

CHAPTER 1

Introduction



Introduction

The 2040 General Plan establishes a framework for maintaining and enhancing Truckee's unique identity over the next two decades. This chapter explains the purpose of the General Plan, provides a brief introduction to the Town of Truckee, presents the vision and guiding principles for the Town, and describes the organization and contents of the 2040 General Plan.

Purpose of the General Plan

The purpose of this General Plan is to guide development and conservation of valued resources in Truckee through 2040 by establishing a policy basis for decision-making. The General Plan articulates a vision for the town's long-term physical form and development through the General Plan Land Use Diagram and Circulation Diagram and through guiding principles, goals, policies, and actions.

California Government Code Section 65300 requires that a general plan be comprehensive, long term, and internally consistent. State law specifies a number of issues that the General Plan is required to address and allows it to be organized in a manner that best suits the Town. Truckee's 2040 General Plan meets all of the requirements of state law.

The 2040 General Plan supersedes the 2025 General Plan, adopted in 2006. However, this document retains much of the original intent of the 2025 General Plan, with new goals, policies, and actions added to address new and emerging issues.

The General Plan provides the legal foundation for the Town's Development Code and other adopted townwide plans and strategies. Implementation of the General Plan will include actions to update other planning documents, such as the Development Code and the Truckee Trails and Bikeways Master Plan, so that they can be adjusted to reflect the policies contained in the 2040 General Plan.

While this General Plan establishes a 20-year planning horizon, it is intended that periodic updates will occur as needed to reflect changing conditions and to keep the General Plan current with state law and the community's visions and values.

The Town and Its Planning Area

Truckee is located in the Lake Tahoe region of northern California. The town lies just east of the Sierra Nevada's crest at Donner Pass, in the valley of the Truckee River and surrounding upland areas. As shown in Figure I-1, Truckee is in the eastern part of Nevada County, approximately 12 miles north of Lake Tahoe, 30 miles west of Reno, Nevada, and 100 miles northeast of Sacramento.

Physical Setting

Situated in a valley containing the Truckee River, Truckee is surrounded by prominent peaks and ridgelines of the Sierra Nevada. In Truckee itself, elevations range from 5,540 feet in the vicinity of Boca to nearly 7,500 feet in Tahoe Donner.

A key element of the town's physical character is its abundance of undeveloped open space areas and natural features including Donner Lake, in the western part of the town, and the Truckee River, which drains from Lake Tahoe to the south to Pyramid Lake in Nevada. Several other important creeks and streams flow through Truckee, notably Trout Creek, Alder Creek, Cold Creek, Donner Creek, and Martis Creek. Open space areas are numerous and encompass relatively flat alluvial areas in the eastern part of the town and areas of steeper slopes and more varied terrain around Donner Lake, in Tahoe Donner, and north of Interstate 80.



Source: Data downloaded from Truckee in 2018.

Figure I-1: Regional Setting

Historical Development

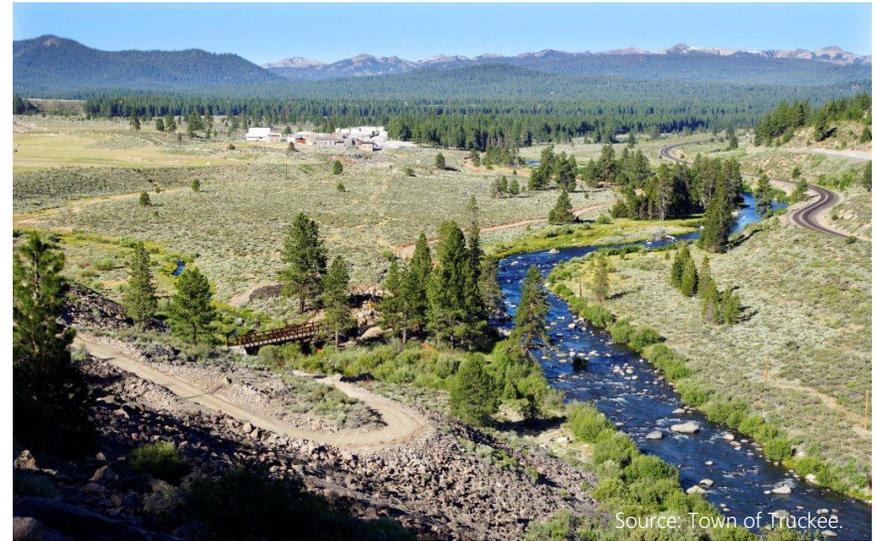
The Truckee area is rich in historic sites, reflecting its deep historic legacy. The Washoe, Maidu, and Paiute people were the earliest occupants of the Truckee and Lake Tahoe area, relying on the rich supply of fish, game, and edible plants for food and sustenance. In the mid-1840s, emigrant parties from the east settled in the region. The two most famous parties were the Murphy-Stevens-Townsend Party, some of whom encamped at Donner Lake (then called Mountain Lake) in the winter of 1844, and the Donner Party, who encamped at Donner Lake in the winter of 1846. The Murphy-Stevens-Townsend Party gave the Truckee River its name, after a Paiute chief, whom they called Truckee. The town initially grew around the emigrant trail, and later, in 1868, began to grow around the station for the newly built Transcontinental Railroad.

Logging was a major industry in the area until the 1920s. Winter sports began to be a major source of economic activity, increasing greatly with the 1960 Winter Olympics at Squaw Valley Ski Resort, now known as Palisades Tahoe. Today, Truckee continues to be a center for outdoor sports, both in the summer and in the winter, and is considered to be the gateway to the Lake Tahoe region from the north.



Source: Truckee Donner Historical Society.

Commercial row in Downtown Truckee in 1958.



Source: Town of Truckee.

View of Truckee River and Legacy Trail.

The Truckee Way

Truckee has a history of active involvement and independent thinking regarding planning and development issues in Nevada County. It was such a dedicated and energetic community planning effort that created the focus for the Town's successful incorporation effort in 1993 and formed the basis for the creation of Truckee's first General Plan in 1996. This same level of interest and energy has been sustained in subsequent updates to the General Plan, with impressive levels of community participation throughout the process to develop the 2040 General Plan.

This dedication is reflected in the Town's commitment to its operating principles and core values and is referred to colloquially as "The Truckee Way." The Town is committed to the following philosophy:

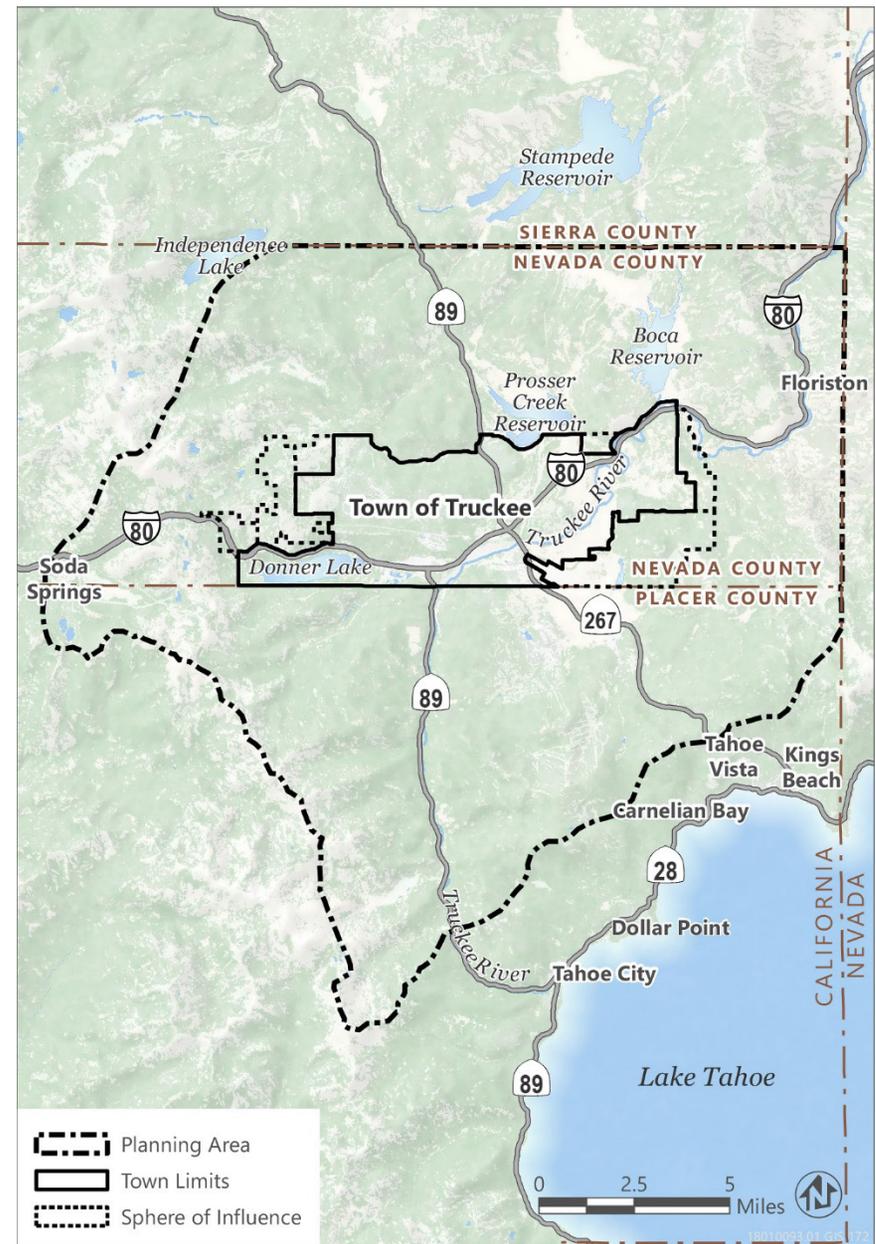
We will treat everyone, and their point of view, with respect, courtesy, and fairness. We will approach issues with creativity and innovation. We will conduct ourselves, and the Town's business, according to the highest ethical standards. We will encourage the free exchange of ideas and information by open and honest communication. We believe that non-adversarial dispute resolution results in the most effective community, decision-maker, and employee involvement in the Town and its future.

Town Limits, Sphere of Influence, and Planning Area

Truckee's town limits, shown in Figure I-2, encompass an area of approximately 34 square miles, which include the historic Downtown core, a newer regional retail and public service-oriented area in the Gateway District along Donner Pass Road, and several residential neighborhoods, including Tahoe Donner, Gray's Crossing, Donner Lake, Glenshire-Devonshire, Prosser Lakeview, Olympic Heights, Sierra Meadows, and Ponderosa Palisades. Interstate 80 and the Union Pacific Railroad, both major transcontinental transportation routes, and the Truckee River each divide the town, traveling roughly east to west. The Nevada County line forms Truckee's southern boundary, and the town is bordered to the north by public open space lands in unincorporated Nevada County. To the east and west are unincorporated areas of very low-density and rural residential development, interspersed with undeveloped open space.

Besides the city or town limits, every city in California has a sphere of influence (SOI), which is the term used for the area outside of the city or town limits that the jurisdiction expects to annex in future years. Truckee's SOI is coterminous with the town limits on the south and extends to include areas to the west, an area to the north just southeast of Prosser Creek Reservoir, and several hundred acres to the east of the town.

The state encourages cities and towns to look beyond their borders when undertaking a comprehensive planning effort like that of the General Plan. For this reason, the General Plan assesses an area known as the Planning Area, which is larger than the town limits and SOI, and reflects the areas outside of the town that are considered to have bearing on or be of interest to the Town's planning. The Planning Area, mapped in Figure I-2, includes a large area surrounding the town, extending north to the Sierra County line, west to the Nevada State line, east to Donner Summit, and south to the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency boundary to encompass the Northstar California and Palisades Tahoe resorts.



Source: Data downloaded from Truckee in 2018.

Figure I-2: Boundaries

Vision and Guiding Principles

The 2040 General Plan presents a vision for the future of Truckee and a set of guiding principles for how the Town will achieve that vision. The vision and guiding principles capture the Town's key values and aspirations for the future.

Vision for the Future

In 2040, Truckee is a welcoming, inclusive, and thriving mountain town with a diverse community, strong four-season economy, and healthy environment. Truckee features a variety of housing types that support the local workforce, arts and culture, and services to support residents and visitors. Our historic downtown is the heart and soul of our town. As the hub, it connects a revitalized and accessible Truckee River with our neighborhoods and regional amenities through a comprehensive network of multi-use trails and transportation solutions.



Source: Town of Truckee.

View of Downtown Truckee at night.

Guiding Principles

Land Use

- ▶ Maintain and enhance the quality of life and unique community character of Truckee through preservation of the town's special characteristics and resources and through development of new land uses that support and complement the community.
- ▶ Maintain and enhance the walkable Downtown core as the heart and soul of the community with a vibrant mix of land uses, historic character, access to a revitalized river, and services and amenities.
- ▶ Promote a mix of land uses whose location, patterns, and densities support increased transit use and encourage biking and walking to reduce vehicle miles traveled while still providing for economic development and housing needs.

Community Character

- ▶ Maintain Truckee's authenticity and sense of place.
- ▶ Preserve the town's established historic and scenic character.
- ▶ Emphasize and enhance the visual and physical connection between the town's natural and built environments.
- ▶ Promote the highest possible standards of town site design, planning, and architecture.
- ▶ Create vibrant, diverse mixed-use neighborhood centers to improve and strengthen connections between the town's neighborhoods and centers.
- ▶ Strengthen Truckee's economic base and provide focal points for the town and its neighborhoods.
- ▶ Enhance Truckee's important corridors and community gateways.
- ▶ Protect the town's historic and cultural resources.
- ▶ Strengthen the sense of community in Truckee.
- ▶ Support the arts and encourage the development of cultural amenities.
- ▶ Strengthen the diverse social fabric of the Truckee community.

Mobility

- ▶ Coordinate and actively integrate land use and transportation planning to provide for the long-range development of the town's roadway and bikeway system consistent with the existing and future land uses described in the Land Use Element.
- ▶ Develop a roadway, transit, bicycle, and pedestrian systems that provide convenient access and mobility for Truckee residents and businesses.
- ▶ Proactively coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions to address regional traffic issues.
- ▶ Create a comprehensive and sustainable multi-modal transportation system that supports the daily travel needs of residents, commuters, owners of second homes, and visitors through equitable investment in all modes.



Source: Joanna Rutkowski, courtesy of Bike Truckee.

Bikers on Truckee Legacy Trail.



Source: Town of Truckee.

Henness Flats affordable housing development.

Housing

- ▶ Provide an adequate number of sites for the development of housing to meet Truckee's fair share of the regional housing need.
- ▶ Encourage a variety of types of housing, distributed throughout the community.
- ▶ Provide housing to meet the needs of its residents, particularly those who work in Truckee, while maintaining the Town's character.
- ▶ Remove avoidable governmental constraints to the maintenance, improvement, and development of housing. Enhance and promote quality housing design in both new and existing development.

Economic Development

- ▶ Build upon the Town's existing assets to diversify and strengthen the local economy in ways that are appropriate and responsive to Truckee's community, businesses, and natural environment.

Conservation and Open Space

- ▶ Preserve and expand the quantity and quality of natural systems in Truckee by promoting aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity and by implementing environmental, ecological, and conservation-minded strategies.
- ▶ Increase the amount of permanently protected, connected, and publicly accessible open space in and around Truckee for the use and enjoyment of all Truckee residents.
- ▶ Preserve the Truckee River corridor, its tributary drainages, and its associated riparian habitat to enhance their role as critical open space and as a biological and scenic resource.
- ▶ Facilitate regional collaboration within the watershed boundary to conserve and manage important natural resources and environmental quality.
- ▶ Ensure the availability of a diverse range of recreational opportunities for Truckee's existing and future population.
- ▶ Maintain and improve air quality in the Truckee region to ensure a healthful environment for all.
- ▶ Implement "low impact development" planning and design practices and technologies to simultaneously reduce infrastructure costs, conserve and protect natural resource systems, and reduce potential environmental impacts.

Safety and Noise

- ▶ Minimize the potential risk to life and property from natural and human-made hazards in Truckee.
- ▶ Ensure the ongoing safety of operations at Truckee Tahoe Airport.
- ▶ Ensure that Truckee's residents and emergency service providers are adequately prepared to respond to emergency situations.
- ▶ Preserve Truckee's peaceful mountain environment by minimizing community exposure to noise.



Source: Town of Truckee.

Truckee Legacy Trail.



Source: Town of Truckee.

Kayaking on the Truckee River.

General Plan Organization

The General Plan includes eight “elements” that contain goals, policies, and actions for each subject. Five of these elements cover each of the seven topics required by Government Code Section 65302, while the remaining two elements, the Community Character Element and the Economic Development Element, have been prepared to meet local needs and concerns. Table I-1 shows how the Truckee 2040 General Plan elements address the topics required by state law. A brief explanation of the General Plan elements follows. The Existing Conditions Report included in Appendix A contains additional analysis required by state law.

Table I-1: Truckee 2040 General Plan and State Requirements

Truckee 2040 General Plan Elements	Elements Required by State Law							Optional Elements
	Land Use	Circulation	Housing	Conservation	Open Space	Safety	Noise	
Land Use	●							
Community Character								●
Mobility		●						
Housing			●					
Economic Development								●
Conservation and Open Space				●	●			
Safety and Noise						●	●	
Climate Action Plan Element								●

Land Use Element

The Land Use Element designates all lands in the town for specific uses such as housing, commercial, industry, open space, recreation, or public uses; defines the range of allowed uses within each designation; and establishes the development density or intensity for those uses. The

element provides land use policies for various types of development, as well as specific areas or districts within the town, and for the Planning Area. The Land Use Element is one of the state-mandated elements.

Community Character Element

The Community Character Element is not required by state law. However, because of the importance of Truckee’s unique physical and visual resources, the General Plan includes the Community Character Element to identify, protect, and enhance these features. The element contains goals, policies, and actions concerning urban design, scenic resources, the natural setting, and cultural resources.

Mobility Element

State law requires that a general plan contain a circulation element to specify the general location and extent of existing and proposed major streets and other transportation facilities. The Town has opted to call this element the Mobility Element because it places a focus on a broader range of solutions that consider safety, convenience, and accessibility for all users as opposed to focusing solely on physical infrastructure.

Housing Element

State law requires housing elements to be updated every eight years according to a state-mandated schedule and to include specific components such as an analysis of existing and projected housing needs and a detailed inventory of available housing sites. The Town’s Housing Element was last updated and adopted in 2019. It will be updated every eight years subsequently, per the requirements of state law, and incorporated as one of the chapters of the General Plan.

Economic Development Element

Although not mandated by state law, this element is included to work toward and maintain a balanced mix of economic activity for residents and visitors alike and to develop a sustainable year-round economy. The Economic Development Element contains goals, policies, and actions to encourage the growth of desired economic sectors and activities in the town.

Conservation and Open Space Element

The Conservation and Open Space Element combines two elements required under state law. It addresses the preservation of a wide range of open space types and the conservation, development, and use of natural resources.

Safety and Noise Element

The Safety and Noise Element combines two state-mandated elements. State law requires the development of a safety element in a general plan to protect the community from risks associated with the effects of seismic and other geologic hazards, flooding, snow avalanche, and wildfire. State law also requires that a noise element be included to address noise problems in the community and that it analyze and quantify current and projected noise levels from a variety of sources.

Climate Action Plan Element

While climate action is not specifically identified in state law as a required topic of the General Plan, since the state expressly recognized climate change as a consideration in the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) in 2007, local governments have typically addressed climate change either in policies in the general plan itself or through adoption of a separate climate action plan (CAP). Recognizing that climate change is one of the most challenging issues Truckee will face in the 21st century, the Town has incorporated a Climate Action Plan Element in the General Plan.

The CAP Element, along with Appendix C, "Climate Action Plan Appendix," serves as a complete climate action plan document that allows the Town to assess its current greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, establish targets and goals for emissions reductions, and identify and implement specific measures that reduce GHG emissions to achieve established state and Town targets. The complete CAP document is structured to serve as a programmatic tiering document for analysis purposes as part of CEQA.

Contents of Each Element

Each element contains goals, policies, and actions, defined as follows:

- ▶ **Goal.** A goal is a desired future condition or end that serves as a concrete step toward fulfilling the vision and guiding principles. Goals are intentionally general and broad.
- ▶ **Policy.** A policy is a specific statement that guides decision-making in order to achieve a goal. Policies, once adopted, represent statements of Town regulation and require no further implementation (although policies may be further expanded, clarified, or given more specific direction through implementing documents such as the Development Code, a specific plan, or the Capital Improvement Program). The policies of the General Plan are used by Town staff, the Planning Commission, and the Town Council in the review of development projects and in decision-making about Town actions.
- ▶ **Action.** An action is a program or implementation measure intended to help achieve a specified goal or policy. Some actions are directly tied to the implementation of a particular policy. But not every policy has an accompanying action, since many policies are implemented through ongoing processes and procedures, such as the development review process.

Each action has an identified responsibility and time frame. The appropriate Town department or partnering agency is listed as the responsibility and the timeframe is listed as short term, midterm, long term, ongoing, or annually. Short term includes actions that will be implemented by 2025, midterm includes actions that will be implemented by 2030, and long term includes actions that will be implemented after 2030.

The General Plan Update Process

The 2040 General Plan represents the culmination of a four-year-long process to study existing conditions, establish a new vision and guiding principles, analyze land use alternatives, evaluate the previous General Plan, and determine what changes were needed to existing goals, policies, and actions to reflect community input and help achieve the Town’s vision. Figure I-3 identifies the main phases of the General Plan update process and the key components of each phase.

- 1 Project Initiation.** Setting up the project website, establishing the GPAC, and initiating community engagement.
- 2 Existing Conditions.** Collecting data and preparing the existing conditions report.
- 3 Issues, Opportunities, and Vision.** Engaging the community on key issues and opportunities, and drafting the vision and guiding principles.
- 4 Land Use Alternatives.** Analyzing land use alternatives and selecting a preferred alternative to form the basis of the General Plan Land Use Diagram.
- 5 Goals and Policies.** Evaluating the existing General Plan and drafting the goals, policies, and actions of the 2040 General Plan.
- 6 Environmental Review.** Analyzing potential impacts and preparing an Environmental Impact Report in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act.
- 7 Final Documents and Adoption.** Reviewing the draft General Plan and EIR with the community and adoption of the 2040 General Plan by the Town Council.

Figure I-3: General Plan Update Process

Community Engagement

Community input was gathered during each step of the process through extensive public outreach that included over 20 meetings with residents, stakeholders, and decision makers. The General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC), in particular, was instrumental in shaping the 2040 General Plan.

General Plan Advisory Committee

At the outset of the project, the GPAC was appointed by the Town Council as a committee tasked with providing input on the 2040 General Plan to the Planning Commission and the Town Council. Made up of nearly 20 community members representing a variety of stakeholders, community perspectives, and interests, the GPAC was formed with the intent of ensuring an inclusive planning process that represented broad public participation. GPAC members volunteered their time over the course of more than two dozen meetings, including both regular meetings of the entire GPAC and subcommittee meetings focused on specific topics (e.g., vision, climate, housing). GPAC meetings were open to the public, and members of the public were able to comment during the meetings.



Virtual GPAC Meeting

Community Workshops and Online Engagement

The Town held a combination of 14 in-person and virtual community workshops during the General Plan update process. Workshop topics included housing opportunity sites, visioning, issues and opportunities, climate vulnerability, Downtown land use concepts, and the General Plan land use alternatives. The Town also distributed surveys and set up an interactive project website that was used to gather input from the community on priority issues, the General Plan vision, and several other topics. Through these community meetings and online platforms, hundreds of Truckee residents shared their ideas and feedback that helped shape the 2040 General Plan.

Planning Commission and Town Council Meetings

At various stages of the process, the Town held meetings with the Planning Commission and the Town Council to provide project updates and get direction on key aspects of the project, including selection of the preferred land use alternative. These meetings were open to the public and offered community members an opportunity to provide direct feedback to decision makers.



Truckee 2040 project website.



Community members shared their ideas at General Plan workshops.

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