

# Canyon Dam Summary Report

11.01.2023

Town Center Planning Report

LMVNOP

Funded by:



# Acknowledgements

The completion of this project was made possible through the generous support of The Almanor Foundation, which funded the development of a Almanor Basin Strategic Housing Plan in 2022-2023. This Strategic Housing Plan was focused on providing housing for the local workforce. Ultimately aligning well with the potential future of Canyon Dam. Funding for this project was also provided by the Dixie Fire Collaborative and the North Valley

LMNOP Design extends our heartfelt appreciation to the The Almanor Foundation, the Dixie Fire Collaborative and the North Valley Community Foundation and its dedicated funders for their unwavering commitment to improving the Almanor Basin and surrounding communities.

We would also like to express our gratitude to the property owners of Canyon Dam and the experts who lent their invaluable insights and expertise to this evolving project. Your active participation, contributions, and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping the outcomes of this project.

The design team recognizes that without the collaborative effort, time, and energy invested by the Canyon Dam community, this document would not have come to fruition.

We look forward to continuing our partnerships as we work together.

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# Introduction

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# 01

# Executive Summary

## About this report:

This document summarizes Canyon Dam work and research completed by LMNOP Design and a team of architecture interns throughout the summer of 2023. It builds off of Phase 0 and 1A reports as well as continued conversation and feedback from property owners and work towards formulating strategies to supporting local workforce housing. The LMNOP team spent ten weeks conducting extensive data collection, one-on-one listening sessions with property owners, and developing design recommendations in response.

The interns' work was made possible due to a number of individuals and organizations - The Almanor Foundation, Plumas County, California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD), and more. For everyone that has participated, contributed and continue to provide encouragement, the LMNOP team expresses our sincere gratitude and thanks.

# Vision + Purpose

In response to the shared impact of the 2021 Dixie Fire Wildfire, the LMNOP intern team worked to mirror resiliency efforts in neighboring Greenville. The team's vision was to formulate strategies that would regenerate Canyon Dam's community, its local economy, and restore its natural environment. This initiative unfolded through research and meaningful dialogues with property owners and experts.

Based on past and ongoing feedback, the founding principles for Canyon Dam are:

- Seasonally-focused, with emphasis on recreation and housing (both short and long term)
- Individualistic [Site Specific Response] compared to community [Town Planning] mindset
- Small mountain town that serves as “the gateway to Lake Almanor”

By embracing these guidelines the purpose of the work is to facilitate a revitalization process by actively engaging with and empowering residents, to work towards addressing their unique needs.

# Methodology: Engagement & Feedback Processes

The approach to addressing the challenges and opportunities in Canyon Dam was grounded in a collaborative and data-driven methodology. Initially, extensive research was conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of the community's context, historical background, and pre-existing conditions. This foundational knowledge, primarily pulled from the Phase 1A [Visioning] feedback, served as a springboard for our design and planning efforts.

To ensure inclusivity and relevance, the team engaged in one-on-one conversation sessions with property owners and experts. These dialogues helped steer the focus towards strategies of regeneration, economic vitality, and environmental preservation. Throughout this process, the commitment for transparency, empathy, and open communication remained at the forefront, guiding the methodologies to reflect the core values of Canyon Dam.

# Meet the Interns



**Creagh D.**  
*Lead Design Intern*



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**Suvin C.**  
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**James N.**  
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**Carlos G.**  
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**Will L.**  
*Design Intern*

## 2023 Summer Internship

This report provides a comprehensive overview of the work carried out by the LMNOP Internship team during the ten-week period from June 12th to August 19th, 2023. While the internship included various core design tracks, this summary report specifically focuses on the team's contributions to Canyon Dam.

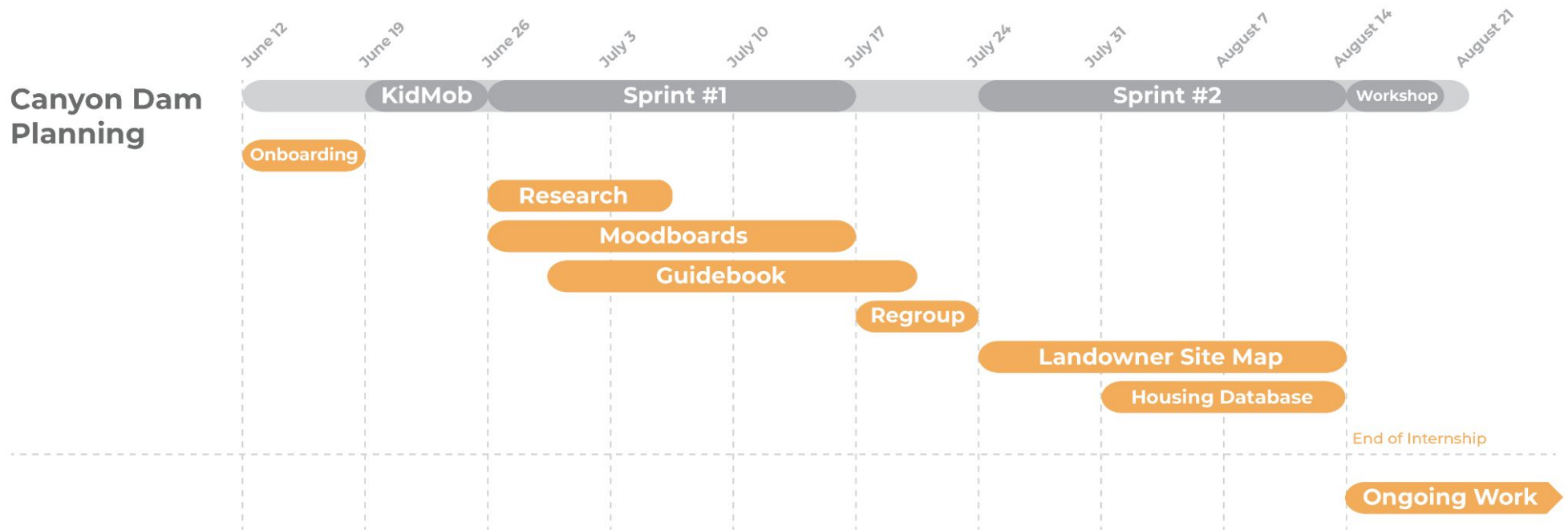
The team's efforts in Canyon Dam were strongly aligned with the overarching mission to revitalize and reimagine the community, emphasizing a shared vision for its future. Subsequent sections in this report delve into the specific accomplishments, significant findings, and ongoing initiatives that have emerged from the work undertaken in Canyon Dam.

## The Interns

Comprising of ten members, the team encompasses recent graduates and current students from four schools, all with backgrounds in architecture or sustainability. The majority resided at Copper Creek Camp, having the unique opportunity to immerse themselves in Valley life. Beyond their specific project assignments, they were encouraged to explore their individual interests within the defined project scope, such as renewable energy infrastructure, historical preservation, fabrication, community engagement, outdoor recreation, and ecological restoration.



# Timeline



## Overview

This timeline offers an overview of the work developed for Canyon Dam over the course of a 10-week internship period, organized into two distinct sprints.

## Sprint #1

This phase commenced with an in-depth evaluation of the previous Phases 0 and 1A reports, aimed at building a comprehensive understanding of the insights shared by community members. The team worked towards developing town aesthetic collages that encapsulated a range of vibes or moods that would resonate with Canyon Dam residents. Concurrently, the team worked towards establishing a digital database containing pre-fire building details, including images and their respective locations.

## Sprint #2

Conversations with key landowners during Sprint #1 revealed notable differences in the vision-shaping process for Canyon Dam compared to Greenville. In response, Sprint #2 adjusted to align with the individualistic character of Canyon Dam and looked at the unique scenarios of individual parcels, with a heightened focus towards accommodating affordable, seasonal workforce housing.

## Next Steps

LMNOP Design will build upon intern work and move towards the implementation phase of The Almanor Foundation's Strategic Housing Plan.

# Context

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# 02

# Overview

Chapter 2 delves into the research developed during the summer internship, as well as insights drawn from prior reports and studies. These explorations assisted the team in developing a knowledge base and navigating the unique challenges and opportunities in Canyon Dam with greater precision and relevance.



# Site Location

Located along the south shore of Lake Almanor, Canyon Dam is nestled within the lake and forest service land. This community serves as an ideal base for exploring the abundant recreational opportunities Lake Almanor has to offer, including fishing, boating, hiking, and captures the essence of California's scenic wonders.

Additionally, Canyon Dam's location and proximity to the junction of Highways 89 and 147 also make it a convenient hub for seasonal living and work opportunities in nearby towns, making it only a 17-minute commute to Chester and a 12-minute commute from Greenville. Its remote location makes it an ideal choice for those seeking to live and work amid the tranquility of the surrounding Plumas/Lassen National Forests, offering a unique blend of natural beauty and convenience.



# History

Initially referred to as *Nevis*, Canyon Dam history dates back to 1910 when it was established as the headquarters of the Great Western Power Company. This move was part of their preparations to construct a dam that would ultimately create Lake Almanor by flooding Big Meadows, which was first used by the Northern Maidu tribe. By the summer of 1914, the name was officially changed to Canyon Dam, a decision adopted by the Plumas County Board of Supervisors.

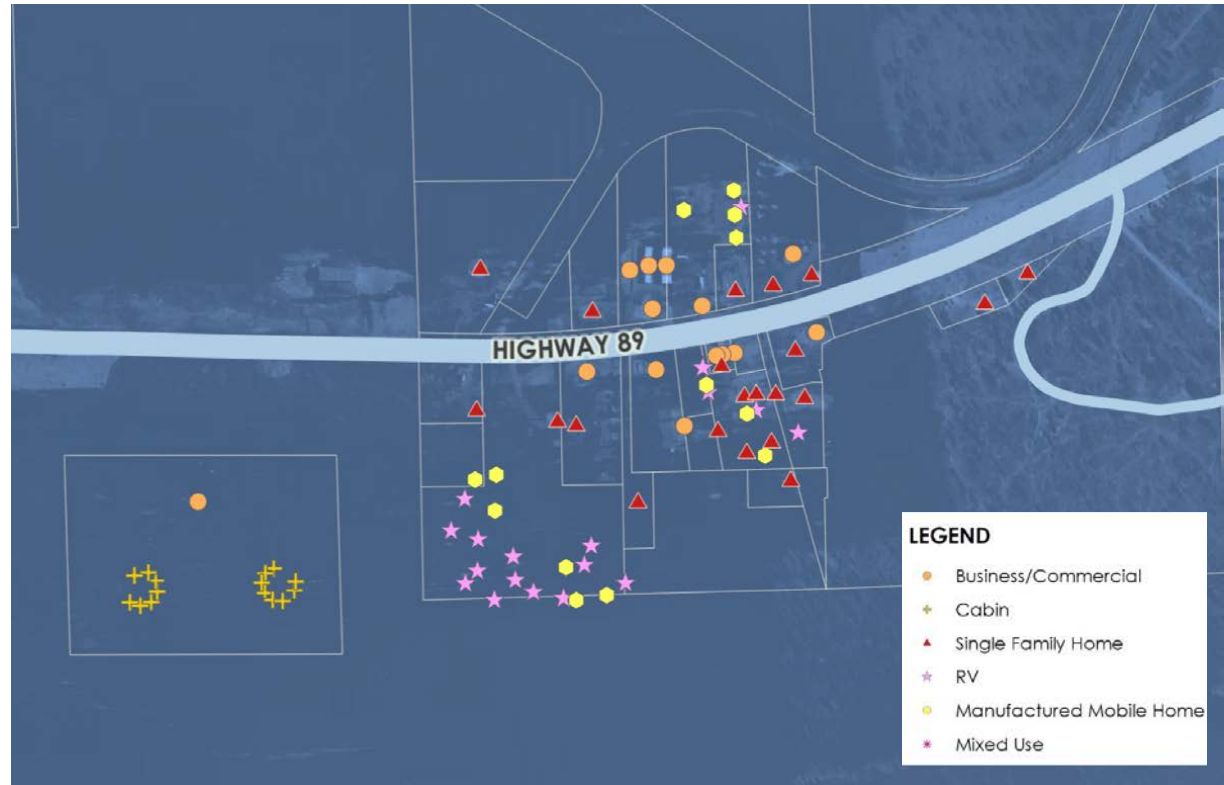
During this early phase, Canyon Dam's development included the establishment of family cottages and various services. These structures formed an integral part of a rustic camp that catered to the needs of the crew involved in dam construction and their families. This initiative not only contributed to the community's growth but also played a role in shaping the character of Canyon Dam as a welcoming and communal place.



# Pre-Fire Conditions

Prior to the 2021 Dixie Fire, Canyon Dam was an eclectic community characterized by a variety of building typologies. The area featured a mix of businesses, commercial establishments, cabins, single family homes, RVs, and manufactured mobile homes.

Canyon Dam experienced varying levels of permanency, from tourists who stayed for short periods, permanent residents who made it their year-round home, and others who considered Canyon Dam their seasonal haven, eagerly awaiting the warm months and returning year after year. In total, there were approximately 270 buildings and structures that fulfilled a range of residential, commercial, and recreational needs.



# Pre-Fire Conditions

Due to limited recorded information on Canyon Dam, the intern team utilized alternative sources such as Google Street View, Zillow, and review platforms like Yelp to gather images and details about the area. They particularly concentrated their efforts on 27 downtown parcels, collecting information related to zoning, acreage, and parcel numbers, and archiving these resources for future research.

This research proved valuable when engaging with landowners, as it provided insights into the properties and the broader context. These insights enhanced discussions regarding potential strategies, building upon the foundation of understanding generated by these alternative resources.

In essence, the comprehensive collection of images and data bridging between the community's past and its future, facilitated constructive and informed conversations with both private landowners and stakeholders.



**29511 Highway 89**

Single-Family Home / Fort Moffet



Fort Moffet



Fort Moffet Cabins



Compound



Bike and Kayak Rental



**29524 Highway 89**

Whispering Pines Trailer Park



Trailer spaces



Leveled lot



Entry

# Phase 1A Feedback

Drawing from the valuable insights of the [Phase 1A feedback](#) provided by Canyon Dam residents, the project team gained an in-depth understanding of the community's vision and emotional state post-wildfire. This feedback emphasizes the unique seasonal nature of the community and sheds light on the challenges faced by residents, including the emotional toll of the disaster.

Incorporating past feedback is essential in ensuring that revitalization strategies are grounded in the area's history and aligned with its seasonal living characteristics. This approach respects the emotional bonds residents have with Canyon Dam, making the rebuilding efforts more comprehensive and empathetic. Ultimately, it paves the way for a more effective and human-centric path towards revitalizing Canyon Dam.

## PHASE 1A [Visioning] CANYON DAM LISTENING SESSION

The project team led a listening session in Canyon Dam, California for community members to share challenges and their plans for the future. Disaster Case Managers (DCMs) were present to make connections and assist when needed. Below is a summarized list of participants thoughts, concerns, and needs for the area:

### OVERVIEW + CURRENT CONDITIONS

- Occupation of the community is seasonal and less populated in the winter months.
- Septic, wells, and water systems need to be tested to reestablish safe-use again (as well as the helium shortage for benzine testing).
- Source water is at the top of the watershed.
- Canyon Dam is a small but very diverse community with strong and distinct perspectives existing pre-wildfire.
- Before the wildfire, there was not a strong central core, but rather individuals that operated in the same space. This event was the first time bringing them all together.
- Overall, the recovery process is 6-9 months behind Greenville, CA which makes the community feel a bit left behind.



### HOW ARE PEOPLE FEELING?

- Deep sadness and overwhelmed about what to do next.
- The need to start over while being close to retirement – "I'm old. It's hard to start over."
- Lack of energy – "It sucked the life out of us."
- Frustration and confusion by the County rebuilding process – "It doesn't seem like Plumas County cares."
- Mental health and trauma is preventing people from navigating the system.
- Not knowing where to start.
- People want to contribute but don't know how.
- There is doubt the Canyon Dam Country Store will be reconstructed

### WHY DO YOU WANT TO STAY?

- "Born and raised here. [It's] all I know."
- "Nice climate."
- "The people [are what] define Canyon Dam (welcoming, like family, working together)."
- "Restore retirement plans."
- "Small scale, fewer people."



# Design

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# 03

# Overview

Chapter 3 of the report focuses on the design phase, a collaborative effort involving private landowners and experts such as the California Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) and Plumas County representatives. Initially, the process began with the development of collage boards aimed at capturing the residents' aspirations for Canyon Dam.

However, conversations with property owners revealed the individualistic and eclectic nature of the area and each property owner. This insight prompted a shift towards creating tailored design solutions for seasonal workforce housing, informed by prior research and ongoing feedback to meet the unique desires of each property owner. This chapter will also provide summaries of conversations held with both landowners and experts.



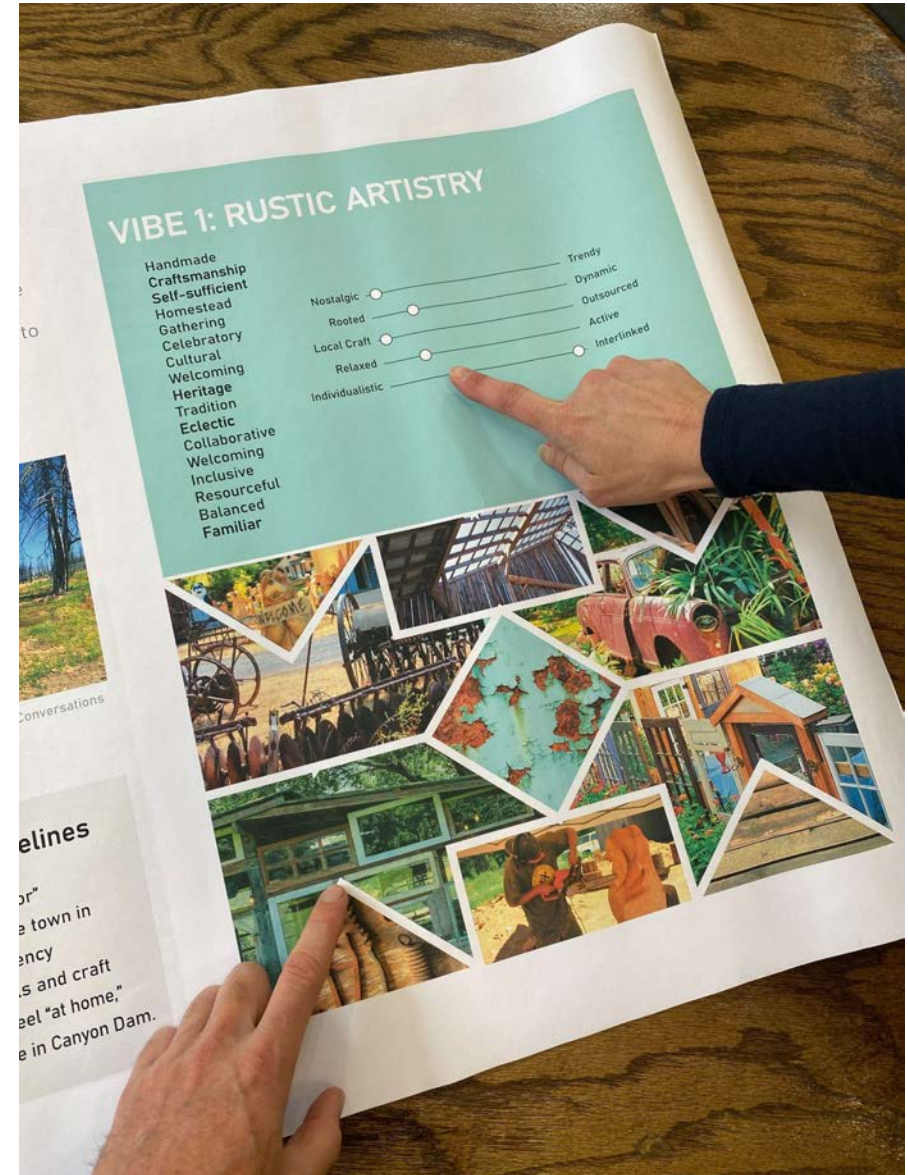
# Moodboard 1: Rustic Artistry

## Rustic Artistry:

The first moodboard aims to highlight Canyon Dam's eclecticism through art and historical preservation, reflecting creative ingenuity while also paying tribute to its logging history and relevance as workforce housing for Almanor Dam workers. This collage celebrates the skills of local craftsmanship and the resourceful essence of the seasonal community in its reclamation and reuse of materials.

## Main Themes:

- *Reclaimed Materiality*: highlighting the use of reclaimed materials, this theme reflects the community's commitment to sustainable practices.
- *Artistic Ingenuity*: demonstrating the innovative artistic expression of Canyon Dam's residents.
- *Logging History*: Paying homage to the area's rich history as a hub for loggers.
- *Historical Roots*: grounding the design in Canyon Dam's past.
- *Western Storefronts*: balancing modern aesthetics with traditional Western charm in architectural elements.



# Moodboard 2: Summer Camp Dream

## Summer Camp Dream:

This moodboard captures the essence of playfulness, inspired by summer-centric activities and experiences. Drawing from the vibrant camping and recreation culture around Lake Almanor during its peak season, it aims to evoke feelings of nostalgia and youthful excitement.

## Main Themes:

- *Youthful Summer Memories:* reminiscent of carefree summer days and youthful adventures.
- *Vibrant Expression:* the use of vibrant colors and textures to express the exuberance of the season.
- *Imagination and Exploration:* inspiring a sense of imagination and the spirit of exploration.
- *Playground for All Ages:* creating an environment where residents and visitors of all ages can enjoy various summer activities.
- *“Gateway to Lake Almanor”:* connecting the seasonal community to the abundance of recreational opportunities available around Lake Almanor.



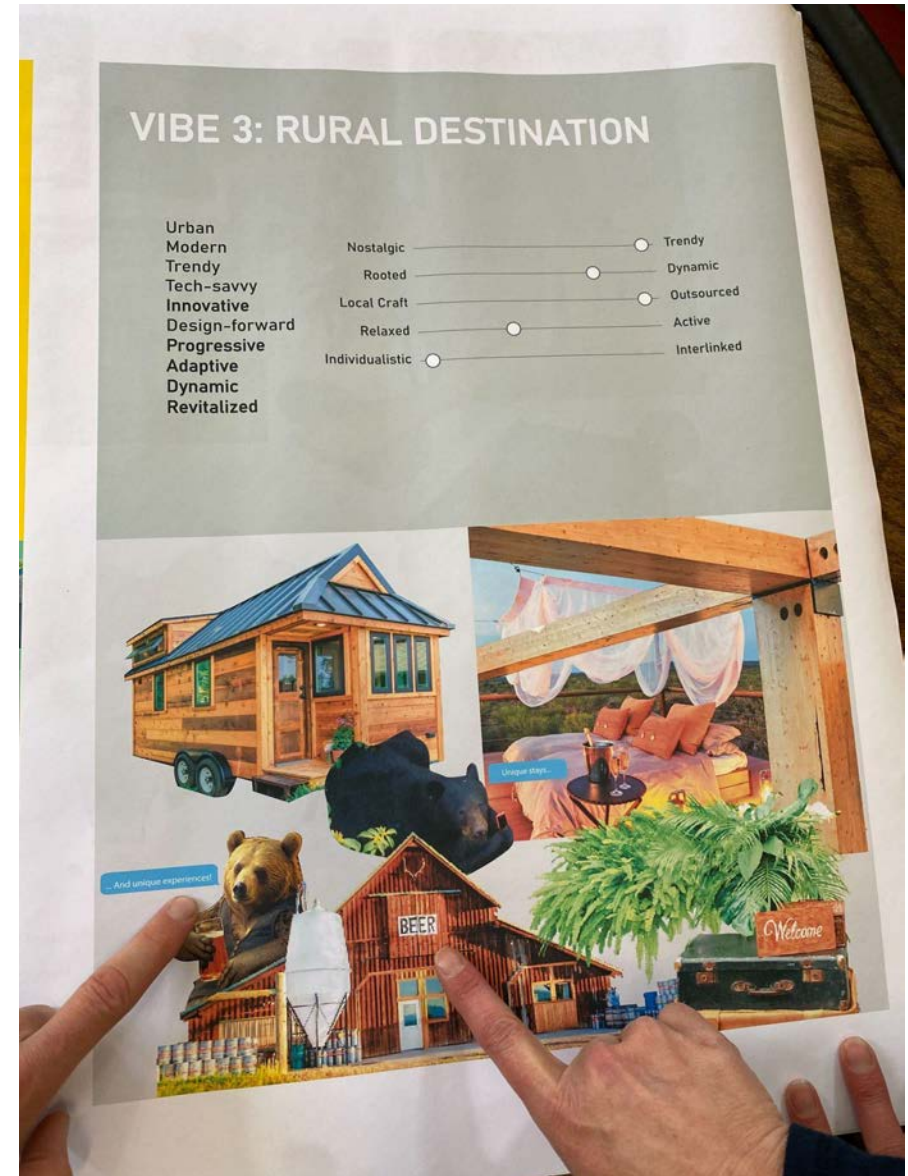
# Moodboard 3: Rural Destination

## Rural Destination:

The third moodboard captures the spirit of glamping, a concept that marries urban comfort with rustic surroundings. By embracing new material and construction technologies, this moodboard aims to offer distinctive stays and experiences, primarily catering to a younger audience. It places a significant emphasis on nomadic culture, such as digital nomadism, and incorporates modern trends and technologies.

## Main Themes:

- *Unique Stays:* focused on providing one-of-a-kind accommodations and memorable experiences.
- *Innovative Material and Design:* Incorporating cutting-edge materials and designs to create a contemporary and stylish atmosphere.
- *Technology and Trends:* using technology to enhance guest experiences.
- *Individual-Centric Approach:* Placing guest experience at the center of the design and tailoring to individual needs and preferences.



# Property Owner 1

One of the initial conversations was with the largest property owner in Canyon Dam, owning and managing roughly 15 acres, 8 of which housed a 55-space RV Park before the wildfire.

During a site visit, the property owner elaborated on their experiences and struggles, along with their deep connection to their seasonal RV park community. It was evident that the complexities of the project and the significant assets involved had slowed the process, including the settlement with PG&E due to extensive property damage.

While the conversation provided key insights, it was clear that due to the extensive complexity of the project and the degree of property damage, this endeavor would be a long-term vision for the future. The property owner expressed a strong connection to the "Summer Town Dream" moodboard and envisioned more greenery in Canyon Dam, embracing the idea of it being the "Gateway to Lake Almanor." The insights gained from this conversation with a dedicated property owner further contributed to the understanding and vision for revitalizing Canyon Dam.

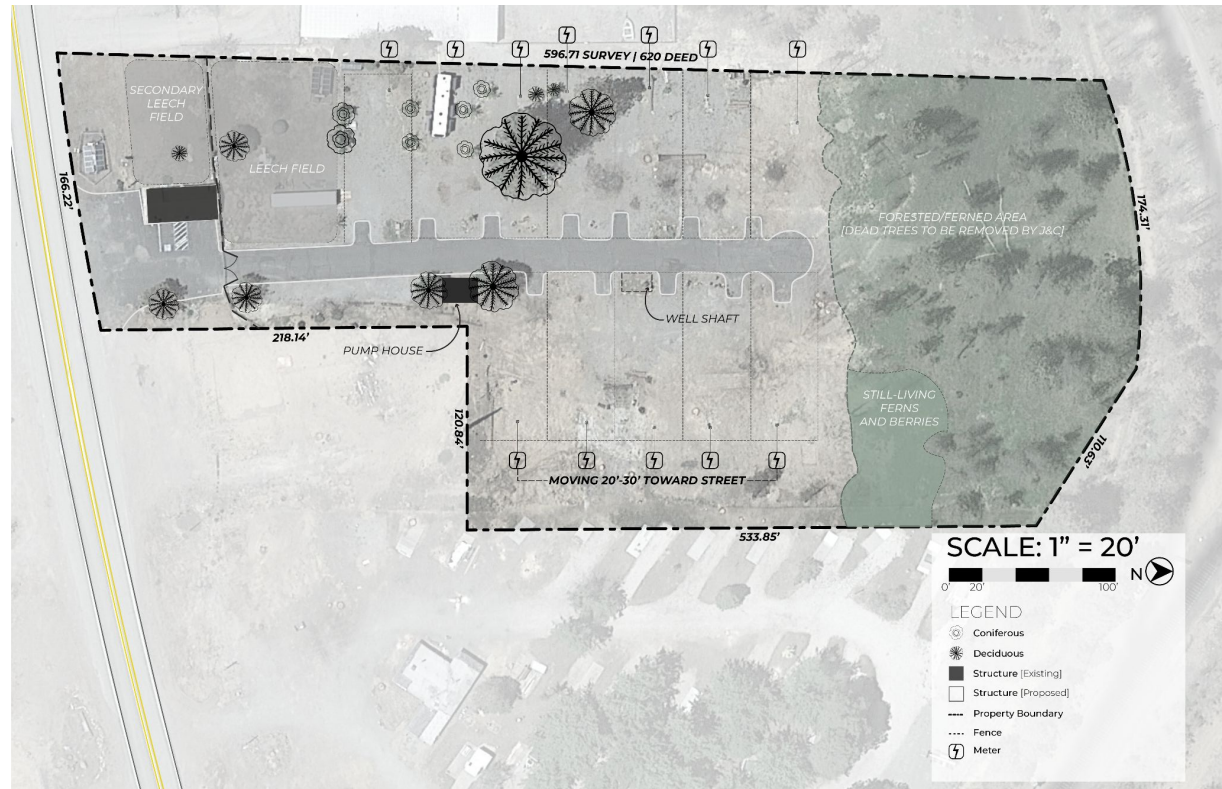


# Property Owner 2

The team also held conversations with another Canyon Dam property owner. Their 3 acre property offers unique possibilities as it is classified as a Mobile Home Park, allowing for greater flexibility in the types of structures and residences that can be accommodated.

This distinction offers more flexibility in terms of the types of structures and residences that can be accommodated, such as tiny homes, pop-up campers, and vans. They also mentioned that Mobile Home and RV Parks are primarily regulated by the CA Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD). They described this property more as “a residential street” than a RV Park.

To support following conversations, a map was developed, which takes into consideration meter placement (expected to be completed in late Spring 2024), boundaries of each of the 12 sites, existing trees and other landscape elements, as well as offers the opportunity to plan out future structures and tree placement. Further collaboration and site visits with the landowner will result in a more finalized map with planned structures and tree placement, but acts as the first step towards the landowner’s vision of an “Eco-Village.”



# Property Owner 2

Building on the unique classification of this Mobile Home Park property, further steps were taken to explore a wide range of housing possibilities. This database, tailored for the specific classification of a Mobile Home Park, is designed to provide a range of affordable workforce housing options at an estimated rental cost between \$500 and \$700/month.

Within this database exploration, listed housing alternatives include: tiny homes (both mobile and stationary), modular homes, manufactured kit homes, and trailers. While not a comprehensive and finalized catalog of all potential options, it serves as a valuable tool for the possibilities within this particular site.

The database takes factors into account such as cost, durability/longevity, and mobility for each housing type and delves into the aesthetic variety offered by these choices.

## Tiny Homes (on Wheels)

- Not likely to appreciate in value
- Transportable
- Appeal to younger generation
- Option for home to become personal property
- Smaller size = less energy cost
- High customization

**COST**

**LONGEVITY**

**MOBILITY**



*MitchCraft | Davis's 22'x8.5'*



*Tiny Heirloom*



*Rocky Mountain Tiny Houses | The Tandy 24'*



# Housing and Community Development (HCD)

In a meeting with HCD representatives, the discussion focused on regulations for converting RV sites into pre-fabricated (or “modular”) homes for special occupancy parks. This conversion process involves adhering to California Building Codes, which have specific requirements. HCD approval is integral to governing mobile homes and RVs, streamlining permitting processes while reducing costs. The meeting also addressed nuances surrounding 'prefabricated' homes, which necessitate compliance with county land-use regulations. The discussion underlined the cost-effectiveness of permitting under HCD and the potential for higher housing density.

This meeting also clarified the distinction between "special occupancy parks" and "manufactured home parks."

Manufactured home parks typically involve permanent residency with residents owning both the home and land, while special occupancy parks primarily concern mobile homes, with residents owning the dwelling but leasing the land. These variations in land ownership structure lead to different regulations and requirements.



## MOBILEHOME PARK AND SPECIAL OCCUPANCY PARK CONSTRUCTION PERMIT PROCEDURES

This booklet is provided as a guideline for construction permit applicants to explain the Department of Housing and Community Development (HCD) procedures and application requirements. Please read through the booklet carefully to see what regulation requirements apply to your project. Procedures for park construction are found in Part A and for park building construction in Part B. Using this booklet helps you to avoid any omissions. Also, before proceeding you are encouraged to contact the appropriate Area Office to learn which local or other agency approvals are necessary for this Department to approve your project and to answer any questions relative to your project.

Once you have obtained any necessary local agency approvals and have completed all necessary plans, calculations, engineering, etc., required for processing your application, it is strongly recommended that you contact the appropriate Area Office or Area Supervisor for additional guidance. The purpose of this contact is to arrange a meeting, preferably at the appropriate area office, to review your construction application, plans and other pertinent documents (project package). At that time, the plan check staff or area supervisor will use this booklet as a worksheet to indicate if your project package is complete and ready to be submitted for plan check or explain what items are remaining to complete your permit package. Commonly deficiencies are noted by circling the box in front of a plan requirement. If the project package is missing information, a second meeting may be recommended prior to submittal of the package for plan checking.

Fees will be charged for these preliminary plan check meetings as a technical service fee (\$196.00 per hour, \$196.00 minimum).

In addition to reviewing the completeness of your project package, the Area Supervisor or plan check staff will calculate construction and plan check fees. Separate permits are required for grading, utility construction, swimming pools and buildings. A copy of your worker's compensation insurance coverage must also be provided. Only after the project package is complete should your application and three (3) sets of plans with calculations and specifications with all required fees be submitted to the Department's plan check section. An incomplete or incorrect submission will result in it being returned, additional fees being charged for re-submittal, and project delays.

Once the submittal is received in the plan check office, it will be logged in and reviewed in the order it was received. Typically, plan review requires 4 to 6 weeks, so please plan accordingly and remain patient.

If the package is approved as submitted, you will receive your permit and job copy of the plans and documents by mail unless otherwise specified and paid for in advance. If the plan checker has questions, identifies errors, or information is missing from the submittal, you will be notified by mail of who to contact and the approval process will be suspended until a satisfactory response is received.

HCD Authorized Representative: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

## DOCUMENTATION STANDARDS FOR PERMITS TO CONSTRUCT OR RECONSTRUCT MOBILEHOME PARK OR SPECIAL OCCUPANCY PARK UTILITY SYSTEMS, BUILDINGS, AND SWIMMING POOLS

The following checked items are required of a permittee prior to submittal of a permit to construct or reconstruct facilities or buildings in a mobilehome park, special occupancy park (RV Park) or campground (25 CCR 1032). (The Area Office will advise you on which approvals are required)

- 1. Obtain approval and signature from the local planning department on the Mobilehome and Recreational Vehicle Park Government Agency Approval form or equivalent document.
- 2. Obtain approval and signature from the local Health Department on the Mobilehome and Recreational Vehicle Park Government Agency Approval form, or an equivalent document, for on-site water supply and on-site or private sewage disposal. Health Department approval is also required if there is any public food preparation as part of your development. Pool plans must have the Health Department stamp upon them as well as a signature on the Mobilehome and Recreational Vehicle Government Agency Approval form or equivalent document.
- 3. Obtain approval and signature from the local public works department or engineering department on the Mobilehome and Recreational Vehicle Park Government Agency Approval form or equivalent document for the park surface or subsurface drainage system and encroachments.
- 4. Obtain approval and signature for fire protection from the local fire protection district on the Mobilehome and Recreational Vehicle Park Government Agency Approval form or equivalent document.
- 5. Obtain required approval and signature from the California Coastal Commission on the Mobilehome and Recreational Vehicle Park Government Agency Approval form or equivalent document for developments within coastal zones.
- 6. Obtain approval and signature on the Mobilehome and Recreational Vehicle Park Government Agency Approval form or equivalent document from \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.
- 7. Obtain approval and signature on the Mobilehome and Recreational Vehicle Park Government Agency Approval form or equivalent document from \_\_\_\_\_ for \_\_\_\_\_.
- 8. Provide "will-serve" letters from gas, electric, water and sewer providers.
- 9. Submit a permit application (HCD Form 50) with three (3) sets of all plans and documents with appropriate fees to the Department after a preliminary plan review meeting has been held. A separate application form is required for each building, utilities (combined), grading/drainage, etc.
- 10. Provide written evidence of compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code, Division 13, commencing with Section 21000. (Typically on the use permit)

# County & Other Conversations

One of the key elements identified for Canyon Dam's revitalization, is the need for tree planting and beautification. This aerial map provided gives further indication towards this need. Due to the loss of the town's canopy and the limited presence of living trees currently, the restoration of green spaces and the enhancement of overall aesthetics have become initial focal points in the ongoing development process. This aligns with landowners' vision of transforming into a more appealing and vibrant place.

Incorporating notes from the meeting with American Planning Association (APA) - Community Assistants Planning Teams (CPAT) and the County into the Canyon Dam Strategic Housing Plan, the meeting shed light on the importance of street design and accounting for snow management in Canyon Dam.



# Next Steps

Suggested Next Steps 04.01

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Partnerships + Collaborations 04.02

# 04

# Suggested Next Steps

The suggested next steps involve ongoing engagement with additional property owners and continued discussions with those previously consulted. This approach ensures that our efforts remain comprehensive and inclusive. Building towards vision and goals set expressed by individual landowners.

Furthermore, the focus includes providing support to landowners through valuable resources, such as technical assistance, tree removal and canopy restoration projects, aimed at enhancing safety and aesthetics in the area. As we move forward, our transition into the implementation phase of the Strategic Housing Plan will involve working closely with The Almanor Foundation and other key stakeholders to transform Canyon Dam and alleviate the pressures of the workforce housing demand.



# Partnerships + Collaborations

Additional recommendations involve actively seeking partnerships and collaborations with organizations that share common goals and visions, with the aim of creating a unified effort to maximize resources for the benefit of Canyon Dam. One such key partnership is with the Indian Valley Community Services District (IVCSD), whose goals align closely.

Additionally, the team will continue maintaining an ongoing and open dialogue with the county to explore potential zone changes and working in tandem with Housing and Community Development (HCD) as pivotal components of developing future strategies.

In alignment with these efforts, the intention is for The Almanor Foundation (TAF) or other organizations to take the lead in creating housing opportunities, ensuring individual-focused approaches to fulfilling the goals of the Strategic Housing Plan and support in the Canyon Dam rebuilding efforts.



# Appendix

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All Documents	05.02



# 05

# Appendix

For more information about previous feedback, please visit the following links:

[Dixie Fire Collaborative - Phase 1A Report](#)

[Almanor Basin Strategic Housing Plan](#)

[Almanor Basin Housing Assessment](#)

[Almanor Basin Housing Systems Map](#)

# Thank You!



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