

CITY OF LAKE ELSINORE

# GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

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## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW SUMMARY

### Interview Process

The project team held a total of two stakeholder interview sessions on November 20, 2023 and November 27, 2023. A diverse group of community members participated. They included property owners, residents, and local organizations' representatives such as school boards, civic clubs, and homeowner associations. Specifically, the participants' organization affiliations are listed below. Interviews were conducted via videoconference and lasted approximately one hour. The participants responded to questions regarding current opportunities and challenges facing Lake Elsinore, a future vision for the city.

- Animals Friends of the Valley
- California Family Life Center/Planet Youth
- Riverside County Fire Department
- Cottonwood Canyon Hills Homeowners Association
- Elsinore Valley Municipal Water District
- Lake Elsinore Historical Society
- Lake Elsinore Unified School District
- Rotary Club of Lake Elsinore

### Interview Questions

Participants were presented with a series of questions about the future of Lake Elsinore and were encouraged to speak about the topics they felt were most important to guide the city over the next 20+ years. Questions included:

1. What do you like most about Lake Elsinore?
2. From your organization's perspective, what will Lake Elsinore look like in 20 years, in terms of:
  - a. What will the housing and neighborhoods look like? How will things change or stay the same?
  - b. What types of shops, restaurants, and businesses? Where will they be?
  - c. What types of jobs will be available?
  - d. How will Lake Elsinore be "healthy"?
3. What are the issues current and long-term issues facing Lake Elsinore that the planning team should be aware of as we work with the community to develop the General Plan update?
4. Are there existing or future trends in Lake Elsinore that we should be aware of?
5. What are the opportunities that should be considered to realize the future vision for Lake Elsinore?
6. How should the city preserve and enhance community assets and those most cherished? Natural resources, historic areas, etc.
7. How can the city partner with other entities to continue to deliver services that promote a great quality of life in Lake Elsinore?



8. What are the best ways for our team to communicate with your group and the Lake Elsinore community?

## Key Themes

The following key themes emerged from the interviews as shared ideas and pressing points. While presented as statements, these reflect the consolidated perspectives of the stakeholders. These key themes and points will be cross-checked and developed through additional outreach and technical analysis to serve as the basis for the draft vision and guiding principles of the General Plan Update. Detailed notes from the stakeholder interviews are included in the **Appendix** and summarized in aggregate by question and topic area.

### Provide High-Quality Employment Opportunities

The lack of higher-paying jobs makes it difficult to attract and retain moderate-to-high-income households. This has also caused an outflow of local talented young adults, many of whom do not return to Lake Elsinore after completing college or university.

- Currently, more tourist-oriented/service jobs are available than corporate jobs.
- Encourage job growth to attract young adults to Lake Elsinore. Many local young adults have an easier time finding corporate jobs in neighboring cities like Riverside, Temecula, or other metropolitan areas in Southern California.
- Invest in higher educational opportunities in addition to employment opportunities to create a better career pipeline for local students.
- Create a pro-business reputation to help in attracting higher-paying jobs.

### Support Extreme Sports and Recreation

Participants noted that extreme sports were central to Lake Elsinore's identity and sense of place, while others noted a need to create a balance between passive and active recreational opportunities as a way to be inclusive of people's tastes and abilities.

- Extreme sports and events like the Elsinore Grand Prix bring visitors from all over and are great economic generators.
- Land currently used for extreme sports like dirt biking, paragliding, skydiving, etc. should be preserved as much as possible as Lake Elsinore continues to grow.
- Lake Elsinore lacks facilities for other outdoor family-oriented sports like soccer, football, etc.
- Recreation activities should be inclusive of all residents' tastes and abilities. Passive recreation activities like the Lake Elsinore Levee Walk or Launch Pointe should be encouraged.
- Balance park use for programs/events with everyday use by community members through better scheduling, especially for parks like Rosetta Sports Park.
- Develop trails, hiking opportunities, and other recreation activities at the wildland-urban interface to provide more passive recreation opportunities.

### Emphasize the Lake as a Destination

The Lake has long served as a focal point for the city and community. Participants discussed their desire to re-emphasize the Lake as a key destination in the city.

- Continue to implement plans and projects supporting the Lake's economic vitality. The City should consider how to attract people to Lake Elsinore and encourage residents/non-residents to visit the Lake rather than other lake destinations such as Lake Havasu.
- Improve access to the Lake from Main Street so people can easily walk/bike between the Lake and downtown.
- Encourage specialty restaurants and shops to enhance the areas around the Lake. Consider docking facilities that provide access to lake-adjacent restaurants/shops; consider refueling docks.
- Several land uses contribute to the poor visual quality of the Lake, such as the military academy, race track, etc. Improving the aesthetics of specific uses and the neighborhoods around the Lake is important because they influence visitors' first impression of the Lake.

### Attract a Diverse Mix of Businesses

Participants noted that Lake Elsinore lacks a diverse mix of businesses; Lake Elsinore needs more shopping, dining, and entertainment opportunities, especially in key areas such as around the Lake and downtown.

- Participants felt there was a proliferation of carwashes, dispensaries, and gas stations; participants would like to see less of these types of commercial uses.
- Participants wanted to see breweries, specialty restaurants and shops, grocery stores like Trader Joe's, rooftop bars, concert venues, and theaters. Participants pointed to Old Town Murrieta, Temecula, and Menifee as good examples of cities that developed not just residential uses but entertainment and retail.
- Many residents patronize businesses outside of Lake Elsinore to gain desired goods and services; thus, residents are not spending their money in Lake Elsinore or its businesses.
- Business development lags behind residential development.
- Consider developing a site where multiple commercial uses (or restaurant uses) are under one roof, ex. food halls. Perhaps redevelop the Outlets at Lake Elsinore.
- Use social media, public art, and wayfinding signs as tools for marketing Lake Elsinore's key attractions and businesses. For example, create murals where people can take photos and geotag Lake Elsinore on social media posts.

### Incentivize Development and Growth

Participants welcome Lake Elsinore's development and growth as they feel this is necessary to attract the types of jobs, businesses, and amenities they would like to see in the future.

- Improve target demographics so that the community can get the types of businesses that participants indicated they want to see. This requires a higher population and income density.
- Encourage residential housing for all income levels and family types. Lake Elsinore needs all types of housing – apartments/condominiums, townhomes, residential/commercial mixed use, smaller scale single unit, large property single unit, etc. Currently, the emphasis is on single unit development; more diversity is needed.
- Incentivize growth by advertising that Lake Elsinore is not anti-growth and reaching out to developers and corporate businesses about development opportunities.

- Balance and ensure city services and infrastructure (e.g. schools, emergency services, roads, etc.) have the capacity to support growth as it occurs.

### **Create More Walkable Communities**

Participants expressed a desire to have more biking and walking opportunities so that they can rely less on driving.

- Long stretches of roads are missing sidewalks and other pedestrian and bicycle-related infrastructure.
- Residents want to conveniently and safely walk from their homes to grocery stores, dining, and shopping.
- Lake Elsinore has a large elderly population; pedestrian infrastructure needs to be more ubiquitous and provide access to services and other necessities. This is particularly important as seniors' ability to use personal vehicles will continue to decline with age.

### **Maintain the Character of the Historic Downtown**

The Historic Downtown is a key community asset and participants want to maintain the historic feel by attracting the “right mix of businesses” such as small businesses/entrepreneurs.

- Continue to invest in the downtown by encouraging more housing opportunities and walkable neighborhood design.
- Improve areas surrounding the downtown so that they are aesthetically compatible with the downtown character. Participants suggested a façade improvement program or using tax incentives or other programs to encourage property owners to improve their businesses, residences, or property maintenance.
- Vacant parcels negatively impact the aesthetics of the downtown.

### **Improve Neighborhood Aesthetics**

Participants mentioned that vacant properties and a lack of property upkeep negatively impacted the aesthetics of many neighborhoods.

- Vacant properties become an eye-sore, especially when located at entrance points or gateways to Lake Elsinore (e.g. vacant Circle K property at the entryway to downtown).
- Work with property owners to redevelop their parcels, through incentives, outreach, or other mechanisms.
- Provide financial support to homeowners so that they can improve the aesthetics of their property, especially the ones near Main Street.
- Use gateway monuments at key entry points to Lake Elsinore or districts to help create a sense of place.
- Clean-up events are a great strategy for creating a sense of community while also improving the look of local areas.

## APPENDIX

The following are detailed notes collected during the interviews.

### Provide High-quality Employment Opportunities

- The city needs quality jobs/employment that will support the level of income that we want to bring into the city. City's income is already fairly high but is not reflected in what is being spent in the city. Bring high-dollar businesses that pay high-dollar salaries.
- Students in high school can't wait to leave Lake Elsinore because there aren't higher educational opportunities. Lake Elsinore needs opportunities to keep them in the city or attract them back to the City. Many bright young people leave the city for university/college/jobs.
- General Plan needs to encourage job growth, young adults return from college and have trouble finding work in Lake Elsinore. They then have to find work in Riverside/Temecula. Planet Youth – job training. Currently have tourist-oriented rather than corporate job.
- Perhaps the city's outskirts are good for corporations.
- Need to attract remote workers and families to LE – how make LE "cool" for the remote worker families.

### Support Extreme Sports and Recreation

- Dream Extreme is great but need other opportunities. For example, the levee, launch pointe, etc. Need something more inclusive of other people's interests.
- Wildland urban interface; developing trails, hiking, etc. in order to preserve the area.
- Need to educate residents on how to maintain wildland urban interface areas and improve access. Hot springs, how to promote more outdoor/open space/passive activities of the city. Walker Canyon, poppies.
- A developer was interested in a more passive recreation facility. Would like to see more of this.
- How to inform developers/property owners to invest in these passive recreation facilities. City lacks facilities for other outdoor family-oriented sports, soccer, and football.
- Really like the Dream Extreme as an opportunity to move towards a brand/look for city. Extreme sports/sports good opportunity to attract investment. Need supportive infrastructure to really see this take off. Keep money within the City. Better quality hotel/lodging opportunities.
- Dirt bike/off road needs presence. City needs to become dirt bike destination. Keep enough land to keep dirt biking going. Start race in downtown, draw people. Even at the cost of a housing development.
- Stadium – needs more advertisement, attendance. Glad to see other events (concerts) besides baseball occurring
- Can stadium master plan implementation be sped up, don't want to lose the stadium
- Keep green spaces in mind, Ortega/paragliders – where will this go if recreation/open space is removed. Ortega/Grand is scheduled for new development, what happens to paragliders
- Need to address Rosetta Sports Park/Launch Pointe – great to have but not much use/availability for local kids/programs. Need to balance; acknowledge City is trying to balance. But may need better scheduling for particular parks.
- If planning parks, why don't plan for parking/travel teams use including parking. Parks parking shouldn't flood into residential neighborhoods.
- Find a way to create resort or park around hot springs.

## Emphasize the Lake as a Destination

- Greater access to lake at the end of Main Street; bring people downtown from lake and vice versa
- Continue projects to support lake. Need to make lake a destination. Dock/fuel boat and recreate on lake i.e. Texas small lakes. Keep people in Lake Elsinore rather than driving to Lake Havasu
- Need to make stadium, lake, and downtown key destinations; businesses/breweries, specialty restaurants/stores

## Attract a Diverse Mix of Businesses

- More outdoor music venues
- Bedroom community; money not being kept within the city; businesses are not developing as quickly as residential uses; most folks go outside of the City to spend their money
- Example: Menifee has developed really quickly in the past decade not just residential but entertainment and shopping
- Lake Elsinore needs a diversity of businesses groceries, retail, entertainment.
- A place where more commercial uses under one roof. Redevelop the outlets.
- Old Town Murrieta and Temecula are good examples of redevelopment.
- Need to build reputation so businesses want to come to city.
- No more carwash places/dispensaries/stop/go/gas stations
- Community theater/arts may help be an attractor

## Incentivize Development and Growth

- Like that Lake Elsinore is a growing community, easy community/civic involvement opportunities
- As housing growth occurs:
  - Can school districts address population. Need childcare too.
  - Infrastructure too – paving/access, patching v. new roads/infrastructure, fire access/emergency exit
- Need to improve target demographic to get the stores the community wants – Trade Joe's- Population and income density.
- Incentivize growth/expansion. Need to advertise that the City is not anti-growth. In the past, Lake Elsinore was anti-growth and the City was hard to work with. That has changed but need the development community to know about it.
- Housing – need all types of housing ---- apartments, condos, townhomes, single family dwellings, large lots.
- Need strategies on how to better inform public about low income housing and maintenance (i.e. inform public that low-income housing isn't rundown housing).

## Create More Walkable Communities

- Make sure there is supportive infrastructure, so seniors can easily access services and necessities.
- Need more walkable communities where you don't need to rely on cars or public transit. You can just walk to a grocery store, restaurant, etc. Neighborhood serving commercial uses/Main Street feel.
- Residential/commercial mixed use is attractive especially for younger age groups

- Need to make corridors bike and pedestrian-friendly. Long stretches of corridor not pedestrian/bike friendly. Missing sidewalk/facilities/pedestrian & bike support; areas are dusty, unsafe, and unattractive. Four corners/cross Elsinore MS unsafe surroundings. Would like to walk along the Lake but unable to without getting dirty or feeling unsafe.
- Around Elsinore Middle School – add benches/police the areas.

### Maintain the Character of the Historic Downtown

- Create a more cohesive downtown
- Wayfinding signage for key destinations; incorporating digital opportunities as well QR codes for business discounts
- Would like to see more variety in Downtown; sit down restaurants, rooftop bars with nice views, fine dining, retail
- TikTok/social media marketing for key attractions; places like Launch Pointe and SkyDiving
- Decorate blank wall/windows with something attractive and encourage people to geotag Lake Elsinore on social media
- Like events held in the downtown area and what's being done to address parking
- Historic downtown with parking access is good but need to maintain historic feel, need to attract "right businesses" – small business/entrepreneurs.
- Continued investment in downtown, continue to provide housing near it and encourage walking in downtown
- Keep small-town feel
- Areas surrounding downtown need enhance their maintenance. Provide tax incentives or something for the 5 blocks around downtown. Require those blocks to build with the downtown character/brick
- Empty lots are problems. Use the empty lots/spaces to encourage the downtown.
- Historic preservation; facades and architectural; signage with historical information
- Consider Pachanga lot for a park, historical botanical park, Native American presence.
- The Chimes – Graham more walkable
- City needs to lean on vacant buildings and companies. Why do buildings remain vacant?
- External investors/absentee landlords are a worry because lack of interest in the community.

### Improve Neighborhood Aesthetics

- Clean-up events were great for creating community while also improving the look of the City
- Grants to help homeowners improve the aesthetics of their property, especially the ones on Main Street
- Vacant Circle K is not attractive especially as it's at the entryway of the downtown
- Gateway monuments to city, districts, etc. would improve aesthetics and contribute to a sense of place
- Abandoned/vacant sites near the I-15
- Rehabilitating/infill development of abandoned buildings for cost efficiency
- Vacant parcels are sometimes owned by people who don't live in the City so they aren't as invested in improving their lots. How to incentivize them to improve their lots?
- City purchasing parcels and working with developers to redevelop areas. Corona Mall as a successful example for redevelopment agencies. Or do outreach to encourage and support property owners to sell or reinvest in their lots.

- Lake Elsinore does not have a cohesive General Plan; residential areas aren't the most attractive but have grown over the years but still needs a more cohesive vision
- Military Academy/Race track/Lakeland Village has poor visual quality. Perhaps annex Lakeland Village because it's the first experience entering Lake Elsinore.

#### Other

- Large elderly population and need to provide more city services for this population. Maybe a City liaison to inform seniors of the services/programs available to them.
- State is really enforcing strict water conservation practices (especially for indoor use); this is really difficult to implement but EVMWD suggests strong coordination with City to understand what the City is planning to ensure strategies are compatible with each other.
- Enjoy the small-town feel with a downtown and lake
- Lake Elsinore is a down-to-earth community, family oriented, multigenerational; enjoy hearing about the city's history; patriotism
- There are opportunities to develop vacant land; family-owned businesses contribute to a sense of community
- Lake Elsinore is central to Southern California airports/work metro area
- Moved here because of downtown, amenities that can be reached easily, live near lake
- Community involvement, active recreation, historic downtown and involvement
- Like Dream Extreme – rec lake, airport, races etc.
- Active city yet still small town
- Lake Elsinore has potential moving forward
- How improve relationships with indigenous tribes. Key to future; neutral grounds.
- Feature old street lights displayed (some broken)
- Safety – better lighting, police
- Military academy refurbished? Park and wayfinding signs may make it a better gateway