

GREATER HIGGINS AREA PLAN

COMMUNITY WORKSHOP SUMMARY Workshop #1: Community Visioning

Date/Time of Meeting: Thursday, October 21, 2021, 6:00-7:30 pm
Format: Virtual (Zoom)

OVERVIEW

The first community workshop for the Greater Higgins Area Plan was attended by approximately 60 community members. It took place in an online format via Zoom.

The meeting began with a welcome greeting from Nevada County Supervisor Ed Scofield (District 2), followed by a PowerPoint presentation led by PlaceWorks (project consultant) that included project/planning background, purpose and objectives of the Area Plan, Plan area boundary considerations, and overview of the main topics to be covered during the focus group discussion portion of the workshop.

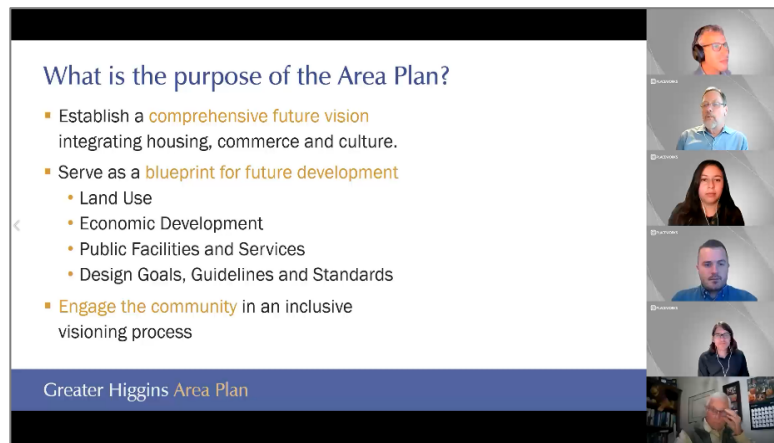
A brief Q&A session followed the presentation. There was not an opportunity during the meeting to answer every question, so all questions asked by community members are posted on the project website in the “Frequently Asked Questions” section (www.GreaterHigginsAreaPlan.com).

After the brief presentation, attendees participated in “breakout room”

visioning exercise in groups of 10-15 people. Each room discussed several topics, with a “Visual Guide” shared on the screen to show images and questions to help guide discussion (located at the end of this report). The topics, guiding questions, and some takeaways are described in the next section of this summary.

Following the breakout room discussions, notetakers (from the project team) for each topic reported back to the entire workshop, highlighting key items and themes from their group.

Following the discussion groups’ presentations to the entire workshop group, PlaceWorks briefly described the project’s next steps/project timeline and the upcoming Workshop #2 in January/February to discuss further refined challenges and opportunities. The workshop adjourned at 7:30 pm.



FOCUS GROUPS – KEY TAKEAWAYS

This section summarizes key themes and takeaways from the focus group discussion. In general, the items below represent shared values amongst multiple participants from different discussion groups; it is not a full list of the many diverse ideas and opinions that were presented by participants.

Preliminary Plan Area

Guiding Question

1. Are there any suggestions or comments about the proposed Plan Area boundaries?
 - In general, participants supported the preliminary plan area and felt it was consistent with the Area Plan's purpose.



Topic 1: Community Strengths and Identity-- Qualities or characteristics that community members value and cherish and see as an advantage compared to other sectors of their community.

Guiding Questions

1. What are the existing strengths and character of the Greater Higgins Area?
2. Is there a community identity, and is it important to have one?

Key Takeaways

- **Community Feel**
 - The rural character and natural landscape attract people to live in the area and should be retained.
 - Concentrate growth around the Holiday Shopping center to minimize development elsewhere.
 - Preserve Mountain views and ridges as they define the area's feel.
- **Community Identity**
 - Need for community space to foster community identity.
 - Consider bringing in more community activities and events to foster a sense of identity.
 - New dining and commercial spaces need to be developed to attract folks to the area.
 - Schools are a major factor attracting new residents to the area.

Topic 2: Housing and Development – Type and character of new commercial, residential, and other community-serving uses, as well as infrastructure improvements.

Guiding Questions

1. What new commercial and development is desired or needed?
2. What types of new housing are needed and where should they be located?

Key Takeaways

- **Development**
 - Dense development should be concentrated in Higgins Corner to create a village-type community center.
 - Strategize development to be very targeted and focused to avoid sprawl or overcrowding.
 - Focus development for pedestrians to support a walkable, village-type area in Higgins Corner.

- Secure higher quality internet services to the area, and include more-reliable internet access with new development.
 - Ensure sufficient infrastructure for power, roads, water, etc. are in place before new development and that utilities for current residents are not affected.
 - Incentivize retail development that can bring in tax revenue for the County.
 - Great need for restaurants and other activities for residents.
 - Consider new restaurants in the Holiday Market center or vacant Old Wagon Restaurant.
 - Use Holiday Market as a model for future development styles.
- **Housing Types**
 - Prioritize housing for seniors to allow aging residents to stay in the Higgins Area.
 - Housing of increased density (e.g., townhomes or duplexes) should be centered in the Higgins Corner area, walkable to services.
 - Consider mixed use housing within Holiday Market center.
 - Uncertain Greater Higgins area can accommodate dense or new housing, due to lack of evacuation routes and existing congestion.
 - Dense housing in the wrong location would negatively affect the small-town rural feel of the community.

Topic 3: Recreation and Public Space- Places to play, gather, exercise, and enjoy nature and the outdoors

Guiding Questions

1. *What kinds of new parks, open space and recreation facilities are needed?*
2. *Is there a need or desire for a public gathering/community space?*

Key Takeaways

- **Community Spaces**
 - Incorporate a farmers' market or flea market to help build with a sense of community identity.
 - There could be a potential to focus on existing community spaces (Lions Club, school facilities) to preserve vacant spaces for commercial uses.
 - Prioritize using existing partnerships with schools as community/gathering centers (see above bullet).
 - Community needs a town square where they can all meet and connect.
 - Residents tend to go to Auburn for entertainment: need to keep them in the Greater Higgins Area.
- **Parks and Trails**
 - Parks and trails are needed in the Plan Area for public use.
 - New bicycle infrastructure is needed throughout entire Higgins Area.
 - Extend bike infrastructure to schools, Lions Clubhouse, and Highway 49.
 - Update and enhance the Higgins trail by improving built sections and extending it in both directions (see above bullet).
 - Residents would like to have the option of using golf carts to get to places in the community.
 - Include better pedestrian and bicycle access along Combie Road.
 - Prioritize outdoor and open spaces to increase accessibility to areas for evacuation during emergency events.

Topic 4: Transportation – Traveling around by vehicle, walking, biking, and transit, and ensuring effective emergency evacuation routes.

Guiding Question

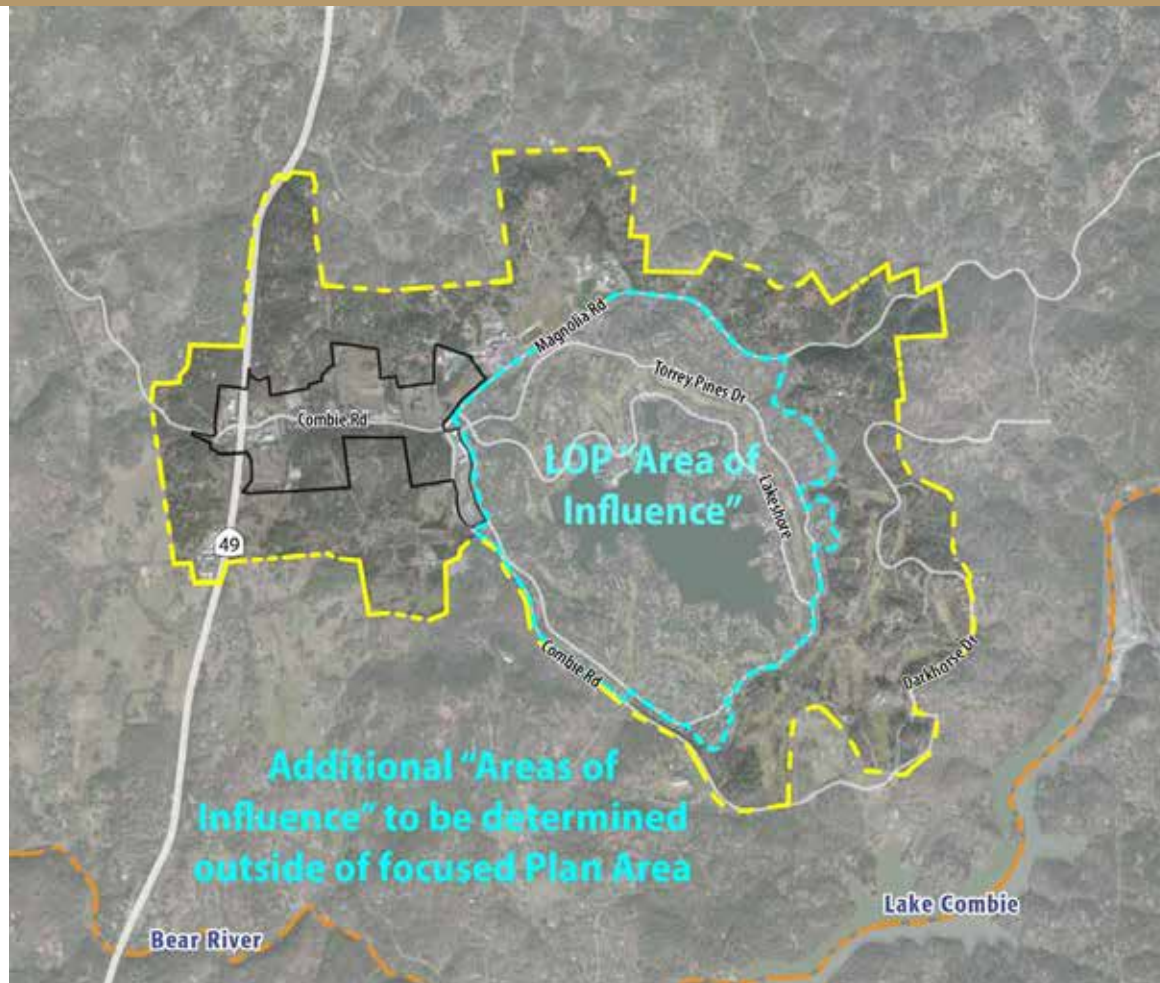
1. What ways should travel be enhanced for drivers, bicyclists, walkers or transit users?

Key Takeaways

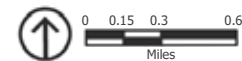
- **Pedestrian, Bicycle and Road Improvements**
 - In general, add new pedestrian facilities and trails throughout the Plan Area.
 - Residents would like to use Combie Rd to access Holiday Market via walking, rolling, and using golf carts. Recent roadwork on Combie Rd did not address pedestrian needs.
 - Ensure there is adequate transportation services and infrastructure prior to adopting any plans resulting in higher population and higher traffic volumes.
 - Portions of Highway 49 within planning area should be updated with safety in mind (e.g., stop signs/lights, turning lanes, speed bumps, etc.).
 - Trails need to be adequately served and regulated to ensure safety of residents.
- **Roadways and Evacuation Routes**
 - Some roads are old and unsafe.
 - There is congestion in some areas, especially at Magnolia/Combie and along SR-49.
 - Greater Higgins Area only has one main way in and out, and it is always backed up regardless of the day.
 - Improve roads to increase safety and evacuation routes.
 - Consider adding a road to the east connecting to Interstate 80 to serve as alternate evacuation route.
 - Consider how increased population and density can affect already-problematic evacuation routes.
 - The Area Plan needs to address evacuation during emergency events.

Discussion Group Visual Guide

PLAN AREA



- Plan Area (Preliminary)
- Lake of the Pines CDP Boundary
- Higgins Area Plan (2000) Boundary
- County Boundary



1. COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND IDENTITY

- What are the existing strengths and character of the Greater Higgins Area?
- Is there a community identity, and is it important to have one?



2. HOUSING AND DEVELOPMENT VISION

- What new commercial development is desired or needed?
- What types of new housing are needed and where should they be located?

EXAMPLES OF EXISTING RETAIL AND HOUSING IN THE AREA

Higgins Corner Shopping Center



Cascade Crossing Near Higgins Corner



Lake of the Pines Center - Combie Rd



House Along Magnolia Rd



EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL HOUSING TYPES

Rural Village



Townhomes



Multifamily Village



Townhomes



3. RECREATION AND PUBLIC SPACE VISION

- What kinds of new parks, open space, and recreation facilities are needed?
- Is there a need or desire for a public gathering/community space?

EXAMPLES OF NEW AMENITIES

Picnic Area



Wilderness Trails



Town Square



Flexible Gathering Space



Nature Play



Multipurpose Trails



Farmers Market



Multipurpose Shelter



4. TRANSPORTATION VISION

- What ways should travel be enhanced for drivers, bicyclists, walkers, or transit users?

EXISTING TRAVEL



EXAMPLES OF POTENTIAL WALKING & BIKING AMENITIES

