

2. PLANNING PROCESS

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A. INTRODUCTION

The planning team consists of second year graduate students in pursuit of a professional Master Degree in the field of City and Regional Planning with supervision of a faculty member, Dr. Cornelius Nuworsoo, from the California Polytechnic State University in San Luis Obispo, California. The planning team has worked closely with the City of Clearlake to generate this background report. This report provides a body of research to serve as the foundation for the Clearlake General Plan Project. This research provides an overview of existing conditions within policies, regulations, programs, infrastructure, and services for the City of Clearlake (City), Lake County (County), and State of California, as they relate to planning practices. Content provided by this report guides the development of goals, objectives, policies, and programs in the forthcoming General Plan policy document.

B. RESEARCH METHODS

This Background Report was generated using data gathered between the months of September 2012 through November 2012. Three different methods were utilized to gather information to inform the planning team on existing conditions in the City of Clearlake and Lake County as well as identify emerging directions which guide the development of goals, objectives, policies, and programs in the General Plan.

1. Secondary research was conducted to identify applicable standards, policies, and programs related to each General Plan element.
2. Field work was performed in order to generate an existing land use inventory which provides information regarding existing condition and use of all parcels within the City.
3. Primary data was collected in the form of two public meetings which obtained community aspirations and preferences regarding the future of Clearlake.

The following sections describe each method in greater detail.

1. Secondary Research

Secondary research provided the planning team the necessary background information and regulatory framework in order to understand the City of Clearlake and identify the information which will need to be addressed in each element of the General Plan. Through an analysis of past demographic conditions and the evolution of relevant City and County policies, the planning team was able to identify emerging trends in the City as they pertain to each element.

The California Office of Planning and Research (OPR) guidelines were the starting point for this process, as these guidelines provide the skeletal framework and mandatory components of each General Plan element. These guidelines identified data and informational needs for each element, and led the planning team to the appropriate documents for further study and analysis. In addition, each section of the background report, as it applies to an element in the General Plan, researched development standards applicable to the conditions in Clearlake. By identifying typical planning ‘best practices’ and common standards to achieve an optimum balance of growth and development; the planning team is able to compare existing conditions to these commonly accepted standards.

The next steps involved the examination and analysis of City and County planning documents, including the City and County General Plans, City of Clearlake Housing Element, County policies, reports, and programs pertaining to the City, as well as such other relevant documents as the 2007 Vision Task Force Report and the 2012 Lakeshore Drive Corridor Plan. These plans provide the historical context for the development of the upcoming General Plan Project and identify additional resources for gathering information on the City.

2. Land Use Inventory

The City of Clearlake consists of 14,518 parcels. At the onset of this Project, there had not been a thorough inventory of existing land uses within the City. In order to provide an accurate background report and have a reliable data on which to develop goals, objectives, policies, and programs for the General Plan, the planning team conducted an in-person comprehensive land use inventory for all parcels in the City.

The team surveyed every parcel and gathered the following information:

- Occupancy, whether the parcel was occupied or vacant
- Active land use(s) for primary, secondary, and/or, tertiary uses
- Absence or presence of sidewalk, and condition of sidewalk, if present

In addition to gathering information for each parcel, the following information was recorded for any, and all, structures located on each parcel, or lot:

- Occupancy, whether the structure was vacant or occupied
- Number of structures
- Type of structure
- Number of stories for each structure
- Physical condition of each structure, ranked bad, poor, fair, or good quality

Active land use identified the primary use of a parcel, such as residential, commercial, industrial, public facility, open space, or other use. Within each land use category, data was collected regarding the specific use within each land use category. For example, residential land uses were subdivided into single family detached, single family attached, multi-family, mobile/modular, or apartment structure. Commercial uses indicated subcategories of retail, office, service, and industry.

Throughout two separate trips in the month of October 2012, the planning team walked the City on foot to record accurate information for each parcel. This data was input into iPads which were installed with specific software to organize the land use database. The HandBase software allowed the data to be exported and merged into an Excel document, readily accessible for mapping in GIS software to create maps of the City based on land use category and other identified parcel characteristics.

3. Primary Data

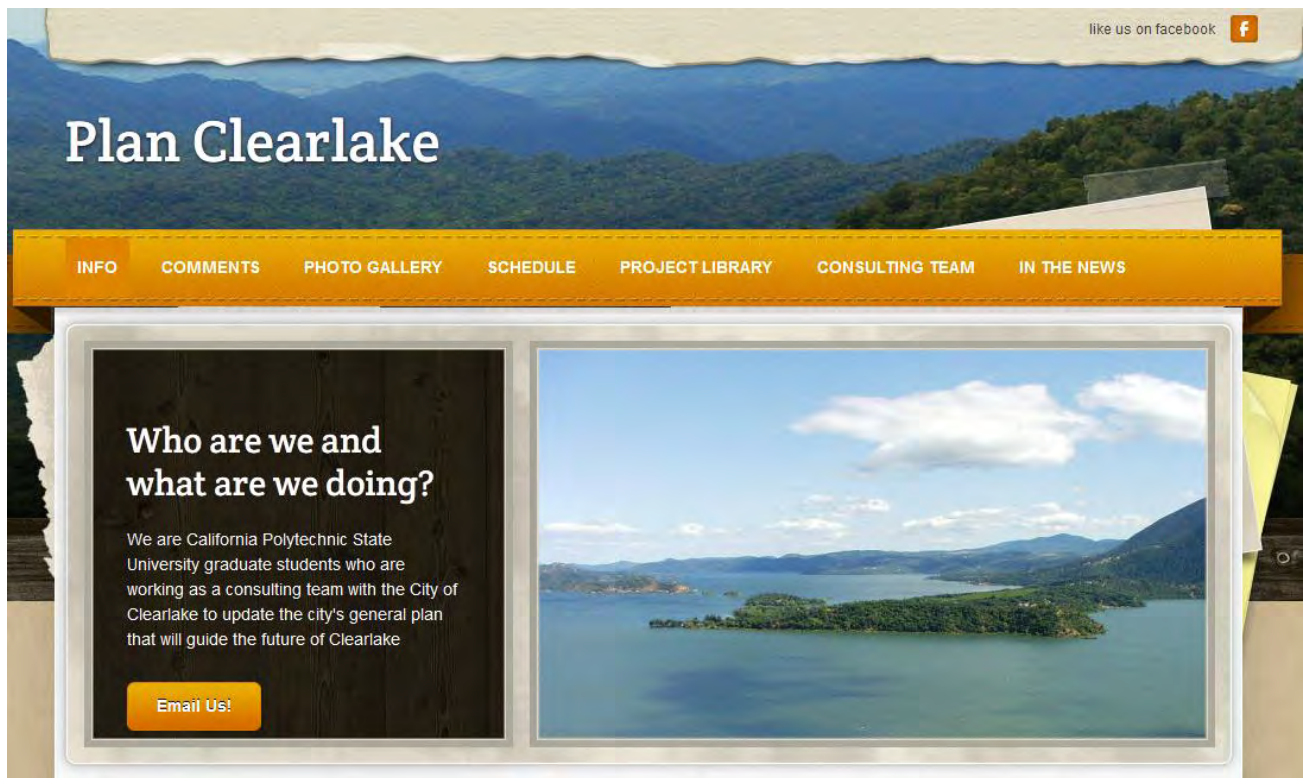
Public Outreach & Community Involvement

Community outreach to the City of Clearlake was fundamental to the development of the General Plan and its supporting documents. A total of four community meetings are associated with the General Plan update. Community input, along with background research and growth projections are essential in developing a preferred alternative scenario for the future of Clearlake. The community meetings were beneficial in identifying issues, prepare goals, objectives, policies and programs, as well as identifying the opportunities and constraints in the

City. Support from the public and City staff was exceptional with good turnout and engagement at the meetings.

The outreach team developed and maintained a database of stakeholders (including contact information for all community meeting attendees). The outreach team utilized the following tools to inform the public of meetings and planning progress:

- Community Plan Website (www.planclearlake.weebly.com) 89 unique visitors went to the website as of November 14, 2012
- Email announcements
- Telephone calls
- Newspaper Announcements (printed in Lake County News)
- Printed Fliers
- Street Interactions (referred to as the Plan Van)
- Facebook Site Plan Clearlake, 39 community members 'liked' this page as of November 14, 2012



Two public outreach meetings were held in Clearlake, the first on October 27, 2012 and the second on November 10, 2012. Both meetings were held at the City Council Chambers. A summary of the main points brought up during the meetings is provided in the following sections.

Community Meeting 1: Focus Groups

During the first meeting, participants were provided an overview of the general plan and were asked three questions about Clearlake. The questions were:

- What do you like about Clearlake?
- What are some of the anchors that are holding Clearlake back?
- What do you wish was different about Clearlake?

Seventeen community members attended the meeting. Participants discussed each of the questions in small focus groups. Participants were also asked to prioritize their favorite ideas for the future of Clearlake. The information gathered during that meeting was incorporated into a presentation for the November 10, 2012 meeting. Community members liked the small town feel, rural character, quiet feel, friendly neighbors, the lake, and the wildlife. They disliked the condition of the lake, the condition of the roads, the limited regional draw into the City and the insufficient number of jobs. To improve the City they feel that Lakeshore Drive needed to be improved, the algae in the lake needed to be dealt with, and family entertainment options needed to be provided.



Community Meeting #1, Group discussion



Community Meeting #1, Small group discussion



Community Meeting #1, Dr. Cornelius Nuworsoo, Terri Persons Lake APC, and City Manager, Joan Phillipe



Community Meeting #1, Community 'anchor' exercise



Community Meeting #1, Group discussion



Community Meeting #1, Small group discussion

To supplement the data gathered at the meeting, part of the planning team went to local shopping centers and asked people who were passing by the same three questions. This team orchestrated a 'Plan Van', an attempt to obtain feedback from people who were unable to attend the meeting. The information collected was added to the feedback generated at the meeting. The information from the formal meeting and the Plan Van were of similar variety and identified similar issues and aspirations.

Community Meeting 2: Visioning with Emerging Directions

A presentation was created based on community input obtained at the October 27th meeting, the Land Use Inventory and policy research. The purpose of the presentation was to show Clearlake's current state, its current needs, and what changes could reasonably be expected, given community preferences and aspirations. The intent was also to make sure that what was being proposed in emerging directions adequately reflected the community's interests and to give the community an update on the background research the planning team had conducted.

Twenty-one community members attended this meeting. During the presentation, there were various breakout sessions. During these sessions, community members were given the opportunity to vote on their preferences for different emerging directions which were identified using all the sources of information.

The Plan Van went to local retail shopping centers to obtain additional community feedback. The community member who passed by were asked to engage in the same preference exercises that took place at the formal meeting. The information gathered was added to the feedback generated at the formal meeting.



Community Meeting #2, Preference exercise



Community Meeting #2, Dot placement during preference exercise



Community Meeting #2, Element presentations



Community Meeting #2, Element presentations

C. THEMES IN COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Several common themes emerged during the community meetings. The following sections summarize some of the main concerns and goals for the future of the City as identified by Clearlake residents. For a full list of community responses from both community meetings, see Appendix A.

Community meeting #1

Strengths

Residents like the City for the following reasons:

- The friendly, small town atmosphere
- There are low traffic volumes in the City, with little to no congestion
- The geographic setting, namely the rural history and character, is a favorite attribute to the City
- There are abundant natural resources, with abundant wildlife and great views of the stars
- It is affordable to live in Clearlake, especially compared to other neighboring regions
- Many residents feel that Clearlake is a safe place to live, with low crime rates
- Clear Lake is one of the main attractions to living in the City
- The residents like the number of community programs, events, and community services provided
- The residents also appreciate the City's efforts to pave roads and maintain parks
- There is a variety of businesses located in the City

Anchors

Residents are concerned that the City is constrained by the following:

- The City's bad reputation within the County
- Lack of/poor quality of infrastructure including sidewalks and paved roads
- Limited animal control
- Inadequate promotion of community events, as well as not enough events
- The cleanliness of the Lake, especially the smell from the algae
- Not enough public transportation, or connection to regional transit centers
- Economic conditions of the City
- There are not enough jobs for residents
- Distrust and dissatisfaction by some community members with government policies and government officials
- Inadequate garbage and waste disposal
- There are blighted areas and poor code enforcement
- Not enough activities, especially for children
- Low educational opportunities, and associated low level of educational attainment of residents
- Illegal drug operations, including marijuana growing

Wishes

Residents wish for the following:

- Better road conditions, including paved roads
- A bike and pedestrian friendly environment and downtown

- Improved transportation system and public transit options
- A nice place to live and retire, with plenty of entertainment options for youth, adults, and seniors
- Improvement of the City's image
- A clean Lake which is healthy and not polluted
- Community centers with educational activities, including information regarding the lake, the ecosystem, and the City's history
- Increased shopping opportunities, in addition to the existing Walmart regional shopping center
- Attraction of more tourists to boost the economy
- More jobs in the community
- Improved child and adult education centers, such as vocational training centers
- Government transparency to improve the relationship between government and residents, to create a relationship based on trust and honesty
- A homeless shelter
- Reduced crime, especially the amount of illegal drug activity
- Improved code enforcement
- A safer environment

Summary

The response from the community during the first community meeting suggests that the community has a strong connection to the environment and surrounding natural resources. The residents preferred the rural and small town setting of the City, as this lifestyle has created a warm and friendly atmosphere for families and children. The benefits of a rural setting include the low levels of traffic, good air quality, access to view of the natural surroundings, and affordable living conditions.

While there are numerous benefits to living in a small community, the residents identified major inhibitors to a good of life. A limited number of jobs, deteriorating quality of water in Clear Lake, and worsening economic conditions are some of the main anchors of the community. These anchors are interrelated, as limited jobs opportunities and business variety lower the economic base of the community, providing little funding for public improvement projects, such as road and sidewalk construction. The community dislikes the reputation the City has earned itself due to a perception of crime, as well as the poor quality of the Lake. Cleaning up the Lake is an on-going process requiring regional coordination. The community suggests that improvements to the Lake might help attract tourists to the area. There is a limited amount of tourist activity, with a limited number of businesses serving visitors.

To address the anchors the community wishes for economic development, more businesses centered along Lakeshore Drive, improved education, and more job opportunities. Although there were several other 'wishes' mentioned during the meeting, these topics target the root of the problem. For example, suggestions for entertainment oriented businesses, such as a bowling alley, ultimately suggest a need for more businesses and a variety of businesses to serve visitors and local residents. By attracting new visitors to Clearlake and encouraging them to stay within the City and shop along the downtown corridor, the City would increase sales tax

revenue. It is suggested that by addressing the economic conditions of the community, other improvements would be more easily made, such as paving of roads. While unpaved roads were not the most discussed topic at the meeting, many residents wish that the overall appearance of the residential and commercial areas is improved, including roads.

Community Meeting #2

This section summarizes input from the preference poster exercise performed during community meeting #2. While all input from the community meeting is addressed in the background report and final General Plan policy document as it pertains to each element, the following summarizes only some of the main points. The full summary of responses can be found in Appendix A.

Economic Development

After reviewing the results of community meeting #1, economic development emerged as a main issue in the community. Economic development addresses both jobs and business development in the City. The community showed a strong preference for locally owned businesses, with a preference for restaurant, entertainment, and retail stores along Lakeshore Drive. When asked which types of job opportunities the community members would like to see in the City, there was a majority preference for skilled trade types of jobs, with service and retail industry jobs ranked in a close second place. This suggests a City preference for increased tourism and the associated jobs for local residents. Retail and entertainment businesses act as a source of attraction for visitors, jobs for residents, and sales tax revenue for the City. This sentiment is echoed in the community preferred promotion strategy of tourism and the area's connection to wine country.

Land Use, Public Facilities, and Community Design

Addressing the City's negative reputation and preserving the rural character of the City emerged as main themes in the first community meeting. To further explore these topics the planning team returned to the City to gather community preference for a variety of land use and design strategies for the City. To improve the overall appearance of the City, community members preferred residential neighborhoods with both sidewalks and landscaped front yards, as well a downtown corridor which is equally landscaped and paved with sidewalks. Another aspect of community design is the maintenance of private property, namely the removal of trash. Trash was identified as the issue needing the most attention in Clearlake, while homelessness was the next popular option. To maintain the small town feel and maintain access to natural views, the community preferred to keep the downtown corridor as an area with one-story buildings.

Health and Safety

Ensuring a safe environment for all residents is a major goal for the community members, as expressed in the first meeting. Although all aspects of public safety require attention in the General Plan, selling and use of illegal drugs was identified as the main problem in the City. The need to address drug use is also a concern for public health, with rehabilitation programs,

family support services, and health education programs as the top three ranked priority concerns for the City. The health and safety of the community is connected. Public health encourages outdoor activities for youth and adults. However, if there are areas in which the community members feel unsafe, this may restrict their access to recreation centers or outdoor activities.

