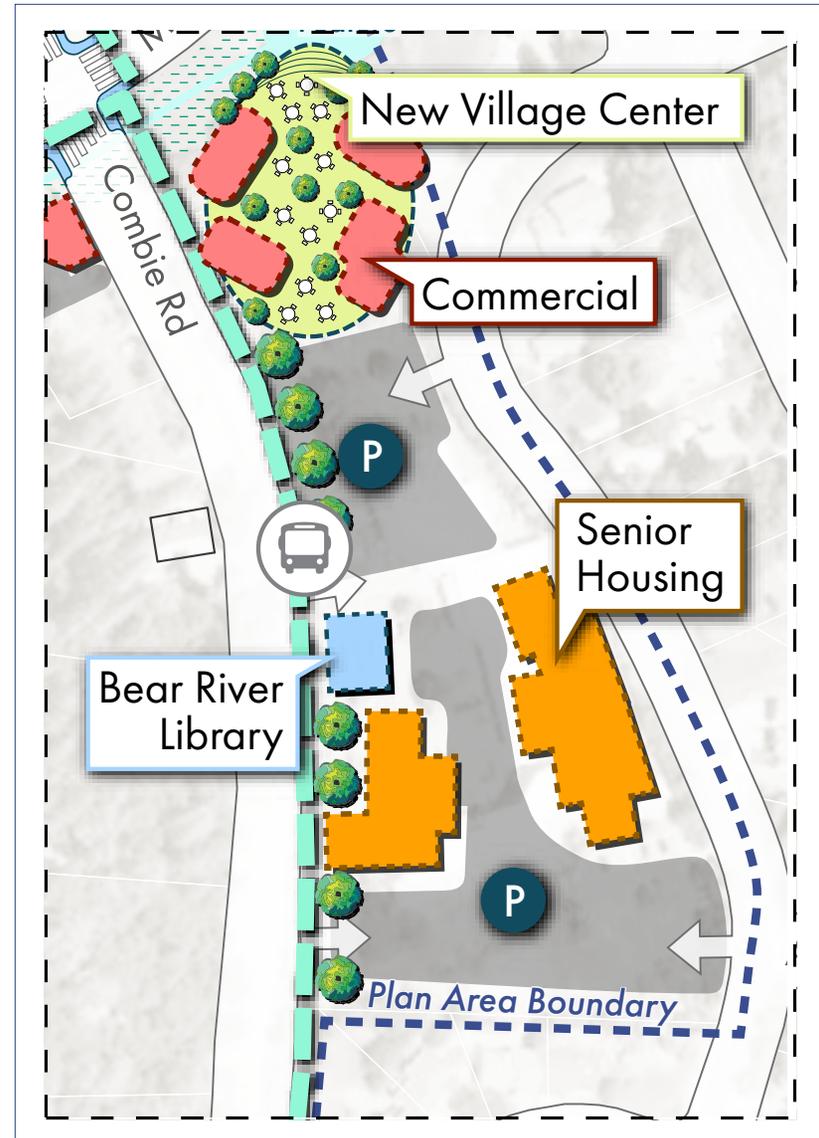


Figure 2.11: Alternative Development Scheme of Lake Center

Residential Development

Existing Housing

There are approximately 1,111 housing units within the Plan Area, of which 1,106 are single-family units and five are multi-family units, as identified by the County's GIS assessor parcel data.

The total number of housing units in the Unincorporated County in 2018 included 29,464 single-family units, 435 multi-family units, and 2,283 mobile homes. The Plan Area contains a portion of these mobilehomes as there is a mobilehome community called the Lake Combie Mobile Home Village on the south side of Combie Road. Between 2009 and 2018, the Unincorporated County's housing stock increased by an additional 957 single-family homes, 115 multi-family dwelling units, and 157 mobile homes. The Unincorporated County is made up of primarily of owners, totaling 21,910 owners and only 5,213 renters.

The State's Department of Housing and Community Development's (HCD) regional housing needs assessment projected the housing needs in Unincorporated Nevada County for the years 2019-2027 as follows: 475 very-low-income units, 367 low-income units, 346 moderate-income units, and 874 above-moderate-income units.

Although there are no designated affordable housing sites within the Plan Area, the Plan Area contains several parcels within the Regional Housing Need Combining District (RH), which are sites designated for development at 16 to 20 units minimum per acre in order to meet the requirements of the RHNA. Additionally, the approved Rincon Del Rio project will provide 345 units of senior housing within the Plan's Areas of Influence and this new development's residents could help support

new commercial, mixed use, and office development within the Plan Area.

New Housing

As part of this Plan, a market study was completed and projected that the number of households residing in the Plan Area and Areas of Influence could increase by 260 to 480 households from 2022 to 2042, with a commensurate increase in housing units. The low range represents what the market would likely develop in or near the Plan Area and Areas of Influence over the next 20 years, and planning for less housing could lead to price escalation. The high range represents the potential market. More details are described in *Chapter 3, Economic Development*. Through the community engagement process, many community members expressed a need for housing, specifically affordable and/or for-rent options for existing senior residents to age in place, existing and future service workers, and for new young adults/families to move into the area and help support local school enrollment.

Currently, the predominant housing type in the Plan Area is single-family residential. However, there are many other types of housing that would be more affordable and, with appropriate design guidelines as contained in this Plan's appendix, will fit in with the natural setting of the Greater Higgins area. These multi-family residential types would be appropriate in the parcels that are zoned for High Density Residential (R3) and have a density range of 16 to 20 dwelling units per acre. Following is a detailed description of different housing types that would fit well in this setting.

Cottage Courts

Cottage court neighborhoods are small-scale clusters of modestly sized houses. They are linked by a driveway around the outside of the houses, leaving the inside for a landscaped courtyard. These smaller size homes (around 1,200 square feet) are generally rented units on a single property, with common driveways and open space.

Cottage Drive

These are cottage homes arranged along a small street with front doors facing the street. Similar to subdivisions but on a smaller scale, they would be more affordable than typical single-family residences due to the smaller size and being on a single property.

Townhouses

Townhouses are attached side-by-side units. Typically, the front units face onto the street with garages behind accessed by an alley. Townhouses are two or three stories, and often have front doors facing sidewalks or landscaped common areas. They can be flexibly arranged to create attractive internal neighborhoods on large sites. Townhouses can also provide opportunities for multigenerational households with seniors residing on the ground level.



Example of attached townhouse community.



Cottage court neighborhood facing onto a courtyard and pedestrian pathway.



Cottage drive homes arranged along a small street with front doors facing the street.



Attached townhouses facing onto the main street or pedestrian streets.



Duplex with two units in a single structure.



Example of three-story garden apartments.

Plexes

Plexes, are two to four units of housing within a single structure. The units are modest in size, but the combination of two or three units makes for a structure similar in scale to a large residence. This housing type fits well in single-family neighborhoods.

Garden Apartments

These are two- or three-story apartments with landscaping at the perimeter and in courtyards. This allows parking to be tucked behind the apartments. Upper floors can be accessed via elevators, which is beneficial for seniors.

Vertical Mixed Use

Vertical mixed use development includes commercial space on the ground level with multi-family housing units built above. For the Greater Higgins area, vertical mixed use would typically be two stories and no more than three stories high. Commercial uses could include retail, office, restaurants, and/or community uses like a gym or a community gathering space. These uses help encourage pedestrian activity and activate the ground floor while also providing convenient access to services for upper story residents. Currently, the County’s zoning ordinance allows mixed use in Commercial-zoned areas at 4 dwelling units per acre. This Plan recommends that this residential density for the Plan Area be increased to 12 dwelling units per acre to encourage higher density development focused at the two Design Districts.

Medium Density Residential

Many Medium Density Residential-zoned (R2) parcels front along Combie Road, between Higgins Road and Hacienda Drive, which also provide opportunity for additional housing development at a maximum of 6 dwelling units per acre. Through the community engagement process, community members provided positive feedback about density and design of the 2014 single-family residential development Cascade Crossing, a 80-home residential community with homes ranging between 1,584 and 2,928 square feet, with a Craftsman architecture style. These homes primarily incorporate front porches, have pitched roofs at the front elevation, and incorporate horizontal wood siding on the façade. Community members expressed that they would like to see more single-family development like Cascade Crossing along the north side of Combie Road.



Example of mixed use with residential above.



Example of mixed use with office above.



Cascade Crossing Residential Development with Medium Density Residential (R2) zoning.

Goals and Policies

Goal LU-1: Concentrated Growth

Concentrated growth in existing commercial areas of the Plan Area, including the two Design Districts (near the Combie Road/Highway 49 and the Combie Road/Magnolia Road intersections) as well as Combie Plaza, to minimize sprawl and to create pedestrian-friendly environments that are easily accessible by walking, biking, and riding NEVs.

Policy LU-1.1: Design Districts

Encourage new development to create a mix of uses in the Higgins Corner Design District and Lake Center Design District, including commercial, retail, high density residential, and office.

Policy LU-1.2: Opportunity Site #2

Work with property owner or partner with a developer to explore development opportunities of the Opportunity Site #2 parcel to create a unified commercial area, integrating the Higgins Village and Higgins Marketplace shopping centers, with a slow-moving “Commercial Lane” that runs north-south through the shopping center, providing access off Combie Road to Woodridge Drive. The new “Commercial Lane” would include two 12’-wide travel lanes with bicycle “sharrows” and 10’ sidewalks on either side with street trees in tree gates on the curb. The existing walking path and new multi-use path would both connect to Commercial Lane to provide a continuous pathway of travel.

Policy LU-1.3: Density

In keeping with the General Plan’s goals and objectives for Community Regions, encourage maximum allowable densities, consistent with environmental, infrastructure, and other site constraints, for new development within the Plan Area.

Policy LU-1.4: Higgins Road

Maintain Higgins Road as a primary thoroughfare for vehicular traffic through the Higgins Corner Design District. However, explore opportunities to improve pedestrian access on this street (i.e., new and/or widened sidewalks).

Policy LU-1.5: East-West Street Connectivity

Improve east-west street connectivity within the Higgins Corner Design District from Higgins Road into the shopping centers. This could include repaving and/or widening existing east-west side streets/alleys and adding landscaping. Improved roadways should accommodate pedestrians on both sides of the street with street trees and/or landscaping.

Policy LU-1.6: Potential Hotel

Explore the feasibility of attracting a potential hotel to be situated in the Plan Area, potentially located along Highway 49 for visibility.

Policy LU-1.7: Lake Center Redevelopment

Encourage coordination between the property owner of the Lake Center and Nevada County Planning staff on the potential redevelopment of the Lake Center to be compatible with the Greater Higgins Area Plan's recommendations.

Policy LU-1.8: Establish Infrastructure Prior to Development

Establish needed infrastructure improvements prior to the rezoning and development of new residential, mixed use, and commercial uses, including the parcels adjacent to East and West Hacienda Drives. Infrastructure systems include for roadways and utilities such as sewer, water, and electricity.

Goal LU-2: Multi-family Housing

A variety of multi-family housing types in the Plan Area that fit with the rural character of existing development, including, but not limited to, garden apartments, townhouses, duplexes and triplexes, cottage home developments, and accessory dwelling units.

Policy LU-2.1: Senior Housing

Prioritize providing affordable housing options for seniors to allow aging residents to stay within Greater Higgins and to free up housing stock for new, younger families and individuals to move in.

Policy LU-2.2: Housing for Young Families

Provide affordable housing types that could accommodate young families, such as duplexes and attached townhomes, to attract these families to reside in Greater Higgins and support local school enrollment.

Policy LU-2.3: Mixed Use Zoning

Seek changes to Nevada County's Zoning Ordinance to allow up to 12 dwelling units per acre for mixed use development on existing Commercial-zoned areas, potentially through a Planned Development Special Combining District on the Plan Area's Opportunity Sites showing mixed use.

Policy LU-2.4: Design Guidelines

New development within the Plan Area, including for multi-family residential, shall adhere to the Plan's design guidelines to create aesthetically pleasing structures complementary to the surrounding built and natural environments.

Goal LU-3: Single-Family Housing

New single-family housing in areas that will help increase the vitality of the Design Districts and is designed to be aesthetically pleasing along public corridors.

Policy LU-3.1: Cascade Crossing Design

Reference the Cascade Crossing residential development as a model for future Medium Density Residential-zoned parcels. Favorable components of the Cascade Crossings development include an aesthetically pleasing entry from Combie Road, architecture that fits the character

of surrounding development, and site grading that is sensitive to the existing site topography.

Policy LU-3.2: Potential Residential Sites

Prioritize new medium density residential development to occur on sites zoned for Medium Density Residential adjacent to the Cascade Crossing residential development, along Combie Road.

Goal LU-4: Experience-Oriented Commercial Areas

Experience-oriented improvements in existing and new commercial development within the Plan's Design Districts that provide experiences beyond just shopping so that they will be more competitive with Internet shopping businesses. Experience-oriented improvements could include outdoor dining, shaded outdoor seating, pocket parks and play areas, plazas and open spaces for events, and recreation and entertainment opportunities.

Policy LU-4.1: Parking Standards

Review parking standards applicable to commercial uses in the Plan Area to identify opportunities to reduce parking requirements in exchange for the provision of experience-oriented improvements.

Policy LU-4.2: Mix of Uses

Review the uses allowed in commercial areas within the Plan's Design Districts to ensure that a full range of recreation and entertainment uses are permitted to compliment more traditional retail and dining uses. Where feasible, eliminate requirements for public hearings for changes of use within existing buildings. New permitted uses could include but are not limited to co-workspaces, makerspaces, small business incuba-

tors/start-up spaces, food halls, fitness and wellness centers, pop-up retail, food truck plazas, etc.

Policy LU-4.3: Maintenance

Conduct outreach with property owners to explore the feasibility of establishing a landscaping and lighting maintenance district to construct and maintain experience-oriented improvements within the Plan's Design Districts.

Goal LU-5: Design Consistency

Consistent and compatible use of building materials and design elements appropriate to the visual and scenic qualities of each site.

Policy LU-5.1: Complementary Building Design

Encourage complementary building materials, textures, roof shapes, lighting, and colors to tie buildings of varying shapes and sizes together.

Goal LU-6: Complementary Landscaping

Landscaping that complements and accents development.

Policy LU-6.1: Native Plants

Encourage the use of native plants, including in Table A.1 of the Greater Higgins Area Plan, to highlight new construction or to soften outdated development. Trees and shrubs should screen storage areas and outdoor equipment; however, consideration should first be given to relocating or architecturally screening unattractive features. Landscaping should be used to define pedestrian areas and open spaces.

Policy LU-6.2: Landscape Design

Encourage landscaping to include an abundance of trees, both deciduous and evergreen, providing shade and color during spring and summer months, and creating a contrast to an otherwise stark environment during the winter. Plant materials should always be distributed throughout parking areas, with larger islands and plantings alongside parking stalls. New landscape design and plants shall be consistent with fire safety guidelines.

Policy LU-6.3: Water Efficiency

New landscaping should follow the State’s Model Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance (MWELo) to increase water efficiency standards through use of more efficient irrigation systems, graywater usage, and onsite stormwater capture, and limiting the amount of landscape covered with turf.

Implementation Actions

Action LU-1: Building Permit Review Process

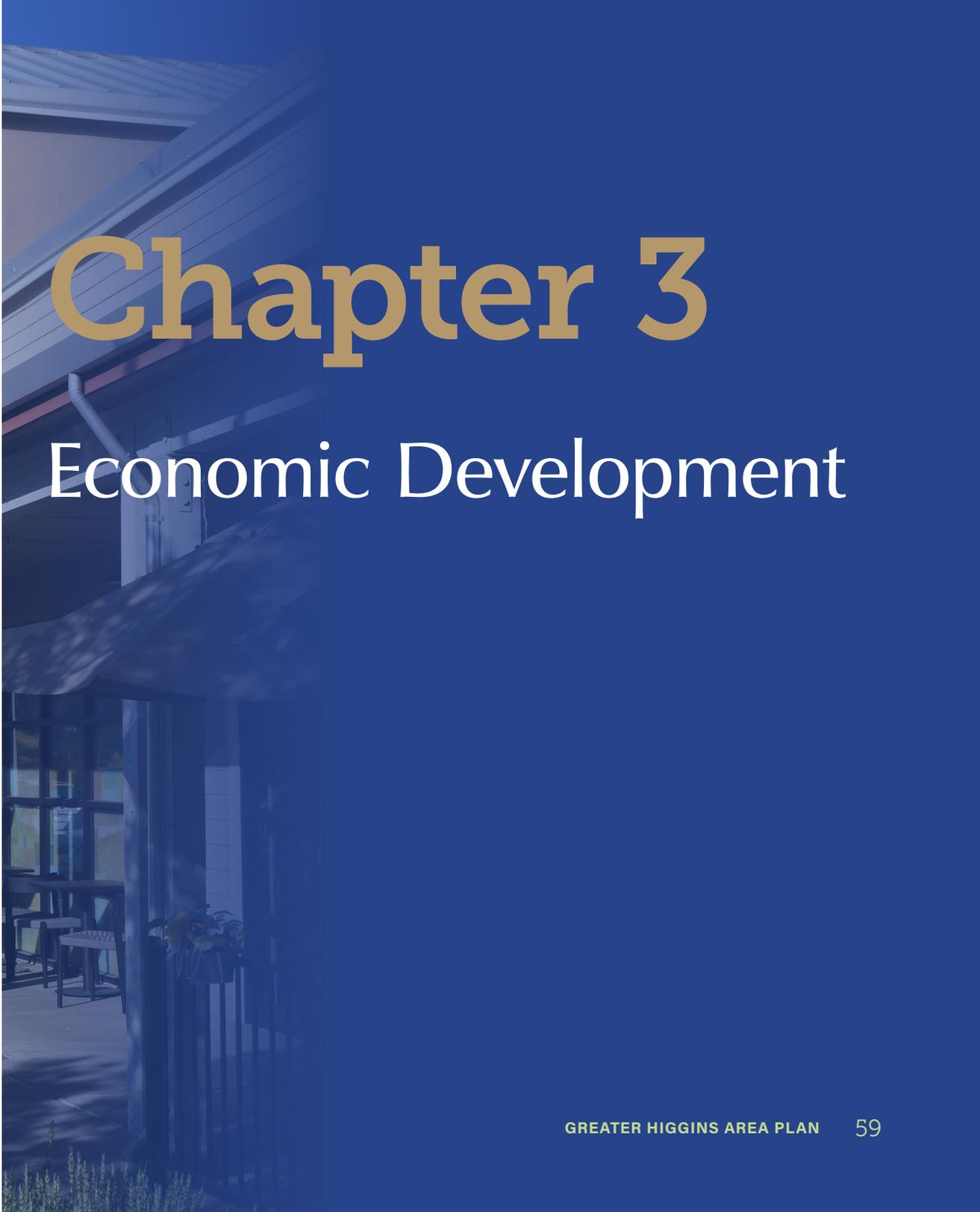
Review the building permit review process with the Building Department and Planning Department to streamline and encourage the development of various multi-family housing types that could accommodate seniors, young families, and young professionals (i.e., townhomes, small lot residential, cottages, etc.).

Action LU-2: Zoning Ordinance Amendments

Review and amend the Nevada County Zoning Ordinance for Commercial-zoned areas to encourage experience-oriented commercial uses and a mix of uses, such as increased density for mixed use development, reduced parking requirements for commercial uses, and new permitted uses.

Action LU-3: Access to Opportunity Sites

Work with the Public Works Department, Nevada Irrigation District, PG&E, other utility providers and willing property owners to identify locations and develop access, secondary access, and utility easements to support necessary infrastructure improvements at high density opportunity sites.



Chapter 3

Economic Development

Introduction

Many Greater Higgins residents work in more urbanized areas, yet they have chosen to live in a more rural area. The Greater Higgins Plan Area (Plan Area) lacks some of the shopping, dining, and entertainment opportunities that are easily found in the more urban areas, but many of these types of uses can be found a mere 10- to 15-minute drive to the north or south. The challenge for economic development and implementing the Greater Higgins Area Plan (Plan) is attracting and sustaining businesses to complement and improve the quality of life while protecting and strengthening the rural character of the area.

This chapter summarizes key findings of the economic analysis conducted for the preparation of the Greater Higgins Area Plan (Plan), establishes the Plan’s vision for community economic development, and identifies goals and policies to work toward the vision.

Existing Economic Conditions

Potential Population and Housing Growth

The commercial businesses in the Greater Higgins area primarily serve households residing in and near the Plan Area, with some additional support from pass-through traffic along Highway 49. Thus, growth in population and households in the Plan Area will be a primary driver of growth in commercial businesses.

Based on an analysis of regional employment growth, this Plan projects the number of new households that could potentially reside in and near the Plan Area if sufficient new housing were constructed. Table 4.1 provides the potential increase in the number of households over the next 20 years.

Table 4.1: Market Potential for New Housing by Number of Units; Greater Higgins Plan Area and Surrounding Area; 2022 to 2042

	Low-Range Projection	High-Range Projection
2022–27	50	100
2027–32	60	110
2032–42	145	270
2022–42	260	480

Source: PlaceWorks, 2022.

The analysis also looked at the types of households that might make up the potential growth in households. The analysis found that renters would make up a larger share of regional household growth (26 percent) than the current share of Plan Area households (16 percent). Regionally, the average household size is slightly smaller than the average size in the Plan Area, and going forward, smaller households are likely to constitute a larger share of household growth.

Table 4.2: Recommended New Retail Development in Square Feet of Building Space for the Greater Higgins Trade Area

Store Type/Format	Low-Range Projection (s.f.)	High-Range Projection (s.f.)
Small Format Box Store	10,000	20,000
Gas Stations	2,000	4,000
Restaurants	8,000	12,000
Small Inline Stores	20,000	30,000
Total Additional Retail Building Space	40,000	66,000

Source: PlaceWorks, 2022.

Regarding the types of housing, the analysis noted that the Plan Area and nearby areas have fewer renters, slightly larger households, and more single-family detached housing than the 30-minute drive-time market area. However, this is not unexpected because smaller, more dense housing and multi-family development most often occur in urbanized areas with more infrastructure than what is available in the Plan Area. Thus, these differences do not suggest that wholesale change is warranted or even feasible in the Plan Area. What these differences do suggest is that planning for a little more variety in housing types may better address future market demand. And even then, providing some flexibility in the Plan can be beneficial by allowing developers and builders to better respond to small shifts in market preferences from year to year.

Commercial Development

The market analysis defined a trade area, the residents of which are likely to support retail sales and services businesses in the Plan Area. Spending support is complicated by competing commercial districts, most notably those in Meadow Vista, Grass Valley, and North Auburn. The businesses in Meadow Vista reduce the amount of money that area’s residents might otherwise spend in the Plan Area. The Plan Area leaks consumer spending to the Grass Valley and North Auburn trade areas, and as noted in the analysis, it is unlikely to capture all the leaked spending. Table 4.2 provides the recommended amount of new commercial building space reasonably expected based on projected household growth.



Example of small inline stores.



Example of small format box store.

The small format box store would most likely be a general merchandise store, similar to Foothill Mercantile in Grass Valley. However, this space could accommodate a building materials or garden equipment and supply store.

The building square footage for gas stations reflects the convenience store square footage, and the size would be reduced for gas stations without convenience stores. As described in *Chapter 2, Land Use and Community Character*, a new gas station is already currently proposed at the Higgins Marketplace so an additional gas station in this area would not be necessary.

The square footage recommended for restaurants does not necessarily distinguish among types of restaurants, but the market analysis indicates that this would be mostly fast food and casual dining, although a fine dining restaurant is not out of the question. Restaurants could be located within a larger commercial building but would most likely be developed as stand-alone buildings to avoid the added construction costs.

Finally, the small inline stores are intended to accommodate new businesses in other categories of businesses, such as hair and nail salons, shipping stores, small clothing boutiques, sandwich shops, bagel shop/bakery, card stores, florists, etc. These stores would likely be developed in one or a few small shopping centers or commercial buildings.

Other Nonresidential Development

The Plan Area is neither intended nor expected to be an urban jobs center. However, there are other types of businesses not included in the retail analysis that also primarily serve local residents. The analysis estimated the amount of building space that could be supported by these other types of businesses as the population and number of households increases over the next 20 years. Table 4.3 provides the estimated market

Table 4.3: Market Potential for Non-Residential Use (excluding Retail) in Square Feet of Building Area; 2022–2042

	Low-Range Projection (s.f.)	High-Range Projection (s.f.)
Other Commercial	4,700	8,630
Office	9,610	17,640
Light Industrial	6,570	12,060
Total	20,900	38,300

Source: PlaceWorks, 2022.

potential for nonresidential uses (excluding retail which was discussed in the previous section). The other commercial uses in Table 4.3 would likely be developed as part of new retail development. It is worth noting that the Plan Area need not accommodate the demand for office and light industrial uses as these businesses could easily serve households within the Plan Area and Areas of Influence even if developed in more urban areas, such as Grass Valley or North Auburn.

The analysis estimates that projected household growth in and around the Plan Area could support the development of 4,700 to 8,630 square feet of building space for other commercial uses, which might include arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and personal services.

The analysis estimates that projected household growth could support the development of 9,610 to 17,640 square feet of building space for



Example of dining restaurant with outdoor seating.

office, which could include professional offices but is mostly medical office. The office uses could also be developed as part of retail development or could be developed as stand-alone office buildings.

Finally, the analysis estimates that projected household growth could support 6,570 to 12,060 square feet of light industrial building space, which could include auto repair and service, construction businesses, and other light industrial types of businesses.

Impacts from Current Events

During the preparation of the Plan, it had become evident that the public health responses to the pandemic had accelerated the ongoing long-term shift of consumer spending from bricks-and-mortar stores to online businesses. It also resulted in the permanent closure of many businesses. As the economy opened back up, households began spending at stores again. Nevertheless, it is widely expected that growth in retail sales will be slow and demand for new retail development will be muted for the next three to five years. The projected demand for retail and other commercial building space over the next 20 years reflects this expected development lull in the short term. Thus, the County should be thoughtful about preserving the planned nonresidential development capacity until there is clear evidence that the projected long-term demand is not likely to materialize.

Inflation increased dramatically as Americans spent on delayed purchases and then on travel and entertainment. It also appears that an expected taming of inflation pressures may not occur as the recent global events such as war and other factors, have disrupted the energy market resulting in higher inflationary fuel and other energy costs. As a result, the Federal Reserve is raising interest rates. The commensurate rise in mortgage rates in combination with rising housing costs have already resulted in lower demand for new mortgages. However, as of the preparation of the Area Plan, it is not clear whether there will be a one- or two-year decline in housing demand or if there will be a longer-term transformation of the housing market. Thus, the County should re-evaluate the market analysis in three to five years to determine if the planned mix of land uses and expected level of nonresidential development are still warranted.

Community Economic Development Vision

This Plan envisions the Plan Area to have vibrant and successful business areas in its two Design Districts (described in detail in *Chapter 2, Land Use and Community Character*) that provide a range of opportunities for daily and weekly shopping, dining, entertainment, services, and socializing; that create a strong and positive public identity for Greater Higgins; and that are built at a scale and in a style that compliments the rural character of the Plan Area.

Business start-ups, especially by south Nevada County residents who know the area and its needs, likely represent more easily obtainable opportunities for economic growth and should be targeted for business development. Attracting new store and office locations of existing businesses in the region will also be warranted but may require longer-term efforts.

The County should keep local residents aware of the shopping, dining, entertainment, socializing, and services available in the Plan Area, as well as introduce these opportunities to residents throughout south Nevada County to help increase economic activity in Higgins Corner. However, implementing public relations and advertising efforts requires funding, and to be effective, must reflect the realities and needs of local businesses. The following goals and policies provide actionable strategies on how to increase economic development in the Plan Area.

Goals and Policies

Goal ED-1: Business Development

Business development that attracts new businesses to Greater Higgins and creates opportunities for economic growth in Greater Higgins.

Policy ED-1.1: Market Research

Use the market analysis prepared for the Greater Higgins Area Plan update and other business analytics data (Buxton) to support business start-ups and to inform business attraction efforts. Update the market analysis once every two to three years.

Policy ED-1.2: Gap Financing

Explore the potential to establish a local gap financing program for start-up businesses to augment conventional lending sources through seed funding. Explore potential grant funding sources, such as the Federal Economic Development Administration and the US Department of Agriculture Rural Development Program, to obtain seed funding for a local gap financing program.

Goal ED-2: Marketing and Organizational Capacity

Development of local organizational capacity and implementation of a communication and marketing strategy to make southwest Nevada County residents aware of the programs to assist with establishing a new business.

Policy ED-2.1: Communication and Marketing Strategy

Work with the organizational structure established in Action ED-1 to create and implement a communication and marketing strategy, which could include paid advertising and/or earned media through a public relations campaign to highlight businesses and opportunities in the Plan Area.

Policy ED-2.2: Events

Work with the organizational structure established in Action ED-1 to plan and sponsor events in the Greater Higgins area to build a sense of community, complement the quality of life for area residents, and draw regional visitors, helping to familiarize them with the shopping, dining, entertainment, socializing, and services available in the Plan Area.

Policy ED-2.3: Economic Development Planning

Incorporate relevant policies and implementation measures from other economic development efforts in the County, including but not limited to the County’s Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), the efforts of the Sierra Business Council, the plans and programs of the Regional Housing Authority, and planning and programs that serve the needs for Beale Air Force Base and active military families; as these other plans and programs are updated over time, ensure that the updates include the Greater Higgins Area Plan’s needs.

Implementation Actions

Action ED-1: Organizational Plan

Engage area stakeholders, including businesses, property owners, and other economic development organizations, to develop an organizational plan, which should identify the activities that would increase the number of businesses and economic activity in the Greater Higgins Area Plan's Design Districts, such as long-term marketing and events. It might be the case that the amount of marketing and number of events are manageable through the existing Chamber of Commerce or the formation of a Greater Higgins Chamber of Commerce. On the other hand, it could be that the amount of marketing and number of events would benefit from an additional funding stream, in which case an entity like a business improvement district would be beneficial.

Action ED-2: Business Start-up Training

Collaborate with the Sierra Small Business Development Center (SSBDC), operated by the Sierra Business Council, to provide business start-up training courses for residents in southwest Nevada County who might be interested in starting a new business. and to make training courses locally available in the Greater Higgins Plan Area to improve the likelihood of new start-up businesses operating.

Action ED-3: Business Attraction

Collaborate with the Sierra Business Council, Nevada County Economic Resource Council, the South Nevada County Chamber of Commerce, real estate brokers, property owners, and/or other stakeholders to market the Greater Higgins Plan Area to prospective new businesses. Work with these stakeholders to maintain an inventory of available building space and available property suitable for non-residential development.



Chapter 4

Public Services and Infrastructure

Introduction

Existing residential, commercial, industrial, and other development in the Greater Higgins Plan Area requires supporting infrastructure including roadways and other transportation infrastructure, water, sewer, and stormwater drainage. It also requires public services such as schools, health, and safety programs. This Public Services and Infrastructure chapter describes the transportation and circulation system, Infrastructure and public facilities and services located in and around the Plan Area.

Existing conditions for each of the infrastructure systems or public services are described. Improvements, if proposed, are discussed for each element. Some of this information was gathered during the creation of the previous Higgins Area Plan in 2000 and updated here as needed.

Goals and policies for all Public Services and Infrastructure topics are listed at the end of this chapter.



View driving northbound along Highway 49.

Transportation

Vehicular Network

The existing vehicular network in the Plan Area includes principal arterials, minor arterials, minor collectors, and local roads. There are four major streets within the Plan Area: Highway 49, Wolf Road west of Highway 49, Combie Road east of Highway 49, and Magnolia Road east of Combie Road. Highway 49 bisects the Plan Area from south to north and provides regional access to the Plan Area via the signalized intersection at Combie Road / Wolf Road as well as from other local roads without signals. Most local roads within the Plan Area have dead-ends and do not connect to any other major streets.

Figure 4.1 shows the vehicular circulation network within and outside of the Plan Area with existing roadway functional classifications:

- **State Highway:** Highway 49
- **Arterials:** Wolf Road, Combie Road, and Magnolia Road
- **Local Roads:** Other streets off the arterials

California Department of Transportation (Caltrans), which is the agency that owns State highways such as Highway 49, does not have any ongoing or upcoming projects within the Plan Area. However, there are several documents that contain potential improvements along Highway 49 within the Plan Area. Caltrans' State Route 49: I-80 to McKnight Way Draft Safety Assessment Report recommends a potential displaced left turn intersection at the Wolf Road/Combie Road intersection. Nevada County Transportation Commission's State Route 49 Corridor System Management Plan 2018 Update contains considerations for additional lighting at the Streeter Road and Wolf Road/Combie Road intersections to reduce collisions and to update the signalized intersection at Wolf Road/Combie Road to a roundabout. Any change to traffic controls



Combie Road at the intersection of Highway 49.



Magnolia Road near the sports field.

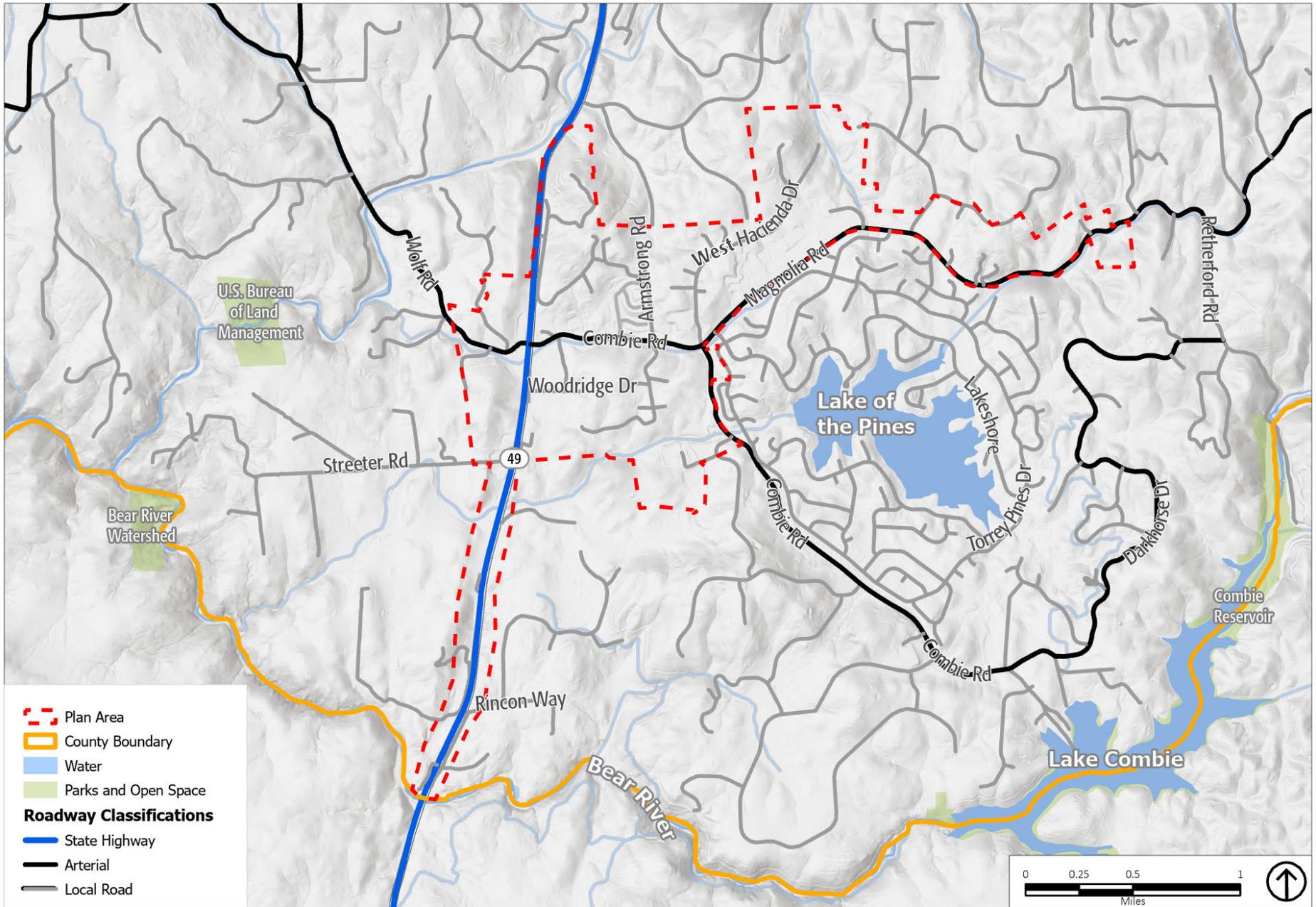
on Highway 49, for example additional traffic signals, would require significant environmental review and permitting by Caltrans. There are several ongoing Caltrans projects occurring on Highway 49 outside of the Plan Area, including a safety project (install concrete barrier and Class III bike facilities) in North Auburn and a lane widening project north of Alta Sierra.

In recent years, Combie Road has been improved to include three lanes in the segment between Magnolia Road and Highway 49. It has two lanes northbound, one lane southbound in the northern portion, and one lane northward and two lanes southward in the southern portion. Another recent change is the addition of a signal at Higgins Road and Combie Road, which was installed at the time the new Holiday Market and Higgins Marketplace shopping center was developed.

Pinch points that can create delays for vehicles in the Plan Area are the intersection of Combie Road/Wolf Road/Highway 49, and the intersection of Combie Road/West Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road/south Combie Road, which can back up due to movements in and out of the Lake of the Pines (LOP) at Lakeshore, especially when combined with school drop-off/pick-up traffic. Some potential solutions that have been discussed as part of the planning process include:

- **Provide two roundabouts and remove the signals at the Combie Road/Magnolia Road intersection.** Although roundabouts can work well in many places similar to the Greater Higgins area, these two would need additional study to ensure the roundabout configuration would work at this location. Also, the roundabout proposal did not get favorable input from community members at public meetings for the Plan update, but that is not unusual for an unfamiliar solution like roundabouts.

Figure 4.1: Vehicular Network and Classification



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

- **Add a right-turn lane into Lakeshore/LOP along Magnolia Road.** This would allow cars to enter LOP in a dedicated lane without being held up by the eastbound traffic along Magnolia Road. This potential improvement would need to be studied and could be incorporated into the redevelopment of the Lake Center as part of the LOP proposal. This proposal has been favorable among community member discussions.
- **Provide additional parallel routes to the arterials.** Parallel routes can take some of the pressure off the main route, would provide additional ways to walk and bicycle and drive Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs or golf carts), and would also provide additional evacuation routes in an emergency. One suggested route is to connect Woodridge Drive south of Combie Road to Rosewood Road and on to south Combie Road. There is no existing right-of-way for such a road; it would need to be developed with the participation of landowners in the area.

Additional ideas for connecting streets together are discussed in the following section on Evacuation Routes.

Evacuation Routes

Evacuation routes are designated roadways that allow for many people to quickly leave an area because of a potential or imminent disaster, such as a wildfire. These routes should have sufficient capacity to accommodate the needs of the community, be safely and easily accessible, and allow people to travel far enough away to be safe from any emergency conditions. Two primary routes currently exist within the Greater Higgins area: 1) Combie Road west to Highway 49, and 2) Magnolia Road east to Dog Bar Road.

In low density residential neighborhoods, most roadways have dead ends and have only one or two access points. In a small-scale emergency, community members may be safe by evacuating to another neighborhood within the Plan Area or to nearby adjacent areas; however, in a larger emergency, the evacuation routes may not be able to handle the capacity needed for safe and efficient evacuations.

This Plan recommends establishing other routes that could be used to provide access out of the Greater Higgins area in the event of an emergency. Figure 4.2 shows potential upgrades to existing roadways and development of new connections as a way to increase the capacity of the roadway network to help meet evacuation needs. Some of these options have been discussed before and/or are underway, while some are new ideas that emerged during development of the Plan:

Projects Underway

- 1 As part of the Rincon Del Rio Senior Living housing project, Rincon Way, which connects to Highway 49, will be extended to become an emergency egress road that connects to Rodeo Flat Road (outside of the Plan Area). Rodeo Flat Road connects to south Combie Road. This is not intended to be open for normal vehicle traffic, but only to be used for emergencies.
- 2 The Dog Bar Road Bridge will be improved to increase vehicle capacity. The bridge connects Placer County and Nevada County over the Bear River (outside of the Plan Area), and currently carries two-way traffic on a one-lane bridge. Caltrans has approved Highway Bridge Program (HBP) funding to remove and replace the bridge. The new bridge will be relocated upstream, have two lanes, and a sidewalk. Further south on Dog Bar Road, across the bridge and Bear River, is a hairpin turn across the Placer

County Water Agency (PCWA) canal, which is in Placer County jurisdiction. This hairpin turn does not comply with Fire Safe road standards and potentially creates a choke point that could impact evacuation. This turn would need to be redesigned in order to meet Fire Safe standards and would require coordination with PCWA, Placer County, and impacted property owners.

Additional Potential Evacuation Routes

The following evacuation routes were discussed as part of the community engagement process, and are desired by the community to provide increased connectivity within the Plan Area to streamline circulation and provide needed ingress and egress. Many of these routes provide increased connectivity to Highway 49 or arterials like Combie Road, south Combie Road, and Magnolia Road. These potential evacuation routes would require further study for feasibility and environmental impacts, and would require coordination with private property owners.

- 3 Egbert Hill Road, which is located north of Bear River High School, connects to Brewer Road, which ultimately connects to Highway 49. There is currently a pathway along Egbert Hill Road that connects to West Hacienda Drive. The pathway is gated at the southern end of Egbert Hill Road. If this fire gate were removed and the roadway were improved, Egbert Hill Road could potentially serve as an emergency route to Highway 49.
- 4 East and West Hacienda Drives are currently disconnected. If connected, this route would provide residential areas along East Hacienda Drive access to the western end of Magnolia Road.

- 5 Sharonjack Road, which feeds into Highway 49, could be extended to connect to Riata Way, which ultimately connects to south Combie Road. Sharonjack Road is only partially within the Plan Area at where it connects to Highway 49, but Riata Way and its connection to south Combie Road are within the Plan Area.
- 6 Magnolia Road is a two-lane, windy road that would cause slower traffic movement in the event of an evacuation. The Higgins Fire Protection District and others recommend smoothing out extreme curves along the eastern segment of Magnolia Road (outside of the Plan Area) and other measures to improve vehicle capacity.
- 7 Wild Iris Lane (outside of the Plan Area), which connects to the southern end of Retherford Road and Magnolia Road, crosses over Combie Reservoir and provides access southeast to Meadow Vista via a private bridge. Creating public access over the bridge could create additional ingress/egress.

Transit

Nevada County Connects

Nevada County Connects, formerly known as Gold Country Stage, is the primary provider of bus transit services in the Western Nevada County region. Nevada County Connects operates one bus line in the Plan Area: Route 5, which travels between Tinloy Street Transit Center in Grass Valley in North County to the Auburn Amtrak Station in Placer County via Highway 49 and serves as the regional route for the Plan Area. These buses also accommodate bicycles.

Route 5 is a limited service commuter route that provides northbound and southbound transit service along Highway 49 with stops along Highway 49 and off Combie Road (see Figure 4.2):



Bus stop along Higgins Road.

- Highway 49 at Streeter Road
- Highway 49 at Gautier Drive
- Highway 49 at Oakhurst Drive
- Higgins Road at Higgins Village
- Combie Road at Lake Center

According to Fiscal Year 2021/2022 Nevada County Connects ridership data, the bus stop that had the most boardings within the Plan Area was the bus stop at Higgins Village going northbound towards Grass Valley at 210 boardings. The bus stop that had the least amount of boardings was Highway 49 at Streeter Road going southbound with 4 boardings. These boarding numbers are the total for the entire fiscal year period.

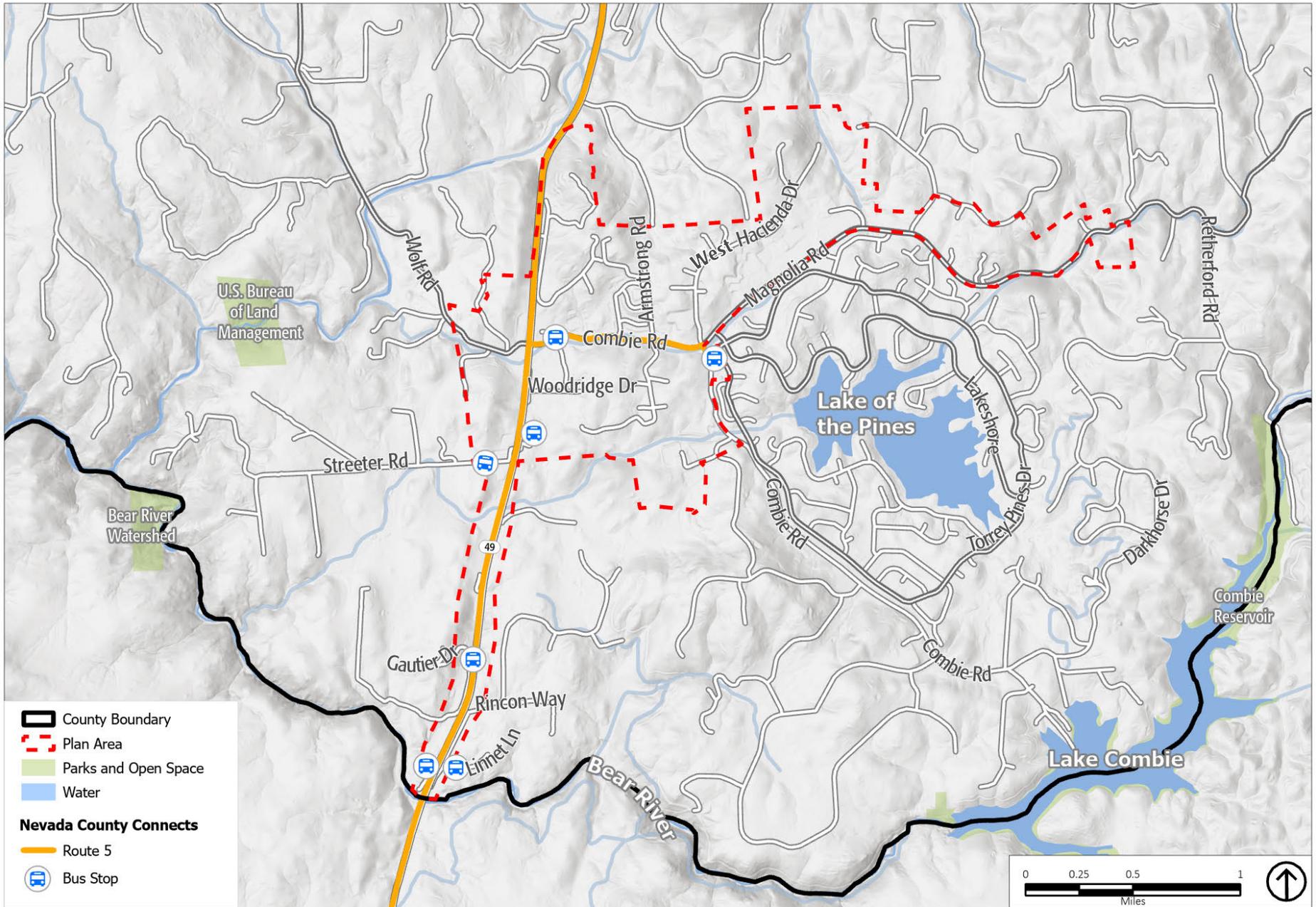
The planning process for this Plan explored whether there should be changes to the routing of Route 5, the location of existing bus stops, and whether any new bus stops should be added. After review by

County staff and the planning consultant team, the physical constraints including available right-of-way, space needed for bus turnarounds, and safety of buses turning onto Highway 49 determined that the existing arrangement can't be improved at this time. Therefore, the Plan does not include recommendations for any changes to the current Nevada County Connects bus route in the near term.

As the Plan is implemented and more development is constructed within the Plan Area, there should be consideration about whether to modify the existing transit route to serve new development and/or modify bus stop locations. All new development shall analyze and ensure transit access, as required by County code. For example, in the future, Route 5 could be rerouted to go through Woodridge Drive and Higgins Road to serve future multifamily residential homes zoned for parcels along that route. As previously mentioned in previous sections, if Woodridge Drive were extended to connect to Rosewood Road or south Combie Road, the transit route could make a loop to serve more patrons. Woodridge Drive at Highway 49 may require signalization and/or a roundabout to allow for safe southbound bus travel.

Another potential improvement to transit service could be achieved through the redevelopment of the Lake Center on south Combie Road. Currently, the bus loops through the parking lot and the stop is difficult to see. This existing bus stop could be relocated in a more prominent location if addressed in the planning for redevelopment. However, as described in *Chapter 5, Recreation and Trails*, the Plan recommends a new 10'-wide multi-use path to be constructed along south Combie Road in front of the Lake Center, and any new transit stop should be coordinated with the design of the multi-use path.

Figure 4.3: Existing Nevada County Connects Bus Routes and Stops



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

Paratransit

Nevada County Now is the paratransit service for people with disabilities or who are unable to access fixed bus routes, and also provides services for seniors over 65 years with On-Demand Dial-a-Ride service. Due to the very low density and high rate of car ownership within the Plan Area, the Plan Area is currently outside the paratransit service area. The nearest paratransit services are north of the Plan Area in Grass Valley and Nevada City areas. However, if the Greater Higgins area grows in residential density and improves in connectivity, there would be greater opportunity to service paratransit within the Plan Area.

School Buses

The Grass Valley School District, which includes Bear River High School, Magnolia Intermediate School, and Cottage Hill Elementary School, contracts with Durham School Services to provide free-of-charge bus transportation to its students. The school buses run within and outside of the Plan Area.

Utility Infrastructure

Domestic Water Supply

Domestic water is provided to the Higgins Area by the Nevada Irrigation District (N.I.D.), whose facilities in the area include Lake Combie, the Magnolia III Canal, and a treatment plant located near the eastern boundary of LOP. All but a small portion of the Plan Area is located within the N.I.D Service Area. Following is a summary of existing capacity and water supply issues from the 2000 Higgins Area Plan.

The 1989 update to N.I.D.'s Master Plan recognized the capacity of the treatment plant to serve properties within the Master Plan boundaries and an additional 138 residential units outside its boundaries. With the exception of two existing multi-family developments-the Lake Combie Mobile home Park and Lone Pines Estates in LOP-the Master Plan assumes one dwelling unit per parcel.

The 1995 Nevada County General Plan added a significant amount of multi-family residential use to the area, resulting in density for 862 additional residential units within N.I.D.'s Master Plan boundaries. There has not been a significant increase in the amount of commercial or industrial acreage that would be served by N.I.D.'s Master Plan. N.I.D. has conducted subsequent analysis which determined that while current facilities are insufficient to serve development projected under the 1995 General Plan, the District does have the ability to upgrade its water treatment and delivery system under the existing fee structure. It was further determined that the District can continue the process of upgrading the system under this fee structure for the next 20 years.

While raw water supply is available, it is anticipated that the demand for treated water, at buildout, will exceed the capacity of the existing treatment plant. Domestic water service is available to new development on a "first come, first served" basis. As development occurs, existing capacity will be depleted. Construction of additional treatment plant capacity may be expensive. N.I.D would expect project proponents to fund the cost of treatment plant expansion. The cost of providing piped, treated water may impose constraints to future development in the Higgins Area. In the case of minor land divisions, General Plan Policy 3.18 allows individual water supply systems if it would be less costly than extending the public system.

Sewage Disposal

The Nevada County Department of Public Works oversees County Sanitation District No. 1, which provides sanitation services including collection, treatment, and disposal for ten zones throughout western Nevada County. The LOP wastewater collection and treatment facility is in Zone 2. Administration, maintenance, and operations are performed by County Public Works Department.

Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo), a County planning agency, has adopted a “sphere of influence” for each sanitation zone; this is the area where future growth is anticipated, and provision should be made for sanitary services. New development within each zone’s sphere of influence is expected to require sewer connections. The sphere of influence for Zone 2 is shown in Figure 4.4 and includes most of the Plan Area.

According to the public review draft of the “Western Nevada County Wastewater Agencies Sphere of Influence Plans,” published in 2021, the LOP Zone (Zone 2) serves 2,090 sewer connections. Most of the connections serve residential development, although 80 connections serve commercial development. Recent connections to the system include the Cascade Crossing subdivision and the Higgins Village commercial area, which connect through force mains in Combie Road to the wastewater treatment facility in the southwest part of the Plan Area. Projected future growth sources include the eventual development of the Rincon del Rio residential development project and the continued buildout of the remaining LOP and Darkhorse lots.

The LOP Zone (Zone 2) wastewater treatment plant has a design capacity of 0.55 MGD (million gallons per day) and a present average dry weather flow of 0.523 MGD. LOP’s wastewater treatment facilities consist of an aerated facultative pond, two settling/backwash ponds, chemical feed facilities, sand filters, chlorination and dechlorination facilities, three storage ponds, five 9-15 acre spray irrigation fields, and a gravity outfall to Magnolia Creek. The plant is located on 104 acres off south Combie Road.

From May to October, disposal of secondary treated effluent is accomplished by spray irrigation. From November to April, tertiary treated effluent is discharged into Magnolia Creek. Conditions permitting, spray irrigation is also used for disposal from November to April.

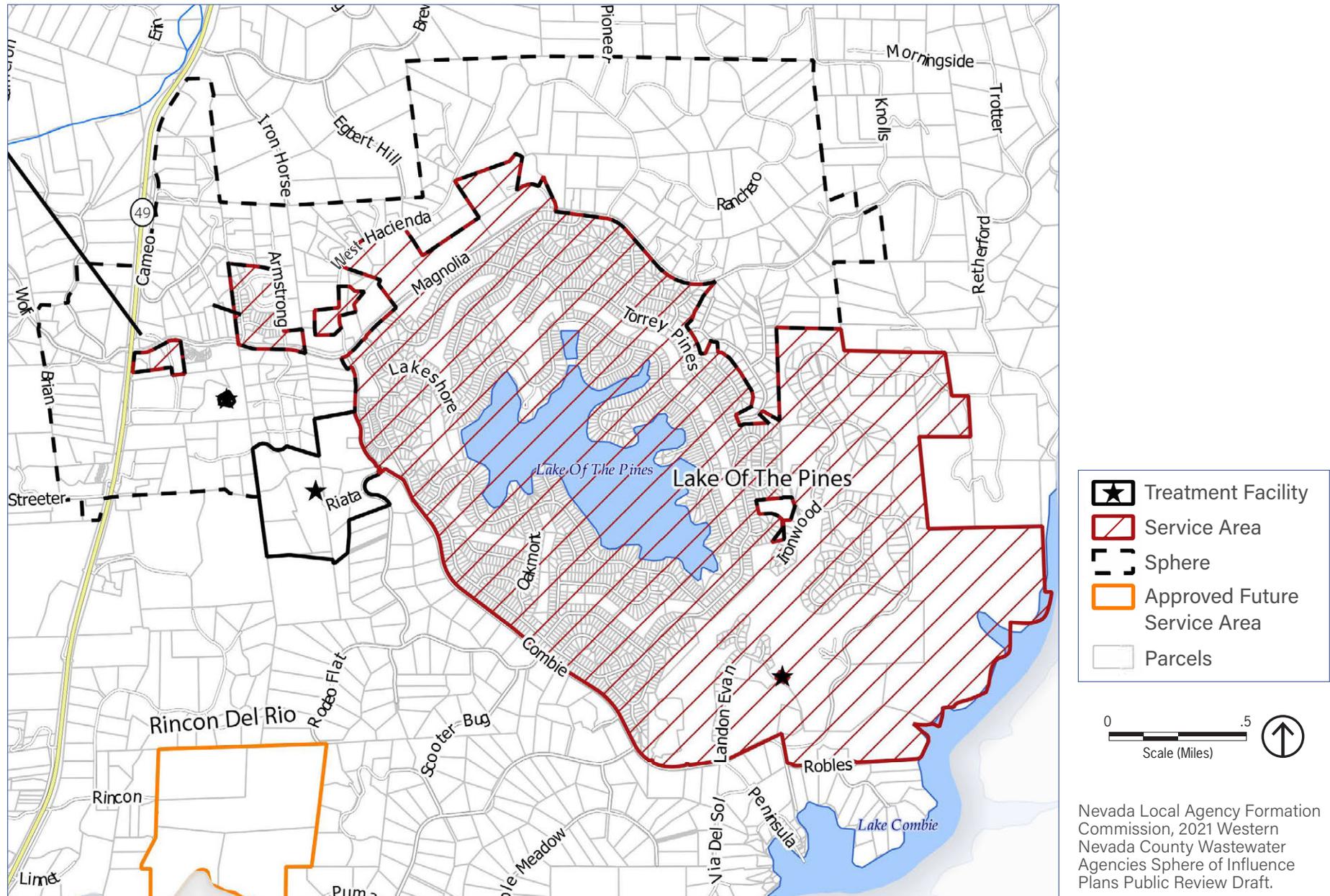
The average flows are approaching the design flow limitations, and sometimes exceeds limitations at peak flows, but the system includes a bypass component that allows wastewater to be diverted to storage ponds until it can be treated at the plant. According to the Sphere of Influence Plan, expansion of the plant is a relatively simple process involving installation of additional membrane cassettes.

Stormwater Drainage

Stormwater from the Plan Area flows to Ragsdale Creek, a tributary of Wolf Creek which flows into the Bear River, or to Magnolia Creek which also flows to the Bear River. The description of stormwater that follows focuses on Ragsdale Creek and is excerpted from the 2000 Higgins Area Plan.

The size of the Ragsdale Creek drainage basin upstream of Highway 49 is approximately 595 acres with elevations ranging from 1,420 to 1,720 feet. The basin is made up of moderately sloping wooded and grassy

Figure 4.4: Sanitation Zone 2 Sphere of Influence



Nevada Local Agency Formation Commission, 2021 Western Nevada County Wastewater Agencies Sphere of Influence Plans Public Review Draft.

A hydraulic analysis was performed on the Highway 49 culvert crossing and the Ragsdale Creek channel extending from Highway 49 to approximately 1,300 feet east of Highway 49.

Under current conditions, with the watershed only partially developed, there is local flooding on the low lying parcels near Highway 49. The extent of flooding is affected more by the sizing of driveway conveyances and the amount of vegetation in the creek bed, rather than the cross section/flow capacity of Ragsdale Creek. Currently the Ragsdale Creek conveyance system and the Highway 49 culvert crossing, with the exception of the undersized driveway culverts, is functioning adequately.

The hydraulic conditions expected to occur at watershed buildout will create the need for minor improvements to the Ragsdale Creek channel as well as the Highway 49 culvert crossing. It is projected that at buildout the storm flows will exceed the capacity of the existing creek channel causing minor flooding on some parcels on Combie Road. Minor flooding is also expected to occur on Combie Road near the Highway 49 intersection. Although the exact depth and extent of the flooding is beyond the scope of this study, it is predicted that the flooding would be less than one-foot deep.

Drainage improvement options were investigated for the section of Ragsdale Creek between Highway 49 and the Combie Road/Magnolia Road intersection. Analysis of seven sections of the Creek was discussed in the 2000 Higgins Area Plan; it is summarized here. It was a study-level plan and more analysis is required before any improvements are proposed.

REACH 1 - Highway 49 CULVERT CROSSING

The existing entrance structure at the culvert undercrossing at Highway 49 is a simple headwall with very little transition from the channel to the culvert. This should be replaced with a wingwall structure, which forms a smooth transition between the channel and the culvert.

REACH 2 - JUST UPSTREAM OF Highway 49 TO JUST DOWNSTREAM OF PARCEL 57-140-13 (Siegle Property)

This area has been improved as part of commercial development since the 2000 Higgins Area Plan recommendations were made.

REACH 3 - FROM JUST DOWNSTREAM OF PARCEL 57-140-13 (Siegle Property) TO THE POND

Reach 3 was recently improved along with the construction of a commercial development. It is assumed that this reach was properly designed and constructed, so no further discussion is provided.

REACH 4 - FROM THE POND ON PARCEL 57-140-13 (Siegle Property) TO THE COMBIE ROAD CULVERT CROSSING

The pond will have little or no effect on the ability of Ragsdale Creek to carry storm flows and it is recommended that this pond remain in its current location.

The section of open channel from the pond to the Combie Road crossing can incorporate the reconstruction method discussed for Reach 2. Due to lower flow rates in Reach 4 channel dimensions will be less than those shown for Reach 2.

REACH 5 - FROM THE CULVERT CROSSING AT COMBIE ROAD THROUGH THE POND ON PARCEL 57- 140-16 (Armstrong Property) THROUGH THE CULVERT CROSSING AT COMBIE ROAD UPSTREAM OF THE POND

Both 60-inch corrugated metal pipe culvert crossings are undersized for buildout flows and should be augmented with an additional 60-inch parallel culvert at each location. These improvements should be made during the future widening project on Combie Road. The pond will have little or no effect on the ability of Ragsdale Creek to carry storm flows and it is recommended that this pond remain in its current location.

REACH 6 - FROM THE CULVERT CROSSING AT COMBIE ROAD TO THE INTERSECTION OF COMBIE AND MAGNOLIA ROADS

Reach 6 can incorporate identical methods (including the same dimensions) discussed for Reach 4.

REACH 7 - CULVERT CROSSING AT THE INTERSECTION OF COMBIE AND MAGNOLIA

This 60-inch corrugated metal pipe culvert crossing is undersized and should be augmented with a 54-inch corrugated metal parallel pipe. These improvements should be made during future improvements to this intersection.

There are currently some small culvert crossings along Combie Road which transfer water from the north side of Combie Road to Ragsdale Creek. It appears that some or all of these crossings are undersized. Although this issue does not relate directly to Ragsdale Creek improvements, it is an important issue with regard to future widening and improvements to Combie Road. These minor crossings should be

investigated, designed and constructed along with any improvements to Combie Road.

Broadband Internet

Throughout Nevada County, there are still areas with no or slow broadband coverage due to the difficulty and cost to dig through hard rock, obstruction of line-of-site needed for wireless technology by dense trees, and the area's low population density to show a return on investment for most broadband projects. In 2019, the County adopted a countywide Broadband Strategy, prepared by the Sierra Business Council, which contains actions and strategies of how the County can increase broadband connectivity for the benefit of its residents.

The Plan Area is within the Combie/Wolf Road priority area, which is one of six priority areas that the Sierra Business Council considered to be in need of improved broadband connectivity. The Broadband Strategy recommends for the County Planning and Public Works Departments to do the following for these priority areas:

- Verify and codify area as a priority area for broadband, based on County's knowledge and discretion.
- Do a high-level internal feasibility assessment (Planning Department, Public Works) seeking to leverage other planned infrastructure projects in the area (if applicable).
- Identify applicable funding sources for project and applicable ISP partnerships.
- Engineer project planning and permitting.
- Assign County staff member to manage project and ensure project success.

Potential solutions for the Combie/Wolf Road priority area include:

- Construction of new wireless tower in area; possible addition of equipment to towers at 22591 Wild Canary Road and/ or 17713 Wolf Mountain Lookout Road.
- Extension of Optimum wired infrastructure into area. According to Optimum, the main obstacle in this area is likely to be finding the proper pole infrastructure for a build.
- DSL is an aging and soon-to-be decommissioned service in this area, and new development should be required to include fiber connectivity, where applicable, that includes 100 Mbps downloading and uploading speeds, in order to promote a healthy competitive market that includes open access infrastructure. All connectivity measures and standards should complement the State Broadband Middle Mile project.

Public Services

Fire Protection

Fire protection in the Higgins Area is provided by the Higgins Fire Protection District (HFPD). The HFPD contracts with the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) for equipment and staff to supplement the HFPD's staff and equipment. The HFPD also maintains mutual aid agreements with the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District to the north and the Placer County Fire Department to the south.

The District maintains its headquarters at the intersection of Combie Road and Highway 49 (Station 21), the entrance to the Higgins Area.

The station houses three engines and is staffed with a minimum of two persons 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

The HFPD is currently funded through a combination of property taxes, Proposition 172 funds, and a voter-approved special assessment district. It also receives development impact mitigation fees, whereby all new construction within the boundaries of the Higgins Area is required to pay impact fees at an established per-square-foot rate.

Fireflow (pressurized water available for fire protection purposes) is currently provided within the Higgins Area via hydrants connected to the Nevada Irrigation District public water supply. A 10-inch water main runs the length of Combie Road from the eastern boundary of LOP to the Higgins Fire District property.

No ambulance services are located within the HFPD. However, all fire-fighters within the District are trained emergency medical technicians or first responders. CALSTAR and Sierra Nevada Ambulance are the nearest ambulance service providers, with ambulances stationed approximately four miles north of the Plan Area.

CAL FIRE provides fire protection and stewardship to California's privately-owned wildlands. CAL FIRE is largely concerned with the prevention and control of wildfires and deterring the spread of fire into developed areas, which helps provide protection to structures threatened by wildfire.

State and County codes require that any development in this area comply with minimum fire safety requirements, including establishing improved access for fire equipment, clearance of native brush from around structures and, for commercial projects, interior fire sprinkler systems.

As mentioned in *Chapter 2, Land Use and Community Character*, the State plans to locate a future station for CAL FIRE at the State-owned parcel at the northwest corner of the Combie Road and Hacienda Drive intersection.

Law Enforcement

The Nevada County Sheriff's Office (NCSO) provides law enforcement to all the unincorporated areas of Nevada County. NCSO services include patrol, dispatch, investigations, search and rescue, boat patrol, correctional facilities, and coroner and court security services. The department's main office is located at 950 Maidu Avenue (Eric Rood Administration Center) in Nevada City.

NCSO facilities also include two satellite volunteer service centers: one in the business center across from the main gate to Lake Wildwood and the other in a business complex near Lake of the Pines. Both centers are staffed on certain days and hours by citizen volunteers and are utilized by patrol staff to meet with citizens and to complete their law enforcement reports. In 2010, the department had approximately 253 employees.

Patrol areas align with the boundaries of the county's five supervisorial districts. The Plan Area is located within Supervisorial District Two; the patrol area is known as "Beat 2." Beat 2 extends south of Grass Valley to the Yuba County/Nevada County and Placer County/Nevada County lines.

The NCSO has mutual aid assistance agreements with the California Highway Patrol (CHP), which provides police protection on all state and county roadways within Nevada County. CHP also provides backup protection to the NCSO as needed, and the NCSO provides backup protection to the CHP.

Schools and Community Facilities

Within the Plan Area, Bear River High School, Magnolia Intermediate School, and Cottage Hill Elementary School are all located adjacent to each other along Magnolia Road. Another school outside of the Plan Area but serving residents in the Greater Higgins area, is Forest Lake Christian School, which is located along south Combie Road.

Bear River High School is part of Nevada Joint Union High School District and can accommodate 1,200 to 1,500 students. Due to a number of reasons, including families moving elsewhere because of high cost of living and older families staying in the area who no longer have school-aged children, the high school's enrollment is currently less than capacity, at about 600 students.

Bear River Library is located on the Bear River High School campus and is a joint-use library with facilities shared between the Nevada County Community Library system and the high school. This library is planned to be relocated to the Lake Center in 2023 (see *Chapter 2, Land Use and Community Character* for more information).

As mentioned in *Chapter 5, Recreation and Trails*, the Bear River Recreation and Park District (BRRPD) provides recreation programs, facilities, and park areas to Nevada County. The Gary D. Clarke Turf Field is a BRRPD facility located within the Plan Area at the Magnolia Sports Complex, which is part of the Magnolia Intermediate School along Magnolia Road. This multi-use athletic field is available by rental and can be used for soccer, lacrosse, softball, and more.

Bear River High School has many facilities that also serve community members, including the library, pool, track, fields, and the Bear River Community Theater. The Bear River Community Theater is a 410-seat



Bear River High School facilities.



View of Gary D. Clarke Turf Field from Magnolia Road.

performance venue designated for theatre arts education and housing the work of students, community members, and organizations. The theater can be rented by the community and is capable of housing many types of events such as meetings, seminars, live theatre, band performances, movies, livestream, live broadcast, and more. The community uses the theater to watch school performances as well as hold other community productions.

The Plan Area also has a community center run by the Higgins Lions Community Association called the Higgins Lions Community Center, located at the intersection of East Hacienda Drive and Magnolia Road. This non-profit community center is available for use by the general public for events such as meetings, weddings, parties, and family gatherings. The South County Area Municipal Advisory Council (SCMAC) is currently using the Higgins Lions Community Center as a venue for their in-person meetings. There is a desire from the community to have an additional community center and/or senior center within the Plan Area. This community center/senior center could potentially be part of new mixed use development in the Lake Center Design District.

Goals and Policies

Goal TR-1: Balanced Circulation Network

A balanced circulation network that accommodates all transportation modes, including vehicles, transit, bicycles, pedestrians, and Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs).

Policy TR-1.1: Local Street Connections

Seek opportunities to connect local streets together to provide a parallel circulation route to the arterials of Wolf Road, Combie Road and Magnolia Road, and East Hacienda Drive to West Hacienda Drive. Future development of parcels along this alignment, including the parcels designated High Density Residential and Medium Density Residential, should be required to provide a right-of-way easement of adequate width during entitlement approval.

Policy TR-1.2: Roundabouts

Explore the potential for roundabouts in the Plan Area to lessen congestion at intersections, including at the intersections of Combie Road/West Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road and Magnolia Road/Lakeshore Drive.

Policy TR-1.3: Park-and-Ride Areas

Along with Park-and Ride Areas near bus stops for drivers to access transit, provide NEV park-and-ride areas with electric charging stations to allow for first-mile and last-mile trips via NEVs. Seek local and regional transportation funding to design and implement these facilities.

Policy TR-1.4: Future Expansion of Transit Services and Routes

As Greater Higgins increases in residential and non-residential density, expand public transit services to link existing and new residential areas to local and regional destinations so that transit is a viable transportation alternative to single-occupancy vehicles. All new development shall analyze and ensure transit access, as required by County code. Explore rerouting Nevada County Connects Route 5 and relocating or adding bus stops near residential or retail uses as new development occurs.

Policy TR-1.5: Paratransit Service

Explore expanding complimentary Nevada County Connects Now paratransit service into the Plan Area as new development occurs.

Policy TR-1.6: Multi-use Path Access to Transit

Ensure that the Nevada County Connects transit system links conveniently to the proposed multi-use path network to allow for “first-mile” and “last-mile” trips (the first leg or last leg of trips before or after riding

transit) to bus stops via non-automobile modes of travel like walking, biking, and NEVs.

Policy TR-1.7: Lake Center Bus Stop

When the Lake Center is redeveloped, ensure that the existing bus stop is relocated to a prominent location convenient to the proposed multi-use path at the south side of south Combie Road as part of the redevelopment.

Policy TR-1.8: Connections to New Development

Ensure that all new commercial and multi-family development projects provide safe and convenient access from the site to nearby streets for pedestrians and bicycle users. For projects adjacent to the proposed multi-use path, ensure the connection from the project to the path is direct and accessible.

Policy TR-1.9: Bicycle Parking

Provide secure, high-quality bicycle parking, including racks and lockers, at key locations, such as transit stops, commercial businesses, offices, parks, and schools. Promote and incentivize the provision of secure bicycle parking for new multifamily residential and mixed-use residential development projects.

Goal TR-2: Connected Circulation Network

A network of routes and measures that allow for ease of circulation and safe evacuation for residents and employees in case of natural disaster or other emergency.

Policy TR-2.1: Roadway Improvements

Prioritize near-term roadway improvements in the County's Capital Improvement Program on planned and potential evacuation routes to improve their emergency function (e.g., widening, adding passing zones on narrow routes, and adding pull-outs). Improvements should be considered for the eastern segment of Magnolia Road and opening emergency access over the private bridge at Wild Iris Lane.

Policy TR-2.2: Roadway Connections

Add new roadway connections, where feasible, beneficial, and/or needed to accommodate increased population from new development and to convert dead-end roads to continuous routes, providing improved access for both every day and emergency functions. New connections should be explored for Egbert Hill Road, East to West Hacienda Drive, and Sharonjack Road. All potential new connections should be reviewed and coordinated with neighboring property owners as described in Policy TR.2-3.

Policy TR.2-3: Property Owner Coordination

Work with property owners to investigate establishing certain private roads as publicly accessible evacuation routes to provide connections to primary evacuation routes, including the routes listed in Policy TR.2-2.

Policy TR-2.4: Evacuation Map

Develop a comprehensive, well-signed evacuation network with an updated evacuation map that shows evacuation routes on public roadways as well as accessible private roadways.

Policy TR-2.5: Evacuation Signage

Provide dynamic evacuation signage, consisting of electronic variable message signs, that can be programmed to help direct residents and visitors to safe evacuation routes, refuge areas or assembly points during emergencies.

Policy TR.2-6: Plan Area Secondary Access

All new residential development should provide at least two means of access for ingress and egress.

Policy TR.2-7: Lake of the Pines Secondary Access

Coordinate with the Lake of the Pines Association Board of Directors to consider a secondary access point into Lake of the Pines to help ease traffic congestion along Combie Road and Magnolia Road in the Greater Higgins Plan Area.

Goal PS-1: Public Services

Public Services that efficiently serve the entire community in the Plan Area.

Policy PS-1.1: Shared Use of School Facilities

Encourage partnerships between the County and the schools within the Greater Higgins Plan Area to streamline the shared use of school facilities including the pool, track, fields, and theater for general members of the public to use and enjoy during off-school hours.

Policy PS-1.2: Bear River Library

Ensure that the Bear River Library remains at the Lake Center if and when it is redeveloped, or is moved to a convenient location within the Plan Area for community members to access.

Goal INF-1: Utility Infrastructure

Utility infrastructure that is well maintained and provides services to accommodate growth envisioned in the Plan Area.

Policy INF-1.1: LOP Wastewater Treatment Plant Expansion

Require new development to provide necessary expansions to the LOP wastewater treatment plant in addition to seeking grants or other funding to expand the plant to accommodate new development.

Policy INF-1.2: Underground Utilities

Work with PG&E to underground or otherwise harden aerial electricity lines within the Greater Higgins Plan Area.

Policy INF-1.3: Broadband Internet

Implement recommendations from the countywide Broadband Strategy for the Combie/Wolf Road priority area, including construction of a new wireless tower, extension of Optimum wired infrastructure, and requiring new development to provide fiber connectivity.

Policy INF-1.4: Infrastructure Improvements

Coordinate with utility providers to prioritize infrastructure improvements to support opportunity sites in the Plan Area. Improvements should be considered to extend services along Higgins Road and Combie Road to high density opportunity sites.

Implementation Actions

Action TR-1: Evacuation Taskforce

Work with Higgins Fire Protection District, OEM, CAL FIRE, and community residents to form an Evacuation Taskforce to study the constraints and benefits of the Plan's potential additional evacuation routes (i.e., feasibility and impacts to property owners), prioritize one or two proposed routes to be improved in the near term, and develop an Evacuation Plan and Map that shows evacuation routes on public roadways and accessible private roadways. The study of evacuation routes should include community outreach, especially to impacted property owners.

Action TR-2: Road Maintenance

Conduct outreach to property owners to establish an assessment district(s) or other maintenance mechanism such as a Road Maintenance Agreement to fund long-term maintenance of new or improved roadways within the Plan Area.

Action TR-3: Traffic Impact Mitigation Fee

Work with the Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC) to potentially create a new traffic impact mitigation fee for new development to fund sufficient transit service to future development for existing and future residents within the Plan Area and Areas of Influence.

Action PS-1: Shared Use of School Facilities

Explore whether the reservation system of school facilities including the pool, track, fields, and theater facilities could be streamlined or relaxed to increase ease of access by residents.

Action INF-1: Infrastructure Improvements

Work with the Public Works Department, Nevada Irrigation District, PG&E, and other utility providers to extend infrastructure improvements or increase infrastructure capacity to facilitate development of high density opportunity sites.

This page intentionally left blank.



Chapter 5

Recreation and Trails

Introduction

This chapter describes the existing recreation activities available in the Greater Higgins Plan Area (Plan Area) and includes recommendations to expand and enhance recreational facilities, including parks and trails and paths for pedestrians, bicycles, and golf carts.

Existing Recreation Activities

Trails and Paths

Figure 5.1 shows the bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the Plan Area. The 2019 Nevada County Active Transportation Plan (ATP) identifies the following existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the Plan Area:

- A **Class I Bike (Multi-use) Path** along Magnolia Road starting at the Combie Road intersection to Kingston Lane. Additionally, there is a 400-foot segment off-street pathway that could be used as a multi-use path at the Cascade Crossing Road intersection which was built as part of the Cascade Crossing residential development.
- **Class II Bike Lanes** along Combie Road from Highway 49 to Magnolia Road. It should be noted that these bike lanes are narrow and have limited pavement markings and signage.
- **Class III Multi-Use Shoulder bikeways** along Wolf Road and west of Highway 49. However, these facilities do not include pavement markings or signage.
- There are only two existing **public sidewalk** segments in the Plan

Area, both located in the western region, between Combie Road and Highway 49. The Higgins Road segment starts at the intersection of Combie Road and Higgins Road, ending at Woodridge Drive. The Combie Road segment starts the Magnolia Road and Combie Road intersection and continues south along Combie Road for about a half mile.



Existing bike lane on Combie Road near Higgins Road.

Parks and Recreation Facilities

The Plan Area lies entirely within the boundaries of the Bear River Recreation and Park District (BRRPD), which provides recreation programs, facilities, and park areas for the residents of Nevada County. This District encompasses 120 square miles and residents from Lake of the Pines and Alta Sierra west to the Yuba County line.

The Magnolia Sports Complex and one baseball field are maintained by BRRPD. The Gary D. Clarke Turf Field is a BRRPD facility located within the Plan Area at the Magnolia Sports Complex, which is part of the Magnolia Intermediate School along Magnolia Road. These facilities are situated on a 6-acre parcel owned by Pleasant Ridge Elementary School District. This multi-use athletic field is available by rental and can be used for soccer, lacrosse, softball, and more.

More recently, BRRPD donated 1.23 acres of open space land (Higgins Pond Preserve) at the corner of Combie Road and Armstrong Road to the Bear Yuba Land Trust (BYLT). The land was previously donated by the developer of the Cascade Crossing residential subdivision to BRRPD as part of the subdivision mitigation. The preserve includes the Ragsdale Creek riparian corridor, a pond, and an open space buffer. It is considered sensitive habitat and is used by native foothill yellow-legged frogs, warm water fish, mallards, Canada geese, black phoebe and belted kingfisher, a beaver, and Western pond turtles. There is also a small neighborhood park north of Higgins Pond Preserve called Dr. Ralph Schaffarzick Park, which is owned and maintained by BRRPD. Both park and open space are accessible to the public.

Bear River High School's campus also has various facilities that are available for rental by members of the public, including:



Higgins Pond Preserve and path developed in front of Cascade Crossing.

- Playing fields for football, soccer, baseball, softball, etc.
- All-weather running track
- Outdoor basketball courts
- Tennis courts
- Outdoor heated swimming pool
- Natural field with stadium

The BRRPD is the only Recreation and Park District that does not charge/receive parcel charge fees so there is no ongoing revenue available to construct, operate, or maintain parks. Given this constraint, the creation of additional park space needs to be implemented using other sources of funding, such as grants or private funding. Another option would be to implement a parcel charge to create a source of funding.

The County of Nevada (County) is starting the process for its first Recreation and Resiliency Master Plan, which will address challenges and opportunities for Nevada County’s open space, trails, and other recreational interfaces. Additionally, the plan will offer strategies for implementing project recommendations, and describe a long-term vision for facilitating the management of open space and recreation resources.

There are also parks, open space, or areas of recreation located in Lake of the Pines, but these areas are available only to Lake of the Pines residents and their guests. Darkhorse also has its own public golf course which runs between and up against residential properties.

Open Space

There are several areas of open space outside of the Plan Area, including the U.S. Bureau of Land Management open space and Bear River Watershed about one and 1.5 miles west, respectively, and Lake Combie and the Combie Reservoir about 2.5 miles to the east. Bear River flows along the County boundary line on the southern end of the South Area of Influence and flows into Lake Combie. However, all approaches to Lake Combie are private through neighborhood associations.

Trail Recommendations

Expanded Multi-use Path Network

Previous plans, including the 2000 Higgins Area Plan and 2019 Nevada County Active Transportation Plan, propose continuation of the existing multi-use path along Magnolia Road west to Highway 49. This multi-use path would allow for shared use between pedestrians and bicyclists, and was originally intended for non-motorized access between Higgins



Example of a multi-use path with a landscaped curb shared by pedestrians, bicyclists, and NEVs.

Corner and Bear River High School. This multi-use path network is in keeping with the General Plan’s “Village Center” concept by connecting commercial and multi-family developments, encouraging non-vehicular traffic between sites, enhancing the visual quality of the corridor, inviting users to stop at local businesses, and providing a safe way for children and others to travel through the Plan Area.

Through the Greater Higgins Area Plan (Plan)’s community outreach progress, many community members, especially those who live in the Lake of the Pines and Darkhorse communities, expressed a desire to use their golf carts on the multi-use path to have an off-street means of travel throughout the Plan Area. Other similar communities have accommodated golf carts, and other Low-Speed Vehicles (LSVs) or Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs), into their transportation networks due

to their increasing popularity as a means of transportation, especially for seniors¹. LSVs and NEVs are small one- to two-passenger vehicles designed for low-speed, local trips that are typically used in planned communities, resorts, college campuses, and rural areas. These vehicles should not travel more than 20 miles per hour. For the purposes of this Plan, golf carts will be referenced under the general term “NEV.”

The 2000 Higgins Area Plan proposed a 10'-wide path along the north side of Combie Road and Magnolia Road, but this Plan proposes to expand the path's width to accommodate the shared use of NEVs, if feasible, and to expand the extent of the path network. This Plan recommends expanding and enhancing the multi-use path network to allow

¹ AARP Public Policy Institute. 2011. Policy and Design Considerations for Accommodating Low-Speed Vehicles and Golf Carts in Community Transportation Networks. <https://assets.aarp.org/rgcenter/ppi/liv-com/insight54.pdf>.



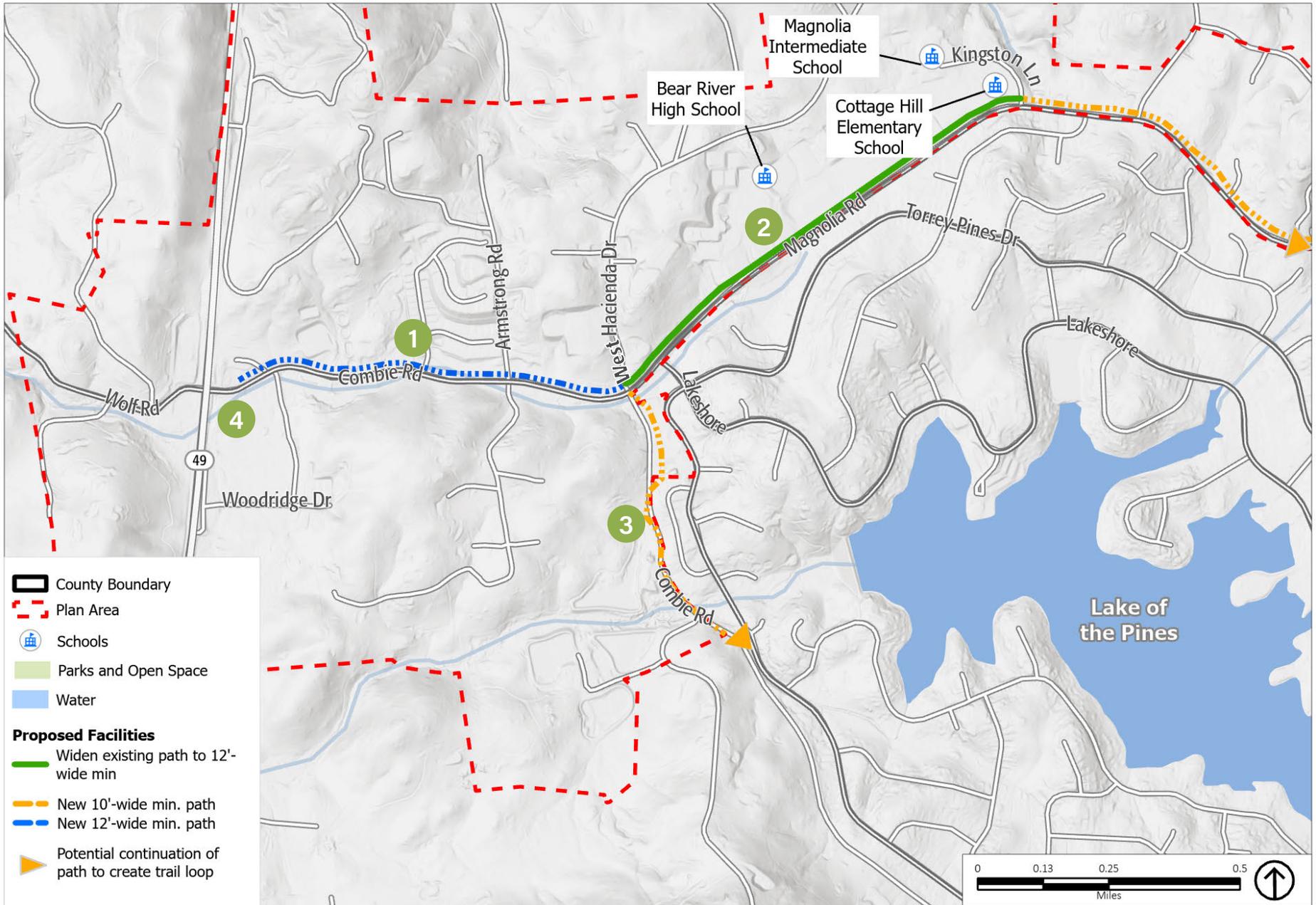
View along south Combie Road to the County Sanitation District land.

for safe, shared use between pedestrians, bicycles, and NEVs (see Figure 5.2). Since multiple modes of transportation will be sharing the multi-use path, the path should be an adequate width of a minimum of 12 feet wide, and recommended width of 14 feet wide. Given the existing right-of-way width and conditions along the north side of Combie Road, this Plan recommends the following multi-use path network expansion:

- 1 Create a new multi-use path along the north side of Combie Road that is a minimum of 12-feet wide and recommended 14-feet wide to accommodate the shared use of golf carts (see Figures 5.3 and 5.4).
- 2 Widen the existing approximately 10'-wide multi-use path along Magnolia Road, as well as the existing segment near Cascade Crossing along Combie Road, to a minimum of 12-feet wide and recommended 14-feet wide to accommodate the shared use of NEVs (see Figures 5.5 and 5.6).
- 3 Create a new 10'-wide multi-use path along south Combie Road that provides access to the Lake Center and to a potential park on the County's Sanitary District land (see Figures 5.7 to 5.8).
- 4 At eastern end of Combie Road, design the multi-use path to cross over Combie Road at the existing crosswalk and connect to the new Commercial Lane.

Additionally, the multi-use path should include a meandering 5'-wide landscaped buffer adjacent to the multi-use path, where possible, that may be comprised of the drought-tolerant, deer-resistant, and low-maintenance plant species listed in Table A1 in Appendix A: Design Guidelines. This landscaped area will help create a visual and physical separation between adjacent traffic and the multi-use path user. To allow golf carts or NEVs to use the multi-use path network, a Golf Cart

Figure 5.2: Proposed Multi-use Path Network



Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

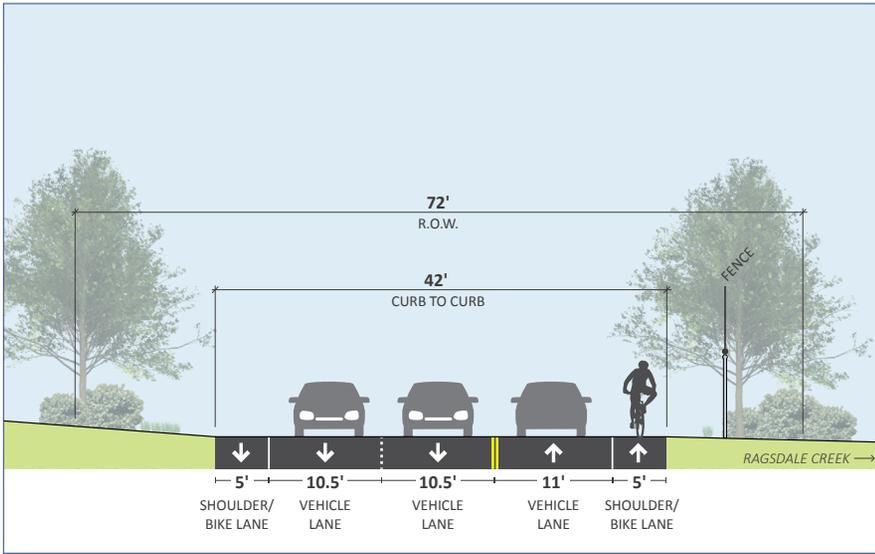


Figure 5.3: Existing Street Section of Combie Road (looking east)

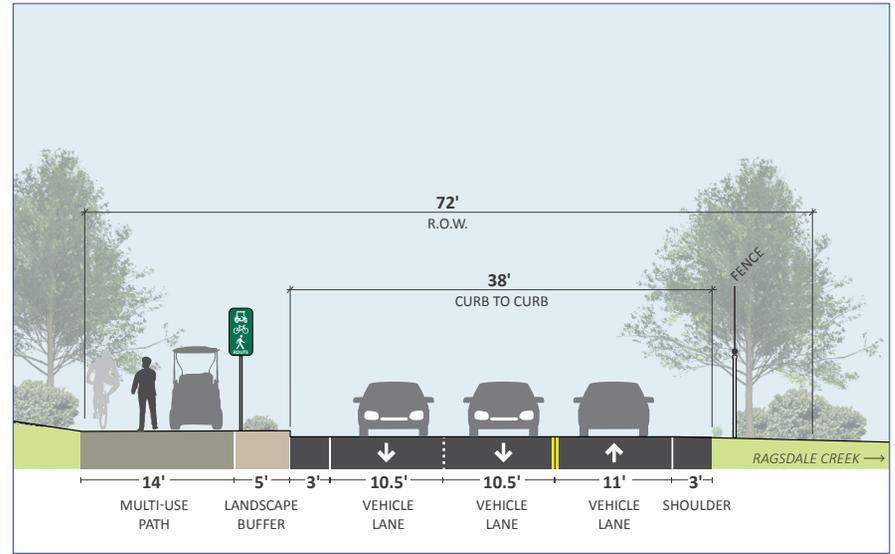


Figure 5.4: Proposed Street Section of Combie Road with New Multi-use Path (looking east)

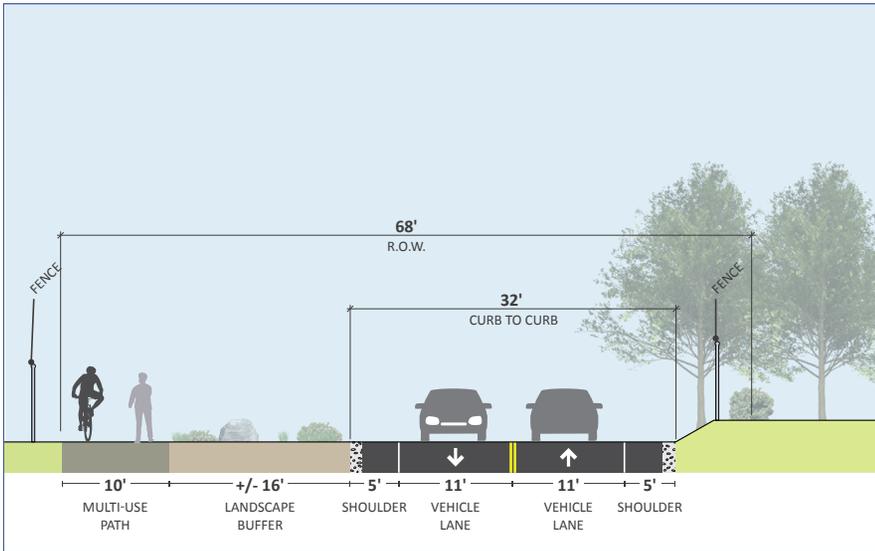


Figure 5.5: Existing Street Section of Magnolia Road (looking east)

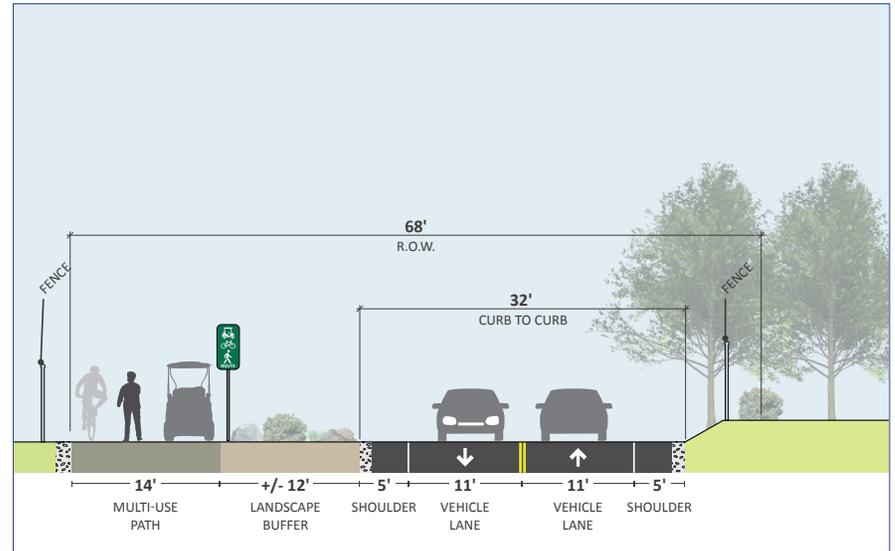


Figure 5.6: Proposed Street Section of Magnolia Road with Widened Multi-use Path (looking east)

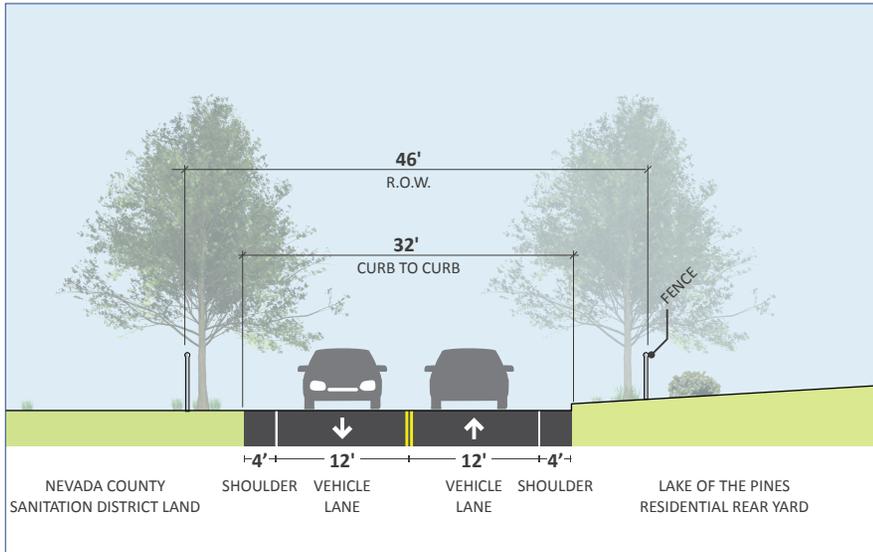


Figure 5.7: Existing Street Section of South Combie Road at Sanitation District Land (looking north)

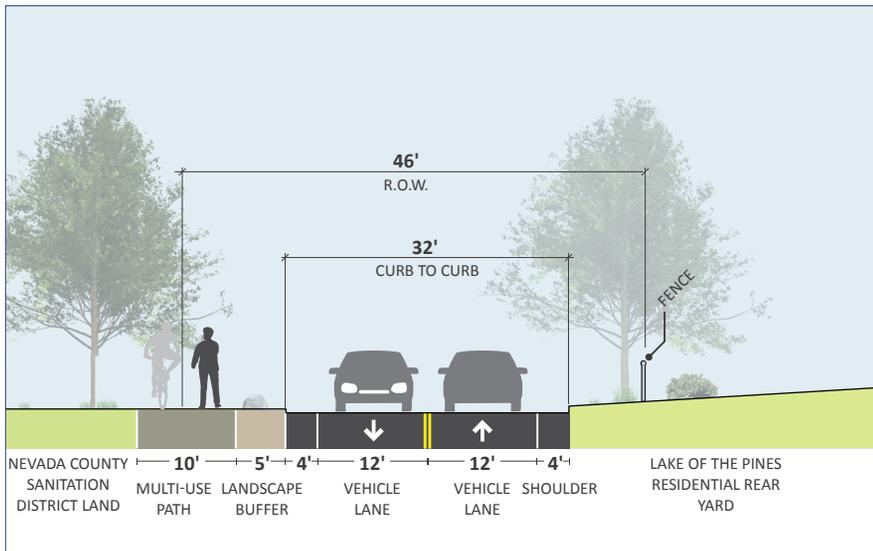


Figure 5.8: Proposed Street Section of South Combie Road at Sanitation District Land with New Multi-use Path (looking north)

or NEV Transportation Plan would be required, per Street and Highways Code Section 1950. If right-of-way on the north side of Combie Road can be expanded, it would be optimal to create a separated off-street pathway for NEVs to reduce potential conflict with pedestrian/bicycle travel.



Example of off-street paths that provide separation for NEV and pedestrian/bicycle travel.

Enhanced Crossings

To access the multi-use path network, pedestrians, bicyclists, and NEVs from surrounding residential areas, especially those who live south of Combie Road and Magnolia Road, need to have safe connections across main roadways, such as Combie Road and Magnolia Road. The Plan Area has several existing crosswalks. However, these crossings have standard crosswalk markings and should be enhanced to increase visibility to motorists. This Plan recommends enhancing existing crosswalks to be high visibility crosswalks with curb cuts wide enough for NEVs, which use patterns (i.e., continental, ladder) that are more visible to drivers and pedestrians from farther away compared to traditional transverse line crosswalks.



Example of high-visibility crosswalk with ladder markings.



Existing walking trail east of Highway 49.

- West Hacienda Drive at Combie Road
- Magnolia Road at Combie Road
- Magnolia Road at Lakeshore

In addition, this Plan recommends adding a new high visibility crosswalk at south Combie Road at Magnolia Road where the multi-use path on south Combie Road crosses from the east to west side to a potential new park (more information in the Parks Recommendations section within this chapter) and across Higgins Road from the Higgins Village/ Higgins Marketplace shopping center.

Connect Walking Trail Segments in Wetlands

As shown and described in *Chapter 2, Land Use and Community Character*, there are existing walking pathways to the east of Highway 49 within the wetlands adjacent to the Higgins Village and Higgins Marketplace shopping centers. With the potential redevelopment of Opportunity Site #2, there is opportunity to create a new segment of walking trail to connect the existing segments (see Figure 5.9). This would create a continuous walkway path through existing open space along the western and northern perimeters of the shopping centers and connect to a potential sidewalk network along Woodridge Drive.

Walkway Along South Side of Combie Road

During the Plan’s planning and engagement process, there was discussion about whether the expanded multi-use path network could be located on the south side of Combie Road. Ultimately, most community members preferred a wider 14-foot multi-use path to be on the north

side of Combie Road. Locating a 14-foot multi-use path on the south side of Combie Road has several constraints due to the south side of Combie Road's proximity to Ragsdale Creek, which runs parallel.

Alternatively, and consistent with the 2000 Higgins Area Plan, this Plan recommends a new 5-foot-wide pedestrian walkway on the south side of Combie Road from Highway 49 to south Combie Road. The pedestrian walkway would be constructed of a permeable surface, such as decomposed granite; it may be straight in some areas and be designed to meander in other areas.

This Plan proposes that construction of a new pedestrian walkway should be prioritized to connect the existing mobile home park and Higgins Road to provide safer access along Combie Road for the mobile home residents (see Figure 5.9). As development occurs, each project shall contribute its pro rata share of the pathway. The pathway will also provide access to the streamside environment for abutting properties along the creek, creating an appealing means to travel through the Plan Area.

Class III Bike Routes with Multi-use Shoulders

Class III bike routes with multi-use shoulders are streets with signage and optional "sharrow" pavement markings where bicyclists share a lane with motor vehicles and additionally provides a striped shoulder of variable width. This facility is typically used when there is insufficient right-of-way to meet minimum requirements for Class II bike lanes and are common in hilly areas and rural settings.

The 2019 ATP proposes Class III bicycle facilities running north-south on Highway 49 from the "tail" of the Plan Area into the northern region of

Nevada County. Caltrans is currently in the project approval phase of a safety project south of Higgins Corner in Placer County, which includes improving the Highway 49 shoulder to become a Class III bicycle facility to provide better bicycle access. Due to the limited right-of-way along Highway 49, a Class III facility in the shoulder is the most appropriate.

The 2019 ATP also proposes Class III bicycle facilities along Magnolia Road from Kingston Lane (Cottage Hill School) to the end of the Plan Area and beyond into the eastern region of Nevada County. As previously mentioned, this Plan recommends continuing the multi-use path along this stretch of Magnolia Road, potentially creating a loop around the Darkhorse community. The multi-use path should take precedence over the proposed Class III bicycle facility but should also not deter the implementation of a Class III bicycle facility in the meantime.

Parks Recommendations

Additional park space, especially with recreational facilities like a sports complex, is needed for the Plan Area. Currently, residents and youth sports teams/leagues residing in the Plan Area and Areas of Influence share use of the Magnolia Sports Complex. Parks and open space help keep residents and families engaged in the community. The community has expressed interest in additional publicly accessible park and gathering spaces, and especially desire a larger park space to accommodate community events like farmers markets and festivals. This Plan proposes several potential locations for new park facilities.

Pocket Parks

Pocket Parks are parks that are smaller in size (typically no more than quarter of an acre) and can accommodate areas for seating, landscaping, and a tot lot. Figure 5.9 shows some potential locations for a new pocket park in the Higgins Corner Design District as part of new mixed use development.



Pocket park nestled in a commercial area.

Large Park

A large park could range from a half-acre to several acres in size. This Plan includes two potential locations for a large park (see Figure 5.10):

- Opportunity Site #11, next to Bear River High School, which is already has an informal walking trail that residents use to access the high school from Lake of the Pines. Note that this parcel currently has split zoning for Open Space on the east half and Office & Professional on the west side and would need to be rezoned to develop a public park. Additionally, this site is along a hill and the slope would likely create challenges to develop facilities on the site.
- Opportunity Site #13 which is owned by the County Sanitary District. Due to the larger size of this parcel, it is more likely to develop facilities such as sports fields on this site.



Example of larger park with walking path and grassy areas for passive recreational activities.



Existing open space on Magnolia Road (Opportunity Site #11) with informal walking path.

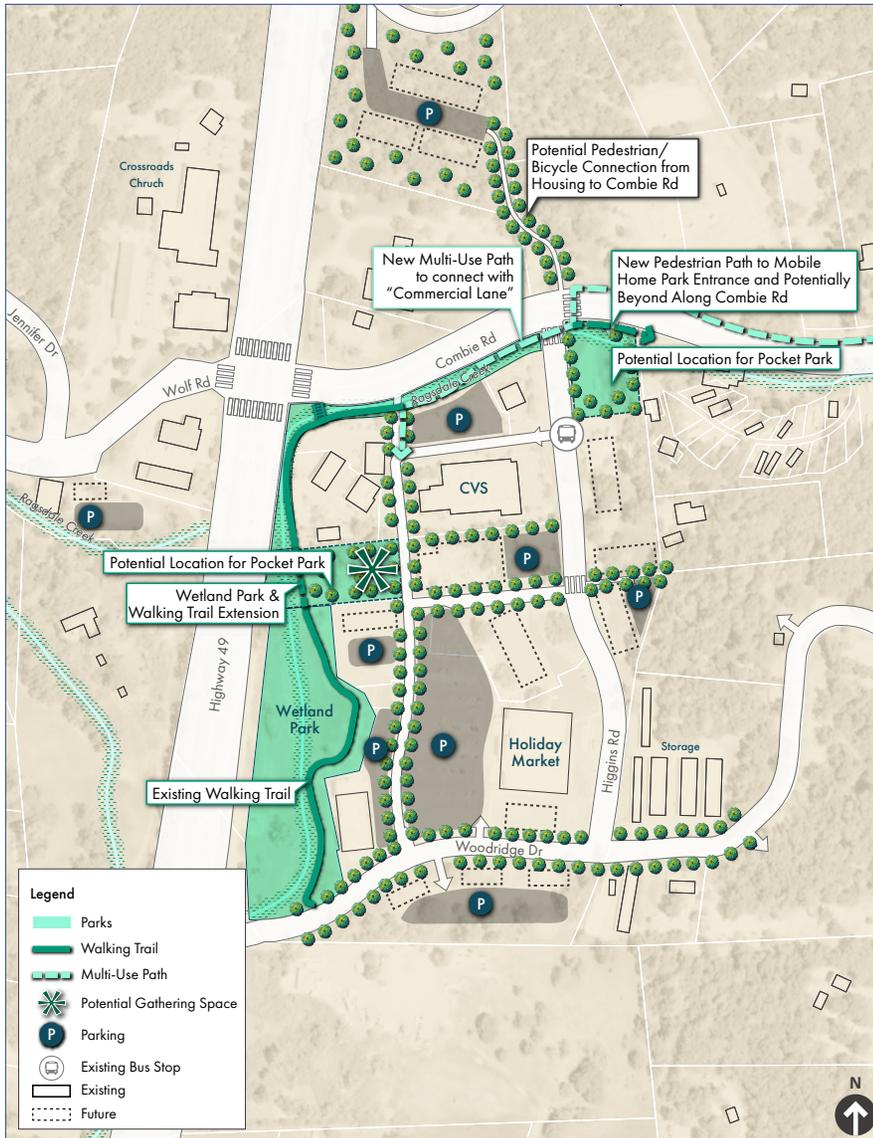


Figure 5.9: Conceptual Diagram of Multi-use Paths and Potential Parks in the Higgins Corner Design District

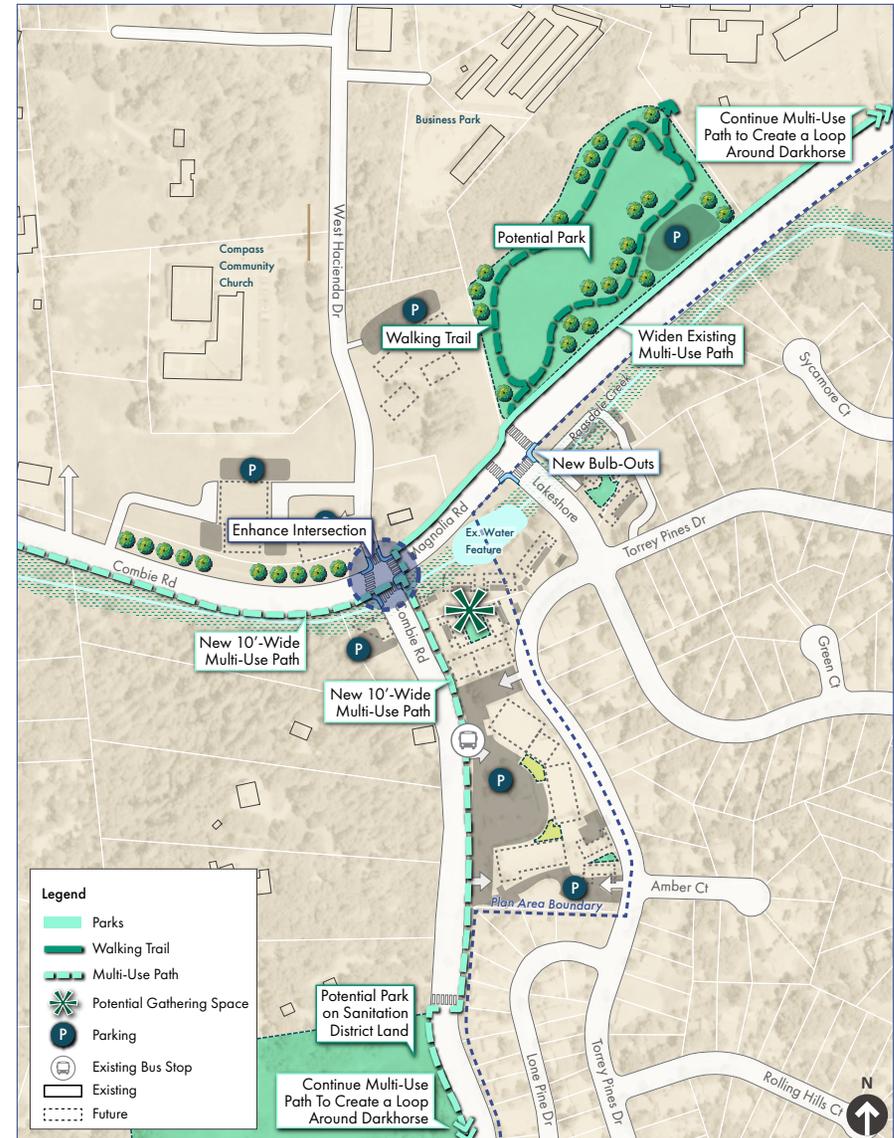


Figure 5.10: Conceptual Diagram of Multi-use Paths and Potential Parks in the Lake Center Design District

Goals and Policies

Goal REC-1: Expanded Multi-use Path Network

A well-connected, multi-use path network that connects Higgins Corner to Bear River High School by extending the existing multi-use trail, and, in future phases, extends the multi-use trail further to the south on south Combie Road and to the east on Magnolia Road, to link with a future regional trail network. The multi-use path shall accommodate alternatives modes of travel, including walking, biking, and/or driving NEVs, and provides linkages between residential areas and local key destinations such as schools, parks, shopping, and transit. Modifications to any roadway shall comply with County of Nevada Department of Transportation Standard Drawings and Caltrans Standards, where applicable.

Policy REC-1.1: Multi-use Path Along Combie Road and Magnolia Road

New development proposals on the north side of Combie Road and Magnolia Road shall include multi-use paths, which prioritize use by pedestrians and bicyclists, along property frontages that allow for shared public use pursuant to the Greater Higgins Area Plan Design Guidelines. Existing multi-use paths along these segments may need to be widened to allow for shared use between pedestrians, bicyclists, and potentially NEVs. The trail will be constructed through a combination of public funds and as part of private development.

Policy REC-1.2: Shared Use with NEVs

Study how to allow the safe and responsible use of NEVs on the multi-use path network, including needed right-of-way width along Combie

Road and Magnolia Road, through the creation of a Golf Cart or NEV Transportation Plan, per Street and Highways Code Section 1950. It is optimal that the off-street pathways for NEVs and pedestrians and bicyclists are separated to reduce potential conflicts.

Policy REC-1.3: Multi-use Path Along South Combie Road

Create new multi-use paths along south Combie Road to provide connections to the Lake Center and a potential park on the Sanitation District land.

Policy REC-1.4: Crossing Improvements

Improve crossings for NEVs to access the multi-use path. Crossings should be signalized, have high visibility markings, and curb cuts that are wide enough to accommodate the size of a NEV.

Policy REC-1.5: Wheelchair Accessibility

Provide wheelchair accessibility to street crosswalks from pathways that end at or near an intersection on any site.

Policy REC-1.6: Connections to Multi-use Path

Connect existing low-density residential areas to the multi-use path network via the existing residential street network.

Policy REC-1.7: Multi-use Path Loop

If supported by the community, explore expanding the multi-use path along Magnolia Road and south Combie Road to create a loop around the Darkhorse community, which is consistent with the County's locations for planned trails along these segments of Magnolia Road and south Combie Road.

Policy REC-1.8: Pathways Paralleling Ragsdale Creek

Separate pathways paralleling Ragsdale Creek from the stream channel by a minimum 5-foot-wide buffer. Landscaping shall consist of native plants, dependent upon market availability.

Policy REC-1.9: Path Maintenance

The funding and responsibility of maintenance of the multi-use path and adjacent landscape buffers shall be established via long-term funding mechanisms/agreements prior to installation.

Goal REC-2: Multi-use Path Design and Management Measures

Shared-use path design, management measures², and education to residents and visitors on how to safely share the multi-use path among different modes of transportation.

Policy REC-2.1: Surface Treatments

Design the multi-use path to potentially include different surface treatments to help delineate different areas of the path for different users. For example, pedestrian and bicyclist circulation designated on one side and NEV-designated on the opposite side.

Policy REC-2.2: Signage

Install educational/etiquette signage along the multi-use path network that informs trail users about the different user types for the path, speed limit (no more than 20 mph), where users should be walking/riding/driving, and/or how to perform passing and other maneuvers safely.

² Alta Planning & Design. 2020. New Mobility Trends in Shared-Use Path Design and Management. https://altago.com/wp-content/uploads/Next-Generation-Trails-White-Paper_2020_-Alta.pdf.

Policy REC-2.3: User Guide

Create and promote a multi-use path user guide that includes safety regulations related to use by NEVs, such as NEVs yielding to other modes of transport, pedestrians should be given right-of-way, and prohibition of NEVs on sidewalks.

Goal REC-3: Bicycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

The use of alternative modes of travel on local and regional connections so that people may walk or bicycle as a viable mode of transportation.

Policy REC-3.1: Implementation of Nevada County ATP

Implement the bicycle and pedestrian improvements recommended in the Nevada County Active Transportation Plan (ATP), including a Class III bicycle route along Highway 49 and new sidewalks.

Policy REC-3.2: Walking Paths

Create continuous walking paths, such as along the south side of Combie Road and along Highway 49 in the wetland area next to Higgins Marketplace.

Goal REC-4: New Parks

More park space within the Plan Area to allow for gathering areas and recreational activities.

Policy REC-4.1: Privately Developed Public Parks

Develop new park space as part of new private development, including potentially splitting zoning on a parcel proposed for new private development to include an Open Space zoning district.

Policy REC-4.2: Potential Park on Nevada County Sanitary District Land

Explore the possibility of developing new park space with sports fields on the Nevada County Sanitary District land along south Combie Road.

Policy REC-4.3: Potential Park Adjacent to Bear River High School

Explore the feasibility of formalizing the open space on the parcel to the west of Bear River High School into a new park space with passive use.

Policy REC-4.4: Joint-use Park Space

Promote joint-use park space, such as sports fields, which can augment and provide a wider range of recreation activities and park amenities to the public.

Policy REC-4.5: School Enrollment

Attract young families to the Plan Area through the provision of affordable housing options to help sustain and increase local school enrollment and support the creation of new recreational facilities.

Policy REC-4.6: Funding

Support the creation of a new park facility with grants and/or property assessments via an assessment district, Landscaping and Lighting Maintenance District (LLMDs), or special tax. Creation of a special tax would require a significant outreach and educational awareness effort to inform residents of the current financial structure of BRRPD and its constraints in providing new facilities to the Plan Area.

Implementation Actions

Action REC-1: NEV Transportation Plan

Create a NEV Transportation Plan for the recommended multi-use path network to allow for safe and responsible use of NEVs on the paths, including needed right-of-way for a separate pathway for NEVs, and to identify existing crossings that need improvement or new crossings to allow for safe access to the multi-use path by NEV.

Action REC-2: Residential Streets Improvements

Identify existing residential streets that provide access to the multi-use path network and prioritize roadway improvements, such as paving and signage, to be included in the County Capital Improvement Program.

Action REC-3: Public Funding for Multi-use Path

Seek grant funding that allows for a motorized component to implement the multi-use path network, such as the Recreational Trails Program (RTP) administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

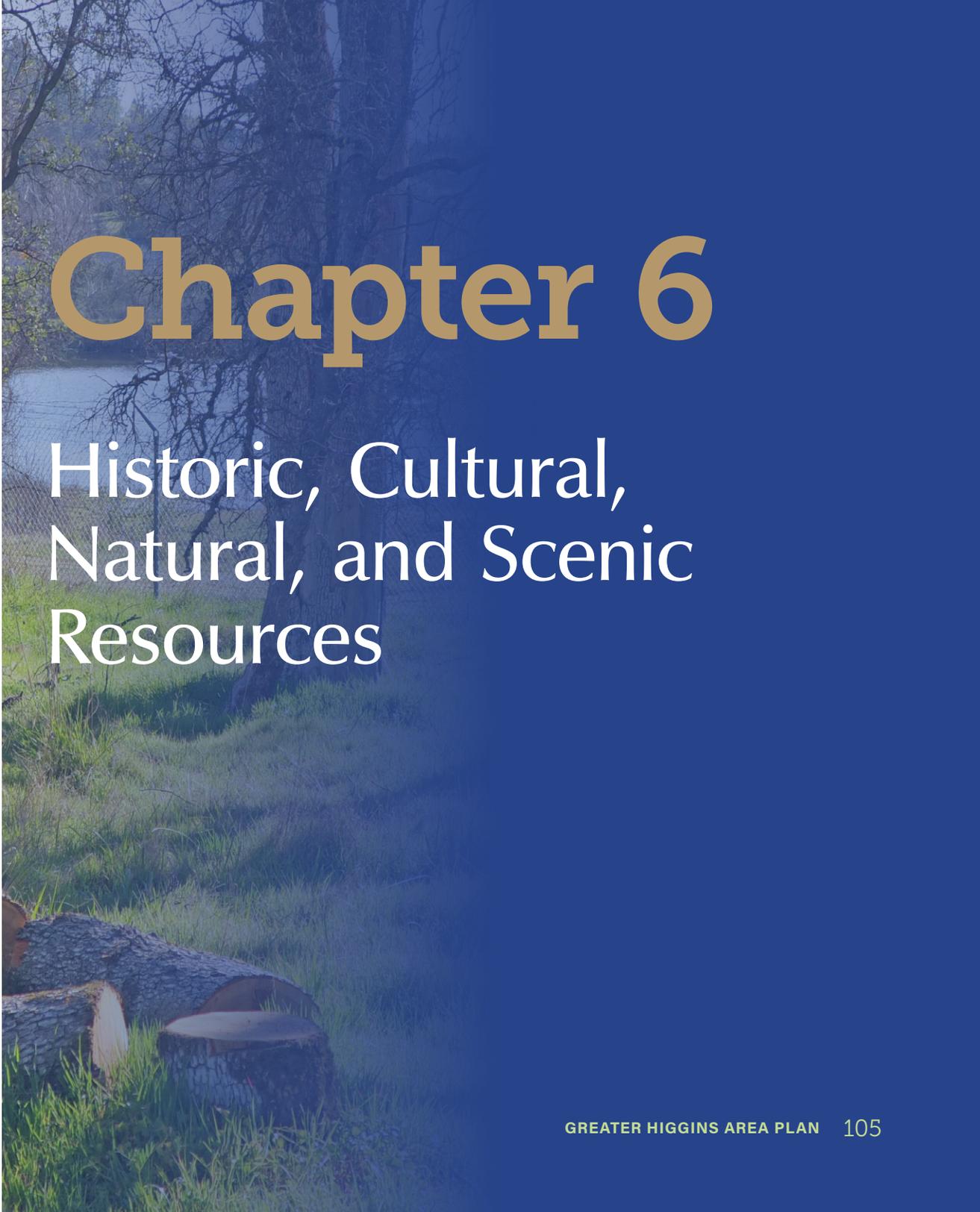
Action REC-4: Recreation and Resiliency Master Plan Coordination

Coordinate with the planning process for the Recreation and Resiliency Master Plan to ensure the Greater Higgins Area Plan's parks and multi-use path improvements are incorporated into the Master Plan and have a designated funding mechanism for construction, operations, and maintenance.



Chapter 6

Historic, Cultural, Natural, and Scenic Resources



Introduction

This chapter describes the rich historical background of the Greater Higgins area and its natural landscape and rural development. It was clear through the community engagement process that residents of the Plan Area and surrounding Areas of Influence choose to reside in the Greater Higgins area for its rural and natural environment.

This Plan seeks to preserve the area's historic, cultural, natural, and scenic resources, and reinforce policies contained in the Nevada County General Plan that emphasize the protection of ridgeline views, slopes, oak woodlands, and riparian corridors. At buildout, it will be the retention and enhancement of natural resources that make the Greater Higgins area a desirable place to live. A number of existing developments have preserved important scenic resources, including the Crain Center, which preserves existing oaks, and the Combie Star Professional Building, which enhances Ragsdale Creek and preserves a highly visible landmark oak along the roadway.

Existing Historic, Cultural, Natural, and Scenic Resources

The following highlights some of the more well-known or apparent resources in the Greater Higgins area but is not meant to be an all-inclusive list of these resources.

Historic/Cultural Resources

Native Americans

The Greater Higgins area was occupied during the pre-European period by the southern Maidu, or Nisenan Tribe, who resided in permanent winter villages and occupied the drainages of the southern Feather River and Honcut Creek in the north, through Bear River and the Yuba and American River drainages in the south. In 1848, gold was discovered at Sutter's Mill in Coloma which led to tens of thousands of Euroamerican immigrant gold seekers descending into the homelands of the Nisenan Tribe, displacing the Tribe and its members.

On July 18, 1851, representatives of the United States and the Nisenan Tribe signed the Camp Union Treaty agreeing to the ceding of certain Nisenan tribal lands, in exchange for safety and reservation land located in western Nevada County. Unfortunately, because the treaty was never ratified by the United States Senate, the Nisenan was left without land and protection.

In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson issued Executive Order 1772 to establish a 75.48-acre reservation, later known as the Nevada City Rancheria, in Nevada County for the Nisenan Tribe near Nevada City, California. However, Congress later passed the 1958 California Rancheria Termination Act, providing that the lands of 41 enumerated California rancherias were to be removed from trust status, including the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe. While most of the 41 California Indian Rancherias terminated under the 1958 California Rancheria Termination Act have been restored to Federal status, the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe has been unable to restore its Federal recognition, and entitlement to Federal Indian programs.

In December 2020, the Nevada County Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution to support the federal recognition of the Nisenan, acknowledging the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe's continuous existence as an indigenous tribe in Nevada County; its historical, cultural, and continued significance and importance of the Nevada City Rancheria Nisenan Tribe; and its contributions to the land, community, culture, and history of Nevada County and California.

Placer Mining

Non-native American use of the region began in earnest with the discovery of placer deposits in Wolf Creek in 1848. The Greater Higgins area appears to have been largely bypassed by the intensive mining that occurred on the Bear River to the south and near Grass Valley to the north. Historic use of the area centered on animal husbandry, homesteading, and ranching, lasting well into the twentieth century. The Greater Higgins area community retained its rural and agricultural identity until development of Lake of the Pines (LOP) began in 1966. This large residential subdivision served as the starting point for a shift to the community's current suburban character.

Wagon Roads

Specific historic features within the vicinity included the "Auburn and Grass Valley Road" and "Ragsdale Ranch." The original wagon road from Auburn to Grass Valley was located about one-half mile west of LOP, paralleling the current alignment of Highway 49. Ragsdale Ranch was located about one mile south of LOP. The Highway 49/Combie Road intersection was developed and used intensively since the early 1860s. Two early transportation corridors, the Overland Emigrant Trail and an early wagon road between Auburn and Grass Valley, are located in the vicinity and roughly follow the present route of Highway 49 near Higgins Corner (intersection of Wolf Road/Combie Road and Highway 49).



Monument/plaque describing the history of the Overland Emigrant Trail along Highway 49.



49Er Feedstore barn structure.

Higgins Corner

The locale of Higgins Corner itself was acquired by Mr. M.J. Higgins in the 1860s. Mr. Higgins was born in Ireland in 1833. He came to California in search of gold, settling in Nevada County in 1860 to raise cattle on a 160-acre ranch near this area with his wife Mary Driscoll and his four daughters and two sons. He acquired approximately 400 acres at this location, which includes what is now the intersection of Highway 49 and Wolf Road. This area was gradually developed for commercial use and included construction of a residence and barn southwest of the intersection. Mr. Higgins passed away at age 80 in 1913. Subsequent land transactions involving the Higgins property were conducted primarily by his son, William, who had earlier expanded the commercial operations to include a blacksmith's shop and a gas station.

The original residence apparently burned (date unknown), and in 1958, Mr. Roy Peterson acquired 400 acres in the vicinity of Higgins Corner, including the remaining historic structures on the southwest side of the intersection. At that time, the structures included the blacksmith's shop, the gas station, and the barn. A number of alterations were made to these buildings and in the 1960s, Peterson razed the blacksmith shop along with the remaining historic structures. Alterations were made to the barn by Peterson and, subsequently, by new owners who in 1985 acquired the property. The barn is now the "49Er feedstore" and is not considered a significant resource due to extensive alterations.

Natural Resources

Hillsides

Topography within the Higgins Area varies from gentle-to-moderate slopes along the northern and southern boundaries to sloping and relatively flat terrain along the Combi Road corridor; prominent ridgelines generally parallel Combie Road north and south.

Tree Cover

Undisturbed areas within the Higgins Area display abundant vegetation in a mix of foothill pines, ponderosa pines and a variety of oaks. Dense oak canopies dominate the steep slopes and riparian vegetation thrives alongside drainage courses and along Ragsdale Creek where it has not been disturbed. Oak woodlands, steep slopes, important ridgelines, streams, riparian habitat, and wetlands occur on numerous sites. Native trees provide a strong, unifying element to development that has no other similar features. They impart visual relief between developments and contribute to the sense of area history. As the Greater Higgins area develops, it will be the retention and enhancement of natural resources that make its community a desirable place to live.



Hillside and tree cover in the Greater Higgins area.



Ragsdale Creek along Combie Road in front of Cascade Crossing Residential Development.

Ragsdale Creek

Ragsdale Creek originates near Huck Finn Lake in Lake of the Pines. From Lake of the Pines, the creek flows westerly, paralleling Combie Road primarily on the south side of the road. In its natural, undisturbed state near the intersection of Combie Road and Magnolia Road, Ragsdale Creek is overgrown and inaccessible. On the north side of Combie Road, the creek feeds into a pond that has been cleared of native brush and replanted with lawn and flowering perennials. East of the Highway 49/Combie Road intersection, the creek has been artificially channelized. The creek should be a unifying feature throughout the primary corridor of the Greater Higgins area, creating a potential focal point of interest for both vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Where enhanced and maintained, Ragsdale Creek could provide a pleasing and inviting roadside attraction.

Area vegetations characterized by a mix of open grassland and oak woodland, with dominant tree species being black oak, blue oak, and ponderosa pine; patches of willow scrub riparian vegetation, freshwater marsh and valley oak woodland occur along the Ragsdale Creek riparian corridor, providing cover, foraging, and breeding habitat for an array of wildlife species. The area along the riparian corridor contains suitable habitat for special-status species. However, no species of concern were identified during preparation of the Ragsdale Creek Development Setback Study, completed in conjunction with the 2000 Higgins Area Plan.

Scenic Resources

Highway 49

Highway 49 is nestled into a broad depression between low hills. The character of the highway is generally open to the surrounding lands which are handsome open spaces that show evidence of agricultural activity and change with the seasons. It is a lovely gateway into Nevada County from the south. Highway 49 is a County-designated Scenic Corridor in the Greater Higgins Plan Area.

The scenic corridor designation generally covers a distance of 200 feet from the right-of way of Highway 49 on both sides, from the southern county line up to Combie Road. It is governed by the suffix “-SC” in the zoning map, for example AG-5-SC, M1-SC, and RA-3-SC, and is therefore a “combining district.” Any changes or new development shall adhere to County standards and guidelines in Section L-II 2.7.7 Scenic Corridor (SC) Combining District of the Nevada County Code. In addition to the existing County standards and guidelines, additional standards and guidelines for Scenic and Natural Resources in Appendix A, Design Guidelines should be followed for Scenic Corridor Combining Districts within the Plan Area.

Highway 49 is also part of the State Scenic Highways Master Plan and is eligible for official designation as an “Official Scenic Highway” by the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans). To become officially designated, the County would need to apply to Caltrans for scenic highway approval and adopt a Corridor Protection Program. As part of the Corridor Protection Program, the County would be required to “protect the scenic appearance of the scenic corridor, the band of land generally adjacent to the highway right-of-way, including, but not limited to, (1) regulation of land use and intensity (density) of development;



Entry monument along Highway 49.

(2) detailed land and site planning; (3) control of outdoor advertising; (4) careful attention to and control of earthmoving and landscaping; and (5) the design and appearance of structures and equipment.”

Combie Road

Combie Road, from east of Highway 49 at Jennifer Drive to just east of Bear River High School, is also considered a scenic corridor and part of the SC Combining District. The scenic corridor designation covers properties abutting the right-of way of Combie Road on both sides, with additional parcels behind that are visible from Combie Road. See Figure 2.5, Plan Area Combining Zoning Districts Map, for a map showing the scenic corridor area along Combie Road. As previously described, any changes or new development for these parcels shall adhere to County standards and guidelines in Section L-II 2.7.7 Scenic Corridor

(SC) Combining District (SC) of the Nevada County Code. In addition to the existing County standards and guidelines, additional standards and guidelines for Scenic and Natural Resources in Appendix A, Design Guidelines should be followed for Scenic Corridor Combining Districts within the Plan Area.

Goals and Policies

Goal RP-1: Scenic Resource Preservation

Preservation of scenic resources that characterize the Highway 49 and Combie Road corridors, including oak woodlands, steep slopes, important ridgelines, streams, riparian habitat, and wetlands.

Policy RP-1.1: Highway 49/Combie Road Intersection

The Highway 49/Combie Road intersection provides an important scenic entry into the Higgins Area. When building new development, projects should strive to protect the natural environs that form the scenic backdrop by preserving native trees and existing views to ridgetops.

Policy RP-1.2: Site Design

Base site design for new development on analysis of the site's characteristics and influences, maintaining as much as possible the natural topography, drainage features, and native trees. Projects should be designed to complement rather than dominate the natural landscape.

Policy RP-1.3: Site Grading

Design site grading to conserve natural topographic features and appearance by minimizing the amount of cut and fill and by utilizing

landform grading to blend graded slopes and benches with the natural topography consistent with the Nevada County Grading Ordinance.

Policy RP-1.4: Cut Slopes

Landscape or otherwise stabilize all cut slopes to avoid erosion and visual impacts.

Policy RP-1.5: Ridgelines

Preserve ridgelines and minimize impacts to slopes in excess of 30 percent to the greatest extent possible.

Policy RP-1.6: Preservation of Native Trees

Preserve as many native trees as possible in the design of new development.

Policy RP-1.7: Scenic Corridors

Adhere to Nevada County standards and guidelines in Section L-II 2.7.7 Scenic Corridor Combining District (SC) of the Nevada County Code for any new changes or development within the Highway 49 and Combie Road Scenic Corridors, as well as additional standards and guidelines outlined within the Greater Higgins Area Plan regarding fencing, signage, parking areas, etc.

Goal RP-2: Ragsdale Creek Protection

Protection of Ragsdale Creek to become a common design theme throughout the Greater Higgins Area to preserve drainage, visual, and habitat resources.

Policy RP-2.1: Integrated Creek Design

Preserve, incorporate, and enhance Ragsdale Creek into the design of any new infrastructure and site-specific improvements for new development along Ragsdale Creek to help retain the rural character of the Greater Higgins area.

Policy RP-2.2: Creek Bed Design

Where the Ragsdale Creek bed has been channelized, provide incentives to property owners, such as reduced permitting requirements, to create a work of art in a new creek bed design, such as utilizing slight meandering, large boulders, shrubs trees and other plants in the side slope area of the creek.

Policy RP-2.3: Erosion Plan

Submit an erosion control plan for approval prior to issuance of grading permits and improvement plans. The plan shall identify measures to minimize erosion during construction, including using Best Management Practices to mitigate potential impacts to Ragsdale Creek. This could include the use of diversion ditches, interception dikes, perimeter dikes, straw bale dikes, an intercept or swale, a perimeter swale, grade stabilization structures and/or sedimentation basins or traps. The erosion plan shall also include plans for enhancing and maintaining the stream channel

Policy RP-2.4: Riparian Mitigation Plan

If vegetation removed near Ragsdale Creek consists of riparian species, prepare and submit a Management Plan, developed by a Nevada County prequalified biologist, to the County for approval. Any plans for development or disturbance within the streambed and in the setback

areas shall be prepared by a Nevada County prequalified biologist to ensure that plantings appropriate to the stream environment are properly established. Management Plans shall include an analysis of impacts to Ragsdale Creek and mitigation measures proposed to offset or minimize impacts to the watercourse and surrounding habitats.

Policy RP-2.5: Drainage Runoff

If roads or paving are proposed near Ragsdale Creek, design a system for drainage runoff on the site, using Best Management Practices (BMPs) for sediment basins, sumps, and oil separators, for long-term protection of water quality. Hard surfaces shall be sloped away from Ragsdale Creek with all surface runoff from the hard improvements directed to oil, grease, and silt traps designed by a registered civil engineer; clean water shall be discharged back into Ragsdale Creek.

Policy RP-2.6: Flow Capacity Improvements

To minimize the potential for flooding for development affecting Ragsdale Creek along Combie Road, developers shall provide flow capacity improvements to the creek channel, in accordance with all requirements of Article 5, "Storm Drainage" of the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code Section L-XVII. Improvements may include the construction of off-stream detention ponds such that water surface returns to its base elevation within 24 hours of the applicable storm event.

Policy RP-2.7: Open Watercourse

Maintain Ragsdale Creek as an open watercourse unless roadway expansion, flood conveyance, or property ingress/egress requires improvements in limited areas.

Policy RP-2.8: Onsite Drainage Improvements

Maintain onsite drainage improvements and streambed vegetation/landscaping unless an entity is formed to assume maintenance responsibility for either improvement. Prior to grading or improvement permit issuance, the applicant shall demonstrate that a legally enforceable mechanism for long-term maintenance of such improvements has been provided. Additionally, stormwater runoff for the project shall be equal to or less than pre-development flows.

Goal RP-3: Community Identity

Community identity for the Greater Higgins area that incorporates and celebrates its cultural and historical context.

Policy RP-3.1: Community Sign

Install a new community sign at the northeast or southeast corner of the Highway 49/Combie Road intersection to welcome residents and visitors to the Greater Higgins area. The design of the community sign should include community input on its design and funding for implementation.

Policy RP-3.2: Public Art

Install any new public art in new gathering spaces identified in the Plan rather than along Highway 49. Public art should be designed to reflect the cultural and historical context of the Greater Higgins area, and include community input.

Goal RP-4: Tribal Coordination

Plan process that recognizes the significance of the Native American Tribes that are historically and culturally affiliated with the Greater Higgins area.

Policy RP-4.2: Tribal Cultural Resources

The County will continue to coordinate with Native American Tribes, including the Nisenan, that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with resources in the Plan Area on management of, and access to Plan Area properties that have Tribal Cultural Resources.

Implementation Actions**Action RP-1: Ragsdale Creek Development Review Process**

Update the planning and design review process to incorporate new policies and design guidelines from the Greater Higgins Area Plan for new development along Ragsdale Creek.

Action RP-2: Community Sign

Conduct community outreach for design input and seek grant funding to install a new community sign at the northeast or southeast corner of the Highway 49/Combie Road intersection.

Action RP-3 Tribal Consultation

Consult with local Native American Tribes, including the Nisenan, that are traditionally and culturally affiliated with resources that could be affected by the Plan or projects, identify areas that may be of cultural or tribal cultural significance, and determine appropriate treatment for the areas.

This page intentionally left blank.



Chapter 7

Implementation

Introduction

This chapter provides a framework for implementing improvements recommended in preceding chapters of the Greater Higgins Area Plan (Plan). The first section of this chapter provides guidance on the Plan's priority policies and guidance for implementation. The first section of the chapter identifies the Plan's high priority policies identified by the South County Municipal Advisory Council (SCMAC), who met throughout the Plan's planning process to guide the development of the Plan. The second section describes federal, State, regional, and local funding opportunities that may provide ways to fund projects and programs recommended in this Plan.

High Priority Policies

At the October 12, 2022 SCMAC meeting, SCMAC members engaged in a facilitated discussion to identify high priority policies from the Plan, which should be prioritized for implementation among all the Plan's policies. In choosing high priority policies, SCMAC members considered community input received during the planning process and on the Public Review Draft of the Plan.

The following 11 policies were identified to be a high priority (in numerical order by chapter). Each high priority policy includes further details for implementation, including the relevant Plan Implementation Action (if applicable), the lead County department and any partner agencies or organizations, estimated implementation time frame, and magnitude of estimated cost. Regarding timeframe, implementation in the short term is considered within five years, medium term is considered between five to ten years, and long term is considered more than ten years.

Land Use and Community Character

- **Policy LU-2.1: Senior Housing:** Prioritize providing affordable housing options for seniors to allow aging residents to stay within Greater Higgins and to free up housing stock for new, younger families and individuals to move in.
 - **Lead County Agency:** Community Development Agency (CDA)
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** Information and General Services (IGS), Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA), Outside Entities
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Short term (Implementation Actions)/ Medium term (attract developers and construct residential)
 - **Related Implementation Actions:** Action LU-1: Building Permit Review Process and Action LU-2: Zoning Ordinance Amendments

- **Policy LU-2.2: Housing for Young Families:** Provide affordable housing types that could accommodate young families, such as duplexes and attached townhomes, to attract these families to reside in Greater Higgins and support local school enrollment.
 - **Lead County Agency:** CDA
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** Outside Entities
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Short term (Implementation Actions)/ Medium-term (attract developers and construct residential)
 - **Related Implementation Actions:** Action LU-1: Building Permit Review Process and Action LU-2: Zoning Ordinance Amendments

Public Services and Infrastructure

- **Policy TR-2.1: Roadway Improvements.** Prioritize near-term roadway improvements in the County's Capital Improvement Program on planned and potential evacuation routes to improve their emergency function (e.g., widening, adding passing zones on narrow routes, and adding pull-outs). Improvements should be considered for the eastern segment of Magnolia Road and opening emergency access over the private bridge at Wild Iris Lane.
 - **Lead County Agency:** CDA
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** IGS, Higgins Fire Protection District, CAL FIRE, Board of Supervisors
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Medium term
 - **Related Implementation Action:** Action TR-1: Evacuation Taskforce

- **Policy TR-2.2: Roadway Connections.** Add new roadway connections, where feasible, beneficial, and/or needed to accommodate increased population from new development and to convert dead-end roads to continuous routes, providing improved access for both every day and emergency functions. New connections should be explored for Egbert Hill Road, East to West Hacienda Drive, and Sharonjack Road. All potential new connections should be reviewed and coordinated with neighboring property owners as described in Policy TR.2-3.
 - **Lead County Agency:** CDA
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** IGS, Higgins Fire Protection District, CAL FIRE, Board of Supervisors

- **Estimated Time Frame:** Medium term
 - **Related Implementation Action:** Action TR-1: Evacuation Taskforce
- **Policy INF-1.3: Broadband Internet.** Implement recommendations from the countywide Broadband Strategy for the Combie/Wolf Road priority area, including construction of a new wireless tower, extension of Optimum wired infrastructure, and requiring new development to provide fiber connectivity.
 - **Lead County Agency:** IGS
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** CDA, HHSA, Board of Supervisors
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Medium term

Recreation and Trails

- **Policy REC-1.1: Multi-use Path Along Combie Road and Magnolia Road.** New development proposals on the north side of Combie Road and Magnolia Road shall include multi-use paths, which prioritize use by pedestrians and bicyclists, along property frontages that allow for shared public use pursuant to the Greater Higgins Area Plan Design Guidelines. Existing multi-use paths along these segments may need to be widened to allow for shared use between pedestrians, bicyclists, and potentially NEVs. The trail will be constructed through a combination of public funds and as part of private development.
 - **Lead County Agency:** CDA

- **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** Bear River Recreation and Parks District (BRRPD), IGS, Nevada County Transportation Commission (NCTC)
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Short to Medium term
 - **Related Implementation Actions:** Action REC-3: Public Funding for Multi-use Path
- **Policy REC-1.2: Shared Use with NEVs.** Study how to allow the safe and responsible use of NEVs on the multi-use path network, including needed right-of-way width along Combie Road and Magnolia Road, through the creation of a Golf Cart or NEV Transportation Plan, per Street and Highways Code Section 1950. It is optimal that the off-street pathways for NEVs and pedestrians and bicyclists are separated to reduce potential conflicts.
 - **Lead County Agency:** CDA
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** NCTC
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Short term
 - **Related Implementation Actions:** Action REC-1: NEV Transportation Plan
 - **Policy REC-4.3: Potential Park Adjacent to Bear River High School.** Explore the feasibility of formalizing the open space on the parcel to the west of Bear River High School into a new park space with passive use.
 - **Lead County Agency:** CDA
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** BRRPD, Nevada Joint Union High School District (NJUHSD)
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Long term
- **Related Implementation Actions:** Action REC-4: Recreation and Resiliency Master Plan Coordination
- **Policy REC-4.6: Funding.** Support the creation of a new park facility with grants and/or property assessments via an assessment district, Landscaping and Lighting Maintenance District (LLMDs), or special tax. Creation of a special tax would require a significant outreach and educational awareness effort to inform residents of the current financial structure of BRRPD and its constraints in providing new facilities to the Plan Area.
 - **Lead County Agency:** BRRPD
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** Local Area Formation Commission (LAFCo), Board of Supervisors
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Long term
 - **Related Implementation Actions:** Action REC-4: Recreation and Resiliency Master Plan Coordination

Historic, Cultural, Natural, and Scenic Resources

- **Policy RP-1.2: Site Design.** Base site design for new development on analysis of the site's characteristics and influences, maintaining as much as possible the natural topography, drainage features, and native trees. Projects should be designed to complement rather than dominate the natural landscape.
 - **Lead County Agency:** CDA
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** IGS
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Short term

- **Policy RP-2.1: Integrated Creek Design.** Preserve, incorporate, and enhance Ragsdale Creek into the design of any new infrastructure and site-specific improvements for new development along Ragsdale Creek to help retain the rural character of the Greater Higgins area.
 - **Lead County Agency:** CDA
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** IGS
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Short term
- **Related Implementation Actions: Action RP-2:** Ragsdale Creek Development Review Process
- **Policy RP-3.1: Community Sign.** Install a new gateway community sign at the northeast or southeast corner of the Highway 49/Combie Road intersection to welcome residents and visitors to the Greater Higgins area. The design of the gateway community sign should include community input on its design and funding for implementation.
 - **Lead County Department:** CDA
 - **Partner Agencies or Organizations:** Caltrans
 - **Estimated Time Frame:** Short term
- **Related Implementation Actions:** Action RP-2: Community Sign

Funding for Potential Improvements and Programs

This section highlights some of the many potential financing and grant sources for funding improvements and programs that are presented in this Plan in preceding chapters. This section is organized by topic based on each source's primary applicability. Other potential funding sources can be found in other adopted County plans, including:

- **Transportation:** Nevada County Transportation Commission's (NCTC) Regional Transportation Plan/Regional Transportation Improvement Program (RTIP), Active Transportation Plan, Bike Master Plan; Pedestrian Improvement Plan; Nevada County Capital Improvement Programs (CIP), and Transit Development Plans.
- **Infrastructure:** Nevada County's Sewer System Management Plans; Nevada Irrigation District Plan for Water, and Management Plans.
- **Recreation:** Nevada County Recreational Trails Master Plan; Recreation and Resiliency Master Plan (forthcoming); and Bear River Recreation District (BRRPD) Master Plan.

Development and Infrastructure

Federal Funding Sources

Community Development Block Grant

The Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program funds community development projects and services to build stronger and more resilient communities. Projects may address needs such as infra-

structure, economic development projects, public facilities installation, community centers, housing rehabilitation, public services, homeowner assistance, etc.

USDA Rural Broadband Programs

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) offers loan and grant programs, including the ReConnect Loan and Grant Program and the Farm Bill Broadband Program, that help provide funds for the costs of construction, improvement, or acquisition of facilities and equipment needed to provide broadband service in eligible rural areas. The ReConnect Program has invested over \$1 billion to expand high-speed broadband infrastructure in unserved rural areas and tribal lands.

State Funding Sources

Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program

The Affordable Housing and Sustainable Communities Program (AHSC) Program is a joint effort by the Strategic Growth Council and California Department of Housing and Community Development. The Program assists affordable housing developments, sustainable transportation infrastructure, transportation-related amenities, and multi-modal transit promotion. Cities, transportation agencies, and developers are eligible to receive funding.

Caltrans Active Transportation Program

The Caltrans Active Transportation Program (ATP) provides a key source of funding for cities, counties, and regional transportation agencies for bike lanes, pedestrian paths, multi-use paths, sidewalks, Safe Routes to Schools, and other projects that help reduce reliance on cars. Based on past grant cycles, the average award for projects in the ATP program is

just under \$2 million dollars. The ATP has grant cycles that occur every other year, with the next grant cycle anticipated for Spring 2024.

Local Streets and Roads Program

SB 1 dedicates approximately \$1.5 billion per year in new formula revenues to cities and counties for basic road maintenance, rehabilitation, and critical safety projects on the local streets and roads system. To be eligible for funding, cities and counties must submit a list of proposed projects to the California Transportation Commission (CTC) by May 1st of each year, with the CTC adopting a list of eligible projects by August 1st of each year. Local Streets and Roads Program (LSRP) funding is available for road maintenance and rehabilitation, safety projects, Complete Streets components (including active transportation purposes, pedestrian and bicycle safety projects, and multi-modal transit facilities in conjunction with any other allowable project), and traffic control devices.

California Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program

The Sustainable Transportation Planning Grant Program was created to support Caltrans' mission to provide a safe, sustainable, integrated, and efficient transportation system to enhance California's economy and livability. It is a key funding source statewide for multi-modal plans, including Complete Streets plans, integrated land use and transportation plans, and corridor plans. The grant program is divided into two grant opportunities.

Sustainable Communities Grant

The Sustainable Communities grant provides Federal Transit Administration (FTA 5304), SB 1, and State Highway Account (SHA) funding

to projects that encourage multi-modal transportation and land use planning projects that contribute to the state's GHG reduction targets. Sustainable Communities grants are distributed via formula and competitive grants.

Strategic Partnerships Grant

The Strategic Partnerships grant program is funded by the Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration and is part of the Caltrans Sustainable Transportation Planning Grants program. The grant program encourages partnerships between Caltrans and regional agencies to collaborate on projects in the state highway system, such as for Highway 49. The grant is split into two components: the strategic partnership component intends to fund planning projects that address needs on the State Highway System, while the transit component addresses multimodal deficiencies that focus on transit.

Office of Traffic Safety Grants

The Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) administers federal traffic safety grant funds that are apportioned to California under the National Highway Safety Act. The OTS supports a wide variety of traffic safety programs, including pedestrian and bicycle safety programs for children, child passenger safety outreach, and support for increased law enforcement services and resources, such as safety helmet distribution, and court diversion programs for safety helmet violators. State governmental agencies, local city and county government agencies, school districts, fire departments, and public emergency services providers are eligible to apply for and receive OTS grant funding. Grants are awarded on a competitive basis.

Nevada County Funding Sources

Capital Program

The Capital Program is a long-range budgeting plan for acquiring, improving, and maintaining the County's critical infrastructure, including roads, facilities, and information and community technology improvements in the short-term and long-term timeframes. The CIP is reviewed regularly to reflect changing priorities, opportunities, and funding sources within the county.

General Fund

The General Fund finances most discretionary services the County provides such as public safety, fire and rescue, recreation, building and planning services, and support services. These services are funded by general purpose tax revenues and other revenues that are unrestricted. These funds are not restricted to predefined uses so the Board of Supervisors can distribute these funds in a way that best meets the needs of the community.

Capital Project Funds

The Capital Project Funds accounts for the acquisition, improvement, or construction of major capital facilities based upon the Capital Program.

NSAQMD AB 2766 DMV Funds

The Northern Sierra Air Quality Management District (NSAQMD) offers a small variety of grant and incentive programs that can be accessed by Nevada County residents. The AB 2766 program, which is funded by vehicle license fees, provides grant funding to implement activities that help reduce air pollution from vehicles. Projects that have been previously funded include clean or alternative fuel vehicles, VMT reduction programs, bus stop shelters, and mass transit subsidies.

Housing

Federal Funding Sources

Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTC)

In 1986, Congress created the federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits to encourage private investment in the acquisition, rehabilitation, and construction of low-income rental housing. Because high housing costs in California make it difficult, even with federal credits, to produce affordable rental housing, the California legislature created a state low-income housing tax credit program to supplement the federal credit. The state credit is essentially identical to the federal credit, the Tax Credit Allocation Committee allocates both, and state credits are only available to projects receiving federal credits. Twenty percent of federal credits are reserved for rural areas and 10 percent for nonprofit sponsors. To compete for the credit, rental housing developments have to reserve units at affordable rents to households at or below 46 percent of area median income. The targeted units must be reserved for the target population for 55 years.

State Funding Sources

Multifamily Housing Program (MHP)

The MHP Program provides loans for new construction, rehabilitation, and preservation of affordable rental housing. Payments on the loans are deferred for a specified period of time.

CalHOME

This program provides grants to local governments and nonprofit agencies for homebuyer assistance, rehabilitation, and new construc-

tion. The agency also finances acquisition, rehabilitation, and replacement of manufactured homes.

Senate Bill 2

SB 2 grants provide technical assistance planning grant funding to jurisdictions for plans and process improvements that will help to streamline and accelerate housing production.

Local Early Action Planning (LEAP) Grants

LEAP grants provide over-the-counter grants complemented with technical assistance to local governments for the preparation and adoption of planning documents, and process improvements that accelerate housing production and facilitate compliance to implement the sixth-cycle Regional Housing Needs Assessment.

Infrastructure Infill Grant

This grant provides gap financing for infrastructure improvements necessary to support the development of affordable infill housing.

Local Partners

Regional Housing Authority

The Regional Housing Authority (RHA) is committed to creating and preserving low-income housing for the Counties of Sutter, Yuba, Colusa, and Nevada. They provide various programs for renters and homeowners, including providing housing and rental assistance and affordably-priced rental units.

Mountain Housing Council (MHC)

The Mountain Housing Council focuses on East County/Tahoe Truckee region and brings together 29 diverse partners to accelerate solutions to achievable local housing. Although its focus is on the East County, the County should collaborate MHC in any countywide housing efforts to increase availability, variety, and affordability to Nevada County.

Recreation and Trails

Federal Funding Sources

National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grants

The Five Star and Urban Waters Restoration Grant Program seeks to develop community capacity to sustain local natural resources for future generations by providing modest financial assistance to diverse local partnerships for wetland, riparian, forest and coastal habitat restoration, wildlife conservation, and stormwater management, as well as outreach, education, and stewardship. Projects should focus on water quality, watersheds, and the habitats they support. National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (NFWF) Grants may use a mix of public and private funding sources to support any grant made through this program.

Federal Recreational Trails Program

The Recreational Trails Program (RTP) is administered by the California Department of Parks and Recreation (DPR) and the Department of Transportation (Caltrans) ATP, and provides funds annually for recreational and trails-related projects. The RTP includes funds for both non-motorized and motorized trails. If the Plan's multi-use path network is widened to include the use of Neighborhood Electric Vehicles (NEVs), this would be considered a motorized recreational trail; the RTP fund

would be administered by the Department's Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Division. For the 2021 Motorized RTP Grant Cycle, \$2.7M was available.

Land and Water Conservation Fund

This program provides federal support for the acquisition and development of outdoor recreation space, with grant cycles typically occurring on an annual basis. Submissions requiring acquisitions were considered the highest priority in the most recent grant cycle.

State Funding Sources

California Department of Parks and Recreation

California State Parks offers many grants for local, state, and nonprofit use, administered by the Office of Grants and Local Services (OGALS). Projects eligible for these grants include nature interpretation programs to bring urban residents into park and wildlife areas, protection of various plant and animal species, and acquisition and development of wildlife corridors and trails.

California Natural Resources Agency Urban Greening Grant Program

This program provides funding for projects that reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and provide multiple benefits including expanding access to parks and green spaces. Projects include replacing asphalt with native plants, gardens, and nature-based outdoor play areas or constructing new paths to reduce vehicles miles traveled.

Regional Park Program

The Regional Park Program provides funding to create, expand, or improve regional parks and regional park facilities. This program is funded by Proposition 68 (2018 Bond Act). For the year 2022, approximately \$23 million will be made available to counties, Regional Park Districts, nonprofit organizations, and other entities for projects such as acquisition for new or enhanced public access and use, as well as development to create or renovate amenities such as trails, sports complexes, visitor and interpretive facilities, and more.

Rural Recreation and Tourism Program (RRT)

The Rural Recreation and Tourism Program funds new recreation opportunities within rural communities to support health-related and economic goals. This program is funded by Proposition 68 (2018 Bond Act). For the year 2022, approximately \$23 million will be made available to cities, counties, and Eligible Districts. The types of projects funded are similar to those funded by the Regional Park Program, described above.

Local Partners

Bear Yuba Land Trust

The Bear Yuba Land Trust (BYLT)'s focus is to protect open space and protected lands in the Bear River and Yuba River Watersheds. The BYLT has many objectives, including supporting local trail initiatives, preserving open space, and creating parkland. BYLT can secure funding to help conserve and maintain land for open space and recreational purposes, such as the open space area along the Ragsdale Creek in front of the Cascade Crossing residential development.

Resiliency

Federal Funding Sources

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) Grants

FEMA administers several grant programs that support hazard mitigation and resiliency-related projects:

FEMA Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC)

Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) supports states, local communities, tribes and territories as they undertake hazard mitigation projects, reducing the risks they face from disasters and natural hazards.

FEMA Hazard Mitigation Assistance (HMA) Grants

This program funds eligible mitigation measures that reduce disaster losses and reduce vulnerability to disasters and their effects. The amount of awarded grants in Fiscal Year 2020 for BRIC and HMA totaled \$700 million.

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) Financing

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) is a financing tool which building owners and developers can use to upgrade building energy performance, install renewable energy systems and reduce resource consumption. The funds are distributed with no money down, and financing is repaid through their property's tax bill.

State Funding Sources

CAL FIRE Grants Program

Through grants to regionally based partners and collaboratives, CAL FIRE seeks to significantly increase fuels management, fire reintroduction, treatment of degraded areas, and conservation of forests through programs including:

Fire Prevention Grants Program Project Grants

This program provides grant funding to State and Federal agencies, local government agencies, Fire Safe councils and other non-profit organizations. It funds a variety of projects including hazardous fuels reduction, fire prevention planning, and fire prevention education.

Forest Health Grants

The Forest Health Program funds active restoration and reforestation activities and projects that provide for more resilient and sustained forests, mitigate climate change, protect communities from fire risk, and strengthen rural economies. Project activities funded by CAL FIRE's Forest Health Grant Program may include forest fuels reduction, prescribed fire, pest management, reforestation, conservation easements, and more.

State Fire Assistance Grants (California Fire Safe Council)

The California Fire Safe Council (CFSC) provides funds to landowners and residents for projects that support fire risk reduction in at-risk communities to restore and maintain resilient landscapes and create fire-adapted communities. Projects may focus on fuel hazard mitigation, community hazard mitigation planning, and prevention and mitigation education activities/programs.

Wildfire Mitigation Financial Assistance Program (Fire Home Hardened Homes Revolving Loan Fund)

Cal OES and CAL FIRE, through a Joint Powers Agreement, administer this comprehensive wildfire mitigation financial assistance program.

State Water Resources Control Board

The State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) administers the implementation of several financial assistance programs that include loan and grant funding for construction of municipal sewage and water recycling facilities, remediation for underground storage tank releases, watershed protection projects, nonpoint source pollution control projects, and more.

ICARP Regional Resilience Program

As part of the 2021 State Climate budget, the Integrated Climate Adaptation and Resiliency Program (ICARP) developed the Regional Resilience Planning & Implementation Grant Program. This program will support regional projects and plans that improve regional climate resilience and reduce risks from climate impacts, including wildfire, sea level rise, drought, flood, increasing temperatures, and extreme heat events.

Other Types of Funding

Developer-Constructed/Funded Improvements

For public facilities and infrastructure on or adjacent to a site proposed for development or new construction, the preferred method to pay for the improvements is for the developer to construct or pay for the improvement as a condition of approval.

In some cases, the development of one or more parcels in the Plan Area may require the construction of off-site infrastructure improvements, the size of which may be larger than what is needed to serve just the proposed development. In such cases, if the County does not have the funds available to pay for the additional infrastructure capacity, the property owner or developer may agree, through a development agreement, to pay for the full cost of the off-site infrastructure improvement and to be repaid as additional development occurs.

The development agreement would stipulate the terms of such repayment. If the cost of infrastructure improvements is to be repaid to a property owner, developer, or other entity that paid the upfront cost, the County may prohibit other development under the Plan until the project applicant has paid the required infrastructure cost repayment fee in accordance with the terms of the development agreement.

Development Impact Fees

Development impact fees (DIFs) are a one-time charge to new development imposed under the Mitigation Fee Act (California Government Code, Section 66000, et seq.). These fees are charged to new development to mitigate impacts resulting from the development activity and cannot be used to fund existing deficiencies. This means that new development can only pay for part of the improvement cost for projects that benefit existing uses as well as new development and the County must find another funding source to cover the costs for the improvements that benefit the existing uses. Impact fees must be adopted based on findings of reasonable relationships between the development paying the fee, the need for the fee, and the use of fee revenues.

Because each development pays only for its fair share of a public facility or infrastructure improvement, the County may not have the necessary funding to pay for improvements until other developments are approved and constructed. If the County has funds available, it can construct the improvements and get repaid over time. If the County does not have funds available, it might be the case that a community facilities district, which can bond against future revenue, would be a better funding mechanism than a DIF.

County Service Areas

A County Service Area (CSA) is a type of dependent special district governed by the County. CSAs are established as a mechanism for counties to furnish municipal-type services to unincorporated areas beyond those uniformly provided countywide. The CSA does not provide new revenue, and is a vehicle through which the County's general fund can be segregated and used for bond repayment for infrastructure and to pay for enhanced levels of service in the defined area. Currently, Nevada County provides enhanced road operation and maintenance services within ten CSAs. Several of the CSAs are also authorized by Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) to provide auxiliary services like vegetation management and street lighting.

Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts

An Enhanced Infrastructure Financing Districts (EIFDs) diverts local property tax revenues through tax-increment financing) to either pay directly for the construction of infrastructure and public facility improvements, or to issue bonds to finance those improvements. No public vote is required to establish an EIFD, but a 55 percent voter approval is required to issue bonds. However, EIFDs cannot divert property tax increment revenues from schools and can only capture tax increment

from taxing jurisdictions that agree to forego their incremental property tax revenue. EIFDs can fund:

- Roads, highways, and bridges
- Parking facilities
- Sewage and water facilities
- Flood control and drainage projects
- Parks and libraries
- Affordable housing

Assessment Districts

In existing neighborhoods and commercial areas, groups of property owners may desire to have public facilities and infrastructure improvements sooner rather than waiting for general fund monies to become available. Assessment districts could help finance the construction of public improvements on public property, public rights-of-way, and public easements in these areas. The public must pay for the portions of the improvements that provide general benefit to the public at large, but real property that receives a special benefit may be assessed for the costs, proportional to the level of benefit received. Assessment districts are intended to finance construction of physical improvements, such as local streets, parks, sidewalks, and landscaping. They cannot pay for operations and maintenance or additional services. If additional improvements are desired after an assessment district is established, the entire process is required for those additional improvements.

Landscaping and Lighting Maintenance District

Whether in new development areas or existing neighborhoods, public facility and infrastructure improvements will require ongoing operations and maintenance. Landscaping and lighting maintenance districts (LLMD) can fund the construction of certain public improvements and the operation and maintenance of public improvements, including street lighting, landscape watering, and landscape maintenance. A LLMD is one alternative to the general fund for paying those costs, as they are funded by the neighborhood's landowners through an assessment. LLMDs could be an effective way to fund the ongoing maintenance (or even the construction) of public realm improvements such as parks and other gathering spaces.

This page intentionally left blank.



Appendix A

Design Guidelines



Introduction

The Greater Higgins Area Plan (Plan) includes the following design guidelines for new public, commercial, and multi-family projects in the Greater Higgins Plan Area (Plan Area). These guidelines are not comprehensive; new development should follow the Western Nevada County Design Guidelines (WNCDG) and the guidelines below are supplemental to the WNCDG. In any case of conflict between guidelines, the Greater Higgins Area Plan's design guidelines shall prevail.

These guidelines are intended to augment and not replace standards associated with the construction of buildings in wildfire prone areas as regulated by the Wildland Urban Interface codes and standards in Chapter 7A of the California Building Code.

Specific development standards are contained within Section L-II, Chapter 4, of the Nevada County Land Use and Development Code. The authority for Design Review is contained within Chapter 18 of the Nevada County General Plan and within Section L-II 5.3 of County Zoning Regulations. It is always recommended that the developer or property owner consult with a Planner early in the process to verify applicable code requirements.

Incorporating similar design features in new developments will result in a coordinated and cohesive community appearance. No particular style or theme is mandated for the Plan Area, so the focus of design should be on constructing high quality buildings and landscape that is sensitive to the rural character of the community. The use of complementary building materials, textures, roof shapes, lighting, and colors can tie buildings of varying shapes and sizes together.

Scenic and Natural Resources

The character of the Plan Area is a rural environment, with buildings set into a rolling landscape of fields, meadows, and forested areas. To ensure this character remains into the future, maintenance and enhancement of the landscape is encouraged along the two primary roadways, Highway 49 and Combie Road (including Ragsdale Creek), along ridgelines, and wherever there are native trees. For general guidelines regarding development on properties elsewhere in the Plan Area refer to the following section, Site Planning Guidelines.

General

- » **SNR-1:** Preserve natural amenities such as streambeds, wildlife habitats, and tree groves by incorporating them into new development and open space/park systems.
- » **SNR-2:** Prominent ridgelines should be preserved in order to maintain the identity and environmental quality of the Plan Area. Existing tree cover along prominent ridgelines should be retained to the extent possible while respecting wildfire mitigation measures.
- » **SNR-3:** Encourage the creation of continuous regional open space networks.
- » **SNR-4:** In keeping with goals in this Plan to preserve the area's scenic resources, all new development shall be designed to impact as few native trees, including Blue Oak, Valley Oak, Gray Pine, and Interior Live Oak, as feasible.
- » **SNR-5:** For properties visible from Highway 49 and Combie Road, new utility line extensions, including cable and telephone lines, shall be installed underground to minimize adverse scenic impacts.



View of ridgeline with tree cover.

Highway 49

- » **SNR-6:** Maintain existing landscape along Highway 49 in compliance with regulations for the Scenic Corridor Combining District in the Nevada County zoning ordinance.
- » **SNR-7:** New development along the Highway 49 scenic corridor should not extend above the ridgeline on either side of Highway 49, as viewed from the highway.
- » **SNR-8:** Utilize existing vegetation to screen new development and minimize aesthetic impacts along the Highway 49 corridor.
- » **SNR-9:** Fencing within 200' of the highway edge shall match split-rail fencing in appearance, whether consisting of wood, precast painted concrete or other material that emulates a wood split-rail appearance.

The finish shall be similar in color to weathered wood. The maximum height shall be 48". If a higher fence is needed, it shall be set back a minimum of 50' from the split-rail fence and shall include drought-tolerant landscaping on the highway side of the fence to grow up and obscure the fence.

- » **SNR-10:** Signage shall adhere to County Standard L-II 2.7.7.D. In addition, there is a maximum sign dimension of 8' maximum in any direction.
- » **SNR-11:** Parking areas should not be located within the scenic corridor combining district. If unavoidable, the parking area shall be screened with landscaping or solid fencing.

Combie Road

- » **SNR-13:** Fencing within 50' of the Combie Road roadway edge shall be in character with other fences in the corridor, which includes split-rail fencing or other material that emulates a wood split-rail appearance, low metal fences or other materials in character with the rural setting. Chain-link fencing is not allowed.
- » **SNR-14:** Signage shall adhere to County Standard L-II 2.7.7.D. In addition, there is a maximum sign dimension of 8' maximum in any direction.
- » **SNR-15:** Parking areas should be located behind buildings to reduce visibility within the scenic corridor combining district. If visible parking areas are unavoidable, the parking area shall be landscaped with shade trees and screened with landscaping or solid fencing (adhering to standard above).

Ragsdale Creek

- » **SNR-16:** Ragsdale Creek shall remain an open watercourse unless roadway expansion, flood conveyance, or property ingress/egress requires improvements in limited areas.
- » **SNR-17:** Pathways paralleling Ragsdale Creek shall be separated from the stream channel by a minimum 5-foot-wide buffer. Landscaping shall consist of native plants, dependent upon market availability.
- » **SNR-18:** To protect water quality, native vegetation on parcels adjacent to Ragsdale Creek should be preserved and/or enhanced where possible.
- » **SNR-19:** Improvements to Ragsdale Creek should strive to create a natural-appearing stream. A design supporting a low-flow channel and creating gentle side-slopes with low herbaceous native vegetation (e.g., rushes, sedges, grasses) is encouraged where not in conflict with conveyance of flood water flows.
- » **SNR-20:** To retain a natural and riparian appearance, if bank stabilization techniques are necessary, the preferred method for planting along the stream banks should include the use of wire mesh over soil implanted with live cuttings, rather than the use of rock riprap.
- » **SNR-21:** The side-slopes of Ragsdale Creek should be landscaped with low-growing native grasses, rushes, and sedges to provide habitat and prevent erosion, while maintaining flood capacity. The terrace above Ragsdale Creek that is not developed as pathway should be landscaped with native species.
- » **SNR-22:** The erosion control plan for each development proposal fronting Ragsdale Creek shall include plans for enhancing and maintaining the stream channel.



Ragsdale Creek outfall near south Combie Road.

- » **SNR-23:** If vegetation removed near Ragsdale Creek consists of riparian species, a Management Plan shall be prepared and submitted to the County for approval. Any enhancement/revegetation plans for the streambed and in the setback areas shall be prepared by a Nevada County prequalified biologist to ensure that plantings appropriate to the stream environment are properly established. Management Plans shall include an analysis of impacts to Ragsdale Creek and mitigation measures proposed to offset or minimize impacts to the watercourse and surrounding habitats.
- » **SNR-24:** If roads or paving are proposed near Ragsdale Creek, the project proponent shall design a system for drainage runoff on the site, using Best Management Practices (BMPs) for sediment basins, sumps, and oil separators, for long-term protection of water quality.

Hard surfaces shall be sloped away from Ragsdale Creek with all surface runoff from the hard improvements directed to oil, grease, and silt traps designed by a registered civil engineer; clean water shall be discharged back into Ragsdale Creek.

Design Districts

The Plan provides for commercial and infill development concentrated in two areas: the Higgins Corner area and the Lake Center area. These “Design Districts” are described in detail in *Chapter 2, Land Use and Community Character*. Following are design guidelines that will guide development in these two Design Districts. Along with the following specific Design District guidelines, new development shall meet all other design guidelines in this Appendix. Where there is a conflict, the Design District guidelines shall be followed.

Higgins Corner Design District

The following guidelines shall apply to new projects in the Higgins Corner area, including all parcels within the area bounded by Highway 49, Combie Road, Higgins Road, and Woodbridge Drive, and including parcels abutting Higgins Road to the south and Woodbridge Drive to the west.

- » **HC-DD-1:** Create a walkable district by providing additional new vehicle, bicycle, and/or pedestrian connections, to create a “grid” of streets and access ways.
- » **HC-DD-2:** Ensure all parts of the area have safe and convenient pedestrian connections, with crosswalks across streets and major accessways, and provide a new “Commercial Lane” in the center of the area with wide sidewalks on both sides of the lane.



Example of a Commercial Lane.



Pedestrian street/connection with outdoor dining.

Image Credit: Congress for the New Urbanism (cnu.org).

- » **HC-DD-3:** New buildings should be located to create a visual edge along “Commercial Lane,” creating a pleasant space by providing enclosure to the space.
- » **HC-DD-4:** New buildings should be oriented to face onto streets, “Commercial Lane,” and pedestrian accessways with parking located behind the buildings.
- » **HC-DD-5:** A mix of businesses and land uses is desired in the Higgins Corner Design District. Uses may range from retail to services, offices, and residential. The mix of uses could be “horizontal” mixed use with separate buildings, or “vertical” mixed use with residential or office on top of retail.
- » **HC-DD-6:** Architectural styles and motifs previously used in the Higgins Village and Higgins Marketplace shopping center are preferred for new buildings. These are based on rural building types, and details include:
 - Pitched metal roofs with gable ends.
 - A variety of roof heights, with larger central volumes engaged by lower shed roof forms below.
 - Clerestory windows (small windows high on the wall).
 - Porches covering entries and providing shaded walkways.
 - Wood siding (including cement board siding and other materials similar to wood).
 - Natural and earth-toned colors.
- » **HC-DD-7:** Retain existing mature native trees to the greatest extent possible.
- » **HC-DD-8:** Plan for outdoor seating areas for cafés and restaurants.

- » **HC-DD-9:** Provide pedestrian connections to existing and future trail systems.

Lake Center Design District

The following guidelines shall apply to new projects in the Lake Center area, including all parcels abutting the corner intersection of Combie Road, Hacienda Drive, Magnolia Drive and south Combie Road, and including all parcels from the original Lake Center shopping center, along with abutting parcels in Lake of the Pines.

- » **LC-DD-1:** New development should present a welcoming face to the intersection of Combie Road/Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road/south Combie Road, which will send the message that this is the community heart of the Higgins Area. New commercial development should be visible from the intersection of Combie Road/Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road/south Combie Road to attract passers-by.
- » **LC-DD-2:** New development should strive to provide design appropriate for a community-focused center for the entire Greater Higgins area. Elements that should be considered include:
 - New development on the existing Lake Center should strive to provide a “community square” that will be visible and open to the public, surrounded by cafés and businesses. This square should have trellises and trees to provide shade, attractive paving, seating, and enough open space to hold small events outdoors.
 - Businesses oriented to community needs, including restaurants, cafés, retail sales, makerspaces (places that cater to businesses or individuals making things), and services such as fitness and wellness centers.

- Space for small businesses, including offices, collaborative workspaces, and small business incubators.
 - Community facilities, such as a library and/or community room.
- » **LC-DD-3:** Residential uses are encouraged as an additional use, particularly senior housing, to help create a “village” feel.
- » **LC-DD-4:** The scale of the development should be appropriate to a smaller community center, with buildings facing the community square limited to two stories but allowing larger, three-story buildings behind smaller ones or in other areas.
- » **LC-DD-5:** New development should acknowledge the beautiful existing water features bordering the Lake of the Pines entry by opening to the view of the water features.
- » **LC-DD-6:** Architectural styles should be based on rural building types and should include some or all the following:
- Pitched metal roofs with gable ends.
 - A variety of roof heights, with larger central volumes engaged by lower shed roof forms below.
 - Clerestory windows (small windows high on the wall).
 - Porches, trellises, and shade trees covering entries and providing shaded walkways.
 - Ample groundcover landscaping in public areas, including parking lots.
 - Wood siding (including cement board siding and other materials similar to wood) in public areas.
 - Natural and earth-toned colors, with limited areas of vibrant colors on key elements to attract attention.



Commercial entries facing onto a small plaza.

- » **LC-DD-7:** Retain existing mature native trees, including Blue Oak, Valley Oak, Gray Pine, and Interior Live Oak, to the greatest extent possible.
- » **LC-DD-8:** Parking areas should be reduced visually by subdividing into separate smaller areas that respond to topography and are separated by landscape.
- » **LC-DD-9:** Improved pedestrian crossings of the Combie Road/Hacienda Drive/Magnolia Road/south Combie Road intersection should be provided.
- » **LC-DD-10:** New development should accommodate pedestrian and bicycle connections to existing and future multi-use paths described in *Chapter 5, Recreation and Trails*.

Site Planning

All new development shall carefully review the opportunities and constraints provided by the natural setting, and work with the site to create buildings that settle into the natural context as much as possible.

General

- » **SP-1:** Locate new development near or adjacent to existing developed areas to better preserve large areas of natural undisturbed areas.
- » **SP-2:** Utilize compact and less land-intensive patterns of growth, including mixed-use development.
- » **SP-3:** Development should be designed to conform to existing landforms and topography using terracing or other design or construction techniques that reduce the perceived height of new development from roadways.
- » **SP-4:** The alignment of roadways and driveways should follow the contours of the site. Meandering roadways minimize the need for cuts and fills, preserve natural drainage patterns, and are easily negotiated.
- » **SP-5:** Set back buildings from the street right-of-way a variety of distances to create a varied and interesting edge facing the street.
- » **SP-6:** Grade changes within tree driplines should be avoided.
- » **SP-7:** Site grading should be designed to conserve natural topographic features and appearance by minimizing the amount of cut and fill and by utilizing landform grading to blend graded slopes and benches with the natural topography consistent with the Nevada County Grading Ordinance.
- » **SP-8:** Ridgelines and slopes in excess of 30 percent shall be preserved.

Open Space

- » **SP-9:** The locations of open space areas should be determined based on features such as preserving sensitive resources, maintaining appropriate public views, topography, and tree cover. Where open space is dictated by sensitive resources, any additional required open space can be located to serve as a buffer around the resources. Ragsdale Creek and open space areas, not including pedestrian path/multi-use path areas, will serve toward meeting open space requirements.
- » **SP-10:** For commercial and mixed-use projects, provide a clearly defined public open space or “community square” to serve as a design centerpiece for the project. This area could be used for community events such as farmers markets. Active retail spaces such as cafés



Plaza/defined public open space with seating, landscaping, and a water play feature.



Pedestrian pathway along a roadway.

and restaurants should be able to open onto the space. Community squares should be designed as focal points and not be sited in “left-over” space at the margins of a project.

- » **SP-11:** Building entrances and windows should be oriented toward the public space to provide a sense of security for users.
- » **SP-12:** Where possible, uses such as restaurants and cafés should activate these spaces.
- » **SP-13:** Pathways shall provide clear and accessible connections from open space to nearby streets, multi-use trails/paths, street intersections, and connections to transit.

Loading, Service, and Equipment

- » **SP-14:** Surface parking lots should be divided into smaller discrete lots separated by landscaping buffers. Use landscape buffers as Low Impact Development (LID) best management practices to provide required stormwater treatment. These buffers should be used as opportunities for incorporating drought-tolerant and fire-safe landscap-



Meandering driveway follows the contours of the site.

ing. Parking areas are also opportunities to provide permeable paving to accommodate stormwater runoff.

- » **SP-15:** All loading, storage, and solid waste disposal areas shall be located in the least visible location and shall be hidden from direct view of roads and building entries through the use of walls and landscaping. Walls used for this purpose shall not be greater in height than the main structure and must be of the same siding material used in the structure it adjoins. All such walls shall be buffered from public view by landscaping. Openings shall be oriented away from view from adjacent streets or public areas, or shall utilize screening to block views.
- » **SP-16:** Ground-level mechanical equipment, including utility boxes, backflow prevention devices, and similar equipment, shall be located in the least conspicuous area.
- » **SP-17:** Service areas and outdoor storage areas, including vehicle repair facilities, should be designed to be shielded from public views and/or neighboring properties by screening or orienting bay openings away from adjacent streets or public areas.

- » **SP-18:** Where uses such as parking lots and service areas must be located in areas visible from public streets, fences no taller than 6' should screen the area.
- » **SP-19:** Utility line extensions, including cable and telephone lines, shall be installed underground to minimize adverse scenic impacts.
- » **SP-20:** New roads and road improvements shall include underground conduit for future provision of broadband and other utilities, where possible.

Fencing and Retaining Wall

- » **SP-21:** Chain-link fencing visible from public streets is discouraged. Where used, it should be landscaped/screened to buffer the view.
- » **SP-22:** Where fencing or walls are needed or appropriate, the scale, color, and materials used should complement the site and associated buildings.
- » **SP-23:** Retaining walls over 5' tall should be designed so as not to create one long, monotonous wall. Landscaping may be used to screen them from view. The design of retaining walls shall complement the building style, materials, and colors used on the site.

Building Design

Designers of new development should utilize a consistent and compatible use of building materials and design elements appropriate to the visual and scenic qualities of each site.

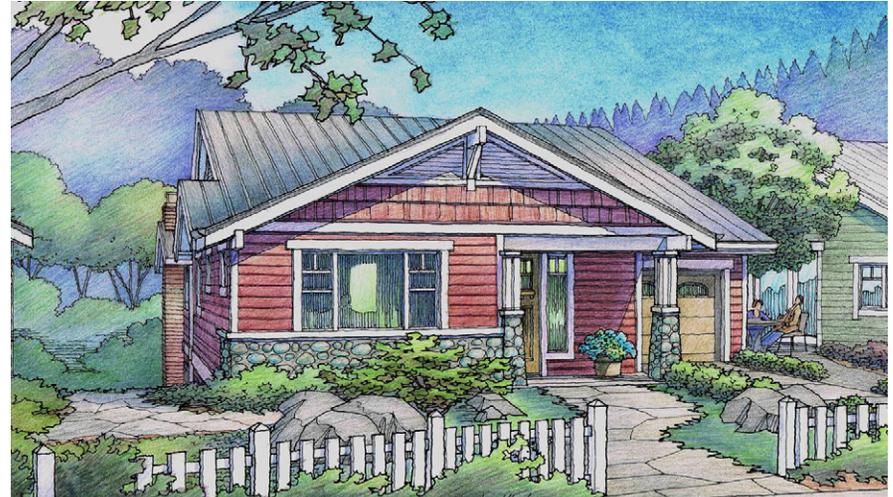


Illustration from Rincon del Rio showing fencing that complements the colors and materials of the house.

Image Credit: Michael Kent Murphy Architects.



Example of split rail wood fence.

General

- » **BD-1:** New development should be designed to complement rather than dominate surroundings. The height and scale of new buildings should be proportionate to adjacent development, transitioning from the height of adjacent development to the maximum height of the proposed building.
- » **BD-2:** Building forms and masses should be multiple simple forms rather than a single large form.
- » **BD-3:** Materials, colors, and architectural styles on adjacent properties should be complementary.
- » **BD-4:** To avoid flat, monotonous façades, plans should provide for a change in the planes of walls or variation in roof form, providing diversity and visual interest.
- » **BD-5:** Horizontal or vertical wall articulation should be expressed through the use of wall offsets, recessed entries, bay windows, projecting wing walls, roof overhangs, second floor setbacks, canopies, porches, or other structural projections.

Building Detail and Materials

- » **BD-6:** In commercial and mixed-use buildings, selective use of awnings and canopies is encouraged as an integral part of the building design to provide shelter for pedestrians, an element of scale and visual interest, and solar shading for windows and storefronts. Signage on awnings should be limited to the awning flap or valance.
- » **BD-7:** Awnings on a single building or adjacent buildings should be of the same approximate style and height on the building façade(s).



Buildings with multiple forms and roof forms that provide interest.



Holiday Market building featuring various changes in wall planes and roof forms.



Awnings on the same commercial building façade.



New building with architectural detailing such as brackets and braces.



Natural stone on building façade.

- » **BD-8:** Architectural detailing should be used to enhance the overall effect of new or remodeled structures. Details should be simple and understated to avoid a cluttered appearance. Each building should incorporate trim, window, or doorway treatments. Detail treatment shall be provided to all visible sides of the structure.
- » **BD-9:** Window patterns should be carefully composed. A regularly spaced rhythm for windows across the entire building is encouraged.
- » **BD-10:** Larger windows should have divisions that reflect the scale of a person, especially for those facing public streets and open spaces.
- » **BD-11:** Buildings should emulate existing historic and rural buildings by incorporating architectural elements such as decorative braces and brackets, clerestories, dormers, roof ornamentations, exposed rafter tails, etc.
- » **BD-12:** Where appropriate, incorporate covered porches that wrap around one or more sides of the building.
- » **BD-13:** Follow fire-safe construction standards regarding roof overhangs, soffits, and other places where fire can enter buildings.
- » **BD-14:** Colors and tones should be compatible throughout the Higgins Area to achieve continuity and to avoid a cluttered, chaotic look. Complementary, brighter colors should be reserved for trims and accents.
- » **BD-15:** Where there are two or more buildings on a site, building materials should be selected to complement the site and adjacent development. The use of similar materials on buildings provides a strong link that unifies varying architectural features of multiple buildings.
- » **BD-16:** Natural materials should be incorporated into building walls whenever possible. The use of stained or painted wood, natural stone, rock, and brick are encouraged. Concrete tilt-ups must be face/refaced with approval of any new construction or remodel project.

Roof

- » **BD-17:** For larger buildings, rooflines should step and vary as the natural ridgelines do, and roof forms should step down from higher levels to lower levels to provide better scale and interest.
- » **BD-18:** Steeper roof pitches of 6:12 or greater are encouraged.
- » **BD-19:** Roofs may be given interest by repeating roof forms on lower volumes, entry porches, and smaller buildings. Ensure that intersections between roof forms do not trap debris that may ignite in a fire.



Home with repeating roof forms that provide interest.

- » **BD-20:** Flat roofs are discouraged, except where they link larger building masses together.
- » **BD-21:** Mechanical equipment, plumbing vents, and other projections should be clustered together and screened by roof monitors or similar architectural elements to keep roof planes as simple and clear as possible.
- » **BD-22:** All roofing materials shall be of non-reflective materials and shall be of colors that complement the area.



Entry porches at the front of homes.



Prominent oak tree in the Greater Higgins area.

Landscaping

Native oaks and grasses dominate slopes and the flatter, low-lying terrain within the Greater Higgins Area, providing definition to the Combie Road and Highway 49 corridors. As development occurs and native vegetation is removed, it is important to replace the native vegetation with landscaping, using native species wherever possible. In addition to providing a visual buffer between roadways and development and between different land uses, well-planned landscaping will enhance the aesthetic quality of the built environment.

- » **LA-1:** Refer to Table A.1 for a recommended plant list with drought-tolerant, deer-resistant, and low-maintenance plant species.
- » **LA-2:** Landscaping should include an abundance of trees, both deciduous and evergreen, providing shade and color during spring and summer months.
- » **LA-3:** Existing on-site trees should be incorporated into the overall landscaping design. New landscaping should respect and utilize existing landscape elements, particularly native trees, including Blue Oak, Valley Oak, Gray Pine, and Interior Live Oak.
- » **LA-4:** Landscaping should be used to define pedestrian areas and open spaces.
- » **LA-5:** All cut slopes shall be landscaped or otherwise stabilized to avoid erosion and visual impacts.
- » **LA-6:** Plant materials should always be distributed throughout parking areas, with larger islands and plantings alongside parking stalls.
- » **LA-7:** Trees and shrubs should screen storage areas and outdoor equipment; however, consideration should first be given to relocating or architecturally screening unattractive features.

- » **LA-8:** Create fire-resistant landscaping in all parts of the project outside of building footprints. Concepts to be followed include the following suggestions from the CAL FIRE website:
 - Create fire-resistant hardscape zones through the use of stone walls, paved patios, and driveways.
 - Use rock, mulch, and tended flower beds and gardens as ground cover and firebreaks.
 - Select high-moisture plants that grow close to the ground and have low sap or resin content.
 - Select fire-resistant shrubs such as rockrose, manzanita, currant, and buckwheat.

- » **LA-9:** In addition to fire-resistant landscaping, ensure the use of non-invasive, drought-tolerant landscaping, except for limited areas of ornamental landscaping in areas near buildings or special gathering places.



Drought-tolerant landscaping with the use of rock, mulch, and plants.

Table A.1: Drought-Tolerant, Deer-Resistant, and Low Maintenance Plant List

Name	Location	Size	Special Features
Trees			
Celtis australis - Hackberry	Sun - Part Shade	25'-40'	Deciduous - good street tree
Ginkgo bilboa 'Fairmount'	Sun - Part Shade	30'-70'	Deciduous - fall color yellow
Lagerstroemia faurei (Standard)	Sun	15'-30'	Flowers in summer - fall color
Pinus halepensis - Aleppo Pine	Sun	30'-60'	Good in poor soil and arid climate - moderate growth

Name	Location	Size	Special Features
Pinus nigra - Austrian Black Pine	Sun	40'	Slow to moderate growth - good street tree
Pistachia chinensis	Sun	30'-50'	Fall color - yellow, orange, or red
Quercus ilex - Holly Oak	Sun	40'-70'	Evergreen - moderate growth
Quercus phellos - Willow Oak	Sun	50'-70'	Deciduous - moderate growth
Quercus suber - Cork Oak	Sun	50'-70'	Evergreen - moderate growth
Quercus wislizenii	Sun - Part Shade	70'	Evergreen - acorns
Quercus lobata	Sun - Part Shade	70'	Deciduous - sprawling branches
Robinia amigua 'Purple Robe'	Sun - Part Shade	25' - 40'	Deciduous - purple flowers
Shrubs			
Artemisia 'Powis Castle'	Sun	2'-4'	Silver Foliage
Artemisia 'Silver Mound'	Sun	1'-2'	Silver Foliage
Baccharis pilularis	Sun	3'-6'	Evergreen
Ceanothus 'Dark Star'	Sun - Part Shade	5'T/8'W	Blue flowers in spring
Ceanothus 'Skylark'	Sun - Part Shade	3'T/5'W	Blue flowers in spring
Cistus ladanifer - Crimson-Spot Rock Rose	Sun	3'T/6'W	White flowers in spring
Cistus purpureus - Orchid Rock Rose	Sun	3'-4'	Orchid flowers in spring
Cistus salviifolius - Sage leaf Rock Rose	Sun	2'T/6'W	Pink flowers in spring
Eriogonum fasciculatum	Sun - Part Shade	3'	White to pink flowers spring-fall
Frangula californica	Sun - Shade	6'-8'	Evergreen with berries
Heteromeles arbutifolia	Sun - Shade	6'-10'	Evergreen with berries

Name	Location	Size	Special Features
Hypericum calycinum-St. Johnswort	Sun - Part Shade	18"	Yellow flowers in the spring
Juniperus chinensis 'Old Gold'	Sun	3'-5'	Evergreen - with green and gold foliage
Juniperus conferta 'Blue Pacific'	Sun	1'T/6'W	Blue green conifer type foliage
Ribes sanguineum	Sun - Shade	3'-4'	Pink flowers in spring
Rosmarinus officinalis 'Huntington Blue' or 'Lockwood de Forest'	Sun	1'-2'	Trailing Rosemary - blue flowers
Stachys byzantina-Lambs Ear	Sun - Part Shade	1'	Foliage is wooly gray - pink flower spikes
Vitis californica	Part Shade	15'-30'	Fruit, fall color
Color (Optional) Small Areas to be Planted for a Longer Bloom Time - May Substitute Dryland Wildflowers			
Achillea - Common Yarrow	Sun - Light Shade	24" - 36"	Pink, yellow, red, or white
Achillea tomentosa - Wolly Yarrow	Sun - Light Shade	6" - 10"	Yellow
Calendula officinalis - Pot Marigold	Sun	12" - 24"	Annuals in winter - yellow or orange
Coreopsis grandiflora	Sun - Part Shade	12" - 30"	Flowers are yellowish orange
Erysimum - Siberian Wallflower	Sun	2'- 4'	Purple flowers - long bloom time
Eschscholzia Californica - Poppy	Sun	8"-12"	Orange flowers - spring
Euryops pectinatus	Sun	3'	Yellow flowers long bloom time
Mimulus aurantiacus	Sun - Shade	2'-3'	Orange flowers spring and summer, evergreen
Nandina domestica 'Compacta'	Sun - Part Shade	3'-4'	Evergreen - red foliage in winter
Narcissus - Daffodils	Sun - Part Shade	8"-24"	Yellow, orange, or white
Penstemon heterophyllus	Sun	1'-3'	Blue - violet flowers spring and summer, evergreen

Name	Location	Size	Special Features
Phormium tenax 'Maori Sunrise' or 'Yellow-Wave'	Sun - Part Shade	2'-4'	Strap-like foliage - purplish, red and yellow
Pinus mugo - Mugo Pine	Sun - Part Shade	2'-4'	Pine shrub
Romneya coulteri - Matilija Poppy	Sun	8' Tall	Gray green foliage - 9" white flowers with orange center - CA native
Rosmarinus officinalis 'Collingwood Ingram'	Sun	2'-3'	Blue green foliage - blue flowers in spring and fall
Rosmarinus officinalis 'Majorca Pink'	Sun	2'-4'	Blue green foliage - pink flowers in spring and fall
Rosmarinus officinalis 'Tuscan Blue'	Sun	4'-6'	Blue green foliage - dark blue flowers in spring and fall
Salvia clevelandii	Sun	4'-5'	Blue - violet flowers spring and summer, evergreen
Santolina chamaecyparissus - Lavender Cotton	Sun	2'	Gray foliage - yellow flowers in spring
Santolina rosmarinifolius (vireos)	Sun	2'	Green foliage - yellow flowers in spring
Teucrium fruticans Bus Germander	Sun	4'-8'	Gray green foliage - blue flowers in spring
Teucruim chamaedrys - Germander	Sun	1'-2'	Green foliage - pink flowers in spring
Zauschneria (Epilobium) California Fuchsia	Sun	1'-2'	Scarlet flowers - bloom time summer to fall - gray foliage - CA native
Groundcover			
Arctostaphylos - Low Manzanitia	Sun - Part Shade	2'T/8'W	Low green foliage - small pink flowers in spring
Cotoneaster horizontalis	Sun - Part Shade	2'T/6'W	Semi-evergreen foliage - red berries in fall
Festuca californica	Sun - Shade	2'-3'	Evergreen, blue - green foliage
Genista spachiana (Racemosa) Spanish Broom	Sun	1'T/3'W	Gray green foliage - green foliage-yellow flowers in spring
Helianthemum nummularium - Sun Rose	Sun	8" T/3'W	Flowers in summer - red, orange, yellow, and white
Muhlenbergia rigens	Sun - Shade	4'-5'	Evergreen, attractive flower stems
Salvia 'Bee's Bliss'	Sun	1'-2'Tx6'-8'W	Blue-lavender flowers spring and summer, evergreen

Public Art

There is a high degree of interest among community members in the Greater Higgins area in public art. Guidelines regarding the creation and siting of public art are as follows:

- » **PA-1:** Public art should be sited where community members gather, for example at a plaza, community center, or library.
- » **PA-2:** There is less interest in public art in the landscape, away from buildings and people.
- » **PA-3:** Public art painted on utility boxes should be considered to soften the appearance of these utilitarian structures.
- » **PA-4:** The theme of public art should respond to the rural character of the area. There is a preference for traditional or historic subjects, for example, to reflect the mining, ranching, or agricultural history of the region.

Lighting

In a rural area like the Greater Higgins area, lighting should be used carefully to preserve the maximum enjoyment of the night sky and to not impact nocturnal wildlife, while still providing light in key areas for safety.

- » **LI-1:** All lighting should be thoughtfully designed and compatible with the rural context of the surroundings by providing the minimum amount of light necessary and LI-2: designed to minimize off-site glare or spill onto neighboring streets or properties.



More traditional type of public art with the use of statues.

- » **LI-3:** LI-4: Directional and indirect lighting should be used for pedestrian illumination. Directional lighting is lighting directed onto a path of travel. Indirect lighting is illumination of landscape features, retaining walls, or other features that cast reflected light in an area.
- » **LI-5:** Building mounted lights shall be limited to those needed for safe and secure building access. External building light fixtures should be fully shielded and directed downward. "Wall packs" are strongly discouraged.
- » **LI-6:** The visual design of external light fixtures, poles, and their foundations should be compatible with and complementary to the style and scale of the surrounding development.



Pedestrian light fixture along a sidewalk.



Lighting at Holiday Market that is fully shielded and downward directed for pedestrian illumination.

- » **LI-7:** Lighting levels should be no more than required to perform the various tasks for which they are intended. Internal street and driveway lighting should be limited to the minimum necessary for public safety and security of residents and visitors.
- » **LI-8:** During nonbusiness hours, lighting should be at levels only necessary for security purposes.
- » **LI-9:** Given the proximity to the dark canyons and rural surroundings of the Greater Higgins area, lighting should be designed and installed using the five principals for responsible outdoor lighting as provided by the International Dark-Sky Association (<https://www.darksky.org/our-work/lighting/lighting-principles>):

- » **USEFUL** – All light should have a clear purpose.
 - Before installing or replacing a light, determine if light is needed. Consider how the use of light will impact the area, including wildlife and the environment. Consider using reflective paints or self-luminous markers for signs, curbs, and steps to reduce the need for permanently installed outdoor lighting.
- » **TARGETED** – Light should be directed only to where needed.
 - Use shielding and careful aiming to target the direction of the light beam so that it points downward and does not spill beyond where it is needed.
- » **LOW LIGHT LEVELS** – Light should be no brighter than necessary.
 - Use the lowest light level required. Be mindful of surface conditions as some surfaces may reflect more light into the night sky than intended.
- » **CONTROLLED** – Light should be used only when it is useful.
 - Use controls such as timers or motion detectors to ensure that light is available when it is needed, dimmed when possible, and turned off when not needed.
- » **COLOR** – Use warmer color lights where possible.
 - Limit the amount of shorter wavelength (blue-violet) light to the least amount needed. Light where you need it, when you need it, in the amount needed, and no more.

Signage

Nicely designed signage can lend a feeling of quality to a development, while garish or oversized signage often gives a negative message. These guidelines will ensure signage doesn't overwhelm the character of the development.

- » **S-1:** Every non-residential project shall submit a preliminary sign plan for review as part of any development permit application. Any plans for temporary signage shall be included. Plans shall depict the overall sign design for all temporary and permanent signs. The sizes, color scheme, lighting detail, and location proposed for each sign shall be submitted with a final comprehensive sign plan at the building permit stage.



Monument sign in a landscaped area with drought-tolerant vegetation.

- » **S-2:** Sign colors and materials should reflect the overall character of the Higgins Area and complement the design of each site's development.
- » **S-3:** Wall signs shall be positioned on the building to complement the style and proportion of the entire building facade. Signs shall not extend above the roof fascia.



Attractive signage for a retail store on a building façade.



Attractive signage for a retail store on a building façade.

- » **S-4:** Temporary signage shall be located on-site and in close proximity to the uses identified. Temporary signs shall not be illuminated.
- » **S-5:** The display of special event banners, flags, and similar advertising devices, including sandwich boards and similar signs, shall not be displayed more than ten days before an event and shall be removed within three days of the end of the event.
- » **S-6:** All monument and freestanding signs shall be placed in landscaped areas.
- » **S-7:** Materials appropriate for signage in the Greater Higgins area include carved or sand blasted wood signs, painted wood signs, and wood/ masonry combinations for the base of freestanding signs.

- » **S-8:** Internally illuminated (cabinet) lighting is not allowed. All lighting should either be externally illuminated with spotlights or separate individual letters with the wall surface behind illuminated by floodlights.
- » **S-9:** Directional signage should be of simple design communicating with a minimum of words and graphics which direct or inform.

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED)

Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) is a crime prevention philosophy based on the theory that the proper design and effective use of the built environment can lead to a reduction in the fear and incidence of crime, as well as an improvement in the quality of life.

CPTED is effective because of the concept of “defensible space.” This concept suggests that space in the human environment is defensible, and if it is or appears to be guarded, it is less likely that a crime or unsafe event would happen there. There are four strategies to help with this below, with associated design guidelines for each:

Natural Surveillance

Natural surveillance is the design of an area that places physical features, activities, and people in locations that maximize the ability to see what is occurring in a given space. An example of natural surveillance is an open area visible from a sidewalk or street. This visibility allows pedestrians and motorists passing by to see into the area and detect activity there. New development should follow these guidelines as a minimum:

- » **CPTED-1:** Adjacent to public streets and open spaces, design landscaping to provide visibility and properly trim and maintain ground landscaping to a maximum height of 42" and trees to a minimum height of 7' which allows clear visibility to view the area.
- » **CPTED-2:** Use a greater number of appropriately scaled lighting fixtures to illuminate the pedestrian environment, rather than a few taller fixtures. Pedestrian-scaled lighting along walkways should be no higher than 20' and spaced no farther than 30'.
- » **CPTED-3:** New development shall orient a minimum of one window or door opening onto each side of the development that borders a public street or open space.

Territorial Reinforcement

Territorial reinforcement is the design of an area that clearly defines its boundaries and ownership. All space can be defined as public, private, or semi-public/semi-private. The underlying principle of territorial reinforcement is that the transition between spaces should be clearly identifiable for both the user and others in the area. Territorial reinforcement allows legitimate users to develop a sense of ownership over a space and act as guardians. New development should provide the following:

- » **CPTED-4:** Decorative fencing or landscaping should be placed around the semi-private outdoor patio of a business or residence adjacent to a public street or open space. The fencing or landscaping should be no greater than 42" tall.
- » **CPTED-5:** Proper signage that communicates the ownership of a space and the rules of its use should be provided where businesses use outdoor space.



Ample windows on front and side façades of homes.

Access Control

Access control is the physical guidance of movement to and from a space by the placement of entrances, exits, fencing, landscaping, locks, and other barriers. This CPTED strategy works because it not only limits and guides movement, but it also causes improper access to be noticed more readily. The following should be provided in new development:

- » **CPTED-6:** Provide separated and well-marked pedestrian pathways through parking lots and private open spaces, which give direction to the users and create a safer path of travel by alerting observers to the concentrated presence of pedestrians.

- » **CPTED-7:** Place bollards across pedestrian entrances to private or public open spaces to prevent vehicle entry but allow pedestrian entry. If needed, bollards may be made removable for emergency vehicle access.
- » **CPTED-8:** Limit the number of pedestrian entries into a private or public open area to no more than two along each street frontage, to control access and provide better observation of who is entering and leaving a space.

Maintenance

Maintenance is the upkeep of an area or building. It demonstrates that someone cares about a space, is watching, and will defend the property against crime. A property that is run-down or in disrepair is likely to attract non-legitimate activities. Routine maintenance or clean-up can have a great deal of impact in making an area unattractive to offenders. This strategy directly addresses the fear of crime in a community by creating perceptions of responsibility and caring in neighborhoods. All new development shall be prepared to follow the following guidelines

- » **CPTED-9:** New development shall provide signage indicating who is responsible for the physical maintenance of a development or business.
- » **CPTED-10:** Property owners shall commit to immediately addressing broken windows, unkempt landscape, or other upkeep issues.



Pedestrian pathway through a parking lot.

Additional Guidelines for Multi-Family Residential Development

Where multi-family residential projects are allowed in the Plan Area, projects should be carefully sited and designed to fit well in the natural and built context so prized in the Greater Higgins area. The Multi-family Residential guidelines apply only to multi-family residential projects with more than two residential units on a single lot, or a mixed-use project with residential and commercial uses. The guidelines below shall be used in addition to, and not in place of, other guidelines in this Appendix. This section starts with some general guidelines for multi-family residential development, followed by guidelines for several different types of development, from cottages to garden apartments.

General Multi-family Residential Development Guidelines

- » **MF-1:** Multi-family building elements should be arranged in discrete clusters separated by generous landscaped areas and set into environment in order to break down the scale and create a sense of a village.
- » **MF-2:** Buildings along entry drives into the site should have entries facing the drive and façades should have windows at street-level where feasible to ensure natural surveillance from the units, a concept also called “eyes on the street.”
- » **MF-3:** Where mixed-use projects are developed, commercial spaces should be closer to the street than residential units, or if residential is above commercial, the commercial entries should face the street frontage or a plaza area accessible from the street.
- » **MF-4:** Where mixed-use projects are developed, provide a distinction between residential and commercial parking.
- » **MF-5:** Gates into developments are highly discouraged.
- » **MF-6:** Fire-safe driveway standards shall be followed, including a minimum width of 10’ and clearance height of 15’. Turn-arounds shall be provided on driveways exceeding 150’ in length.



Multi-family buildings arranged in clusters separated by landscaping.

Guidelines for Multi-family Housing Types

The following residential development types are suitable for the character of the Greater Higgins area. Along with following the general guidelines in the previous section, the guidelines below give additional guidance for each type.



Cottage court neighborhood facing onto a courtyard and pedestrian pathway.



One-story cottage courts.

Cottage Courts

Cottage court neighborhoods are small scale clusters of modestly sized houses. They are linked by a driveway around the outside of the houses, leaving the inside for a common space, which is usually a landscaped courtyard. These smaller size homes (around 1,200 square feet) are generally rented units on a single property with common driveways and open space.

- » **MF-7:** Front doors of cottages should face onto the central common space. This central space is pedestrian access for residents and visitors. Private outdoor space in front of cottages in the common, called dooryards, should be a minimal area leaving ample space for walkways and common landscaping. The dooryard may be fenced with a 42"-high fence maximum, which should be visually permeable.
- » **MF-8:** Cottages should be one or two stories.
- » **MF-9:** Vehicle access should be from a loop driveway behind the cottages. Parking should be along the driveway or at the rear of the site. Parking can be surface parking, carports, enclosed garages, or a combination.
- » **MF-10:** Cottages closest to the public street should face the street with windows, a front door, and a porch. Alternatively, the door could face the common space with a porch that wraps around to the public street side of the cottage.

Cottage Drives

These are cottage homes arranged along a small private street with front doors facing the street. Like single family subdivisions but on a smaller scale, they would be more affordable than typical single-family residences due to the smaller size and being on a single property. The character of the street is important; it should feel like a real street with curbs and gutters on both sides and street lighting. To meet fire code the drive may need to have a turnaround, or loop back to the public street.

- » **MF-11:** Front doors of cottages should face onto the private drive. Cottages are close to the drive and dooryards are usually quite small. The dooryard may be fenced with a 42"-high fence maximum, which should be visually permeable. Although the cottages have a private rear yard, a small gathering space the size of a cottage lot should be provided as a gathering space and play area for kids.
- » **MF-12:** Cottages should be one or two stories.
- » **MF-13:** Vehicle access should be from the private drive. Parking access is from the drive for each cottage. Parking should be provided behind the front line of the house. Parking can be an open space, in a carport, or a garage. Single width tandem parking is encouraged with 12' driveways. This is a more efficient use of the property, and the narrow driveways allow curb space for ample on-street parking.
- » **MF-14:** Cottages should face the street or private drive with windows, a front door, and a porch.



Cottage drive homes arranged along a small street with front doors facing the street.



Illustration from Rincon del Rio showing cottage with windows, door, and porch facing drive.

Image Credit: Michael Kent Murphy Architects.



Attached townhouses facing onto the main street or pedestrian streets.



Townhouses facing public street with covered entries.

Townhouses

Townhouses are attached units side-by-side. It is a very common housing type because the layout is efficient and allows for fairly large units. Townhouses generally have front doors on one side and garages on the back side. The front doors look onto a public street, private drive, or common open space, while the garages are usually lined up along an alley with garage doors on both sides.

- » **MF-15:** If possible, the first row of townhouses should face onto the public street with front doors and porches providing pedestrian access from the street. If sites are narrow, townhouses may be arranged to be perpendicular to the public street. In that case, the units closest to the public street should have front doors and porches that face the street. Internal circulation is via one or more internal streets connecting to alleys where garages are located.
- » **MF-16:** The front doors of townhouses should have a roof or porch providing protection. The space next to the porch is used for private gardens, while the space in front of the porch should be shared space used for common landscaping and pedestrian paths.
- » **MF-17:** Townhouses can be either two or three stories. If three stories, the top story should be stepped back at least 6' from the front façade to break up the massing and give the appearance of a smaller building.
- » **MF-18:** Vehicle access should be from the alleys off the internal drive. Most townhouses have two car garages, either two spaces wide or two tandem spaces (end to end). Visitor parking should be provided as on-street parking along the internal street or in small groups along the way.

- » **MF-19:** Front facades should have ample windows along with the front door to give a human scale. The materials on the front façade should consist of quality materials like cementitious siding, stone, or brick, while the rear aspect facing alleys is more utilitarian and can use economical materials such as stucco.

Duplexes, Triplexes, and Fourplexes

Duplexes, triplexes, and fourplexes (or plex housing) are two to four units of housing within a single structure. The individual units are modest in size, but the combination of two, three, or four units makes for a structure similar in scale to a large residence. This housing type fits well in single-family neighborhoods. They fit smoothly into that transitional zone between single-family residential and commercial.

- » **MF-20:** Plex housing is typically arranged in separate buildings along a public street, or an internal street network. One type of triplex which is economical is a single-story ground floor unit with two units side by side above. The ground floor unit should be made accessible to Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Another type of plex housing is a two-story fourplex. Often, plex housing is arranged with small surface parking lots between every two buildings, but other arrangements work well also.
- » **MF-21:** The front doors of plex housing should have a roof or porch providing protection. Private open space (a dooryard) should be provided at the ground near the entry to each unit. The dooryard may be fenced with a 42"-high fence maximum, which should be visually permeable. Since there is typically not dedicated rear yards, all plex housing should provide a common space with areas where kids can play safely.



Duplex with two units in a single structure.

- » **MF-22:** Plex housing can be either two or three stories. If three stories, the top story should be stepped back at least 6' from the front façade to break up the massing and give the appearance of a smaller building.
- » **MF-23:** Vehicle access should be from internal streets off the public street. Parking can be provided as open spaces or covered with carports. Visitor parking should be provided as on-street parking along the internal street.
- » **MF-24:** Front facades facing the internal street should have ample windows along with the front door to give a human scale. The materials on the front façade should consist of quality materials like cementitious siding, stone, or brick, while the rear can use economical materials such as stucco.

Garden Apartments

Garden apartments (or condominiums) are an affordable housing type. Young people and seniors who do not want the responsibility of keeping up a house and yard are good candidates for this type of housing. Garden apartments are usually two or three stories and are arranged around a common landscaped courtyard. Often, they have amenities such as a common room or exercise room. The building should have a façade that faces the street behind a landscaped setback. Parking should not be located between the street and the building.

- » **MF-25:** The building should be set facing the public street with convenient access for pedestrians to connect to the neighborhood. An internal street should bypass the building, leading to parking behind. An entry is often at the side, facing the internal street. The entry should be clearly visible, with a protective roof and a welcoming set of doors and windows.
- » **MF-26:** The internal street should have a separated walkway and lighting. Street trees at regular intervals should be provided from the street to the end of the building. The internal street could also have on-street parking to handle visitor parking if desired.
- » **MF-27:** Garden apartments should have sloped roofs if feasible. These could be arranged in a hip or gable roof form. If a flat roof is unavoidable, the building wall should have a prominent cornice at the top.
- » **MF-28:** Since garden apartments often have longer walls than other housing types, special attention should be paid to the façade. Long walls should be broken up with recesses at no more than 50' intervals. Tower elements, pop-outs, and bay windows give opportunities to add roof forms to the façade even if the main volume is a flat roof.

- » **MF-29:** Several window sizes should be composed in a rhythm that breaks down the scale rather than repeating the same window over a long façade.



Illustration from Rincon del Rio showing condominium building with façade broken up with entry elements and variation in color.

Image Credit: Michael Kent Murphy Architects



Internal street with lighting within garden apartment complex.



**NEVADA
COUNTY**
CALIFORNIA



ORANGE COUNTY • **BAY AREA** • SACRAMENTO • CENTRAL COAST • LOS ANGELES • INLAND EMPIRE

www.PlaceWorks.com