



Release Date: March 2, 2022

For More Information: Jerry Azevedo, (916) 475-2437 or jazevedo@integrated-comms.com

Majority of Tahoe Residents Say Lack of Housing, Traffic, Wildfires and Vacation Rentals Are Biggest Threats to Quality of Life

“Envision Tahoe Community Report” presents survey results and new Census data to help Tahoe craft strategies for economic recovery, resiliency, and diversification

INCLINE VILLAGE, NV – Tahoe residents – regardless of their specific location around the Lake or individual situation – are unified in their concern that housing, traffic congestion, and other visitor impacts pose the biggest threats to the quality of life in the Tahoe Basin and which efforts should be given priority to maintain or improve quality of life for residents and workers. In the wake of the Caldor Fire, residents also rank wildfires and smoke as one of the most significant threats to the Tahoe region.

These findings are presented in the “Envision Tahoe Community Report,” the second report delivered to Tahoe leaders and community members through “Envision Tahoe: Prosperity Plan 2.0,” an initiative to guide Tahoe’s economic recovery from the pandemic, increase its resiliency to disruptions, and make Tahoe’s economy more sustainable and inclusive through diversification. Envision Tahoe is led by the Tahoe Prosperity Center (TPC), the regional community and economic development non-profit for the Tahoe Basin.

“In many ways, this new report captures the very same housing, traffic and economic disparity issues that Tahoe residents have been struggling with and discussing for years,” said Heidi Hill Drum, CEO for the Tahoe Prosperity Center. “What’s surprising is how unified Tahoe residents are in their assessment of the threats to our quality of life, regardless of where they live or what they do, and how strongly they feel about both the challenges and where we need to focus our efforts. The updated Census data tells us that our economic and housing challenges have been persistent and now are even more urgent.”

The Community Report presents the results of extensive qualitative and quantitative research to capture broad and diverse opinions from community members on a wide range of economic and quality-of-life issues. These included one-on-one interviews with business and community leaders, expert panel discussions on key issue areas, focus groups convened with residents around Lake Tahoe, and an online community survey that generated nearly 1,800 responses.

“One of the imperatives for Envision Tahoe was extensive, inclusive engagement with basin residents to understand their perspectives on our economic and community challenges and how we address them,” said Placer County Supervisor Cindy Gustafson, serving as a co-chair of the Envision Tahoe Catalyst Committee. “We now have input from hundreds of residents from diverse walks of life, including parents, young people, employers, workers, community leaders, and others. This feedback will help us link our economic strategies to the needs of our community members.”

“In addition to agreeing on the threats, this survey also shows that residents are unified over what makes Tahoe a great place to live,” said Chris McNamara, owner of OutdoorGearLab, LLC and TechGearLab, and co-chair of the Envision Tahoe Catalyst Committee. “We love the Lake, our outdoor lifestyle, recreation and our connections in the community and solving problems together. These are great building blocks for creating a shared vision for our future.”

The Community Report also presents new data from the 2020 U.S. Census that was not available when the Envision Tahoe “Baseline Report” was published last fall. This data shows that Tahoe median home prices have tripled in nine years, from \$345,000 in 2012 to \$950,000 in 2021, while the number of housing units has only increased by 1%. Compared to updated income data, there are zero homes presently listed for sale in Tahoe in a price range that is affordable to a person or couple earning a median wage of \$53,000.

By late spring, the Envision Tahoe initiative will publish a final report with tactical workplans in key activation areas to promote economic resiliency and diversification, as well as efforts to address the housing crisis that underpins much of the region’s challenges.

The key findings of the Community Survey include:

- **Natural Beauty, Lifestyle and Recreation Make Tahoe a great place to live:** Strong majorities of residents cite Tahoe’s natural beauty (75%), its outdoor mountain lifestyle (61%), and unique access to outdoor recreation (58%) as the most important factors that make Tahoe special. Smaller percentages cited sense of community, education, job opportunities, social/cultural opportunities, and resorts as the most important factor.
- **Tahoe is on the Wrong Track:** 63% believe that things in the Tahoe Region are “on the wrong track.” Just 1 in 5 believe things are on the right track.
- **One-Quarter of People Struggle to Make Ends Meet:** 76% of respondents say they are able to live in “reasonable comfort” in Tahoe, including those who work for a Tahoe-based employer, don’t work or are self-employed. The remaining 24% said they can barely make ends meet but don’t want to move, must work two or more jobs, or cannot afford to stay in Tahoe and plan to leave.
- **Lack of Housing, Traffic, Smoke and Vacation Rentals Threaten Quality of Life:** 73% of respondents said that lack of stable housing options for workers is the most significant threat to quality of life in the Tahoe region. From a list of 18 threats, a majority of respondents also selected traffic and lack of transportation options, wildfires and smoke and too many vacation rentals/second homes as among the most significant threats. Significant numbers also pointed to disrespectful attitudes among tourists and a lack of economic diversity.
- **Solutions Should Prioritize Housing, Tourism Fees, Transportation, and Restrictions on Second Homeownership:** 79% of respondents said that expanding economical housing opportunities for workers should be a “very high” or “high” priority. 75% said priority should be on imposing public access fees on tourists to pay for investments in the environment, transportation and community services. A strong majority of respondents also said “very high” or “high” priority should be placed on developing transportation options/reducing congestion, imposing restrictions on second

homeowners and short-term rentals, investing in education, expanding family services, improving broadband/cellular infrastructure, and diversifying housing to include more higher density options.

For more information, visit www.tahoeprosperty.org/envision-tahoe/

###

Tahoe Prosperity Center is an innovative economic and community development non-profit. In order to make Lake Tahoe truly inclusive and prosperous, we are working to establish attainable workforce housing, improve job and training opportunities, reliable and robust internet, and ensure a safe Basin equipped with fire safety cameras - all driven by locally focused, community indicators data. TPC works towards a healthy economy, community and environment. Our mission is Uniting Tahoe's communities to strengthen regional prosperity.