

MEMORANDUM

DATE February 17, 2022
TO Kyle Smith, Associate Planner
County of Nevada, Planning Department
FROM Bruce Brubaker and Janet Chang
SUBJECT Greater Higgins Area Plan Existing Conditions Analysis

Introduction

This memo is part of an initial task for the Greater Higgins Area Plan (Plan) in describing existing conditions of the Plan's study area (Plan Area), including land use, physical form and community character, environmental conditions, development potential, and mobility or transportation. The existing conditions analysis will inform the planning process for development within the Plan Area.

The Plan will establish a comprehensive future vision for the Plan Area and serve as a blueprint for future development over the next twenty years, including for land use; economic development; public facilities and services; and design goals, guidelines, and standards. The Plan will focus on areas that have potential for change to guide future growth that contributes to community vitality and creates a more compact resident and commercial development. Areas surrounding the Plan Area are primarily zoned for agriculture, which are unlikely to change.

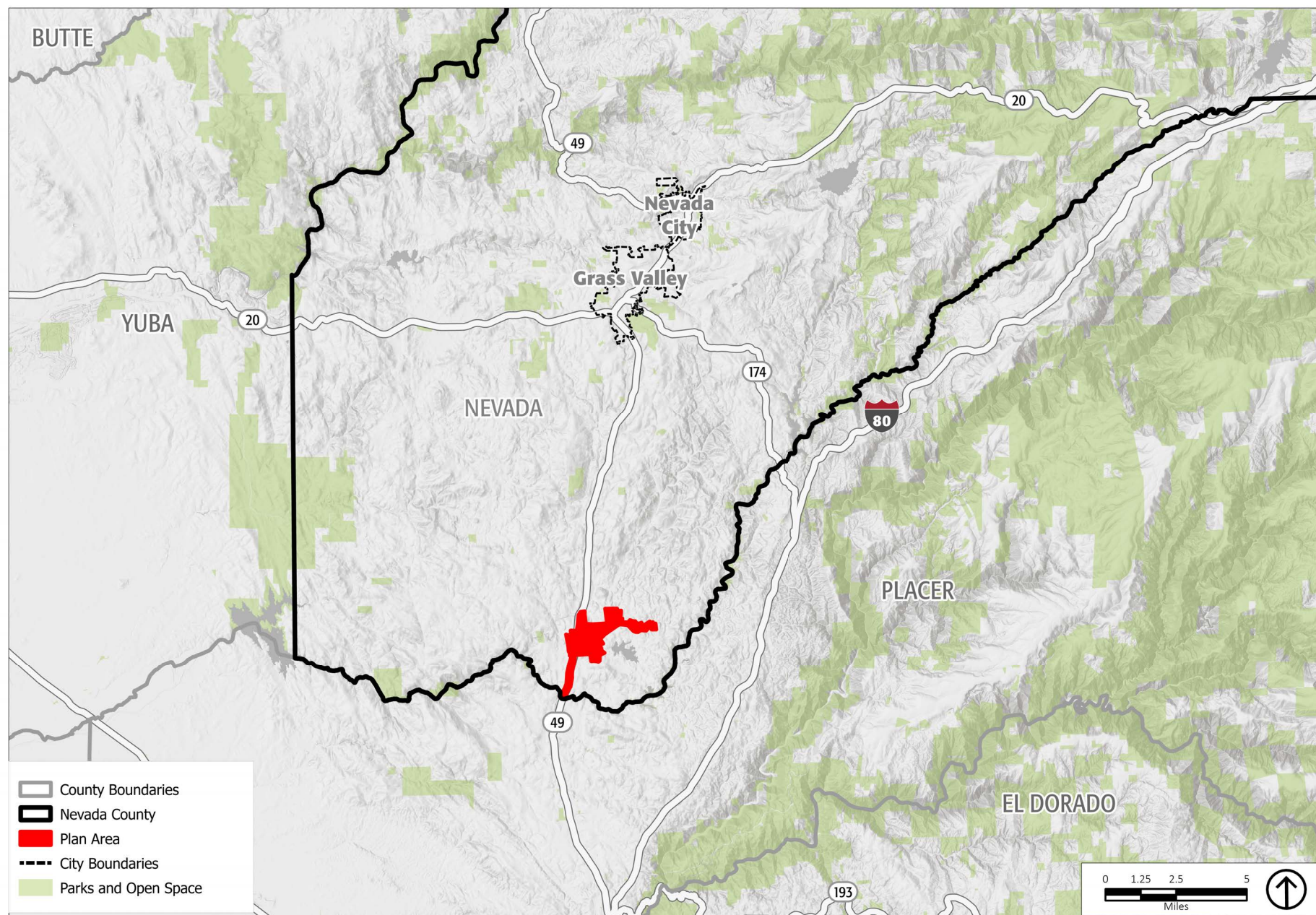
The Plan Area will be the focus area for policies and recommendations, but the planning process will engage residents from inside and outside the Plan Area.

CONTEXT

The Plan Area is situated in the southern end of Nevada County (or South County), with Sacramento to the southwest and Lake Tahoe to the east. The Plan Area is close to the southern and eastern boundaries of Nevada County, which border Placer County (see Figure 1).

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. The cities of Grass Valley and Nevada City are located to the north, Colfax to the northeast, and Auburn to the south.

The County's 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.



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

Figure 1
Regional Context Map

PLAN AREA

The Plan is an update and expansion to Nevada County's (County) 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 Combie Road to the entrance to Bear River High School, as well as the Lake of the Pines subdivision (see Figure 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.

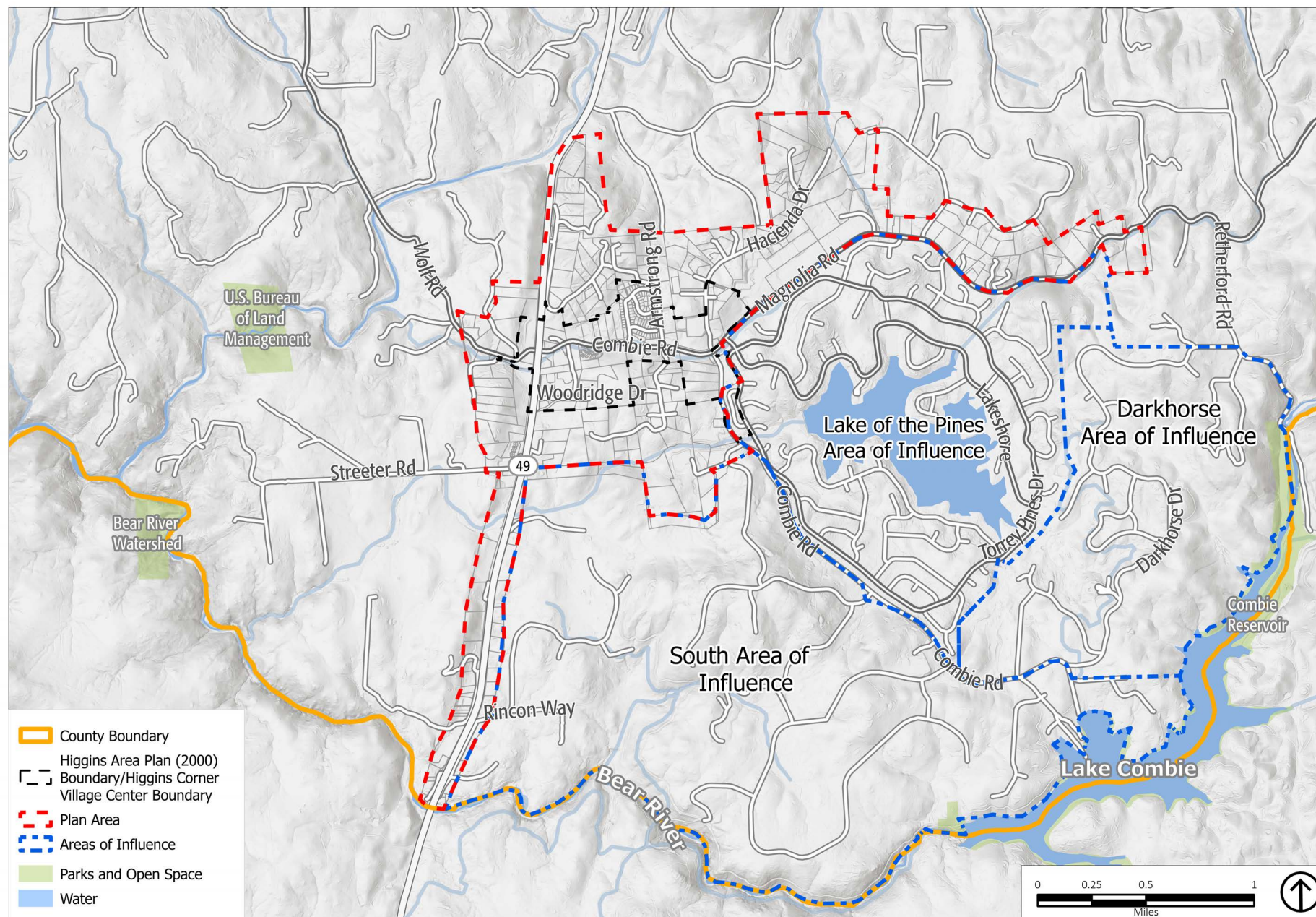
Land Use

This section provides an overview of the Plan Area's existing land uses, physical form, and community character; General Plan designations; zoning; as well as existing housing inventory.

EXISTING LAND USE, PHYSICAL FORM, AND COMMUNITY CHARACTER

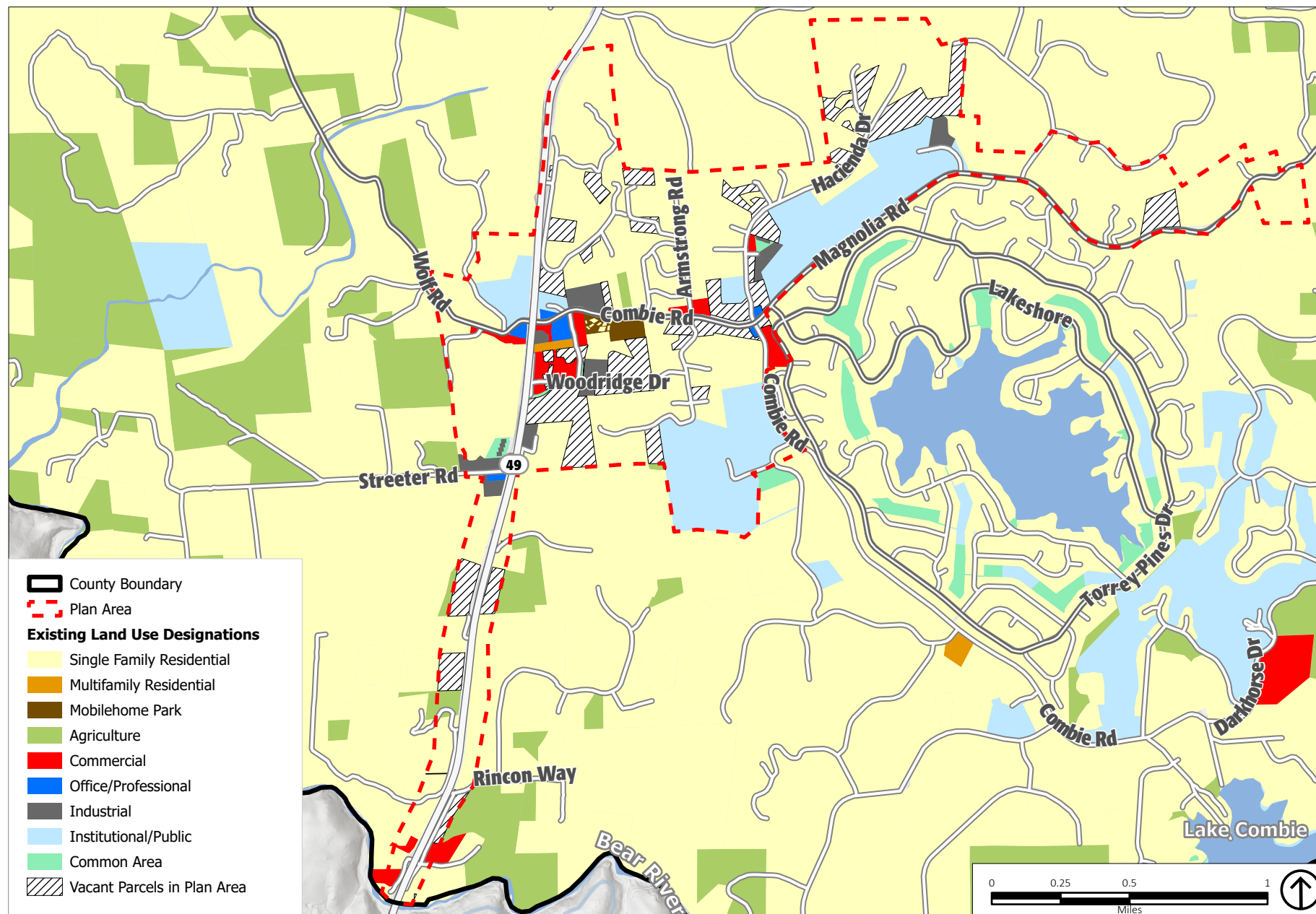
Figure 3 shows the existing land uses within the Plan Area and is described in the following discussion. The physical form and community character of the Plan Area vary and can be categorized into six discrete areas within the Plan Area (see Figure 4):

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



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

Figure 2
Plan Area Map



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

Figure 3
Existing Land Use Map

Each of these areas is discussed in further detail below.

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/Hacienda Road/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. There is a significant commercial shopping center on the south side of Highway 49, which includes a commercial center with CVS as the anchor at the southeast corner and the new Higgins Marketplace south of that commercial center.

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 79 homes ranging between 1,500 and 3,000 square feet, within the Plan Area off Combie Road. Several vacant parcels front onto Combie Road, with several larger vacant parcels between Armstrong Road and Hacienda Drive.



Higgins Marketplace shopping center



Commercial at Higgins Corner



Combie Plaza

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

South Combie Road Area

This area along Combie Road runs south from the intersection of Combie Road/Hacienda Road/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

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 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.



Bear River High School

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, looking east

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.

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.



Surrounding residential

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



Crossroads Church building

establishments are Crossroads Church, a small shopping center with medical and retail stores, a gas station with associated smaller retail stores and professional offices, and a now closed farm supply store.

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. It is nestled into a broad depression between low hills. Although almost all property bordering the highway is zoned for agricultural land, there are some areas zoned Residential Agriculture and a section of Light Industrial. 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. 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, Ranch Road, a light industrial complex along Streeter Road, and a single parcel for commercial at the southern County border, which is currently a hay feed wholesale store. 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.

SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY FACILITIES

As previously mentioned, Magnolia Road serves as the main road to access a number of schools within the Plan Area, including Bear River High School, Magnolia Intermediate School, and Cottage Hill Elementary School.

Another school outside of the Plan Area but serving residents in the Plan Area and Areas of Influence, is Forest Lake Christian School, which is located further south along Combie Road.



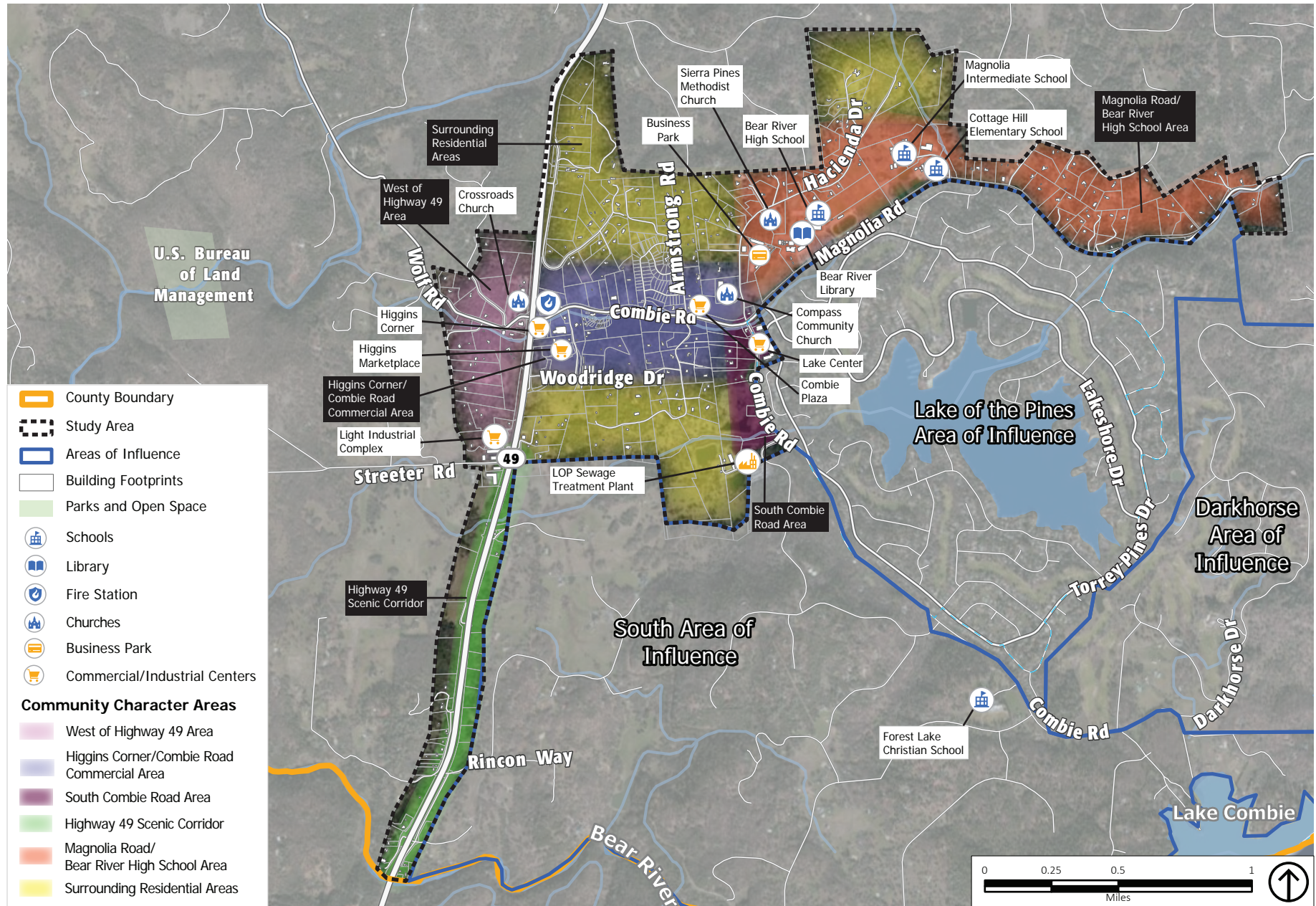
Commercial center off Wolf Road



Nevada County gateway monument along Highway 49



Highway Commercial building along Highway 49



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

Figure 4
Community Character Map

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 will be relocating by 2023 (see *Development Potential* section of this memo for additional information).

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.

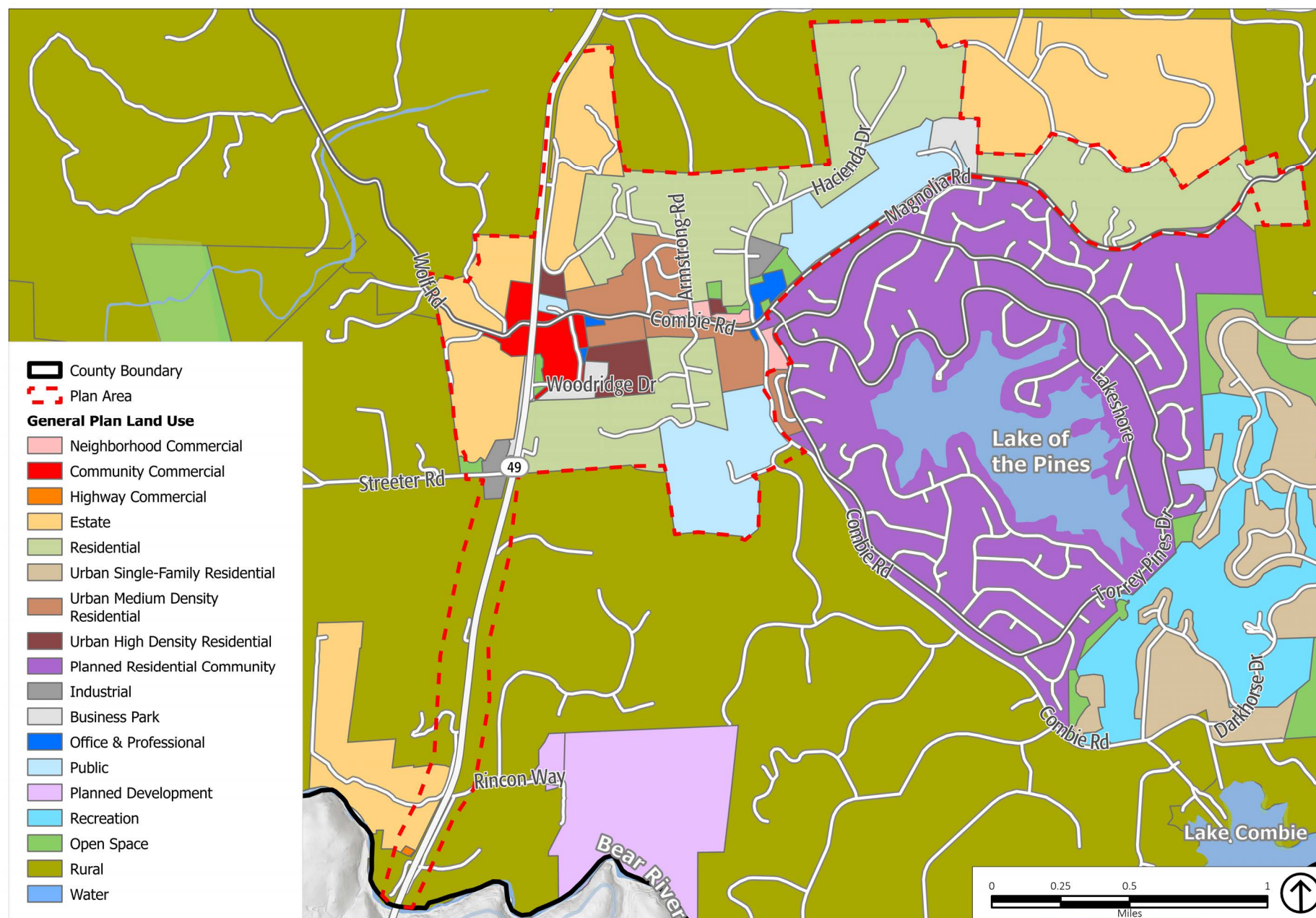
Bear River High School has many facilities that also serve community members, including the library, pool, track, fields, and the Bear River Community Theater. The Bear River Community Theater is a 410-seat performance venue designated for theatre arts education and housing the work of students, community 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.

PARKS AND OPEN SPACE

There are no public parks within the Plan Area. The nearest parks, open space, or areas of recreation are located in Lake of the Pines, but these areas are available only to Lake of the Pines residents. Darkhorse also has its own private golf course which runs between and up against residential properties. 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 1 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.

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE

Figure 5 shows the planned land uses within and surrounding the Plan Area, designated by the County's General Plan. The General Plan's land uses illustrate and envision the Greater Higgins area to develop two nodes of higher density development that front directly onto Combie Road and Magnolia Road, including Community Commercial, Neighborhood Commercial, Urban Medium Density Residential, and Office & Professional. Surrounding residential uses would support retail and services along Combie Road and Magnolia Road. The two higher density nodes are: 1) Community Commercial at the intersection of Highway 49/Combie Road (including Higgins Corner and Higgins Marketplace shopping center), and 2) Office & Professional and Community Commercial at the intersection of Combie Road/Hacienda Drive (including Lake Center). There is an additional node along Highway 49 at the Streeter Road intersection for Industrial uses.



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

Figure 5
General Plan Land Use Designations Map

The Plan Area also includes several areas designated for Urban High Residential. Although these areas are not directly adjacent to Combie, they are located directly outside of uses fronting onto Combie Road and could be considered part of Highway 49/Combie Road commercial node.

There are three areas for Public use within the Plan Area: 1) a smaller area at the Combie/Highway 49 commercial node (fire station), 2) a large area along Magnolia Road that is adjacent to Business Park to the east (existing schools), and 3) a large area to the south of Combie Road, adjacent to Residential and Urban Medium Density Residential (Lake of the Pines Sewage Treatment Plant).

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 is located to the east of Highway 49, to the north and south of Combie and Magnolia Roads. 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 but at the most southern end, there is Estate residential and one parcel designated for Highway Commercial.

Table 1 contains abbreviated definitions and densities for the General Plan uses within the Plan Area.

Table 1. General Plan Land Use Descriptions

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE	MAX. DENSITY	MAX. BUILDING HEIGHT	MIN. ACREAGE	APPROPRIATE USES
Estate (EST)	3 du/acre max.	3 stories or 45'	3 acre minimum parcel size	Low density residential development in areas which are essentially rural in character accessible to shopping, employment and services. Agricultural operations and natural resource related uses, including the production of timber.
Residential (RES)	3 du/acre max.	3 stories or 45'	1.5 acre minimum parcel size	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. Agricultural operations and natural resource related uses, including the production of timber.

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE	MAX. DENSITY	MAX. BUILDING HEIGHT	MIN. ACREAGE	APPROPRIATE USES
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>
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>
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>

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE	MAX. DENSITY	MAX. BUILDING HEIGHT	MIN. ACREAGE	APPROPRIATE USES
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 & 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>
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>
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>

GENERAL PLAN LAND USE	MAX. DENSITY	MAX. BUILDING HEIGHT	MIN. ACREAGE	APPROPRIATE USES
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>
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>
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>

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

ZONING

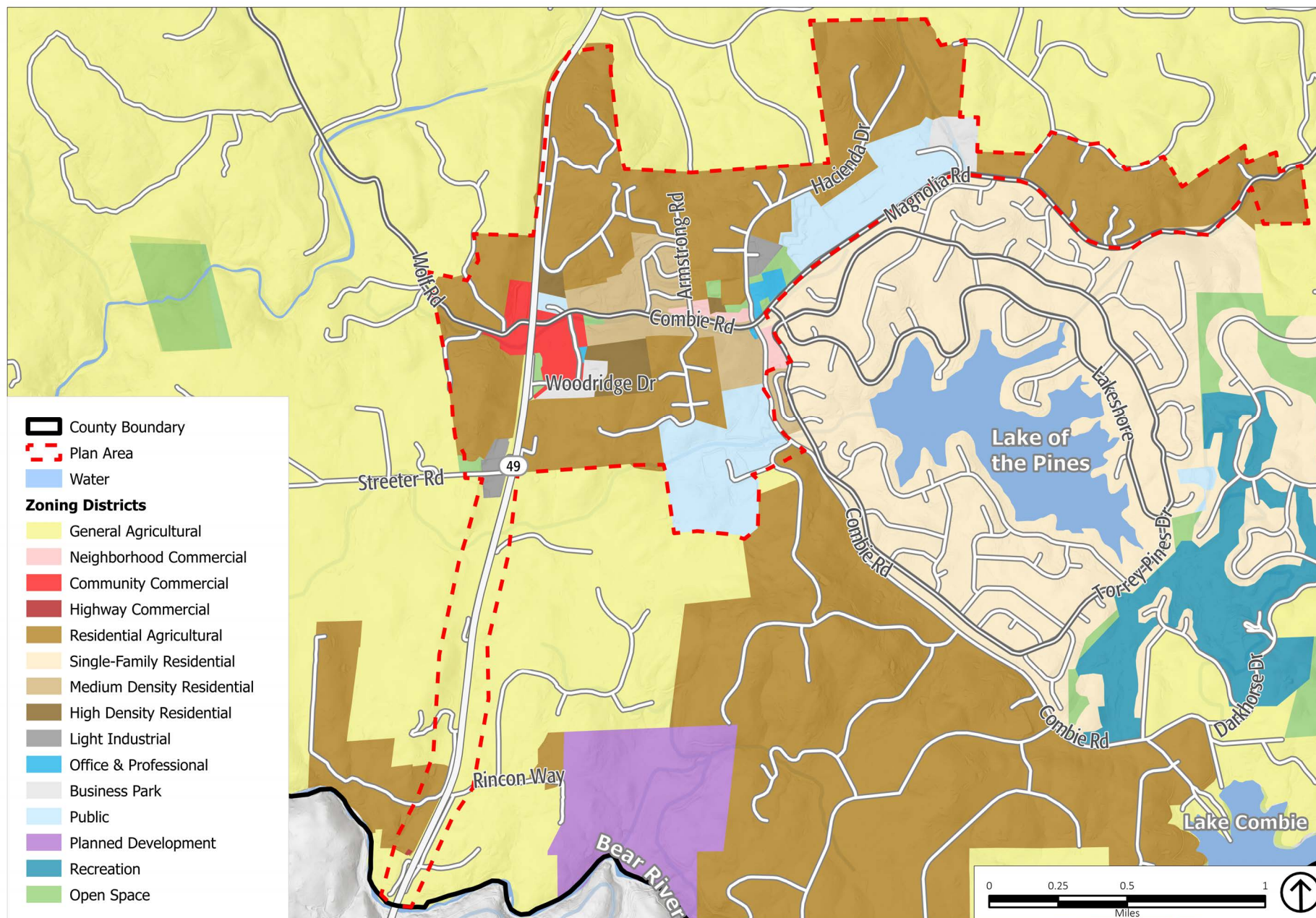
The existing zoning districts within the Plan Area generally correspond to the Plan Area’s General Plan land use designations with a few minor exceptions (see Figure 6). Table 2 contains descriptions of the relevant zoning districts within the Plan Area.

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, racing, 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).

Table 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)



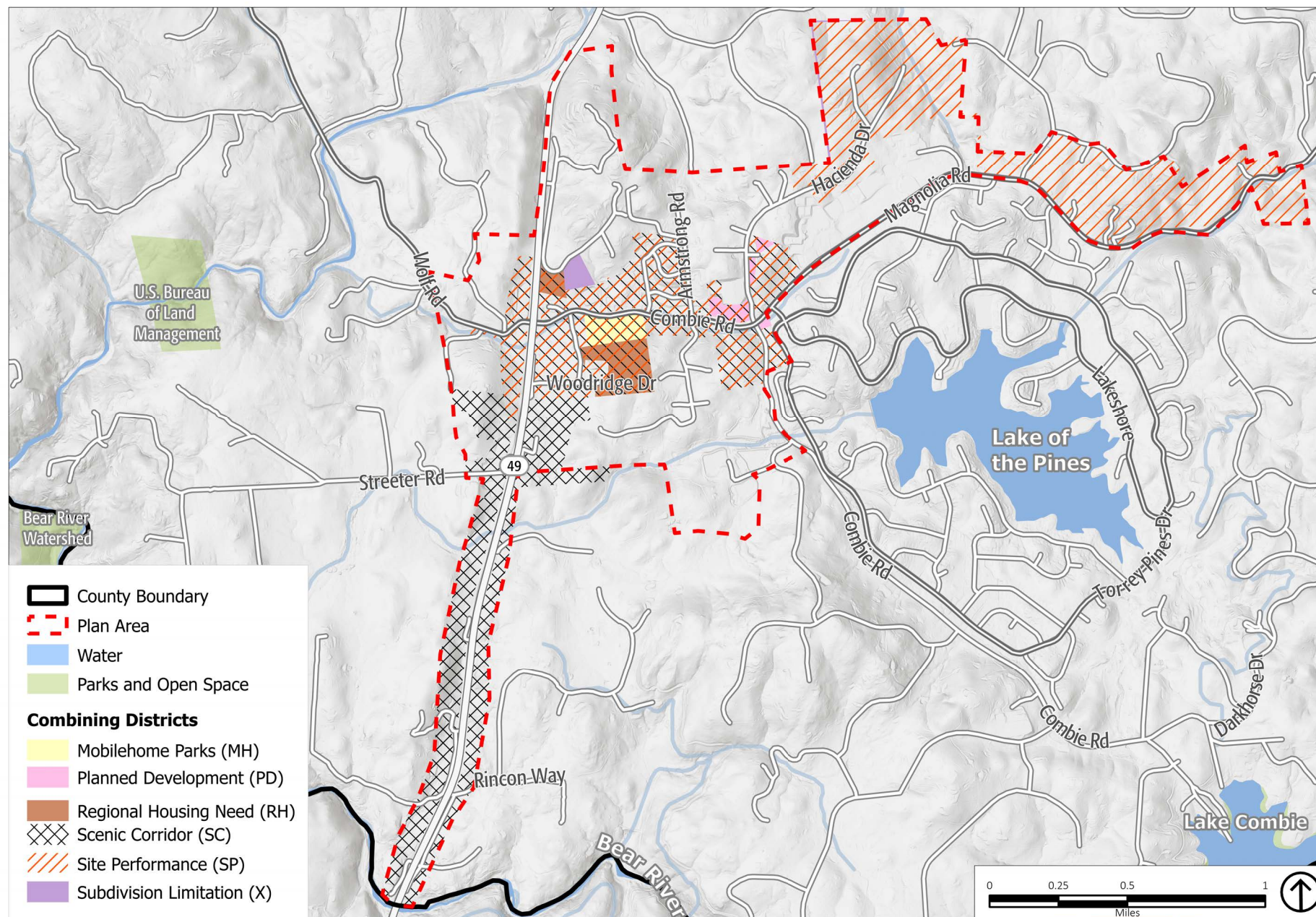
Source: Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

Figure 6
Zoning Districts Map

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 7):

- **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.
- **Regional Housing Need Combining District (RH).** This District contains sites designated for development at 16 to 20 units minimum per acre in order to 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.



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

Figure 7
Combining Districts within Plan Area Map

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 multifamily units, and 2,283 mobile homes. 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 five 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. These sites are noted on Table 5 in the Development Potential section.

Mobility

This section describes the existing vehicle circulation network, existing and planned bicycle and pedestrian facilities, existing transit lines, and identifies policies that guide future mobility efforts.

RELEVANT POLICIES

The following are various policies included in existing policy documents that are relevant to circulation improvements within the Plan Area.

General Plan

The Nevada County General Plan, which was originally adopted in 1996 and has since been amended multiple times, outlines various policies aimed to guide the physical development, enhancements, and revitalization of the county. The following policies are related to the mobility and circulation of the county that are relevant to the Plan Area:

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

2000 Higgins Area Plan

The 2000 Higgins Area Plan Area is the boundary for the Higgins Corner Village Center and the original plan in which the Greater Higgins Area Plan is expanding and updating. The following circulation policies are listed in the Higgins Area Plan and should be incorporated into the Greater Higgins Area Plan for the Higgins Corner Village Center area.

- **Secondary Emergency Access.** Another route that could be used to access Highway 49, as an alternative to Combie Road in the event of an emergency, is desirable. Evaluate the feasibility of creating an alternative access to the Higgins Area south of Combie Road.
 - Note that an emergency egress road south from south Combie Road is planned as part of new development off Rincon Way.
- **Vehicle Traffic Infrastructure.** Consistent with General Plan Policy 4.19, for all new development, allow access via the lowest roadway classification, consistent with safe operation of the roadways and environmental constraints.
- **Internal Circulation.** New access encroachments should be minimized, common driveways should be utilized wherever possible, and all new encroachments should be analyzed for their effect upon the safety and efficiency of the major roads and intersections. Turn-restricting medians should be installed where necessary and the use of alternative service roads should be encouraged. A typical cross section of a Community Area multi-lane street would be four 12-foot-wide lanes with 4-foot-wide shoulders, and 12-foot wide center lane where appropriate, and a landscaped center median where a center turn lane is not desirable. A meandering landscaped buffer between the vehicle traveled way and the proposed multipurpose trail would also be a desirable amenity.

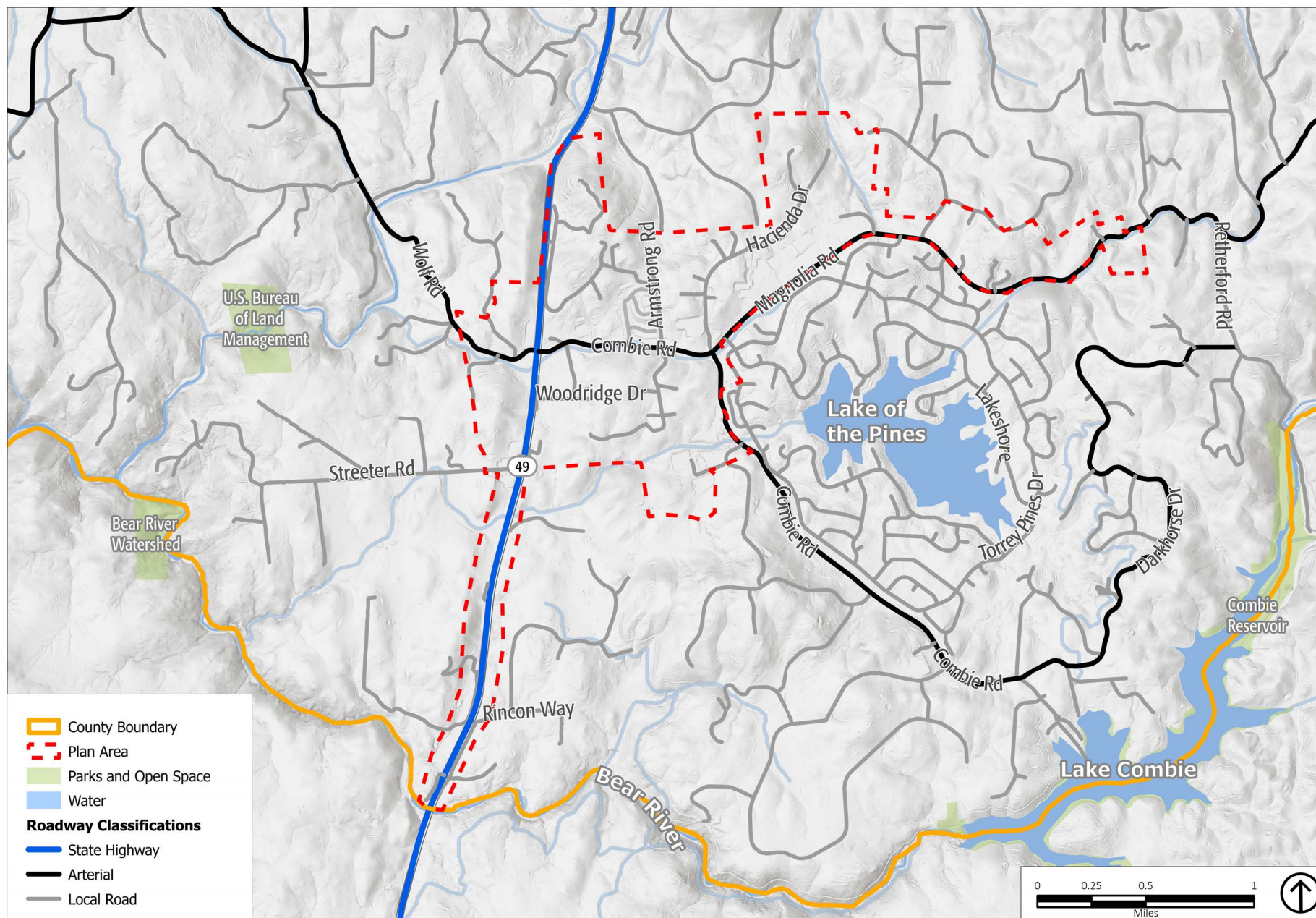
EXISTING FACILITIES

Vehicular Circulation Network

The vehicular network within the Plan Area is mainly rural consisting of limited roads going north-south and east-west. The existing vehicular network in the Plan Area includes principal arterials, minor arterials, minor collectors, and local roads. There are three major streets within the Plan Area: Wolf Road west of Highway 49, Combie Road east of Highway 49, and Magnolia Road east of Combie Road. Highway 49 is located west of the Plan Area and within the “tail” of the Plan Area boundary, and provides regional access to the Plan Area via interchanges at Combie Road and Wolf Road. Rural roads within the Plan Area meet with Wolf Road, west of Highway 49, and east of Highway 49 along Combie Road and Magnolia Road. Most rural roads within the Plan Area have dead-ends and do not connect to any other major streets.

Figure 8 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



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

Figure 8
Vehicular Circulation Network Map

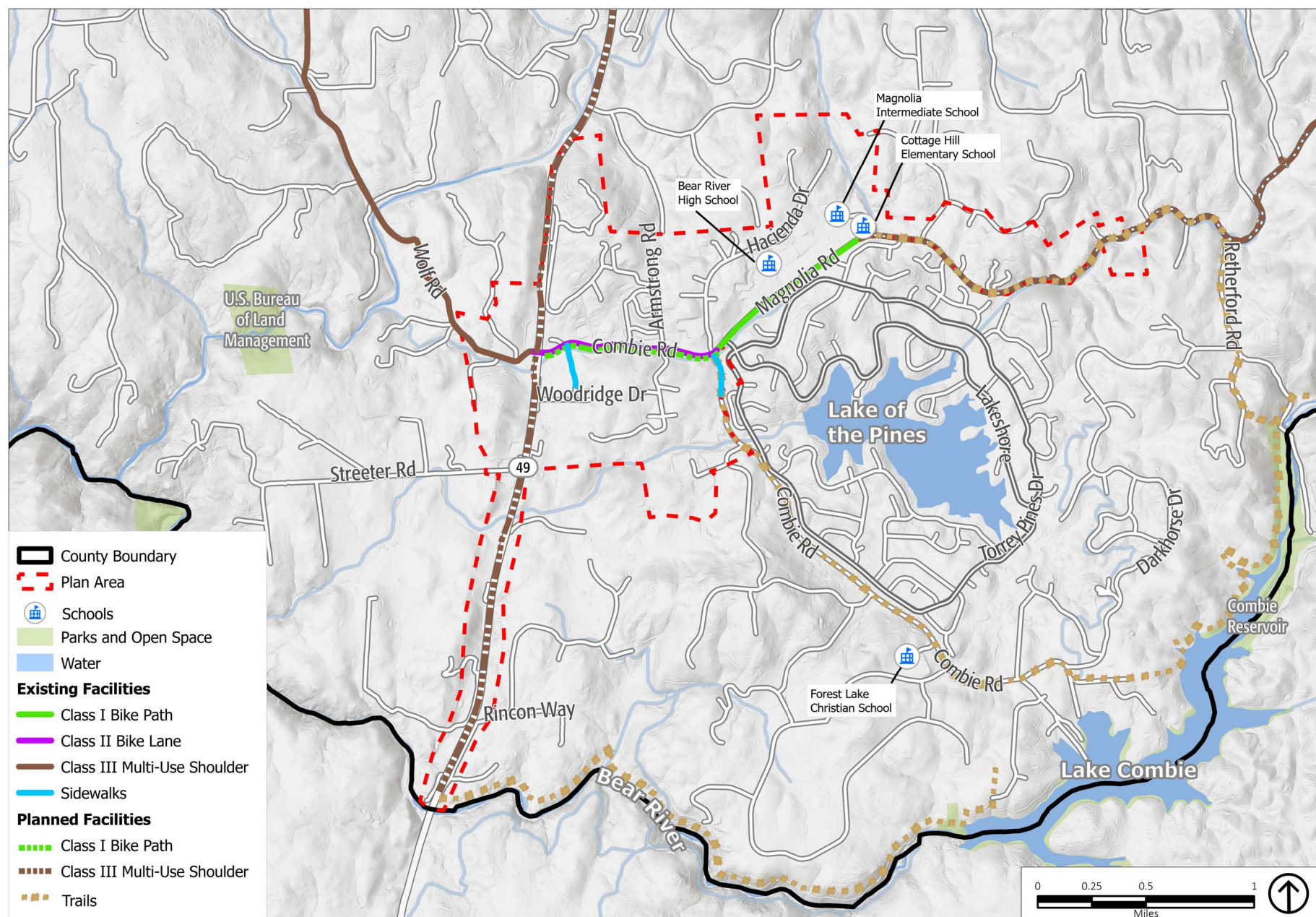
The Nevada County General Plan has more nuance in its classification of these roadways:

- **Principal Arterials.** Roadways carrying some regional traffic and connecting the major population centers within the County.
 - Highway 49 is a north-south arterial on the western edge of the Plan Area.
- **Minor Arterials.** Roadways providing primary access from freeways and principal arterials to major origins and destinations.
 - Combie Road is a west-east and south roadway. The segment starting on the west side of the Plan Area at Highway 49 towards Magnolia Road is a three-lane divided roadway, with left and right turn shoulders at intersections, and serves as the primary arterial street in the western part of the Plan Area. The southern segment of Combie Road is a two-lane divided roadway with about a quarter mile of curb and sidewalk treatments.
- **Collectors.** Streets connecting arterials to local roads.
 - Wolf Road is a west-east two-lane divided roadway within the Plan Area and serves as the primary collector street on the west side of Highway 49.
 - Magnolia Road is a west-east two-lane divided major collector with turn shoulders at intersections, and serves as the primary collector street in the eastern part of the Plan Area. Magnolia Road stretches beyond the Plan Area connecting to Dog Bar Road to the north and serves as an alternate regional connector.

Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Figure 9 shows the bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the Plan Area. The 2019 Nevada County Active Transportation Plan identifies the following existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities within the Plan Area:

- Class I Bike (Multi-use) Path. Magnolia Road: east of Combie Road, starting at the intersection of Magnolia Road and Combie Road to Kingston Lane.
- Class II Bike Lane. Combie Road: west of Magnolia Road, along Combie Road to Highway 49. It should be noted that these bike lanes could be improved, including pavement markings and signage.
- Class III Multi-Use Shoulder. Wolf Road: west of Highway 49.
- Sidewalks. 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.



Source: Western Nevada County Non-Motorized Recreational Trails Master Plan- Technical Working Plan, 2010; Nevada County Active Transportation Plan, 2019; Nevada County, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

Figure 9
Existing and Planned Bicycle, Pedestrian, and Trail Facilities Map

Transit Facilities

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 and serves as the regional route for the Plan Area. Route 5 enters the Plan Area through Combie Road and has two bus stops: one is located on the east side of Higgins Road at Higgins Marketplace and the second stop is located on south Combie Road in front of the Lake Center. Figure 10 shows the existing transit Nevada County Connects routes and stops in the Plan Area.

Nevada County Now is the paratransit service for people with disabilities or who are unable to access fixed bus routes. Paratransit services are not available in the Plan Area. The nearest paratransit services are north of the Plan Area in Grass Valley and Nevada City areas.

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.

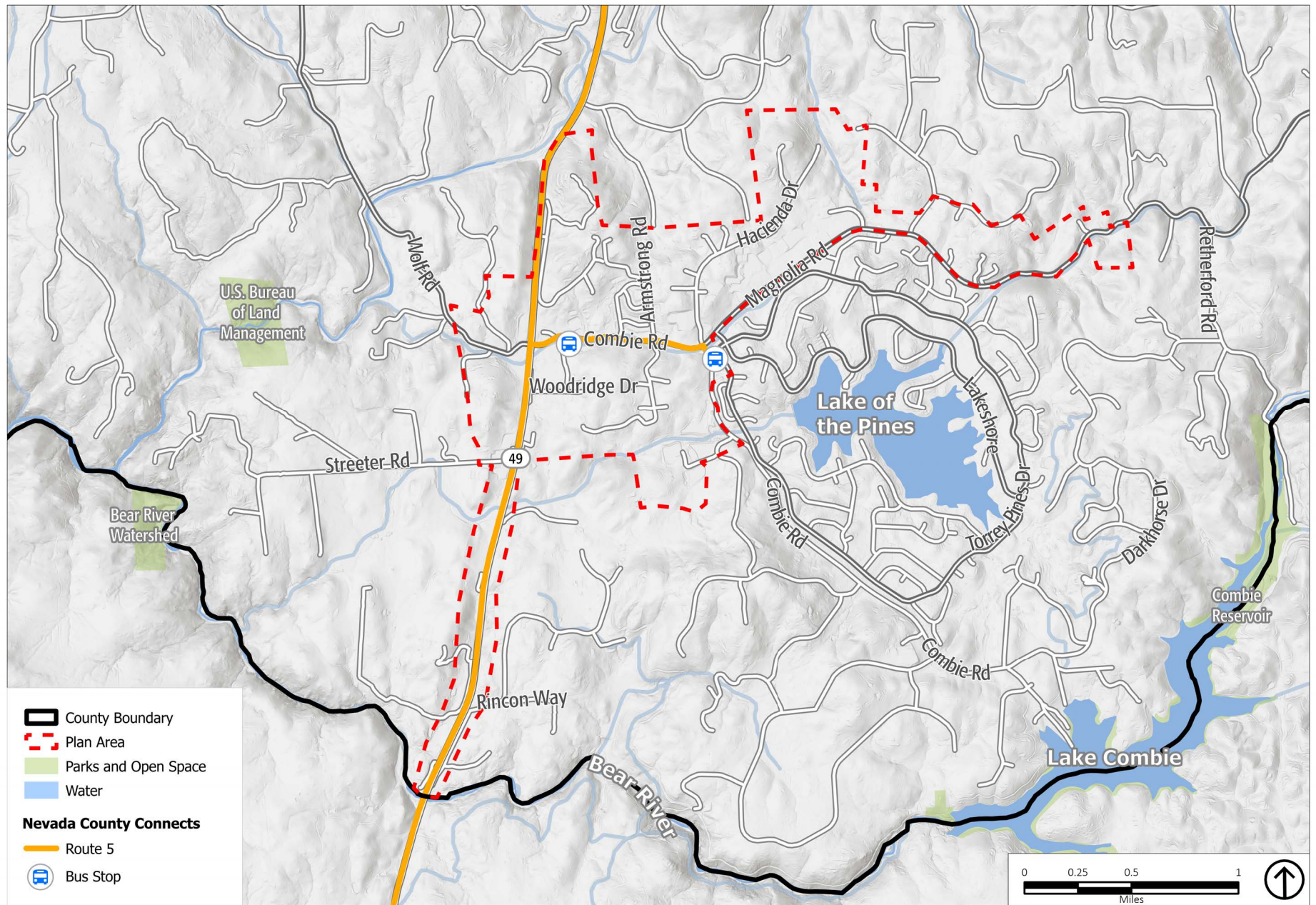
PLANNED FACILITIES AND IMPROVEMENTS

This section describes the planned mobility improvements from existing policy documents as well as other proposed mobility projects by other agencies.

2019 Nevada County ATP

The 2019 Nevada County Active Transportation Plan includes the following planned bicycle and pedestrian improvements within the Plan Area and are shown on Figure 7:

- Class I Bike Path. Combie Road: west of Magnolia, along Combie Road to Highway 49.
- Class III Multi-Use Shoulder. Highway 49 and Magnolia Road: north-south of Highway 49 from the “tail” of the Plan Area into the northern region of Nevada County; and Magnolia Road from Kingston Lane to end of Plan Area and beyond into eastern region of Nevada County.
- Trails. There is one planned trail facility in the Plan Area along the western segment of Magnolia Road past the schools. There are three other planned trails not within the Plan Area but within the Areas of Influence, including 1) along south Combie Road, connecting to Lake Combie and the Combie Reservoir; 2) along Retherford Road, connecting to the planned trail along the western end of Magnolia Road; and 3) Bear River trail, starting at Highway 49 at the southern end of the Plan Area, continuing along Bear River/the southern County boundary.



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

Figure 10
Existing Bus Routes and Stops Map

2000 Higgins Area Plan

The 2000 Higgins Area Plan proposed several mobility improvements within the Higgins Corner Village Center. The majority of the planned improvements have since been completed, including:

- Widening of Combie Road to two through-traffic lanes in each direction with a center two-way left-turn lane.
- Widening of the Highway 49/Combie Road intersection to provide additional through north-south state route intersection capacity.
- Pedestrian walkways on the east side of Combie Road from Magnolia Road to the south end of the Lake Center shopping center and the north/west side of the planned parkway extension of Higgins Road.
- Widening of Highway 49 to two through-lanes in each direction.
- Lengthening the northbound Highway 49 to Combie Road right-turn lane.
- Construction of a parkway to serve commercial development (Higgins Village) at the southeast corner of Combie Road and Highway 49.
- Continuous hard-surfaced, 10-foot-wide multipurpose trail (flanked by an approximately 5-foot-wide landscaped strip) on the north side of Magnolia Road from Highway 49 to the Magnolia Intermediate School on Kingston Lane.
 - It should be noted that this multipurpose trail could be improved with additional safeguards from vehicle travel and delineation between pedestrian and bicycle travel.
- The following crosswalks have been implemented. However, it should be noted that only the crosswalks at the Highway 49 and Combie Road/Wolf Road intersection are high visibility crosswalks.
 - Highway 49 at the Combie Road/Wolf Road intersection (north side only)
 - Wolf Road at Highway 49
 - Combie Road at Highway 49
 - West Hacienda Road at Combie Road
 - Magnolia Road at Combie Road
 - Magnolia Road at Lakeshore Drive

The following planned improvements have yet to be completed and should be considered for incorporation into the Greater Higgins Area Plan:

- Continuation of the multipurpose trail along Magnolia Road west to Highway 49 (this improvement is also included in the 2019 Nevada County ATP as the planned Class I bike path). Additionally, the Ragsdale Creek Setback Study conducted as part of the Higgins Area Plan recommended that the multi-purpose trail be further continued on the west side of Highway 49.

- Future efforts to extend this trail west of Highway 49 should continue by working with Caltrans to locate the safest crossing of the State highway and aligning the trail with that crossing.
- 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.
- Crosswalk at south Combie Road at Magnolia Road.

Other Proposed Projects

The project team held several stakeholder interviews as part of this project, including with Caltrans, CAL FIRE, and the Higgins Fire Protection District. Staff from these agencies noted several proposed projects. Although these projects are located outside of the Plan Area, they may affect vehicle and bicycle accessibility in and out of the Plan Area.

- California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) safety project south of Higgins Corner in Placer County – project approval phase
 - Project will install a concrete barrier, eliminating access points to Highway 49 and concentrating them at two locations (Lonestar and Lorensen/Florence) to prevent drivers from crossing the median.
 - Project includes improving shoulder to become a Class III facility provide better bicycle access.
 - Project may also include two roundabouts.
- Caltrans lane widening (from two to five lanes) project north of Alta Sierra between Alta Ranch Road and McKnight Way – project approval phase
 - Phase 1: Northbound truck lane with two-way left turn lane
 - Phase 2: Additional southbound truck lane
 - Phase 3: Add concrete median barriers with either traffic signals or roundabouts at two intersections
- Dog Bar Road Bridge over the Bear River (connects Placer County and Nevada County) – final design phase
 - Project improves access out to Placer Hills area and includes improvements to the bridge only and does not address subsequent road improvements over canal in Placer County.

Environmental Conditions

This section includes a review of the State of California Regional Water Quality Control Board (RWQCB) GeoTracker and the California Environmental Protection Agency Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) EnviroStor for sites within the Plan Area that are being investigated or need further evaluation and assessment for possible hazardous impacts. The review of these two publicly available databases may be incomplete but are considered standard sources of environmental information for site assessments.

The following identifies sites within the Plan Area that were listed on either the GeoTracker or EnviroStor database. Four sites were identified within the Plan Area on GeoTracker, and three sites were identified on EnviroStor.

All listed sites within the Plan Area have been granted regulatory agency approval for closure based on the site investigations and potential risk to human health and the environment. The agency closures apply only to the issues investigated and if unidentified contamination is discovered at these sites, additional investigation, assessment, and/or cleanup may be required. These sites are not anticipated to have potential development as part of the Greater Higgins Area Plan.

Table 3. GeoTracker and EnviroStor Sites within Plan Area

LISTING	ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER (APN)	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
GeoTracker			
Best Gas Station at 10055 Wolf Road, Grass Valley	057-260-007	A leak associated with the underground storage tanks (USTs) released petroleum hydrocarbons into the soil and groundwater at the gas station in 1994. Impacted soil was excavated and disposed offsite in 1994. Additional soil gas and groundwater monitoring was implemented in 2001 through 2010 that found low concentrations of petroleum hydrocarbon constituents in soil gas, and groundwater wells located on site. Nearby offsite groundwater wells were nondetect for petroleum hydrocarbons.	In October 2011, the California RWQCB Central Region concurred that the petroleum hydrocarbons in groundwater do not pose a risk to human health or other beneficial uses of groundwater in the area and granted regulatory closure on October 3, 2011.
Combie Gas Station at 10594 Combie Road, Auburn	057-142-015	A leak associated with the USTS was discovered during tank removal activities in 1990. Soil was excavated and removed down to bedrock in areas of identified contamination. Groundwater monitoring wells were installed and sampled.	On July 21, 1996, the California RWQCB Central Region concurred that no further action was required in relation to the UST release.

LISTING	ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER (APN)	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
Magnolia School at 22431 Kingston Lane, Grass Valley	021-730-013	A 550-gallon diesel oil tank was removed at the Magnolia school in March 1988. Petroleum impacted soil was found beneath the tank location and excavated from the area. The excavation was backfilled with clean soil.	On November 30, 1998, the Central Valley RWQCB concurred that the site does not pose a significant threat to groundwater.
Pac Bell at 23337 Highway 49, Grass Valley	057-071-007	A 1,000-gallon diesel UST was removed from the Pac Bell Site in 1988. Soil and groundwater sampling was implemented from 1989 to 1994 and very low to nondetect concentrations were found in the soil and groundwater.	On April 4, 2001, the Central Valley RWQCB indicated that they concurred that no future action related to the petroleum release at the site was required.
EnviroStor			
Bear River High School Library at 11130 Magnolia Road, Grass Valley	021-730-085	A portion of the Bear River High School was reportedly a skeet shooting range prior to the construction of the school in the early 1980s. There was a concern for residual lead to be present in soil at the site in the vicinity of the proposed library building and parking lot. Due to the potential presence of lead pellets several investigations were conducted starting in 1995 in areas of proposed construction.	A No Further Action was issued for the library portion of the site in December 1999.
Bear River High School Expansion	021-730-085	A 10-acre expansion site was assessed in 2000 that had a former automotive detailing facility located on a portion of the site. A Preliminary Environmental Assessment was implemented for the site to evaluate if there were residual impacts to the site based on historic land use.	The DTSC issues a No Further Action on May 11, 2001 for the 10-acre expansion site.

LISTING	ASSESSOR PARCEL NUMBER (APN)	DESCRIPTION	STATUS
Bear River High School Performing Arts Center and Aquatic Center	021-730-085	Soil in the footprint of the proposed Performing Arts Center was found to have elevated lead and in the proposed aquatic center, soil was found to have elevated arsenic in 2003. A removal action occurred which removed impacted lead soil in the Performing Arts Center and for arsenic impacted soil in the Aquatic Center.	The DTSC issued a removal action certification indicating no additional action was needed for the Performing Arts Center and Aquatic Center on May 25, 2005

Development Potential

This section describes proposed development projects within or near the Plan Area and identifies potential opportunity sites for future development within the Plan Area.

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

The County has received several planning applications for development within the Plan Area. The projects are listed in Table 3 and also shown on the map on Figure 11. All projects are located to the east of Highway 49 at or near the Higgins Corner/Higgins Village commercial node. More information about the projects are as follows:

- 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.
- The Bear River Library will be moving from the Bear River High School to their new location at the Lake Center (location of the former Holiday Market). The new space will have about 2,500 square feet and incorporate an adult section, children's section, circulation area, community room, lobby, office and three ADA restrooms. The library will also incorporate a new 214 square feet Sheriff sub-station with an office and interview room which will move from their existing location at 10556 Combie Road.
- 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 Hobby Condos project would consist of a 61,200 square foot facility with an office and clubhouse fronting Higgins Road. Each of the 61 “condos” is intended to provide space for work benches, car lifts, and/or shelving. Residential occupancy, including overnight occupancy, will not be permitted. This project would be set back from Higgins Road because of the existing culverts along Higgins Road.

Table 4. Potential Development Projects within Plan Area.

PROJECT LETTER	PROJECT NAME	APN	ADDRESS	STATUS
A	Quick Quack Car Wash at Higgins Market Place	057-260-019	Highway 49 and Woodridge Road	Application under review
B	Higgins Fuel Station	057-260-024	10004 Woodridge Drive, Auburn, CA 94602	Phase III of Holiday Marketplace and final approval pending
C	Bear River Library	021-010-025	10988 Combie Road, Suites 108 & 110, Auburn, CA 95602	Design phase – anticipated completion by early 2023
D	Hobby Condos	057-141-032	21515 Higgins Road, Auburn, CA 95602	Completed Design Review
E	Cameo Affordable Housing	057-141-029	22630 Cameo Drive, Grass Valley, CA 95949	Site is set up to allow for by-right development as a State-mandated rezone site.

VACANT AND UNDERUTILIZED SITES

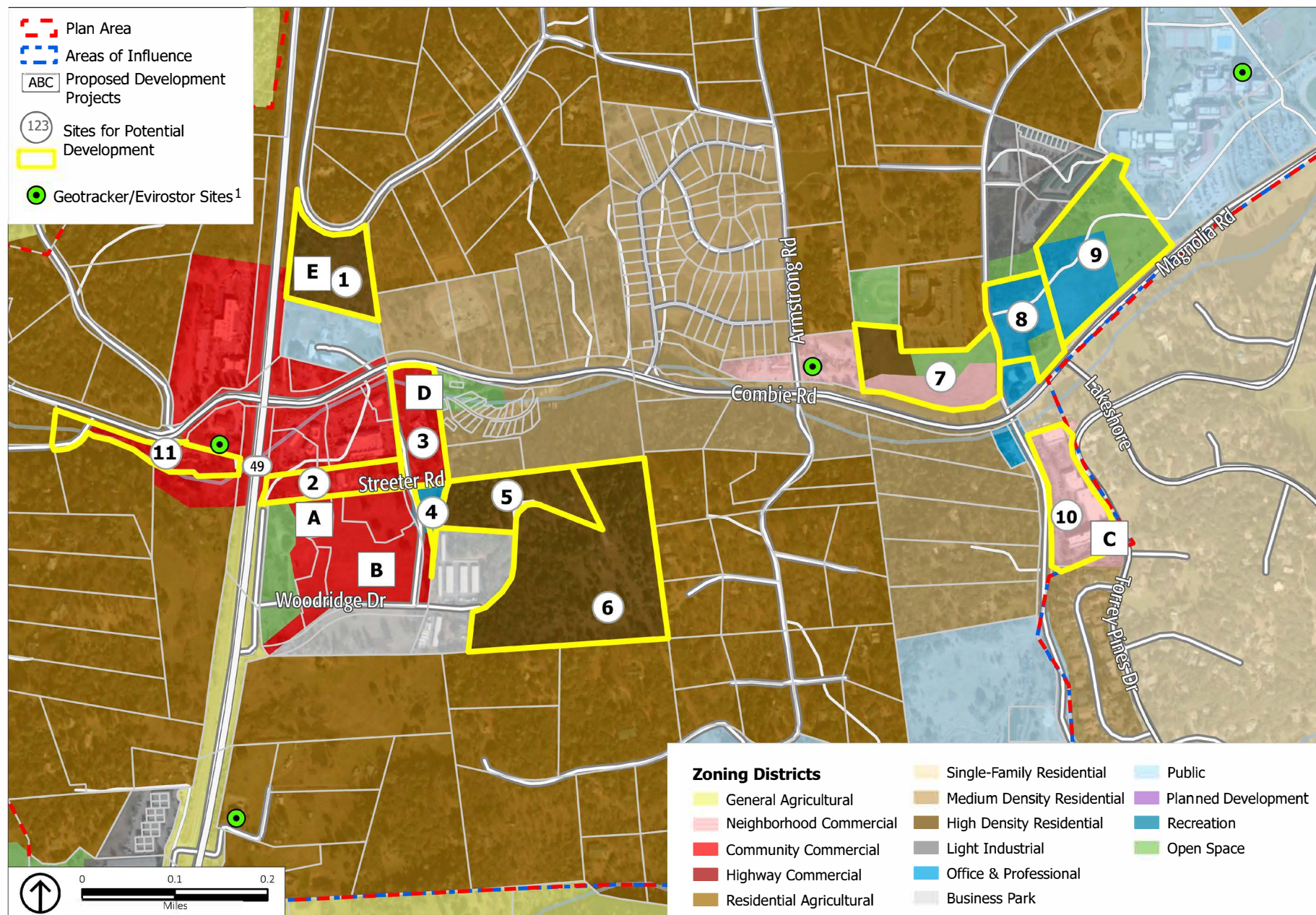
After review of General Plan designations, existing land uses, and discussions with the South County Area Municipal Advisory Council (SCMAC) and other stakeholders, there may be opportunities for future development on some sites within the Plan Area, listed in Table 5 and shown on Figure 11. The zoning for the parcels listed in Table 5 includes any applicable combining districts (i.e., RH, SC, and SP).

These sites are only listed for the purposes of discussion during the preliminary planning process of this Plan and there are no definite plans for redevelopment. The selection of these sites is based upon a windshield survey of vacancy or underutilization of the site and planned General Plan land use designations for commercial, office, or high density residential. The Plan’s project team, including County staff, will more closely analyze the feasibility of redevelopment at these sites and whether any should be included in the Plan.

Table 5 and Figure 11 also includes the Lake Center. The Lake Center could be redeveloped, specifically at the space of the former Holiday Market. There is potential for a smaller grocery market or other anchor tenant (approximately 18,000 s.f.).

Table 5. Sites for Potential Development

SITE #	APN	PROPOSED OR POTENTIAL DEVELOPMENT	SIZE (ACREAGE)	GENERAL PLAN LAND USE DESIGNATION	ZONING AND COMBINING DISTRICTS
1	057-141-029	Affordable housing	5.0	Urban High Density Residential	R3-RH-SC-SP
2	057-260-006	Multifamily housing	2.8	Community Commercial	C2-SC-SP
3	057-141-032	Hobby Condos	3.9	Community Commercial	C2-SC-SP
4	057-260-021	-	0.8	Office & Professional	OP-SC-SP, R3-RH-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	021-730-087	-	7.1	Neighborhood Commercial	C1-SC-SP-PD, R3-SC-SP-PD, OS-SC-SP
8	021-730-051	-	4.2	Office & Professional	OP-SC-SP, OS-SC-SP
9	021-730-083	-	9.6	Office & Professional	OS-SC-SP, OP-SC-SP
10 (Lake Center)	021-010-025	-	5.3	Neighborhood Commercial	C1 -SC-SP
11	057-260-008	-	3.0	Community Commercial	C2-SC-SP, RA-3



Source: Nevada County, 2021; Envirostor and Geotracker, 2021; PlaceWorks, Inc. 2021.

¹ For more information on these sites, see the Environmental Conditions section of the Greater Higgins Area Plan Existing Conditions Memo.

Figure 11
Development Potential Map