



Planning Commission Staff Report

Meeting Date: March 7, 2023

Agenda Item: 8A

BRIEF SUMMARY:

Information on the Washoe County Master Plan update, including: (a) review of previous progress, (b) discussion of plan structure, and (c) next steps and opportunities for Planning Commission involvement.

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STAFF RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE

DENY

POSSIBLE MOTION

I move that the Washoe County Planning Commission support the overall direction of the draft as presented in the staff report and at this public meeting, the incorporation of the community derived cross-cutting themes, and implementation of the planned community engagement efforts. I further move to provide the following additional input to staff: [...]

(Motion on Page 8)

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Background

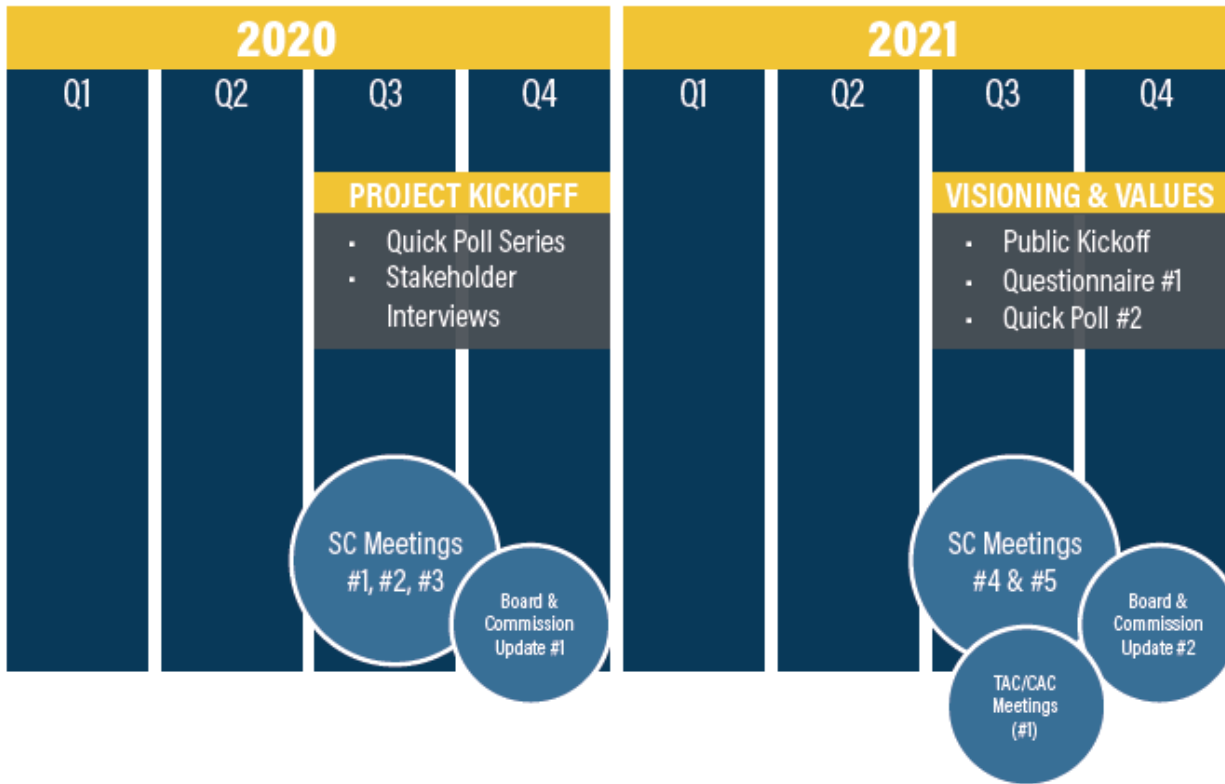
Washoe County is currently in the process of updating its Master Plan, a document that guides land use in the unincorporated county and defines community priorities. Official community engagement to create the new Master Plan—named Envision Washoe 2040—began in 2020. After a series of meetings, surveys, and other engagement with the general public, steering committees, and stakeholder groups, staff has begun drafting Envision Washoe 2040. The intention of this staff report is to provide a general update on the emerging draft and to preview our planned next steps. Staff is seeking the Planning Commission’s input on those steps and on the four cross-cutting themes that emerged during public engagement and how they are being addressed in the emerging draft.

Public Engagement and Timeline

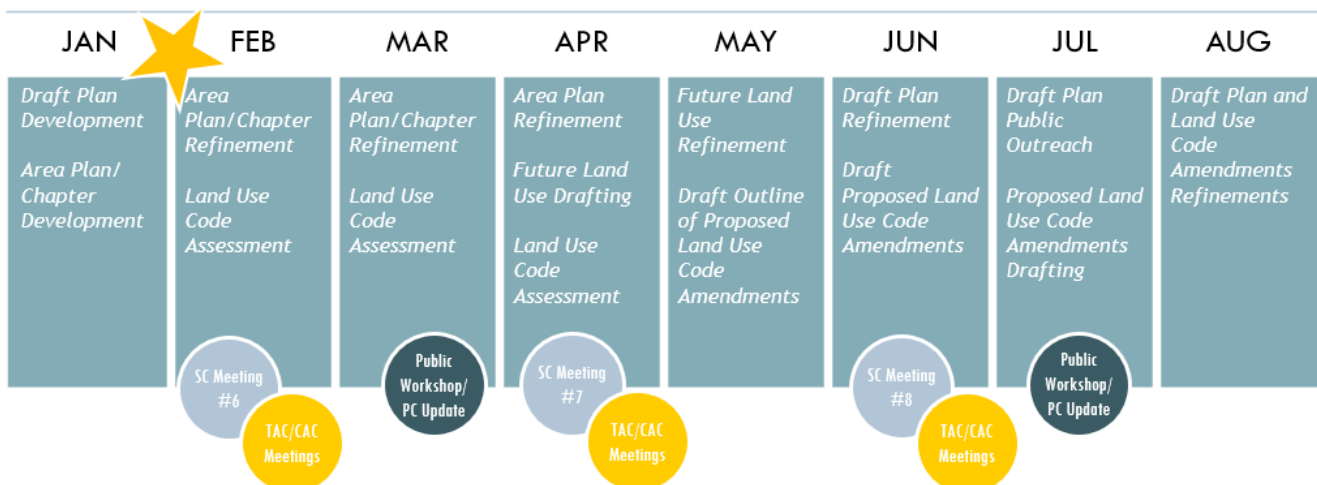
To arrive at the structure described below, Washoe County has conducted extensive public engagement over the last few years. Early in the project, staff established three advisory committees: the Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), and the Steering Committee (SC.) The CAC specifically is composed of citizens from each planning area. They directly advise county staff and utilize their networks to gather broader input. The Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) also includes members of the public who represent different stakeholder groups that interact with the Master Plan, including representatives from the Planning Commission, the consulting community, and others. The Steering Committee is composed of County Department and Regional Agency Directors. The Steering Committee is tasked with ensuring the project stays focused and on track.

Additional outreach included efforts that directly involved any and all citizens of Washoe County—including the polls and questionnaires—and ongoing collaboration with the Citizens Advisory Boards (CAB) and community focused advisory groups. All meetings are documented and listed on the project’s dedicated website EnvisionWashoe2040.org. A timeline of engagement in 2020 and 2021 can be found below. CAB meetings, agency meetings, and community group meetings continued throughout 2022. A series of additional community meetings is planned to begin following the incorporation of the direction staff receives from the Planning Commission.

OVERALL PROCESS TIMELINE

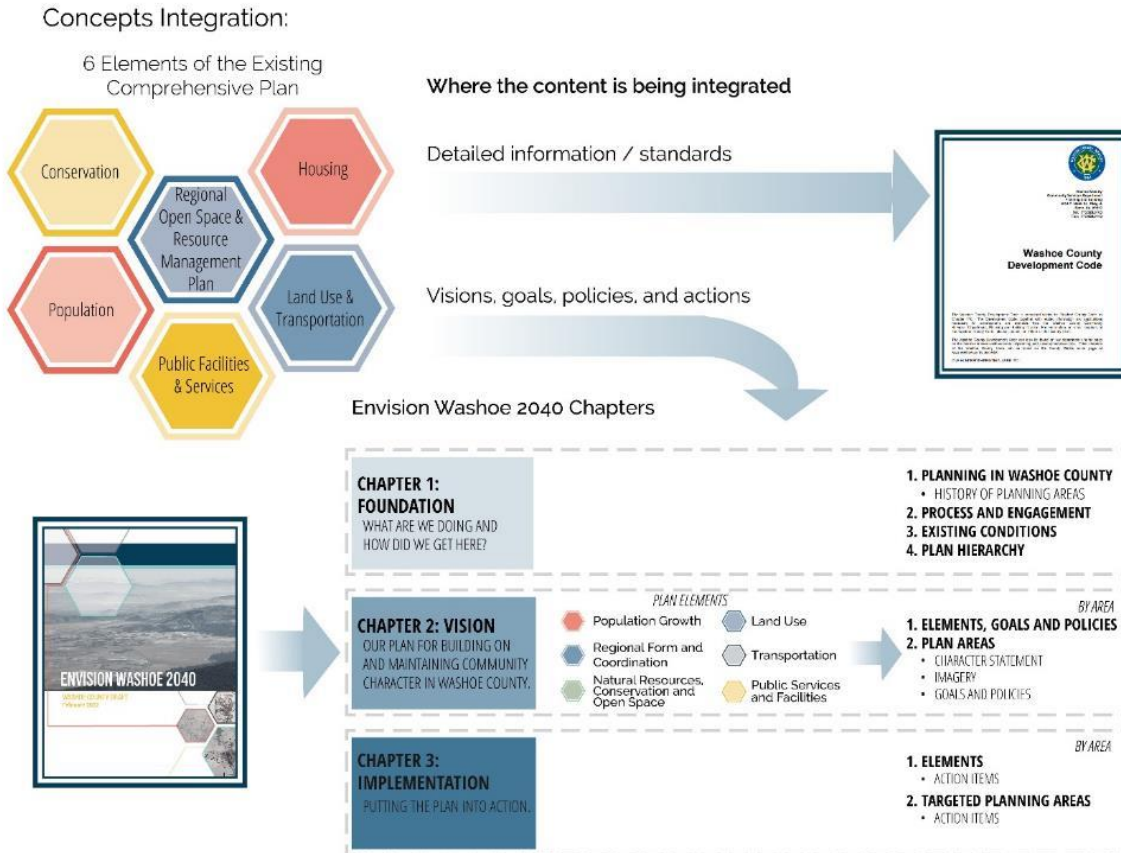


Engagement thus far has informed the overall shape of the plan. Staff is now drafting the plan and has a working draft of about 50% of the overall document. During and after the development of this draft, public outreach will continue to the various advisory groups and the general public. This includes gathering information on what people would like to see in the Master Plan and, eventually, public review of the draft itself. Next phases of outreach will help confirm that the plan achieves what was intended and will incorporate any changes necessary to ensure that Envision Washoe 2040 effectively serves the people of Washoe County. A timeline of future plan development and engagement is below. The next significant period of public outreach will occur at the end of March, when consulting staff from Logan-Simpson, Inc. will be in town. During this visit, they will facilitate a series of public workshops that will focus on the area plan drafts and future land use in each of the planning areas. These workshops will be held in community settings in at least four separate locations throughout the county. After the initial area plan workshops, staff will hold additional community-specific workshops as needed. Another phase of public outreach will take place in July to get input on the full draft of the Master Plan. This outreach will include public workshops and other methods that are currently being considered by staff.



Plan Structure

After extensive public outreach and input from steering and advisory committees, staff determined a new structure for Washoe County’s Master Plan that would consolidate the 19 documents that currently comprise the plan into one document.



The current Master Plan includes six “elements” and 13 area plans. While they are technically all part of the same Master Plan, they exist largely separately. A goal of Envision Washoe 2040—as established early in the project by the Steering Committee—is to streamline the Master Plan into one concise and clear document that is accessible to all. As shown in the figure above, this will be achieved by restructuring the plan to: (a) move language that contains development standards into the development code, and (b) incorporate the plans into a single document that contextualize them in relation to each other. The result is a three-chapter plan.

Chapter 1—Foundation

Envision Washoe 2040’s first chapter, Foundation, provides background and context for the plan. It addresses the history and purpose of area plans in Washoe County, describes the process and engagement undertaken to create the Master Plan, and briefly chronicles existing conditions in the county.

Additionally, this section places the Washoe County Master Plan in a regional context. Washoe County’s Master Plan is one such plan that exists in a network of other similar documents for other agencies in the region. Most notably, Washoe County’s plan must be in conformance with the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan. The ability of Washoe County to implement our Master Plan will be impacted by the plans of other agencies, such as the Truckee Meadows Water Authority (TMWA), the Regional Transportation Commission (RTC), and so on. The reverse is also true. Throughout, but in Chapter 1 particularly, this Master Plan places emphasis on describing the network of agencies that govern and influence land use in Washoe County.

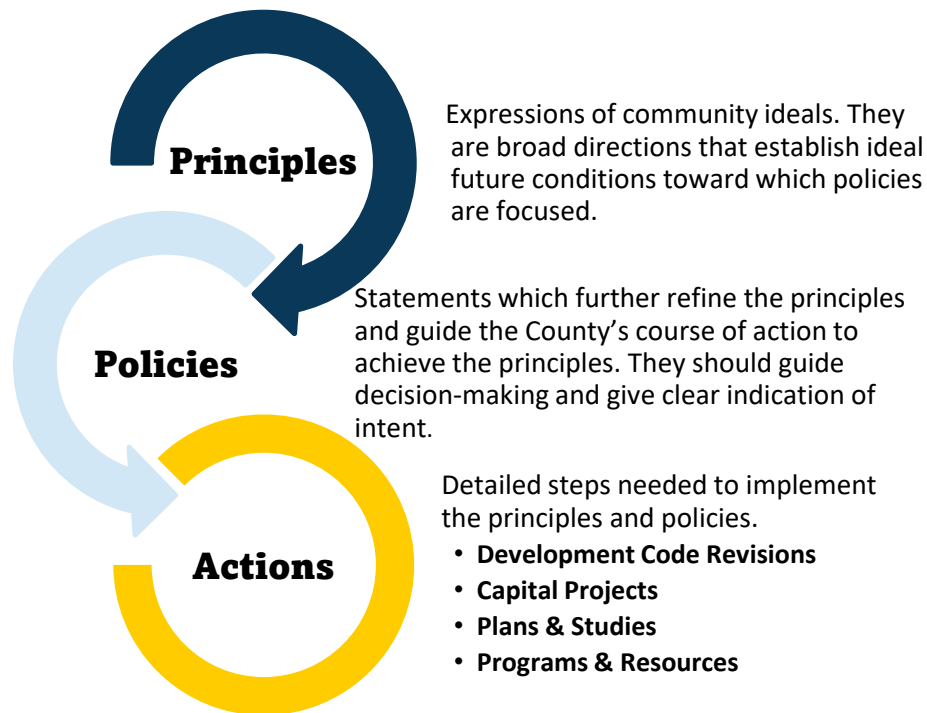
Chapter 1 introduces these other agencies and plans, so that they can be referenced and linked throughout the following chapters when relevant.

Chapter 2—Vision

As the name suggests, the second chapter is focused on defining a vision for the future of the county; it describes where we are now, and where we want to go. Chapter 2 is broken into two parts: the first part includes the elements, and second part includes the plan areas.

As described above, the elements currently exist as six separate documents. They also align with Nevada Revised Statute (NRS) requirements for a Master Plan. The new Master Plan will slightly reorganize the elements into the following groups: population and housing; regional form and coordination; natural resources, conservation, and open space; transportation; land use; and public services and facilities. In contrast with the previous Master Plan, these elements separate transportation and land use and add regional form and coordination, which is consistent with the structure of the Truckee Meadows Regional Plan and emphasizes the importance of regional collaboration in implementing this Master Plan and other existing plans.

Each element contains an overall description, key indicators, principles, and policies applicable to the whole county. These policies will guide the county in pursuing its principles and goals, through development review and other methods. The relationship between principles, policies, and actions is described below. Actions will appear in Chapter 3.



Key indicators, while not included in the figure above, are part of tracking the County’s efficacy in implementing the Master Plan. A few key indicators will be developed for each element that will be measured, tracked, and reported on by county staff to measure plan implementation. For example, a key indicator may be something like “acres of protected open space added to the Regional Parks and Open Space system.” Specific indicators are not yet developed by staff but are intended to be measurable and related to specific plans and/or policies.

The second half of Chapter 2 are the planning areas. This section, which is still in its earlier stages of development, will distill each existing area plan down to approximately four pages. As with the elements, much of the text in the existing area plans consists of specific rules and regulations that would be more appropriately contained in the development code. Accordingly, in concert with the Master Plan update, there will also be development code amendments. What remains will—through community engagement efforts that have already begun and will continue into March and April—be distilled to focus on what is essential and unique to each area. Moreover, area information will be structured such that existing conditions and future issues and opportunities are addressed separately. This way, the plan will provide clarity on what exists and what communities desire for the future. In addition, each planning area will have principles and policies that address items specific to their region. Existing area plan policies that appear in several area plans will, generally speaking, be made county-wide policies within the elements portion of Chapter 2.

Chapter 3—Implementation

The third and final chapter focuses on implementation, or the “action” element in the figure above. Each policy in Chapter 2 will be tied to at least one implementation action that specifies how that policy will be achieved, in what broad time frame (e.g. short term, medium term, long term, continuous), and what types of resources are required to do so. Depending on the policy, the action may be development code revisions, capital projects, plans and studies, or programs and resources. These actions won’t be a concrete to-do list that achieves every single policy, but rather a place to start in implementing the Master Plan. For example, if a policy is, “Maintain dark night skies,” an action might be, “Propose development code standards for dark-sky compliant lighting.” By defining actions, the public, elected and appointed officials, and county staff will have a clear and mutual understanding of the policies and how they should be pursued. This chapter is in earlier stages of drafting, and the Planning Commission will receive future updates and opportunities to provide input as it is further developed.

Four Cross-cutting themes

The three-chapter structure as described above will govern the Master Plan on an organizational level and is derived primarily from steering and advisory committee input, staff input, and best practices. The cross-cutting themes, in contrast, represent the topics that came up universally throughout public engagement processes regardless of the location or the stakeholder group. These themes—concurrency of infrastructure, housing diversity, conservation of natural resources, and outdoor recreation and access—were revealed as the topics universally impacting the quality of life of Washoe County citizens. They are referred to as “cross-cutting themes” because throughout all public engagement in all areas of the county, these four topics came up in some capacity. That is not to say there is consensus about how to address each theme—just that they are near-universal subjects of concern for the citizens of Washoe County. In order to recognize the importance of these themes the emerging draft seeks to ensure each theme is addressed in a direct and transparent manner. The current draft provides a clear definition of each theme and goes on to identify where each theme is addressed with a series of icons in the elements.



The four cross-cutting themes will appear as icons next to the principles they are associated with. The inclusion of these icons will help the public track how the county is addressing the core concerns that they raised during the public engagement process. It will also highlight the fact that their concerns were heard and addressed in the Master Plan update. The figure below shows how those icons will appear in the elements (principle and policies shown are still under development).



Recommendation

At this time, staff is seeking the Planning Commission's input on and support for the overall direction of the draft, the incorporation of the community derived cross-cutting themes, and the plan for public engagement. As the draft continues to develop, staff will require and seek further Planning Commission input that is more focused on the specific content of each element and area plan. Staff offers the following motion for the Commission's consideration.

Possible Motion

I move that the Washoe County Planning Commission support the overall direction of the draft as presented in the staff report and at this public meeting, the incorporation of the community derived cross-cutting themes, and implementation of the planned community engagement efforts. I further move to provide the following additional input to staff: [...]