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To: Board of Supervisors

From: Brendan Ferry, Chief Deputy Director of Tahoe Planning & Building
Robert Peters, Deputy Director of Planning

Subject: Planning Divisions' Fiscal Year 25/26 Key Priorities

PURPOSE

This staff memo is an update to the Board of Supervisors (Board) on the major accomplishments in Fiscal Year (FY) 2024/2025 and upcoming key priorities for FY 2025/2026 for the Planning Division both on the West Slope and in the Tahoe Basin. The purpose of this item is to solicit Board input and feedback to staff in order to accomplish upcoming key priorities and work for FY 2025/2026, and if needed, provide direction to staff. This item also replaces the historic Long Range Planning (LRP) matrix/work plan. No formal action will be taken as part of this item.

BACKGROUND

In 2015, the Board endorsed the first LRP matrix/work plan that set priorities for County-initiated projects lead by the LRP team (2/24/2015 Board Agenda, 13-0510). Subsequent updated LRP work plans were presented to the Board on the following dates: 2/9/2016 (16-0069); 2/28/2017 (16-0069); 11/7/2017 (16-0069); 6/12/2018 (18-0865); 3/5/2019 (19-0311); 3/17/2020 (20-0326); 4/13/2021 (21-0502); 6/28/2022 (22-1101); 6/13/2023 (23-1059); and 7/30/2024 (24-1332) (Attachment B, Exhibit A).

Planning staff decided to take a broader approach to this item this year to include other units' work within the Planning Division, not just LRP's. By taking this approach, staff is better positioned to provide a more detailed, comprehensive update to the Board on its recent accomplishments and upcoming key priorities. This approach also allows the Board the opportunity to weigh-in and provide feedback on those wide-ranging priorities.

The Planning Division's work is complex and multifaceted. Planning staff complete the following types of tasks: develop, implement, and maintain the County's General Plan, Zoning

Ordinance, and Subdivision Ordinance; process discretionary development applications and ministerial permits; conduct environmental compliance; review plans associated with building and grading permits; perform general land use reviews; and respond to public inquiries.

The Planning team is organized by region – part is based on the West Slope and the other part in the Tahoe Basin – but Planning staff works collaboratively together as one team. The Current Planning Unit/Permit Center staff provides the public with information and assistance on planning and zoning matters, including obtaining necessary permits and approvals for construction or development projects. The Current Planning Unit and Discretionary Planning staff processes discretionary applications and conducts the corresponding environmental review typically for residential and commercial development projects. The Commercial Cannabis Unit processes permits and/or licenses for commercial cannabis activities. The LRP Unit is responsible for helping the Board of Supervisors develop plans, policies, ordinances, programs, including updates to the General Plan and Zoning Ordinance.

MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS IN FY 2024/2025

Discretionary Planning (including Commercial Cannabis)
<p>Continued thorough and efficient review of complex projects: Discretionary Planners have managed ongoing detailed review of multiple Specific Plan, residential, commercial, and cannabis proposals, inclusive of California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) documentation. Together with LRP and Current Planners, the Discretionary Planners have processed and delivered 15 projects for the Zoning Administrator (ZA) and 33 projects for the Planning Commission (Commission) hearings, including seven (7) Commercial Cannabis proposals. The Board received two (2) J-6 pre-applications; four (4) Commission-recommended re-zoning projects; and several projects appealed from both the Commission and ZA. Many of the complex and/or controversial projects are available for viewing with the County's Projects in Your Area webpage at https://engageeldorado.us/engagementhq.com/edc-projects-in-your-area.</p>
<p>Team-oriented project review: A peer review process for discretionary staff reports has been led by Senior Planners from all units of the Planning Division. LRP and Current Senior Planners are the primary peer reviewers, offering their experience and insights to improve documents for decision-makers. Increased support among planners is now enabled through weekly group check-ins and with all deadline calendars established for Director-level decisions, and ZA, Commission, and Board hearings. Team-oriented coordination between planners and administrative staff has increased consistency and improved clarity for published documents.</p>
<p>Updated Initial Study (IS) template for CEQA: CEQA competency requires regular professional consultation as case law influences how best to determine compliance with state requirements. Planners working on discretionary projects regularly met with a CEQA expert to revise our IS template and to confirm staff's CEQA approach for a variety of project types. This revised template will enable Planners to author CEQA determinations in-house with more confidence with the goal of making the document more defensible.</p>
<p>Streamlined invoice communication: Discretionary Planners have developed and now reference a table of named tasks to more consistently to include with invoices. Applicants will</p>

receive more predictable and understandable information about time that is billed for their project review process.

Permit Center

Process manual: Completed a process manual for planning review of building and grading permits. The manual will be a reference for training new planners and as an ongoing guide to ensure development is reviewed consistently.

Triage system for preliminary reviews: Set up a triage system for preliminary review of tenant improvement and cellular permits. Board Policy J-2 requires that all departments provide priority treatment for commercial and industrial projects being processed in the County. Systems have been put into place to assure that the future tax base of the County is provided in a timely manner.

Alert system for Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs): Created an alert system to ensure ADUs are reviewed within mandated timelines. State streamlining legislation have implemented strict timelines for residential building permit review.

Administrative and temporary use permit processing: Processed 87 administrative and temporary use permits. Approvals include mitigation for oak trees, relief from development standards, and temporary uses.

Building and grading permit review: Planning permit center staff reviewed 1,768 building and grading permits for conformance with the County's Zoning Ordinance and other applicable policies and guidelines.

Tahoe permit center: The Tahoe permit center is now staffed with a full-time staff person and they are at the front counter 8:00 a.m.-4:00 p.m. Monday-Thursday. Tahoe planning staff have also reviewed all plan checks older than 30 days; there was no plan check “back-log” as of late 2024.

Long Range Planning

Interim Community Design Standards: On December 3, 2024, the Board adopted Interim Design Standards and Guidelines for commercial, multifamily, and mixed-use projects in the County's Community Regions and Rural Centers and adopted Interim Objective Design Standards for multifamily and mixed-use projects that qualify for state streamlined ministerial processing. Both documents became effective on January 3, 2025.

Communications Facilities Zoning Ordinance Amendments: On December 3, 2024, the Board adopted amendments to Section 130.40.130 of the Zoning Ordinance (Telecommunications Facilities) including new requirements for facilities adjacent to residential zones, regulations for temporary facilities and other minor amendments for clarity and consistency with state and federal law.

2024 Housing Element Annual Progress Report: The Report was due to the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) on April 1, 2025. The 2024 Report was presented to the Board as a receive-and-file item on March 25, 2025, and submitted to HCD and the Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation (LCI) before the deadline.

<p>2024 General Plan Annual Progress Report: The Report was due to HCD and LCI on April 1, 2025. The 2024 Report was presented to the Board as a receive-and-file item on March 25, 2025, and submitted to HCD and LCI before the deadline.</p>
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KEY PRIORITIES IN FY 2025/2026

The priorities summarized below is not an exhaustive list of the Planning team’s entire workload. There are other projects that are on the Planning team’s list, specifically LRP, that are not priorities for FY 2025/26 likely either because they are not funded and/or have been prioritized for a forthcoming FY (Attachment B, Exhibit B).

Discretionary Planning (including Commercial Cannabis)
Continue thorough and efficient review of complex projects: Continue to provide excellent service to the community and applicants with thorough analysis of complex projects and to make that information available to all with cogent and articulate reports for decision-maker review at public hearings.
Update CEQA 15183 Exemption process: Responsive to recent case law, create a template with CEQA experts to appropriately enable CEQA exemptions to projects that are consistent with the development density established by a Specific Plan, General Plan, or Zoning for which an EIR has been certified.
Teambuilding: Continue to encourage opportunities to support a strong team dynamic.
Process improvements: Continue to integrate and update process improvements identified consistent with the Board direction and Resolution 014-2024.

Permit Center
Ongoing compliance with State housing streamlining legislation: More than 100 housing production laws have gone into effect since 2017 which leads to a constant evolution to our processes.
Educating staff: Prioritize educating existing staff to ensure retention and consistency of outcomes.
Process improvements: Continue to integrate and update process improvements identified consistent with the Board direction and Resolution 014-2014.
Tahoe plan checks: Preparing to process and review plan checks in the Tahoe office by Tahoe staff to enhance customer service to Tahoe residents.

Long Range Planning
Permanent Community Design Standards: On July 23, 2024, the Board directed staff to create a revised consultant Scope of Work (SOW) for permanent Community Region and Rural Center design standards based on lessons learned from development of the Interim Design Standards. The revised SOW is anticipated for review by the Board in April 2025 with adoption of new Community Region design standards is anticipated in Summer 2027 and adoption of new Rural Center design standards would follow during FY 27/28.
Tahoe El Dorado Area Plan: The TED Area Plan is a planning document that will update Meyers Area Plan and include other communities in the Tahoe Basin area of the County.

<p>Completing the TED Area Plan is directed by the General Plan (Goal 2.10, Policies 2.10.1.2 and 2.10.1.3 and Measure LU-O). The TED Area Plan is broken up into three phases and is a three year+ project. The County completed the first phase in Fall 2024, which consisted mostly of community outreach and engagement efforts. The second phase has begun and consists of completing a draft of the TED Area Plan and holding additional community workshops. The third phase includes environmental review, public review period, and various public hearings for possible adoption. Staff anticipates final adoption in 2027.</p>
<p>Oak Resources Conservation Zoning Ordinance Amendments: In 2021, the Board directed staff to process several focused amendments to Chapter 130.39 (Oak Resources Conservation) to streamline and clarify permitting and mitigation requirements for oak resources removal. Planning Commission and Board hearings for the proposed amendments are anticipated in late Summer or early Fall 2025.</p>
<p>Signs Zoning Ordinance Amendments and Cameron Park Sign Standards: In 2021, the Board directed staff to process focused amendments to Chapter 130.36 (Signs) and to develop separate sign standards for the Cameron Park Community Region. Commission and Board hearings for the signs amendments and Cameron Park Sign Standards are anticipated in late Spring or early Summer 2025.</p>
<p>Administrative Zoning Ordinance Amendments: On January 7, 2025, the Board of Supervisors approved a Resolution of Intent (ROI) to initiate the process to propose minor amendments to Title 130. Staff has compiled an initial package of proposed amendments and anticipates bringing the package forward for Commission and Board consideration Summer 2025.</p>
<p>General Plan Five-Year Review: The last General Plan Five-Year Review for 2016-2020 was completed and presented to the Board on April 2, 2024. The General Plan Five-Year Review for 2021-2025 will be initiated in FY 2025-26 and is anticipated to be completed by Spring 2026.</p>
<p>Texas Hill El Dorado Irrigation District (EID) Reservoir Parcel Rezones and General Plan Amendment: In 2020 and again in 2023, the Board directed staff to process a General Plan amendment and Rezone to allow residential uses for approximately 120 parcels located within the site of the previously identified Texas Hill Reservoir, one mile south of the Placerville city limit. Environmental review (an EIR) and Commission and Board hearing timelines are dependent on status of pending tribal consultation.</p>
<p>General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element Update: Staff is in the process of initiating an update to the General Plan Conservation and Open Space Element, pursuant to Senate Bill 1425 (Stern, 2022). This update will address multiple specific topics including equitable access to open space for all residents, correlated with the Environmental Justice Element; climate resilience and other co-benefits of open space, correlated with the Safety Element; and rewilding opportunities, as defined by Senate Bill 1425, correlated with the Land Use Element. The law requires the County to review and update the Open Space Element by the January 1, 2026 deadline.</p>
<p>Meyers Permanent Watercraft Inspection Station: The Project consists of relocating the watercraft inspection station, currently located at 2175 Keetak Street in Meyers to a more suitable and permanent location within Meyers on four publicly owned California Tahoe Conservancy asset lands on the southwest corner of the intersection of State Route 89 and U.S. Highway 50. The County is a local implementer of Environmental Improvement Program projects and is the project manager for planning and implementation of the Project. This Project is temporarily on hold based on the federal funding freeze.</p>

Ecological Preserve Fee Update: Since 1998, the County has collected fees from new development within Mitigation Area 1 (Rare Soils Area) and Mitigation Area 2 (EID service area) due to their direct and / or indirect impact on gabbro soils rare plants and their habitat. The County uses the fees acquire additional land for the Pine Hill Preserve, a site that preserves these rare plants and rare plant habitat, and to contribute towards the management of the Preserve. The County is the process of updating these fees.

POLICY AND PROGRAMMATIC CHANGES

Various policy and programmatic changes have been made recently within the Planning Division, including implementing a flexible staffing model, implementing process improvements, outsourcing work to consultants, and reviewing positions and employee specifications.

Implementing flexible staffing model and removing silos

The team has implemented a flexible staffing model meaning that staff share in responsibilities and completing work. For example, LRP staff cover work in the permit center and are also assigned discretionary permit applications. By removing silos between units, when appropriate, it allows the Planning Division to be nimble and quickly shift staffing depending on workload need and other considerations like the budget and a future comprehensive General Plan Update.

Implementing process improvements

The process improvement program ran by the Economic Development Division within the Department focuses on enhancing operational efficiency through policy and programmatic changes. Key efforts include streamlining development application processes, improving customer service, and integrating technology-driven solutions to modernize workflows. These initiatives aim to strengthen interdepartmental coordination, increase transparency for the public, and cultivate a positive organizational culture, aligning with Resolution No. 014-2024, “improvements to the County’s Development Review Process.”

A core component of the program is effectively communicating these changes to stakeholders. Beyond internal enhancements, the department emphasizes "telling the story" of its progress—sharing achievements, addressing challenges, and clarifying misconceptions about the development process. This approach seeks to build trust and maintain a positive reputation by proactively highlighting the complexities and benefits of the improvements, ensuring that refinements in customer service and transparency resonate with the public and stakeholders alike.

Outsourcing work to consultants

The Planning Division has committed to completing project timelines with limited overtime for the 2025 and 2026 budget years. Planning staff from all units contribute to the discretionary planning workload. The Planning Division remains understaffed, primarily due to staff turnover. To provide reasonable service levels for discretionary projects, our team contracts out reviews of certain projects and CEQA documentation. Two common types of projects are outsourced to temporarily expand the expertise and timeliness of our team; large complex projects such as Specific Plan proposals, and

residentially zoned parcel map proposals (property divided into fewer than four new lots), which are typically applied for by existing County residents. The goal with this process is to cover the amount of work that in the past was only possible with limited staff working beyond the 40-hour standard to assist with meeting reasonable project timelines for project proposals with completed applications. All consultant work is managed, reviewed, and edited by Discretionary Planners, with costs being captured through billing for project review, directly to the applicant. Consultant outsourced work is not intended replace the institutional knowledge and dedication of County Planning staff. Instead, it is a valuable opportunity to efficiently and effectively expand our delivery capacity for many project proposals at one time.