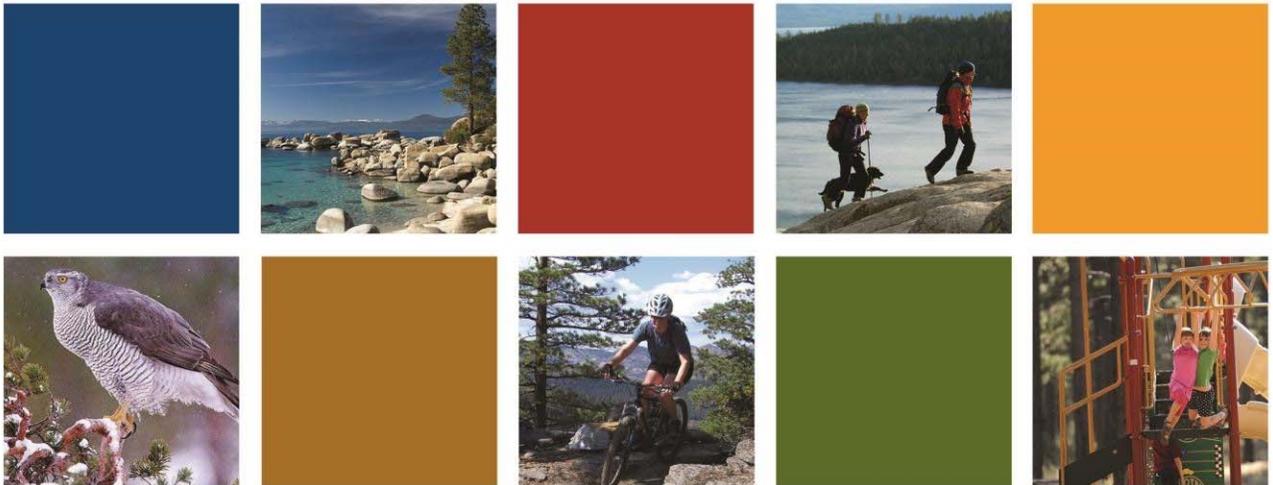


Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program Documents Series #12

# Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities

## Program Summary

March 2016



*Lake Tahoe*  
Sustainable Communities Program

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# California Strategic Growth Council

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# Acknowledgements

## Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization Governing Board

The Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO) Governing Board is comprised of the members of the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) Governing Board and one representative of the US Forest Service. The TRPA staff serves both the TMPO and TRPA. The TRPA Governing Board is responsible for adopting the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan and Code of Ordinances. The TMPO Governing Board is responsible for adopting the Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy.

## Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Senior Management Team

Joanne S. Marchetta, Executive Director  
John Marshall, General Counsel  
John B. Hester, Chief Operating Officer  
Julie Regan, Chief, External Affairs  
Chris Keillor, Finance Director  
Marja Ambler, Clerk to the Governing Board

## Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Sustainable Communities Program Staff

John B. Hester, Chief Operating Officer  
Lucia Maloney, Acting Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program Manager

## Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative

This citizens group is responsible for sustainability planning recommendations, projects, and programs. More information is available at [www.sustainabilitycollaborative.org](http://www.sustainabilitycollaborative.org).

## Tahoe Basin Partnership for Sustainable Communities

This group, comprised of representatives from the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization, California Tahoe Conservancy, El Dorado County, Placer County, City of South Lake Tahoe, North Lake Tahoe Resort Association, and Sierra Nevada Alliance, was responsible for preparing the original SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant application and has provided ongoing support for completion of these SGC grant-funded tasks.

## Consultants

AECOM	KPS3
Ascent	One Globe Corporation
BAE	PMC
Dyett and Bhatia	Sierra Business Council
Environmental Incentives	SITKA Technology
Hauge Brueck Associates	Sustainable Community Advocates
High Bar Global Consulting	Tahoe Prosperity Center
Highmark Designs	

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# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction to the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program</b> .....	1
Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Documents Series.....	1
<b>Current Program Summary</b> .....	5
Sustainability Framework Components.....	5
Interaction of Sustainability Framework Components.....	5
Stakeholder Involvement.....	7
<b>Moving the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program Forward</b> .....	9
Institutional Commitment and Support.....	9
Diffusion of Sustainability.....	12

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# Introduction to the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program

The need to embrace sustainability in all planning and implementation activities in the Lake Tahoe Region and beyond has been recognized in a number of ways. At the national level, the Department of Housing and Urban Development has created the Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program and the Department of Interior Bureau of Reclamation has initiated the Truckee River Basin Study that includes adaptive strategies to respond to climate change and other uncertainties. At the state level, California has adopted the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008 requiring greenhouse gas emission reduction targets for passenger vehicles for 2020 and 2035 for each region covered by a metropolitan planning organization (MPO) and created the Strategic Growth Council, which has awarded grants for sustainable community planning and natural resource conservation. At the Lake Tahoe Region level, the Tahoe Regional Planning Agency (TRPA) has updated the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan to include sustainability policies and mitigation measures, and the Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization (TMPO) has adopted a Sustainable Communities Strategy as required by the Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act of 2008. At the local level, local governments in the Lake Tahoe Region are in the process of integrating sustainability principles into their local plans.

In the summer of 2010, a partnership of agencies, organizations, and jurisdictions came together as “The Tahoe Basin Partnership for Sustainable Communities” in order to apply for a grant from the Strategic Growth Council. Collectively, the Partnership is supporting execution of the Strategic Growth Council 2011 Sustainable Communities Planning Grant that was officially awarded to the TMPO in August of 2011. The Partnership is comprised of Tahoe Metropolitan Planning Organization, Tahoe Regional Planning Agency, El Dorado County, Placer County, City of South Lake Tahoe, California Tahoe Conservancy, and Sierra Nevada Alliance.

The TRPA, in partnership with other key stakeholders in the Lake Tahoe Region, is a participant in all of these national, state, regional and local efforts. Often they are complementary and of common interest to stakeholders. Hence, the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program has been created as a Basin-wide program with staff from different agencies and organizations participating in the various efforts. To the extent possible, the products from these efforts will be available through the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program website and as a series of documents.

## Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program Documents Series

This series of documents is organized to generally reflect the tasks associated with the grants received from the California Strategic Growth Council (SGC). The series as currently envisioned includes the following:

1. **Sustainability Framework and Vision** – This document accompanies the California Tahoe Conservancy *Tahoe Basin Sustainability Planning Guidebook* document (Appendix A) and includes an overview of the Sustainable Communities Program, the framework within which all of the regional and local level plans work, and the vision for sustainability based on input from over 5,000 participants in the regional planning process. The *Tahoe Basin Sustainability Planning Guidebook* was prepared in 2011 and describes how this effort was originally envisioned. The

Sustainability Framework and Vision has more detailed and updated language related to the newly adopted Regional Plan and the framework for Area Plans, input from participants in that process, and the interaction of sustainability components. This serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 1: Roadmap & Organizational Structure.

2. **Sustainability Action Plan Background** – This document includes the initial greenhouse gas emissions inventory and reduction targets, and climate change adaptation and mitigation strategies. It reflects the adopted Regional Plan, Regional Transportation Plan, and Sustainable Communities Strategy policies, and is the basis for the sustainability (a.k.a., climate change) action plan. This document serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 3: Goals, Objectives, & Strategies.
3. **Sustainability Action Plan: A Sustainability Action Toolkit for Lake Tahoe** – This includes the revised greenhouse gas emissions inventory and reduction targets, and climate change and adaptation strategies vetted through the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative and the Tahoe Basin Partnership for Sustainable Communities. This document also includes community level outreach and action strategies. This document serves as the “deliverables” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Tasks 3.D, 4.A, and 4.D: Lake Tahoe Sustainability Action Plan and Outreach Activities.
4. **Sustainability Indicators Reporting Plan**– This includes: (1) an assessment of existing Lake Tahoe Region measurement and monitoring efforts, (2) identification of a suite of sustainability indicators, (3) development of a sustainability metrics reporting plan, and (4) initiation of a sustainability dashboard. This measurement and tracking approach is intended to be consistent with and a key element of the larger Lake Tahoe Basin Monitoring, Evaluation, and Reporting Program required by California State Appropriations Bill #3110-0140 in addition to serving as the ‘deliverables’ for SGC Round 1 Task 4.B: Develop Performance Measures, Indicators and Monitoring Program, including a Tracking and Accounting System and SGC Round 2 Task 4.A: Obtain Regional Indicators Data.
5. **Area Plans Framework** – This includes the framework for Area Plans and initiation of those Area Plans. The framework (i.e., Regional Plan policies and code, conformance review checklist, and model Area Plan contents) serves as the “deliverable” for SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 4, Subtask C: Lake Tahoe Livable Communities Program.
6. **Area Plans Background** – This includes an assessment of the sustainability and livability measures needed in each planning area and the barriers to local implementation of those sustainability measures. This document serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 2: Situation Assessments.
7. **Development Commodities Transfer Policies Analysis** – This includes identification and analysis of the potential market effectiveness of proposed transfer of development rights and bonus unit policies included in the Regional Plan. This serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 4, Subtask E: Development Rights Incentives Program.
8. **Development Commodities Tracking and Exchange System** – This includes the concepts, processes, software requirements, and other system specifications, as well as the results of implementing the development commodities and exchange system. This serves as the

“deliverable” for the SGC Round 2 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 3: Regional Development Rights Tracking System.

9. **Economic Development Strategy** – This includes analysis of existing and targeted industry clusters and recommendations on the clusters and incentives that will be most effective in creating and maintaining a sustainable economy for the Lake Tahoe Region. Also included is stakeholder outreach resulting in recommendations for implementation of commodities transfer policies. This serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 4, Subtask F: Economic Incentives Strategy.
10. **Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative Strategic Plan** – This document includes the LTSC’s mission, charter, and business plan which provides the strategy for the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative to continue, on an ongoing basis, to act as an independent entity that “champions” sustainability in the Lake Tahoe Region. This serves as the “deliverables” for the SGC Round 1 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 1.B: Establish Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative and SGC Round 2, Task 4.E: Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative Support.
11. **Annual Report** – This is the initial annual report on the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program and is now being included in TRPA annual reports. It is updated using current sustainability indicators data, and can act as a template for similar sustainability planning reports in other regions. This serves as the “deliverables” for the SGC Round 2 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Tasks 4.B: Implement Regional Data Sharing/Management Program, 4.C: Web-Based Dashboard Implementation and 4.D: Prepare and Publish Final Tahoe Annual Report.
12. **Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program Summary** - Other documents that are an integral part of the sustainability efforts in the Lake Tahoe Region include the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan, Regional Transportation Plan and Sustainable Communities Strategy, and various local government Area Plans. This document provides a summary of these plans, the products described in previous reports in this series, and how they work together within the Sustainability Framework for the Lake Tahoe Region. This serves as the “deliverable” for the SGC Round 2 Sustainable Community Planning Grant Task 2: SB375 Local Planning and Implementation Tool-Kit.

While providing valuable information about the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program to Lake Tahoe Region stakeholders, this series is also designed to provide a reference for other regions involved in addressing the critical issue of sustainability.

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# Sustainability Framework

The Lake Tahoe Region is subject to a unique Bi-State compact approved by California and Nevada, and ratified by the United States Congress. The regional and local (i.e., area) level plans that are enabled and required by this legislation (i.e., formal plans) are two of the four main components of the sustainability framework. The other two main components of the framework, Sustainability Action Plan and Related Plans and Projects, are not required (i.e., informal, often non-regulatory mechanisms). These four components, how they interact, and how stakeholders are involved to create the sustainability framework are described below.

## Sustainability Framework Components

The four components of the sustainability framework are as follows.

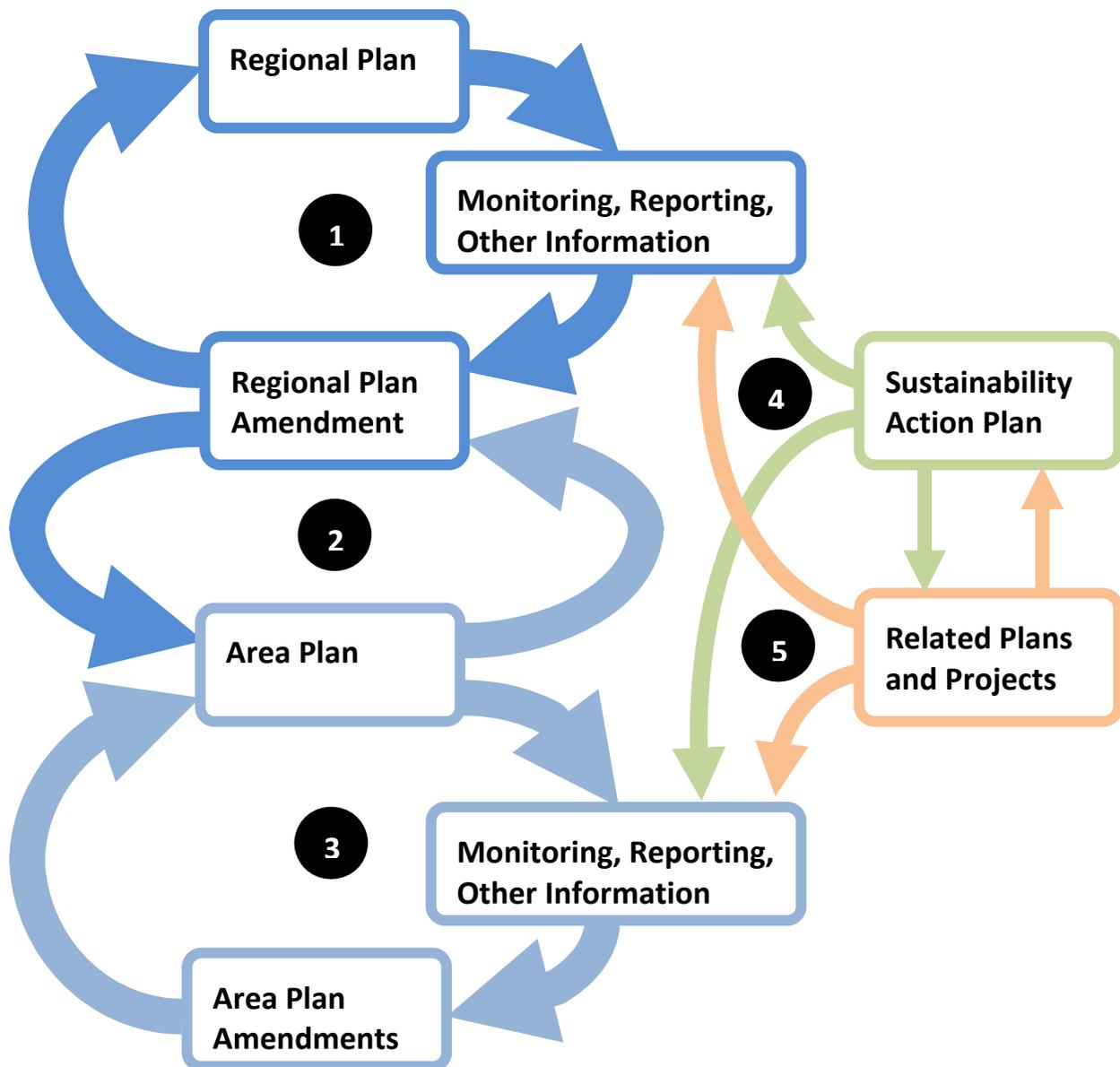
- **Regional Plan** – the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan adopted as required by the Tahoe Regional Planning Compact (P.L. 96-551). It includes goals and policies, the regional transportation plan and sustainable communities strategy, the water quality management plan, the final EIS mitigation measures, and Code of Ordinances.
- **Area Plans** – city and county plans adopted pursuant to California Planning and Zoning Law (Government Code 65000-66037) or Nevada Revised Statutes Chapter 278, and found in conformance with the Regional Plan.
- **Sustainability Action Plan (a.k.a., Climate Action Plan)** – recommendations evaluated by the Collaborative and provided to stakeholders to act upon to address greenhouse gas reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and sustainability.
- **Related Plans and Projects** – plan recommendations, projects, and programs initiated and/or advocated by other parties (e.g., Bureau of Reclamation recommendations on sustainability from the Truckee River Basin Study, Forest Service sustainability policies in the Forest Plan, Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan economic development policies, etc.).

## Interaction of Sustainability Framework Components

The formal plans (i.e., Regional Plan and Area Plans) have very well-defined processes and procedures for preparation, adoption, and amendment. These processes and how they interact are shown on the following graphic.

1. The Regional Plan must address certain topics, must be updated periodically, is subject to environmental review and mitigation, and these changes must be made through formal public processes. These requirements are well defined in the Bi-State Compact, the Regional Plan policies, the Code of Ordinances, and applicable environmental impact mitigation measures. In accord with the Regional Plan implementation policies, the TRPA Governing Board annually reviews monitoring data, reports, and other information to establish priorities for updating the Regional Plan. In addition, there is a time frame for completion of environmental mitigation measures. This annual regional level process is depicted by the top loop in the diagram below. The Regional Plan includes many sustainability measures (see Sustainability Action Plan Background document which is part of the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Document Series). Additional measures can be recommended for inclusion in the Regional Plan through this ongoing process and public meetings.

2. The Regional Plan and Code of Ordinances also established the framework for Area Plans and associated code to be created and maintained by local jurisdictions in the Lake Tahoe Region (see the Area Plan Framework document which is part of the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Document Series). As the middle loop on the following graphic shows, an amendment to the Regional Plan or Code of Ordinances may require an amendment to an Area Plan and/or associated code.
  
3. The Regional Plan allows a one-year period for an amendment to an Area Plan after the Regional Plan is amended (bottom loop). Once adopted and found to be in conformance with the Regional Plan, the Area Plan and/or code become part of the Regional Plan and/or Code of Ordinances. Like



the Regional Plan, the Area Plans are reviewed on an ongoing basis. In some instances, the appropriate local government may decide it is necessary to amend an Area Plan. This is completed through well-defined processes and procedures as dictated by the Bi-State Compact and either California Planning and Zoning Law or Nevada Revised Statutes. These processes include publicly noticed meetings of the local government planning commission and governing body, as well as other meetings determined by that local government. Additional sustainability measures can be recommended for inclusion in Area Plans through this ongoing process and public meetings.

4. The Sustainability Action Plan, prepared independently of the Regional Plan and Area Plans, addresses greenhouse gas emissions reduction, climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies, as well as other sustainability actions. As this plan was prepared and is updated, recommendations for sustainability measures to be included in the Regional Plan or Area Plans have been or may be identified. These recommendations are made through the ongoing Regional Plan and Area Plan processes, and also may inform Related Plans and Projects.
5. Related Plans and Projects include all plans that address environmental sustainability (e.g., Truckee Basin Study, Forest Plan, etc.), economic sustainability (e.g., Lake Tahoe Basin Prosperity Plan), and community sustainability. Sustainability projects include projects and programs identified in these plans, as well as those conceived and advocated by one or more stakeholder groups in the Region. Related Plans and Projects may be incorporated into the Regional Plan or an Area Plan through those respective ongoing planning processes, and also may inform the Sustainability Action Plan.

## Stakeholder Involvement

This graphic on the next page depicts the full range of options for stakeholder groups to be involved in the components of the sustainability framework. This framework recognizes that achieving sustainability will require an unprecedented level of collaboration between regional and local, formal and informal, and public and private efforts.

The following examples better illustrate this concept:

- **Greenhouse Gas Reductions from New Buildings** – The Regional Plan Environmental Impact Statement identified the need to mitigate the potential increase in greenhouse gas emissions from new buildings. The greenhouse gas emissions inventory, which is an important source of background information for the Sustainability Action Plan, indicates that the third largest source of greenhouse gas emissions in the Lake Tahoe Basin is from fuel combustion to heat buildings. By establishing minimum energy efficiency standards for new buildings in the Lake Tahoe Basin, the necessary mitigation measure will be put into effect through Area Plans and part of the desired reduction in greenhouse emissions identified in the Sustainability Action Plan will be achieved. This is part of both formal (Area Plan) and informal (Sustainability Action Plan) planning efforts, and involves a number of stakeholder groups ranging from individuals (e.g., homeowners) to government organizations (e.g., local government building officials).
- **Development Commodities Policies** – The changes in policies related to transfer and conversion of development commodities are of interest to a number of stakeholders including businesses, non-government organizations, and government organizations. Through the Tahoe Prosperity Center, all three of these stakeholder groups met to address these policies. The results were

important for both informal planning efforts (Sustainability Action Plan economic development incentives strategies and implementation of the Tahoe Basin Plan for Prosperity) and in formal planning efforts (Regional Plan pilot tourist accommodation unit conversion policy and possible new policies).

This sustainability framework, which recognizes and embraces plans and projects that in the past may have been viewed as unrelated or conflicting, represents a change in the planning and implementation paradigm necessary for the Lake Tahoe Region to successfully pursue sustainability.

# Moving the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program Forward

The partners in the Lake Tahoe Region have successfully designed and launched the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program (<http://laketahoesustainablecommunitiesprogram.org/>), supported by SGC funding. In part through SGC grants, Lake Tahoe communities are positioned to act on the most effective strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet other sustainability goals. Outcomes have included an on-line transfer of development rights tracking system that implements the land-use component of the Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS), the development and approval of Area Plans throughout the Region to implement both the land use and transportation components of the SCS, the Lake Tahoe Sustainability Collaborative, the award-winning Sustainability Action Plan, and the development of sustainability indicators (<https://laketahoeinfo.org/>). Two of the most important determinants of the future success of the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program will be continued formal institutional commitment and support, and diffusion of sustainability actions into the day-to-day activities of those who live, work, and visit the Region.

## Institutional Commitment and Support

Although not always labelled as such, the Lake Tahoe Region has a long history of engaging in sustainability practices. One of the most significant of these was the creation of the unique Tahoe Regional Planning Agency through a Bi-State compact adopted by Congress nearly 50 years ago. In 1997 the Region held the first of what became an annual event, the Tahoe Summit. That first Summit was attended by a number of prominent public officials including President Bill Clinton and Vice President Al Gore.

*Lake Tahoe is ahead of the curve. You recognized it when the beauty, and clarity, and majesty of this lake was obviously and clearly threatened. When the threat is to communities around the world, it is harder to connect the dots. But those dots connect right back to Lake Tahoe.*

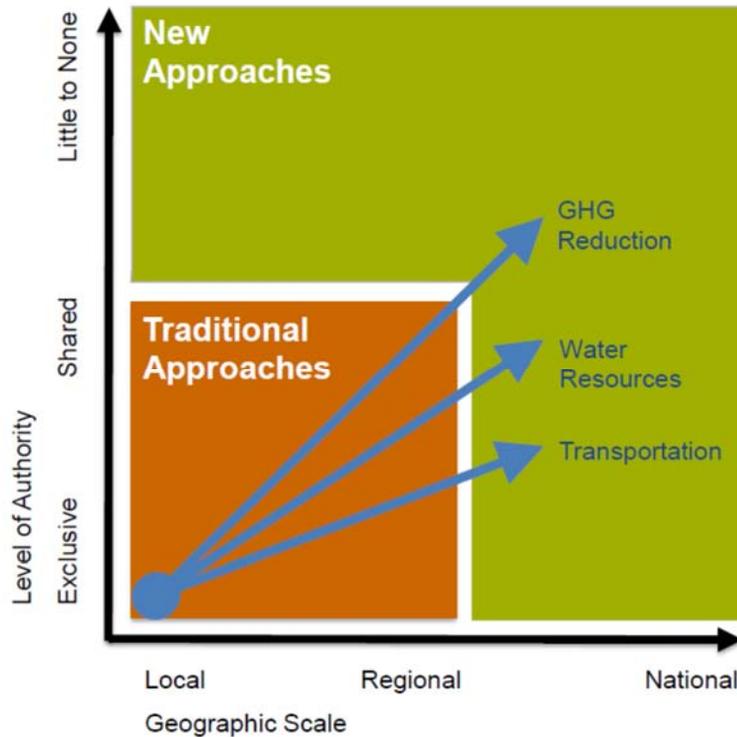
—Former Vice President Al Gore;  
2013 Tahoe Summit.

At the 2013 Summit Former Vice President Al Gore returned and challenged those present to address global warming and sustainability. The Tahoe Regional Planning Agency Governing Board responded by making “becoming a leader in sustainability” one of the four strategic objective in the Agency’s Strategic Plan (<http://www.trpa.org/about-trpa/how-we-operate/strategic-plan/>).

The Agency created the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program (LTSCP) to meet this new strategic objective. The LTSCP complements and enhances the other the TRPA functions as defined by the Bi-State compact that created the organization. The Bi-State Compact that established TRPA requires the Governing Board to adopt 1) Environmental Threshold Carrying Capacities and 2) a Regional Plan to achieve and maintain the adopted Thresholds. The Bi-State Compact also mandates implementation of the Regional Plan through 3) ordinances, rules, and regulations, as well as 4) the inclusion of projects, proposals, and time schedules for implementation. Like many federal, state and

local government plans the Lake Tahoe Regional Plan is implemented through both regulatory actions (project permitting and compliance) and projects and programs that are funded predominantly by the public with significant private sector participation (Environmental Improvement Program).

Unlike the other operations divisions/programs, the Sustainable Communities Program operates largely in areas where TRPA does not have exclusive or shared authority, and in many cases in geographic areas outside of the TRPA jurisdiction (i.e., outside of the Lake Tahoe Basin). This requires new approaches to



issues that complement the traditional approaches the Compact authorizes. For example, reducing the greenhouse gas emissions created from generation of electricity outside of the Region and consumed within the Region may be best addressed by reducing emissions from the generation process outside of the Basin. Similarly, upstream activities like forest fuels management and aquatic invasive species prevention may be one of the more effective ways to protect the water supply for downstream municipal users and should be supported by those users. Yet another example is that the vehicle miles traveled in the Region are affected by both the development within the Region, which TRPA can impact, and the travel behavior of visitors from outside of the Region who make day trips into the Region for recreation purposes, which TRPA may not be able to impact without collaborating with adjacent Metropolitan Planning Organizations on alternative forms of inter-regional transportation.

Over time it has become more apparent that the ability for TRPA to recognize and react to the underlying principles implied above (shared or no authority, geographic scale that may extend beyond the Lake Tahoe Region) will play an even greater role in determining success in achieving the goals of the Bi-State Compact and the strategic objectives of the Governing Board. More specifically, the focus of the LTSCP should continue to be successful implementation of the Sustainability Action Plan, to include planning, securing funding, and other forms of collaboration with partners both inside and outside of the basin.

The figure below illustrates how TRPA operates to achieve its mission of preserving, restoring, and enhancing Lake Tahoe through these five functions:

1. Achieve and maintain thresholds;
2. Prepare and maintain a plan to realize the thresholds;
3. Implement the plan through permitting and compliance;
4. Implement the plan through projects and programs; and
5. Implement the plan and sustainability actions in areas beyond the agency's formal jurisdiction and authority through education and collaboration.<sup>1</sup>



## Diffusion of Sustainability

While creating an institutional “home” for sustainability is important, motivating people to action through effective education and outreach is perhaps the most critical element of the Lake Tahoe Sustainable Communities Program. Collaboration is necessary to achieve this objective.<sup>2</sup> Much of the recent success in improving transportation and energy infrastructure in Lake Tahoe has been a direct result of advocacy and on-the-ground action by the grassroots Sustainability Collaborative. These informed citizens alert local decision-makers to sustainability priorities, and share information on the benefits of sustainability practices throughout their networks.

To further implement the Sustainability Action Plan through collaboration, TRPA LTSCP staff will make a concerted effort to build the capacity of the community and Sustainability Collaborative

<sup>1</sup> This reflects some of the same concepts described as the “Golden Circle” in Simon Sinek, *Start with Why*. New York: Portfolio/Penguin, 2009. The Agency mission correlates to “why the organization does what it does”; the five functions are essentially a blend of the concepts “how the agency does what it does” and “what the agency does.”

<sup>2</sup> The following video provides an explanation of the distinction between institutional and collaborative approaches: [http://www.ted.com/talks/clay\\_shirky\\_on\\_institutions\\_versus\\_collaboration#twinports](http://www.ted.com/talks/clay_shirky_on_institutions_versus_collaboration#twinports)

members to interact with each other and local decision-makers to create more change, such as improving energy efficiency in the home and reducing fuel consumption. In addition to supporting the community and Collaborative members, LTSCP staff will create training modules, perform outreach, and utilize community-based social marketing tools using the “diffusion of innovations” approach.<sup>3,4,5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See Everett M. Rogers, *Diffusion of Innovations*. New York: Free Press, 2003.

<sup>4</sup> The combination of the “Golden Circle” and diffusion of innovations concepts is explained in the following video: [https://www.ted.com/talks/simon\\_sinek\\_how\\_great\\_leaders\\_inspire\\_action?language=en](https://www.ted.com/talks/simon_sinek_how_great_leaders_inspire_action?language=en)

<sup>5</sup> The following webpage discusses the integration of these concepts to address sustainability: <http://intercongreen.com/2010/06/10/jumping-the-chasm/>