

# Cobb MOUNTAIN

## Regeneration After Catastrophic Wildfire

A Community Resilience & Development Strategy

2022



Prepared for  
Cobb Area Council



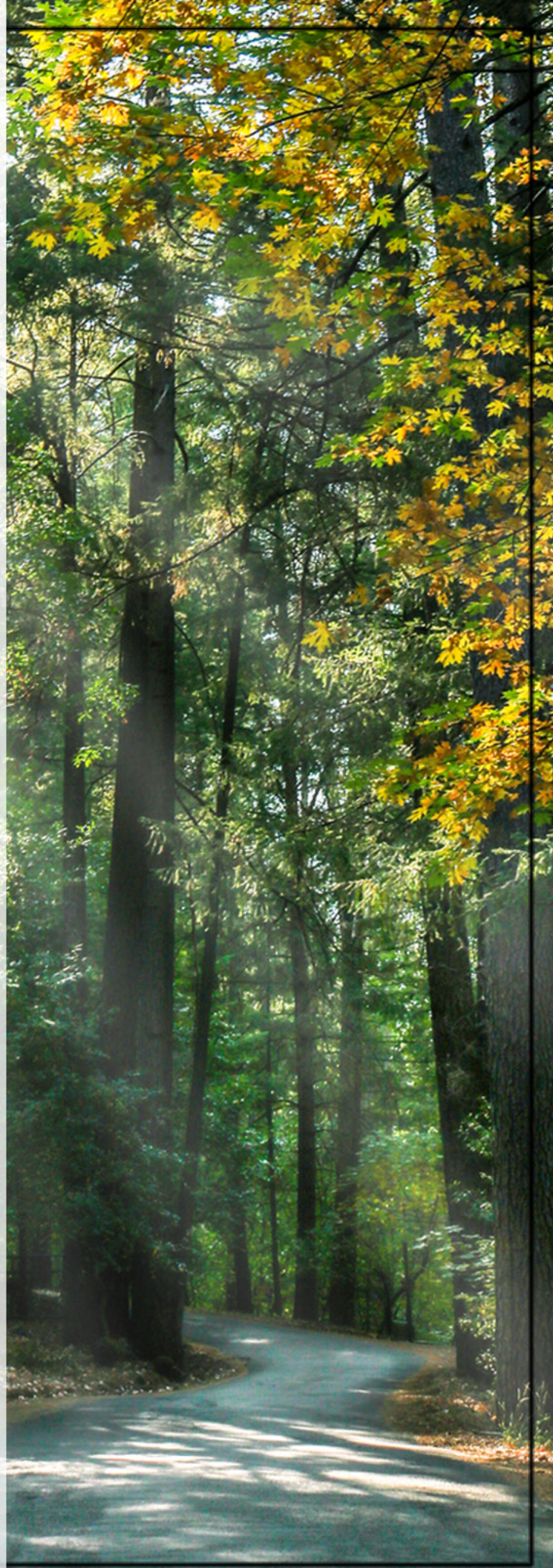
by  
Seigler Springs Community  
Redevelopment Association



with funding from the  
Federal Home Loan  
Bank of San Francisco



Community First Credit Union



# Cobb Mountain Area Community Resilience and Development Strategy

Version March 2022



Prepared by  
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With assistance from  
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## **Cobb Area Council**

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**Jessica Pyska - Lake County Supervisor, District 5**

***We acknowledge that the lands described in this document are the ancestral territories of the Pomo, Lake Miwok and Wappo peoples, who lived sustainably in the area for over 10,000 years, who were largely displaced by settlers and settlement policies beginning in the mid 19th century, and who are currently prominent participants in local community affairs.***

## **Special thanks for participating in interviews for this project:**

Dottie Bates, Christina Bougas, Richie Bucher, Jack Buell, John Carlisi, Renee Chastain, Greg Clouse, Michael Dabney, David Epstein, Raoul Goff & Chris Brodeur, Ron Haskett, Peter Hess, Deborah Hellenen, Tim Holmes, Glenneth Lambert, David Leonard, Maya Leonard, Danielle Matthews Seperas, Ben Murphy, Dean Nicolliades, Kyle Noble, Scott Parady, Gary Prather, Joel Pyska, Joe Schneider, Keith Smithson, Eric Sklar, Robert Stark, Jake Strickler, Debbie St. Cyr, Timothy Toye, Mike Wink.

Funding for this document has been provided by the  
**Federal Home Loan Bank of San Francisco AHEAD-DR Program and  
Community First Credit Union**

“ I’m very impressed with how your [Cobb Mountain] community is coming together and working together on all aspects of community engagement, activities, infrastructure, and fire mitigation. It’s great to see so much activity going on. We don’t always see that in the communities we visit across the country. So big applause to all of you for your efforts. ”

*- Member of Federal Community Mitigation Assistance Team*

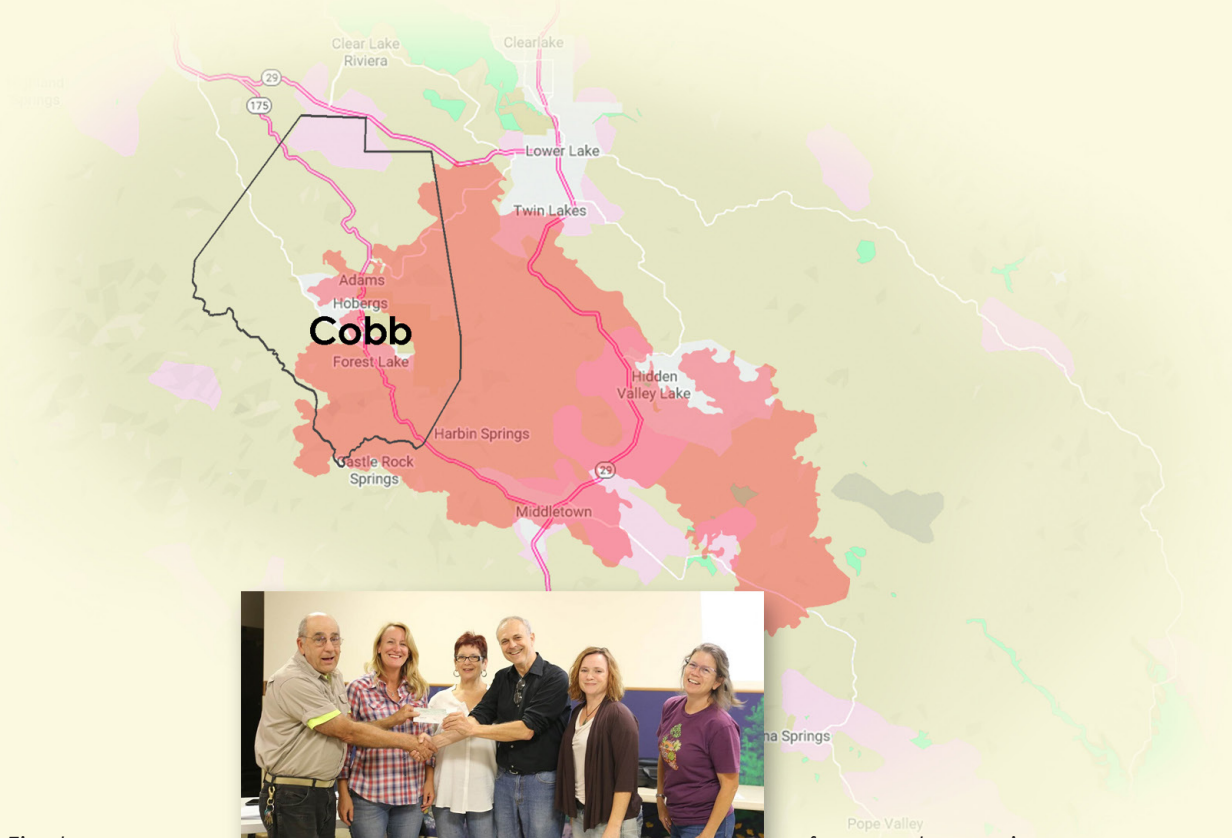
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# Executive Summary

## Fire Recovery, Economic Development and Community Resilience - A Strategy for The Cobb Mountain Area



*The Valley Fire tore through the small Cobb Mountain community in southern Lake County California on September 12, 2015. It was the third most damaging wildfire<sup>1</sup> in California history at the time, and sadly the harbinger of even more horrific disasters to come.<sup>2</sup> Recovery*

*from such a major disaster is as challenging as recovery from major surgery or a crippling injury - it takes time, and adaptation to a new pattern of life.<sup>4\*</sup> With the right help and enough time, much of pre-disaster quality of life can be restored but it will not look the same.*



\*note – footnotes in the Executive Summary follow the numbering established in the main text body



This Strategy seeks to chart a course of renewal and regeneration over the coming decade and beyond, especially in the face of intensifying climate disruption. It does this by taking a fresh look at the enduring assets of the community and focuses on building local capacity on the basis of those assets. The Strategy recognizes the critical role that County, State and Federal policies and programs will play in its future, but also claims a major role for home-grown intelligence, energy and innovation. It is hoped that this Strategy can be both a call to action, a high-level roadmap to implementation and a guide to ongoing evaluation of how we are progressing.

Finally, the Strategy looks at the community as a complex, evolving system, in which all of the elements of the community can support each other and looks to nurture positively reinforcing relationships throughout the area.<sup>6</sup>

## THE SEVEN COMMUNITY CAPITALS: A FRAMEWORK FOR RESILIENCE

This Strategy uses a “Community Capitals Framework” that was developed in the early 2000’s<sup>7</sup> and is grounded in literature from multiple disciplines<sup>8</sup> as a tool to help communities approach development from a systems perspective. Broadly, community capitals are assets or resources that can be utilized to produce additional resources.

### The Seven Community Capitals<sup>9</sup>:

<b>Natural Capital:</b>	Natural and environmental resources
<b>Built Capital:</b>	Physical structures and facilities, including housing and infrastructure
<b>Social Capital:</b>	Groups and networks that help make things happen
<b>Financial Capital:</b>	The “economy”; resources available for development
<b>Cultural Capital:</b>	Values, norms, beliefs and traditions
<b>Political Capital:</b>	Capacity to influence rules and standards; access to institutional resources
<b>Human Capital:</b>	Attributes that give people the ability to thrive and contribute

The seven community capitals represent all aspects of community life and can be invested and saved, or wasted and depleted. The objective of the present Strategy is to use the Community Capitals Framework to present an understandable economic development program, a fire recovery strategy and an overall approach to long term community resilience.

The Seven forms of Community Capital can also build a bridge to the seven legally required elements in the California General Planning model<sup>10</sup>. Thus, this Strategy can also help set the stage for the update to the Cobb Mountain community’s formal Area Plan<sup>11</sup>, a County planning document that must be consistent with its General Plan<sup>12</sup>.



For each of the seven Community Capitals this document presents:

- a description of the importance of each form of Capital in the Cobb Mountain community,
- local data that describes the current condition of that form of capital,
- additional local data that we would like to have,
- an analysis of the current situation,
- recommended long term goals, and
- recommended strategies to meet those goals

Lastly, the document recommends a prioritized list of strategies for the first year, including the suggested responsibilities and necessary resources. The top six priorities for year one are:

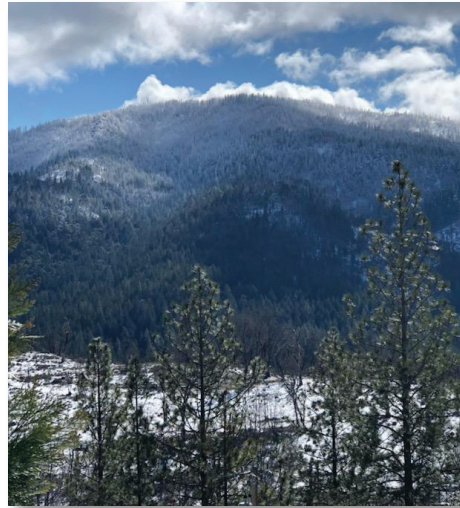
Priority	Strategy	Responsibility	Actions, Personnel, Tools and Resources needed
1	Establish Forest Stewardship working Group <b>Natural Capital</b>	Cobb Area Council (CAC) - new standing committee	Recruit Committee Chair, identify potential funding for specific projects via CalFire, RRA, FSC's, SSCRA*
2	Increase Broadband service - Pilot Project <b>Built Capital</b>	Community Development Services to manage contract with LCBS*	Full project scope of work and budget to be approved by CAC General Assembly, \$16,000 (already identified and appropriated)
3	Blackberry Cobbler Festival <b>Cultural Capital</b>	CAC ad hoc cobbler committee	Project coordinator and strong volunteer participation; local sponsors
4	Partner with KBA & MAMA* to promote Cobb businesses <b>Financial Capital</b>	CAC Economic Development Committee	Participation from Cobb businesses and KBA/MAMA management
5	Continue "Explore Cobb CA" Initiative <b>Financial Capital</b>	CAC Economic Development Committee	Keep website current, enroll more local business participants
6	CAC participation marketing campaign <b>Political Capital</b>	CAC Membership committee	Social media outreach, new CAC website, pamphlet, support for Cobb Resource Hub

\*see glossary on Pg 52 for list of acronyms

Introduction:

# A Strategy for The Cobb Mountain Area

Fire Recovery,  
Economic Development  
& Community Resilience



On September 12, 2015 the Valley Fire tore through the small Cobb Mountain community in southern Lake County California. It was the third most damaging wildfire in California history<sup>1</sup> at the time, and sadly the harbinger of even more horrific disasters to come<sup>2</sup>. By 2021, Lake County had suffered wildfire destruction every year with over 65%<sup>3</sup> of the County burned and fires throughout the state had far surpassed anything seen before.

Recovery from such a major disaster is as challenging as recovery from major surgery or a crippling injury - it takes time, and adaptation to a new pattern of life<sup>4</sup>. With the right help and enough time, much of pre-disaster quality of life can be restored but it will not look the same.

Prior to the fire, Cobb Mountain was a comfortable, if somewhat remote place, a favored summer home location and getaway destination as well as home to many year-round residents who delighted in its cool forested hamlets, mountainside neighborhoods and historic retreat properties. With over 75,000 acres burned overall

and over a thousand homes lost, that pre-fire pattern has been significantly disrupted, the fragile local economy traumatized and historic social relationships scrambled. Residents have awakened to the necessity of building a lifestyle that recognizes fire as a natural and inescapable part of the local ecosystem, especially given new dangerous trends driven by global climate change<sup>5</sup>. At the same time the COVID pandemic of 2020-21 has also demonstrated both the enduring appeal of Cobb Mountain's charms as well as its capacity to provide an alternative to urban

“ We moved to the area when we first got married in '81, fell in love with the place, and lived here for 10 years before our lives took us on other paths for a while. But when I retired in 2015, this was exactly where I wanted to be. Unfortunately the Valley Fire burned down our entire neighborhood a few months after we moved in.

But the fire also opened up all kinds of new vistas, both visually and socially, because we now connected with an amazing community of all sorts of folks that are doing remarkable work together to rebuild in a new way - smarter, stronger, safer.

- local retiree ”



or suburban living for those who can work remotely.

This Strategy seeks to chart a course of renewal and regeneration over the coming decade and beyond, especially in the face of intensifying climate disruption. It does this by taking a fresh look at the enduring assets of the community and focuses on building local capacity on the basis of those assets. The Strategy recognizes the critical role that County, State and Federal policies and programs will play in its future, but also claims a major role for home-grown intelligence, energy and innovation. It is hoped that this Strategy can be both a call to action, a high-level roadmap to implementation and a guide to ongoing evaluation of how we are progressing.

This Strategy also recognizes that people are different and, especially in a rural setting like Cobb Mountain that is still close to a major metropolitan area, residents have diverse views and varying levels of interest in community affairs.

Finally, the Strategy looks at the community as a complex, evolving system, in which all of the elements of the community can support each other and looks to nurture positively reinforcing relationships throughout the area<sup>6</sup>, especially as conditions in the County, the Region and the world continue to change rapidly and unpredictably. Therefore, this document must be understood as only a beginning, a guess at where we are and where we are headed. If the Cobb Mountain community is to thrive in the coming decades, we will have to continue to sharpen our understanding of the complex forces and influences affected our lives, and build our collective capacity to engage those influences with creativity and solidarity.

“ It actually begins before my father and grandmother arrived. My grandmother's younger brother moved to Cobb (in the 1870's) and lived for a while at the place that xxx now inhabits. That house was originally a saloon that catered to logging truck drivers going up Cobb during the early days of logging.”

- Fire Safety Activist



# The Seven Community Capitals

## A Framework for Resilience



Over the past decade, researchers have found that the communities most successful in supporting healthy sustainable community and economic development paid attention to seven types of “capital” or assets: natural, cultural, human, social, political, financial and built<sup>7</sup>.

Communities are complex, dynamic systems and this Community Capitals Framework (CCF) has been used to address this challenge. The CCF was developed in the early 2000’s and is grounded in literature from multiple disciplines<sup>8</sup> as a tool to help communities approach development from a systems perspective. Broadly, community capitals are assets or resources that can be utilized to produce additional resources. Focusing on community assets can play a transformative role in the way that the planning and development process unfolds in community settings

### The Seven Community Capitals<sup>9</sup>:

<b>Natural Capital:</b>	Natural and environmental resources
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<b>Political Capital:</b>	Capacity to influence rules and standards; access to institutional resources
<b>Human Capital:</b>	Attributes that give people the ability to thrive and contribute

The seven community capitals represent all aspects of community life and can be invested and saved, or wasted and depleted. Communities invest capital when they use those assets to improve the community. Taken together, these seven community capitals work as an integrated system, with overlapping activities and complex relationships, potentially reinforcing the strength and stability of each other and of the whole community. When the community capitals are all strong, balanced and well integrated, all kinds of creative and lively things can happen. Like a healthy forest, a well-balanced and strong community will show all the signs of life fullness that are possible in a thriving community.

Thus, the objective of the present Strategy is both to present an understandable economic development program, a fire recovery strategy and an overall approach to long term community resilience.

The Seven forms of Community Capital described in this Strategy can also build a bridge to the seven legally required elements in the California General Planning model<sup>10</sup>. Thus, the development Strategy presented here can also help set the stage for the update to the Cobb Mountain community's formal Area Plan<sup>11</sup>, a County planning document that must

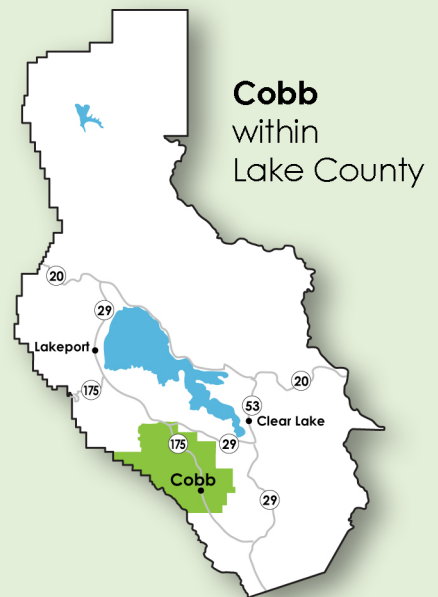
be consistent with its General Plan<sup>12</sup>.

A guiding orientation for this Strategy is one that looks at our community as filled with "assets" to be mobilized, connected and amplified,

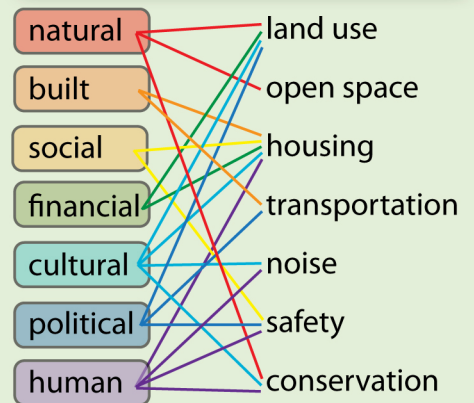


rather than one with "needs" only that must be addressed by resources from outside. Yes, we recognize the importance of drawing appropriate assistance from the institutions and government agencies responsible to serve our community, but we also assume that we must build our local capacity to make best use of those resources and that much of the work required to cultivate true community resilience must be nurtured and sustained by local enthusiasm and self-reliance. This approach of "asset-based community development" has also been extensively studied and validated<sup>13</sup>.

*Note that each form of community capital will affect several General Plan/ Area Plan Elements and that the policies and programs proposed under each General Plan element will be influenced by several areas in the community.*



Seven Community Capitals	Required General Plan (and Area Plan) Elements
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## About the Data in this Strategy

It has been said that it is important to measure what you value, rather than only value what you can measure. Unfortunately, much of the publicly available measurements ("data") comes from either the government (Federal, State, County) or from large business organizations concerned with the large-scale movements of the economy. When it comes to focusing on what is happening at the relatively small scale of the local Cobb Mountain Community, there are two approaches that can be taken:

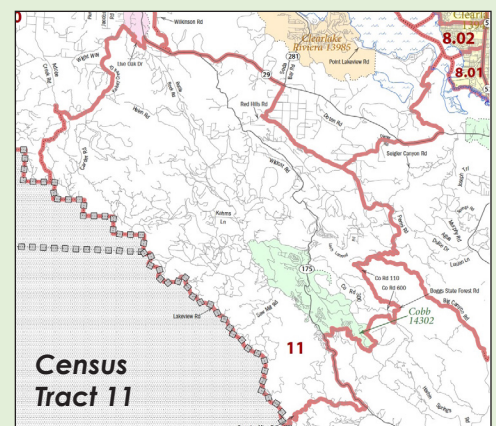
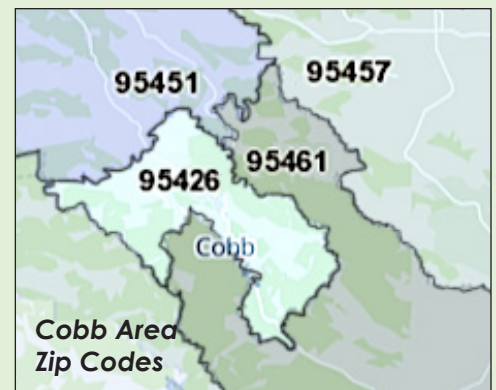
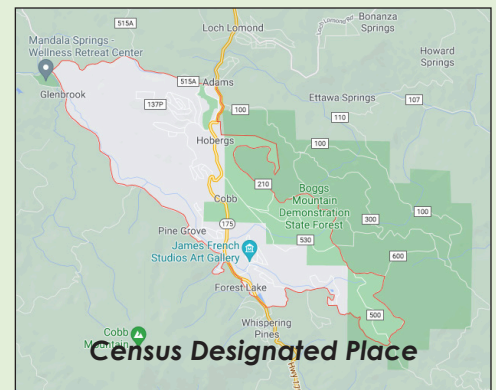


*This Plan is also offered as a supplement to the Lake County Economic Development Strategy adopted in 2018*

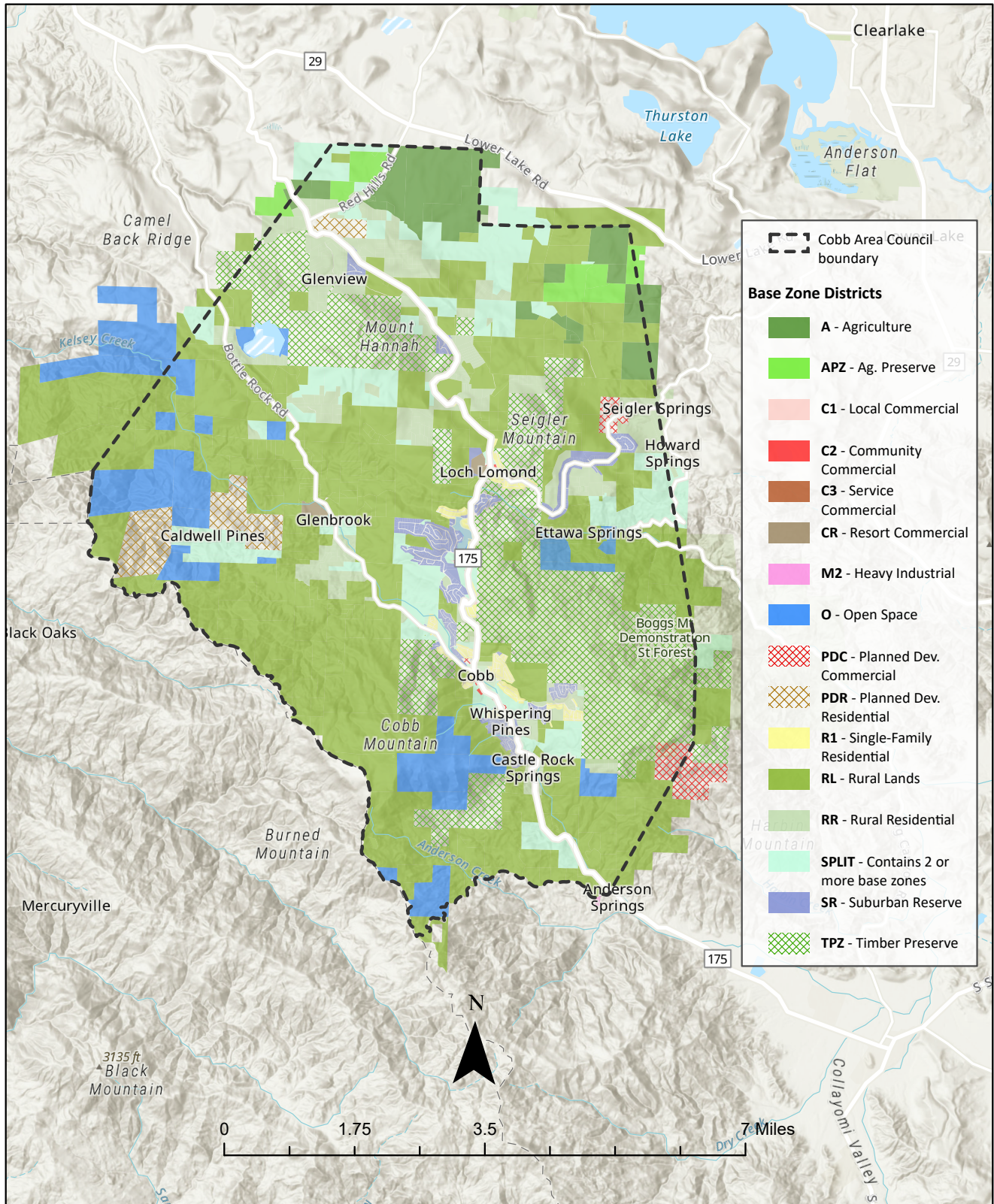
1. Using data that approximates our local area, with emphasis on "approximates". Extracting locally relevant information is imprecise and labor intensive. For this, there are four general categories available to us:
  - a. US Census: "Cobb Census Designated Place" (image) The Census provides many different kinds of data at different scales. Some (not all) Census information is available for this core community area, although it will NOT include information from the entire community.
  - b. US Census Tract 11: Another Census category that includes the Cobb Census Designated Place plus additional areas, again without covering ALL of the Cobb Mountain Community, and including some areas outside our Cobb Mountain Community.
  - c. Zip Codes: 95426 covers a relatively small area around the Cobb Post Office. Although mail addresses to this zip code will be delivered throughout the community, the formal data category is small. On the contrary 95461, which covers all of the Cobb Mountain Community, also covers all of Middletown except Hidden Valley.
  - d. Some existing local data sources that relate directly to the Cobb Mountain community, such as information from the Cobb Mountain Water Company and data collected by local realtors
2. Develop local sources of information. In each of the seven areas covered in this document, we will name some of the information that would provide better intelligence about how the system is operating.

In addition, this report also values less key non-numerical data, especially in the areas of social, cultural and human capital.

*Note that data from the 2020 decennial census is not yet available but the report will be updated as this information is released*



# Cobb Area Zoning Map



Cobb Area Council Area Boundary: with Lake County Zoning Classifications & Valley Fire Boundary<sup>14</sup>

## BASIC COMMUNITY DATA

Total Population				
	2014	2019	gain/loss	% change
Lake County	64,209	64,195	14	0.02%
Cobb Area: Tract 11	3,679	2,839	840	-22.83%

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year Estimates

Population Distribution by Age, 2019				
Age Range	Lake County		Cobb: Tract 11	
Under 5 years	3,731	5.8%	76	2.7%
5 to 14 years	7,346	11.4%	174	6.1%
15 to 19 years	3,695	5.8%	99	3.5%
20 to 24 years	2,997	4.7%	95	3.3%
25 to 39 years	10,956	17.0%	445	15.9%
40 to 54 years	10,713	16.7%	546	19.1%
55 to 64 years	10,424	16.2%	733	25.7%
65 to 74 years	8,902	13.9%	429	15.0%
75 to 84 years	4,148	6.5%	208	7.3%
85 years and over	1,283	2.0%	34	1.2%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>64,195</b>		<b>2,839</b>	
0-19	23.0%		12.3%	
29-64	54.6%		64.0%	
65+	22.4%		23.5%	

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year Estimates

Population Migration, 2019				
	Percent of Population		Percent of Population	
Moved from Within County	Lake County	9.3%	Cobb Mountain	4.5%
Moved from Different County	Lake County	6.0%	Cobb Mountain	6.3%
Moved from Different State	Lake County	1.8%	Cobb Mountain	0.2%
Moved From Abroad	Lake County	0.3%	Cobb Mountain	0.3%
<b>TOTAL IN-MIGRATION</b>	<b>7.4%</b>		<b>11.3%</b>	

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year Estimates

### FINAL NOTE ABOUT THE DATA:

Using these approximate Data Numbers means that there is an inherent margin of error for most of the figures we are presenting in this report.

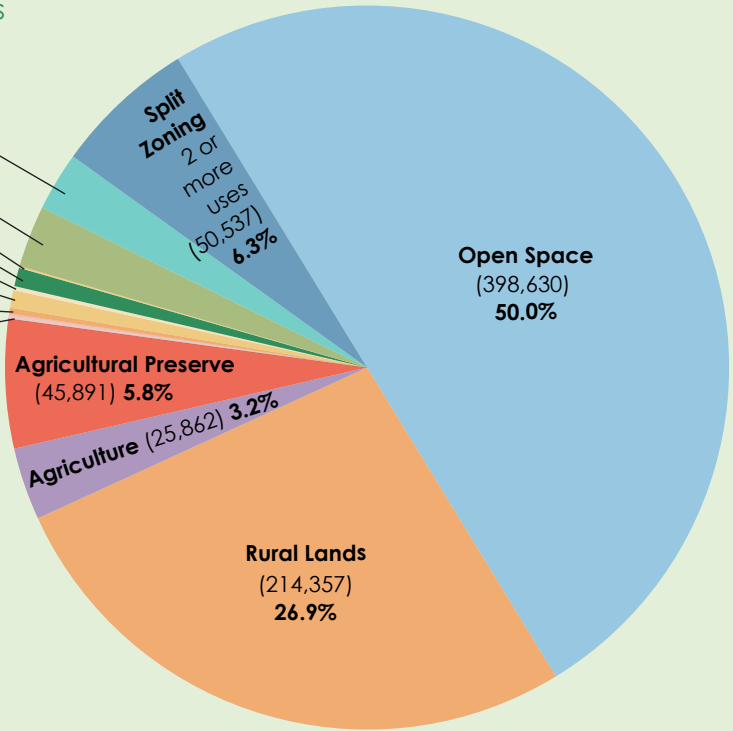
# Cobb Area Zoning

## Lake County Zoning Type

Acres in parenthesis rounded to whole numbers

- Timberland Preserve (20992) 2.6%
- Rural Residential (21943) 2.8%
- Multi-Family Residential (409) 0.1%
- Single Family Residential (6564) 0.8%
- Planned Development Residential (1574) 0.2%
- Suburban Reserve (6,210) 0.8%
- Planned Development Commercial (1,960) 0.2%
- Resort Commercial (959) 0.1%
- Two-Family Residential (288) 0.0%
- Heavy Industrial (121) 0.0%
- Commerical/Manufacturing (33) 0.0%
- Service Commercial (389) 0.0%
- Local Commercial (61) 0.0%
- Highway Commercial (39) 0.0%
- Community Commercial (284) 0.0%
- TOTAL: (797,103) 100.0%**

Source: Lake County GIS, 2019 ACS 5-year estimates  
(Excludes cities of Clearlake and Lakeport)



## Cobb Planning Area Zoning Type (5% of County Totals)

Acres in parenthesis rounded to whole numbers

- Single Family Residential (317) 0.8%
- Planned Development Residential (835) 2.1%
- Suburban Reserve (794) 2.0%
- Planned Development Commercial (437) 1.1%
- Heavy Industrial (5) 0.0%
- Resort Commercial (90) 0.2%
- Service Commercial (.32) 0.0%
- Community Commercial (15) 0.0%
- Local Commercial (9) 0.0%
- Agricultural Preserve (637) 1.6%
- TOTAL: (39,884) 100.0%**

Source: Lake County GIS,  
2019 ACS 5-year estimates

