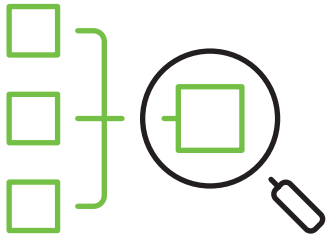
Paradise at a Glance



March 2026

General Plan Update Context



The Town of Paradise is updating its General Plan. The General Plan is the Town's primary policy guide for the community's future. This effort builds on the Town's Long Term Recovery Plan, which was developed after the 2018 Camp Fire to guide rebuilding and community recovery, and which is also currently being updated. While the Recovery Plan focuses on rebuilding and resilience following the disaster, the General Plan has a broader scope, addressing land use, housing, economic development, transportation, public services, and environmental stewardship for the community as a whole over the next 20 years.

It has been more than 30 years since the last comprehensive update to the General Plan; during that time, the town and the community have undergone significant transformations. As a first step in the update process, the Town conducted an in-depth analysis of current conditions in Paradise, which are summarized in this briefing book. Over the next three years, there will be many opportunities for residents, business owners, workers, and others who care about Paradise to build on this information; share your vision, needs, and ideas; and help shape the future of Paradise.







Introduction

The General Plan Update is an opportunity to understand current conditions and key issues in Paradise and for the Town to work closely with community members to develop policies and actions to address current and future opportunities and challenges. This briefing book summarizes important background information and emerging opportunities and issues, organized around the seven topics shown to the right.



- Post Fire Redevelopment
- Community Profile
- Mobility
- Sustainability and Resilience
- Police and Fire Services
- Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater Infrastructure
- Economic Development and Fiscal Sustainability

More information on these and many other topics is available in the detailed Existing Conditions Reports available on the project website at **www.Paradise2045.com**

Some **key topics** that will be considered during the project are highlighted below, many of which are discussed in the following pages, while others will be explored in more detail later in the process:



Camp Fire recovery and rebuilding efforts.



Shifting community needs resulting from changing demographics and environmental factors.



Strengthening community cohesion and rebuilding the social ties that proved to be life-saving in 2018.



Maintaining fiscal and environmental sustainability throughout redevelopment.



Constraints to building and economic development stemming from the Town's reliance on onsite wastewater systems and the absence of centralized sewer infrastructure.



How to improve community health and quality of life outcomes for all ages.

Post-Fire Redevelopment

Paradise is a small town in the Sierra Nevada foothills of Northern California, known for its natural beauty and close-knit community. Long before the town was established, the land was stewarded by the Konkow Native American tribe. European explorers first entered the region in the late 1700s, and Paradise later developed as a supply hub for Gold Rush miners. It eventually became a farming community known for apples, prunes, and pears. This history is still celebrated today through events such as the Johnny Appleseed Days fall harvest festival held every year since 1888.

While Paradise's history and small-town character define much of its identity, the Camp Fire is the reason the town is known nationwide. On November 8, 2018, the Camp Fire devastated Paradise and became the deadliest and most destructive wildfire in California history. Although media coverage has faded in the years since, the impacts of the Camp Fire remain deeply visible in both the physical landscape and the daily lives of residents. Recovery and redevelopment continue to shape Paradise today.

This section highlights key changes in Paradise since the Camp Fire and what's expected in the years ahead.

Camp Fire Impact at a Glance

- **Deaths Caused:** 85
- **People Displaced:** 50,000
- **Homes Destroyed:** 11,000
- **Other Structures Destroyed:** 8,000
- **Acres Burned:** 150,000



Sources: Butte County Association of Governments, 2025 (Homes Destroyed; Other Structures Destroyed); CAL FIRE, 2025 (Deaths Caused; People Displaced; Acres Burned).



Paradise Today

Development

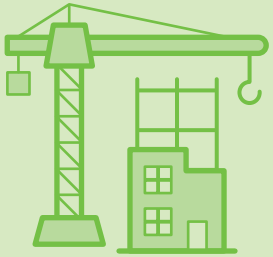
Vacant parcels still make up more than half of the town's land area. Most development that remains or has been rebuilt since the Fire is single-family homes.

Population Loss

Before the Fire, Paradise had maintained a stable population of approximately 26,000 residents for decades. Today the population is approximately 11,000.

Redevelopment Progress

To date, one-third of the homes destroyed have been replaced. Non-residential development, such as businesses and services, has occurred more slowly and is expected to increase as residential rebuilding continues.



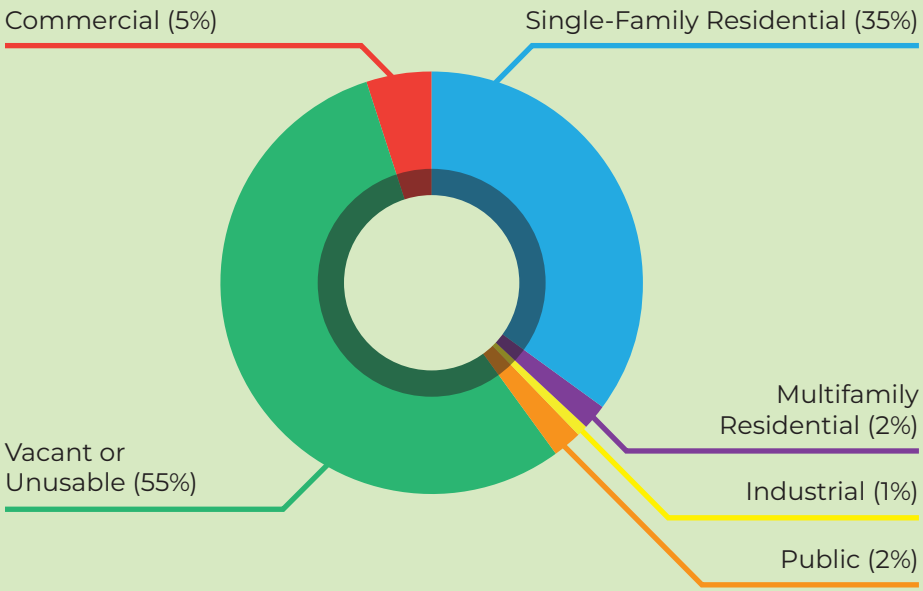
Post-Fire Redevelopment (as of November 2025)

New Single-Family Homes: 2,950

New Multifamily Homes: 680

New Commercial and Industrial Development: 100,000 square feet

How Land Is Used Today



Paradise in the Future

Under the current General Plan, most vacant land in Paradise is designated for single-family residential development.

Vacant Parcels' Current Land Use Designations

Current General Plan Land Use Designation	Town Limit	Planning Area*
Agricultural Residential	28%	24%
Rural Residential	28%	21%
Town Residential	29%	14%
Multifamily Residential	3%	1%
Neighborhood Commercial	<1%	<1%
Central Commercial	1%	<1%
Town Commercial	4%	3%
Business Park	N/A	<1%
Light Industrial	1%	1%
Community Service	3%	2%
Recreational	<1%	<1%
Public Institutional	<1%	1%
Open Space/ Agricultural	3%	33%
Total Acres	**5,740**	**11,700**

Source: Chico State University's Geographic Information Center, 2025.

*The "Planning Area" for the General Plan Update includes both the town's current limit and nearby areas that may become part of the Town in the future, known as the sphere of influence or SOI. The town limit marks where the Town's authority ends and the surrounding unincorporated areas begin. The SOI includes adjacent land that could be added to the town over time and where Town services, such as roads, water, or emergency services, could eventually be provided.

Community Profile

Paradise Population Change Since the Camp Fire

2018:
26,000 Residents

2019:
4,000 Residents

2021:
6,000 Residents

2025:
11,000 Residents

In the year immediately following the Camp Fire, Paradise's population fell from about 26,000 residents to roughly 4,000. As the town has redeveloped, both Fire survivors and new residents have contributed to its recovery. Today's population of approximately 11,000—about 40% of its pre-Fire size—shares some characteristics with the pre-Fire community but differs in important ways and is likely to continue evolving in the years ahead. Key population characteristics before and after the Fire are summarized in the table and highlighted below.

- **More New Residents.** In the immediate aftermath of the Fire, returning residents led the charge to rebuild. Over time, that pattern shifted and, by 2021, most new homes were built for households moving to Paradise for the first time.
- **Faster Youth Recovery.** School enrollment is rebounding faster than overall population growth.
- **Greater Diversity.** Racial and ethnic diversity has increased, though no single racial or ethnic group accounts for the majority of this change.
- **Income Gains and Growing Inequality.** Median household income has increased while the number of families living below the poverty level has also risen.
- **Remote Work on the Rise.** As in many communities since the COVID-19 pandemic, remote work has become more common.
- **Jobs Keeping Pace with Population.** Employment has rebounded at roughly the same pace as population, though only a small share of jobs in Paradise are held by local residents.



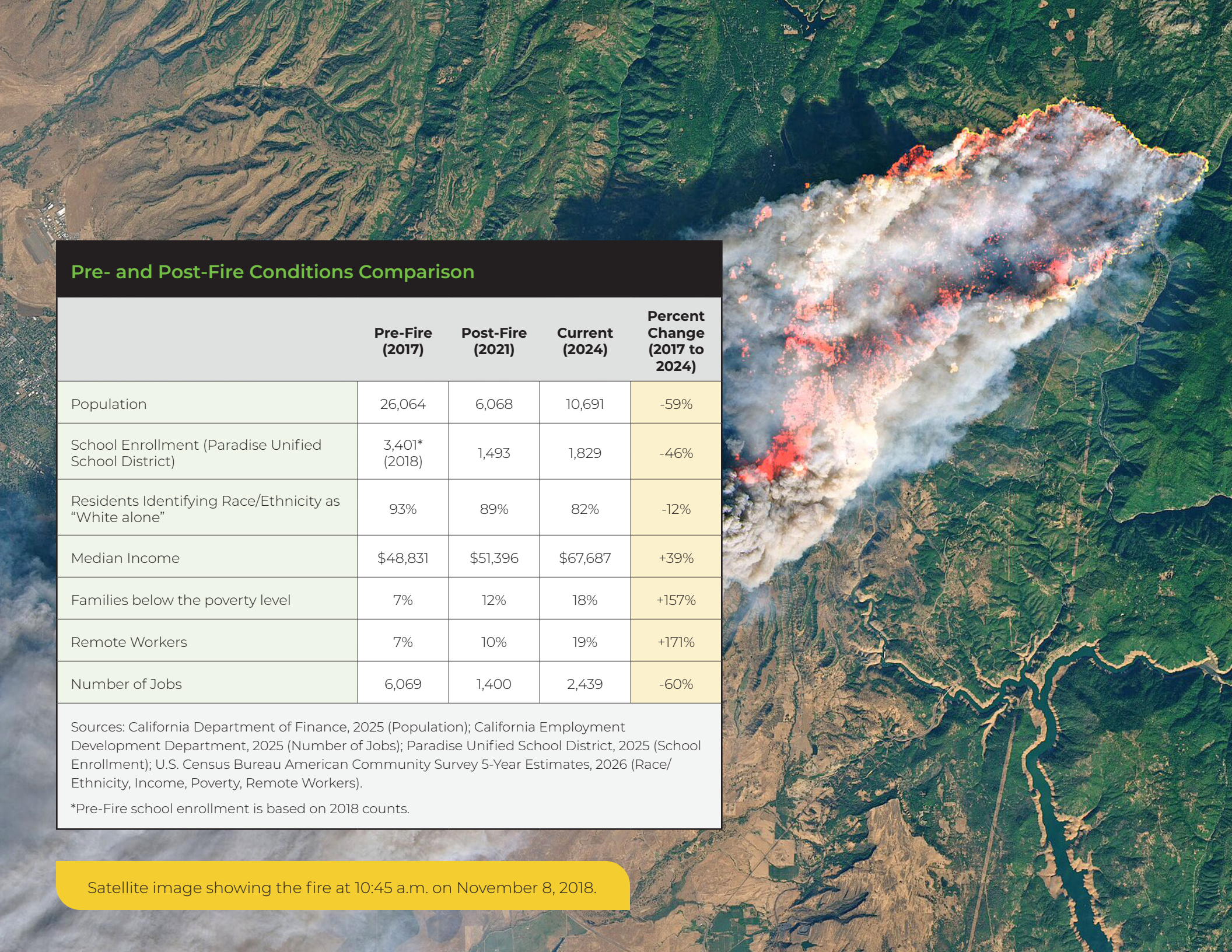


Pre- and Post-Fire Conditions Comparison

	Pre-Fire (2017)	Post-Fire (2021)	Current (2024)	Percent Change (2017 to 2024)
Population	26,064	6,068	10,691	-59%
School Enrollment (Paradise Unified School District)	3,401* (2018)	1,493	1,829	-46%
Residents Identifying Race/Ethnicity as "White alone"	93%	89%	82%	-12%
Median Income	$48,831	$51,396	$67,687	+39%
Families below the poverty level	7%	12%	18%	+157%
Remote Workers	7%	10%	19%	+171%
Number of Jobs	6,069	1,400	2,439	-60%

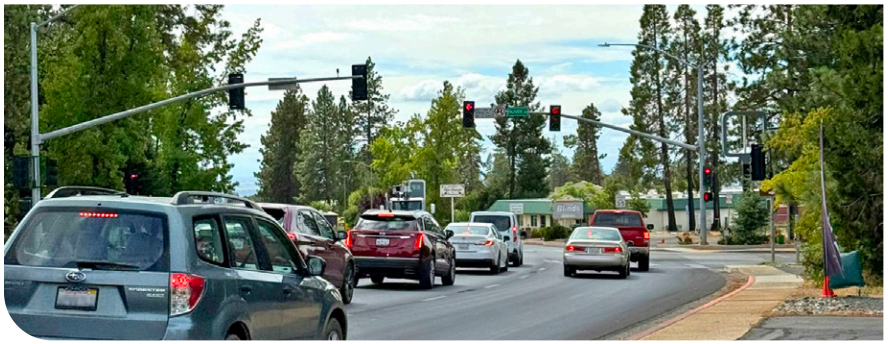
Sources: California Department of Finance, 2025 (Population); California Employment Development Department, 2025 (Number of Jobs); Paradise Unified School District, 2025 (School Enrollment); U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2026 (Race/ Ethnicity, Income, Poverty, Remote Workers).

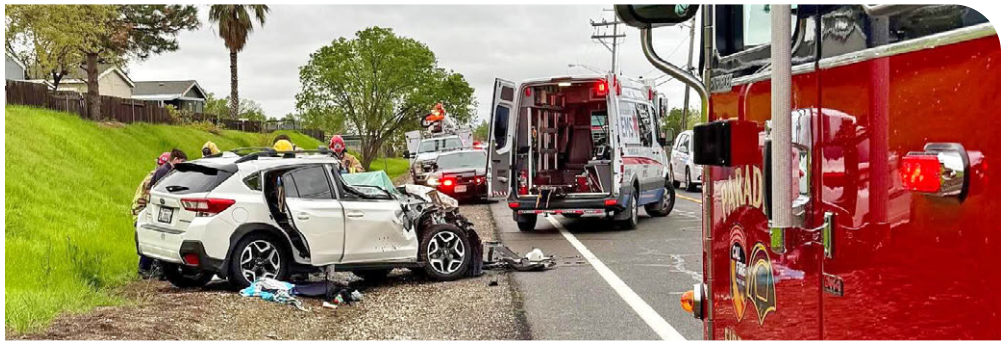
*Pre-Fire school enrollment is based on 2018 counts.



Satellite image showing the fire at 10:45 a.m. on November 8, 2018.

Mobility





Transportation in Paradise is largely car-dependent, with most residents relying on personal vehicles for daily travel due to the community's rural layout and regional commuting patterns. While the town also has sidewalks, bike lanes, multi-use paths, and transit services, these options are limited and serve a smaller share of trips.

Roadway Network. The Town maintains more than 100 miles of local roads, which carried an average of about 177,000 miles of vehicle travel per day in 2024. Following damage from the Camp Fire, the Town launched a major roadway rehabilitation program beginning in 2022 to repair infrastructure, improve safety conditions, and enhance emergency evacuation routes throughout the community.

Roadway Safety. Roadway safety remains a concern despite relatively low congestion, as the road network was originally designed to serve a much larger population. Of the 163 vehicle crashes reported between 2019 and 2023, excessive speed was the most common contributing factor. The Town's 2022 Local Road Safety Plan outlines strategies to enhance roadway safety, which can be further reinforced and expanded through the General Plan.

Active Transportation Network. Sidewalks, bike lanes, and multi-use paths are present in downtown Paradise, along Skyway, and on other major corridors, but the overall network remains limited. A key asset is the 5.5-mile Yellowstone Kelley Heritage Trail, a multi-use path that runs alongside the Skyway. However, the trail currently has few connections to surrounding neighborhoods, sidewalks, and bikeways. Expanding safe walking and bicycling connections remains an important goal as the Town rebuilds and evaluates transportation improvements through efforts such as the Transportation Master Plan and Local Road Safety Plan.

Transit Network. Public transit in the town is limited, primarily consisting of bus routes providing regional connections to Chico and local service within Paradise. Dial-a-Ride service is also available, serving seniors and people with disabilities. Although bus service is limited due to relatively low ridership, the Paradise Transit Center was recently upgraded to improve the experience for riders and to make transit more accessible for pedestrians, bicyclists, and park-and-ride users.

Commute Patterns. Both before and after the Fire, about 73% of working residents traveled alone to work. The use of most other ways of getting to work—such as carpooling, walking, and biking—has declined post-Fire and post-COVID 19, while the share of residents working from home who no longer commute has increased.


SPEED LIMIT
25





Sustainability and Resiliency

The extensive and ongoing rebuilding of the town presents challenges and unique opportunities to enhance sustainability and resilience standards from the ground up. Modern building materials and enhanced building standards result in new homes and businesses that are far more energy efficient, water efficient, and fire-safe than their predecessors. At the same time, construction activities generate a lot of greenhouse gas-emitting waste.

Similarly, the Camp Fire's impact has afforded the Town and community the ability to build back smarter and better equipped to withstand the next hazard event, though no level of planning or investment can fully mitigate the risk of wildfire. This rebuilding process also presents opportunities to modernize infrastructure systems and incorporate resilience measures into roads, utilities, drainage systems, and public facilities.

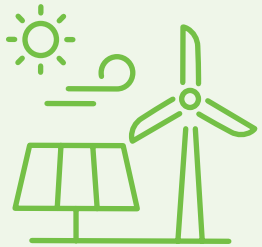
Growth in Solar Energy (2020–2024)

Year	Number of New Systems	Annual Energy Production Capacity (Kilowatt-hours/year)
2020	180	2,450,740
2021	240	3,326,340
2022	360	4,232,950
2023	460	6,740,370
2024	340	2,202,020
Total New Systems/ Annual Energy Production Capacity	**1,580**	**18,952,420**

Sources: California Distributed Generation Statistics, 2025 (Number of New Systems); National Renewable Energy Laboratory PVWatts Calculator, 2025 (Annual Energy Production Capacity).

Advancements in Sustainability

Renewable and Resilient Energy. Since the Fire, many residents and businesses have invested in solar panels and battery storage. These investments help reduce environmental impacts and make the community less vulnerable to power outages, including public safety power shutoff (PSPS) events.



Starting in 2027, Paradise will gain access to cleaner energy options by joining **Pioneer Community Energy**, a program that gives residents and businesses an alternative to Pacific Gas & Electric and offers several choices for purchasing more sustainably generated electricity.

Electric Vehicles. Community members are investing more in electric vehicles—up from 0.2% of car sales in 2017 to 12% in 2024, reflecting a growing interest in cleaner transportation options.

Growth in Solar Energy (2020–2024)

From 2020 to 2024, solar installations increased steadily, significantly expanding the community's clean energy capacity.

Enough energy to power over 1,750 homes for a year.



Setbacks in Sustainability



Resource Consumption. Although overall waste disposal has dropped significantly and the Town supports over a dozen waste diversion programs—such as recycling and composting—waste disposal per-person has increased by nearly 50 percent since before the fire. This increase is largely due to debris and materials generated by high levels of rebuilding and construction activity following the Fire.

Waste Disposal Rates	Target*	2017	2024
Annual disposal rate per resident (pounds per day)	4.8	4.5	6.3
Annual disposal rate per employee (pounds per day)	18.8	18.3	23.2

Source: CalRecycle, 2025.

*Targets are established by the California Department of Resources Recycling and Recovery (CalRecycle), in alignment with State law.

Resiliency

***Resilience* describes the capacity of people, structures, systems, and communities to prepare for, withstand, and recover from disruptions such as natural disasters, economic shocks, and climate change impacts.**

Resilience is about more than preparing for wildfires. Economic diversity, housing stability, access to healthcare, food security, and strong social connections all play a role in a community's ability to recover from disasters and maintain a good quality of life. Paradise's ongoing recovery from the Camp Fire underscores the importance of these resilience factors.



All of Paradise is located within a State-designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone — the highest fire risk category. To address this risk, the Town has implemented comprehensive measures, including defensible space requirements, fuel-reduction projects, strengthened building standards, and community preparedness programs.

Compliance with the requirement for 100 feet of defensible space is improving:

- September 2023: 74% compliance
- September 2024: 90% compliance

Paradise is home to 14+ 'Firewise Communities' — 'Firewise Communities' are neighborhoods recognized by the National Fire Protection Association for proactively working together to reduce wildfire risks.

Beyond wildfire risk, Paradise is facing more climate-driven challenges, such as more frequent extreme heat events. Power shutoffs during PSPS events expose weaknesses in critical infrastructure and underscore the need for greater energy resilience.

Public Safety Power Shutoffs (PSPS) in Paradise

- » An average of three PSPS events occur each year
- » Each outage lasts about 37 hours on average
- » Approximately 490 households are affected during each event

Police and Fire Services



Police

The Paradise Police Department (PPD) provides a full range of public safety services within town limits, including patrol, investigations, dispatch, animal control, and community safety programs. Restoration of the Dispatch Center marked an important recovery milestone and strengthened local control over emergency response. While staffing levels continue to reflect post-Camp Fire population changes, police services are supported by specialized units and partnerships with community organizations to meet evolving public safety needs.



Fire

Fire protection services are provided through a partnership with CAL FIRE, which provides trained personnel and comprehensive emergency response and wildfire preparedness services and collaboratively maintains fire stations and firefighting equipment with the Town. Although call volumes declined sharply after the Camp Fire, they are now generally proportionate to the town's population. As the community continues to grow, the flexibility provided by the partnership with CAL FIRE remains a major asset.

PPD Staffing and Services

- 18 sworn police officers:
  - » 4 K-9 Units that support patrol operations, investigations, and search operations
  - » 1 dedicated School Resource Officer assigned to work with Paradise schools
  - » The Investigations Unit, made up of specialized detectives who handle follow-up investigations of crimes and complex cases
  - » Strong connections with community organizations, like the Boys & Girls Club
- 14 civilian staff members, including:
  - » Dispatch
  - » Evidence Technician
  - » Administration
  - » Animal Control

Fire Facilities, Equipment, and Staffing

- 3 fire stations — 2 maintained by the Town, 1 maintained by CAL FIRE
- 7 fire engines
- 2 utility trucks
- 17+ firefighters in the Town-maintained stations, including:
  - » 6 Fire Captains
  - » 6 Fire Apparatus Engineers
  - » 5 Firefighter II postions
  - » 2 Additional Firefighter II positions during peak-season (March-December)
  - » 2-6 Firefighters in the CAL FIRE-maintained station (more staff during peak fire season)
- Additional staffing, including:
  - » North Division Chief
  - » 1 Battalion Chief for command-level oversight
  - » 2 Communication Operators
  - » 2 volunteers providing logistical and administrative support



Dispatch Center Restoration

After more than five years of relying on Butte County Sheriff's Office support, in 2024 PPD staff regained control to handle 911 calls directly.

Water, Wastewater, and Stormwater Infrastructure

The Town currently has reliable potable water service provided primarily by Paradise Irrigation District, while wastewater and stormwater infrastructure continue to present planning and investment challenges as the community rebuilds.

Water

Four water districts serve the Planning Area, operated by two providers: Paradise Irrigation District (PID) and Del Oro Water Company (Del Oro). PID supplies water within the town limits, while Del Oro primarily serves the surrounding unincorporated areas and beyond.

Paradise Irrigation District (PID)

- **Water Supply.** Most of PID's water supply comes from Little Butte Creek, which can provide an average of 15,960 acre feet[1] per year (AFY).
- **Current Water Use.** Current customers use around 4,000 acre-feet per year (AFY).
- **Future Water Availability.** Water supplies are projected to meet demands through 2045.
- **Constraints.**
  - » PID's reservoirs cannot store all of the water available to the District, although current storage is sufficient to meet near-term needs.
  - » One PID-owned groundwater well has been out of service since 2020 due to mechanical issues. The well can supply up to 350 acre-feet of water per year and is expected to return to service by 2030.

1 An "acre foot" is the amount of water needed to cover one acre of land to a depth of one foot.



Del Oro Water Company

- **Water Supply.** Water supplies serving the unincorporated Planning Area and southeast Paradise primarily come from deep water wells and Lake Oroville and can supply more than 1,430 AFY.
- **Current Water Use.** Current customers use around 750 AFY.
- **Future Water Availability.** Current water supplies can meet the water needs of pre–Camp Fire levels, but significant growth in demand beyond that will require further study to understand whether it can be accommodated.

Wastewater

Properties in Paradise currently rely on onsite wastewater treatment systems, including septic systems and holding tanks, because the Town does not currently operate a centralized municipal sewer system. The lack of sewer service makes it difficult to attract new commercial development, which often requires expensive on-site wastewater systems. The Town is in the final environmental review and early design phase of the Paradise Sewer Project to bring sewer service to parts of the community, potentially as early as 2030.

Sewer Service Timeline

2025 – Town Council adopts revised project description

2026 – Project design

2026 – Environmental analysis

2029 – Phase 1 construction

2030 – Begin Phase 1 sewer service

Beyond – Expand service as funding permits

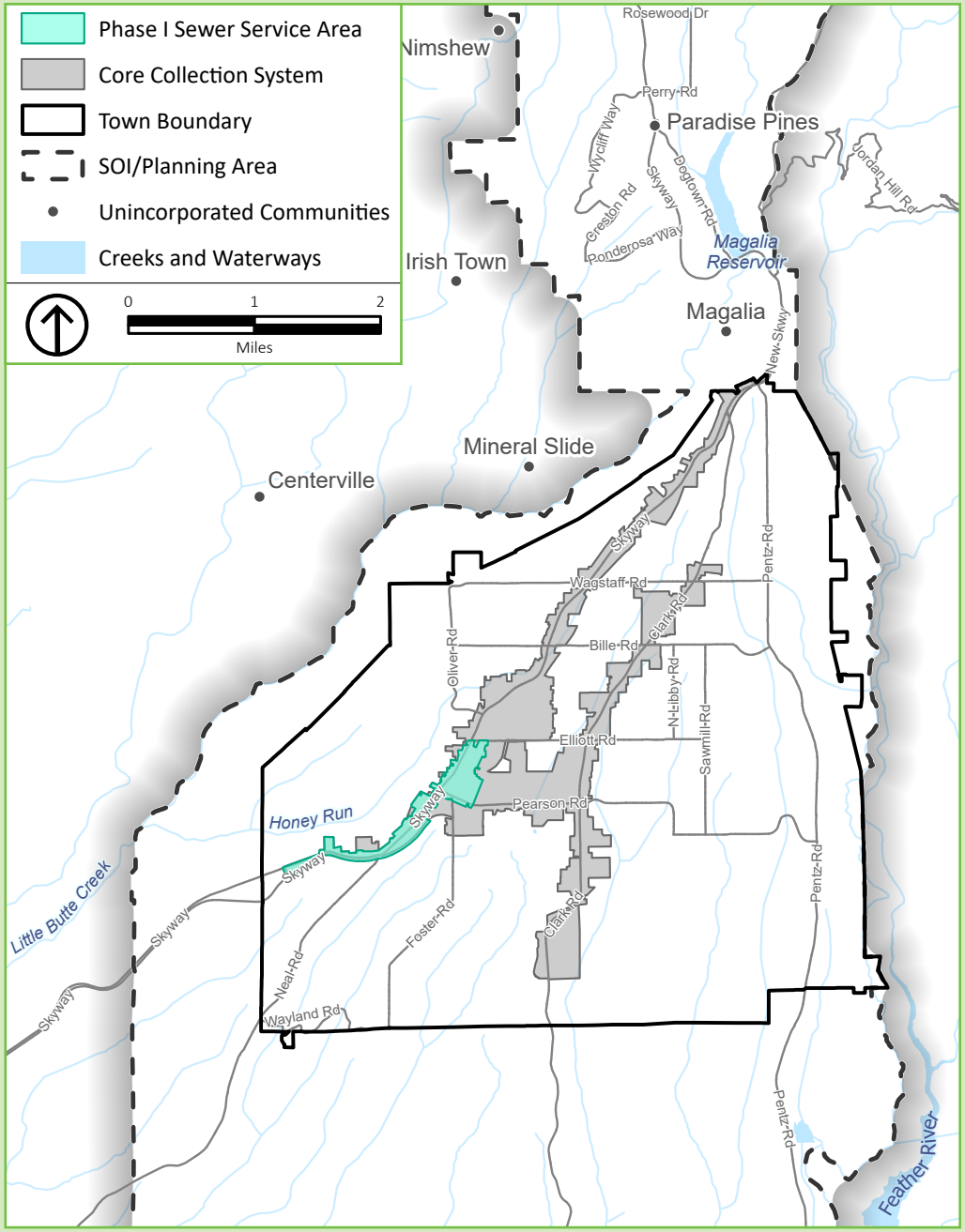
Stormwater

The Town maintains stormwater infrastructure within the town limits. Post-Fire redevelopment has created an opportunity to evaluate and address gaps in the existing stormwater system.

The 2022 Storm Drainage Master Plan recommends improvements to the town's infrastructure totaling $25M.

Some upgrades to the Town's stormwater and active transportation infrastructure occur as part of certain new development, which is required to install sidewalks, curbs, gutters, and connections to the storm drain system. In addition, the Town has secured funding through state disaster recovery mitigation programs to implement several priority drainage resilience projects.

Phase 1 Sewer Service Area



Economic Development and Fiscal Sustainability

The Camp Fire caused severe and lasting disruption to Paradise's local economy, resulting in substantial job losses and changes in employment patterns. At this stage, the construction activity to rebuild the town is a significant economic generator bringing jobs back to Paradise, but those are temporary. The economic impacts, combined with population and property losses, have significantly weakened the Town's fiscal health. In response, the Town is using a variety of strategies and programs to encourage economic activity and create long-term financial stability.

Jobs

Pre-Fire

Before the Camp Fire, nearly half of all jobs in Paradise were in education, healthcare, and social services. Retail and local government jobs made up about one quarter of total employment, with the rest spread across many other industries.

Current

As of 2024, Paradise has about 40% of the local jobs it had before the Camp Fire. Job growth has generally kept pace with population growth, but the mix of available jobs has changed. Since the Fire, construction is the only sector that has grown beyond pre-Fire levels and now accounts for about 10% of all jobs.

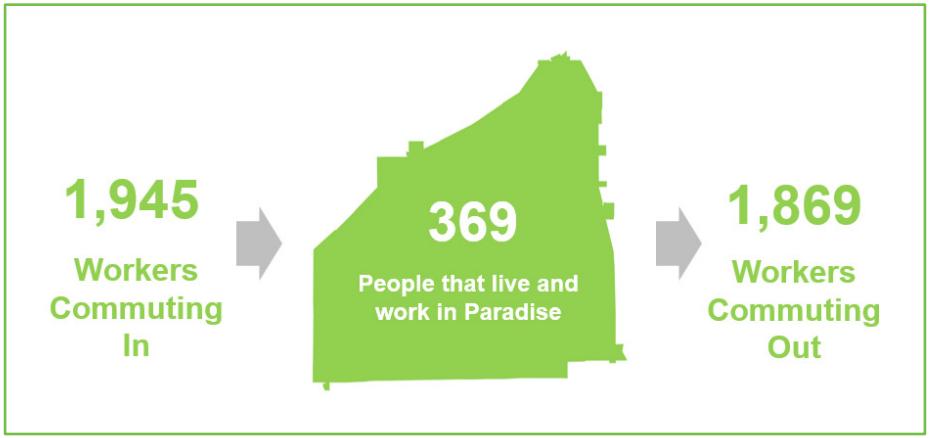
Education, healthcare, and social services remain the Town's largest source of employment, making up about 27% of local jobs. However, this share reflects a significant decline, as more than 75% of jobs in this sector were lost after the Fire. Local government is the second-largest employer, accounting for about 21% of all jobs.

Outlook

The permanent loss of the Feather River Hospital—a vital community resource and source of higher-wage jobs—continues to pose a significant challenge for Paradise's economic recovery and access to healthcare, with no plans to reopen or replace the facility.

Both before and after the Camp Fire, Paradise's economy has been largely focused on providing goods and services to local residents, with very little industry that sells goods or services outside the community.

About 84% of jobs in Paradise are held by workers who commute into the town, and a similar number of employed residents commute out of Paradise for work. This back-and-forth commuting indicates that local jobs do not always match the skills of people who live in the community. Reducing this cross-commuting presents an opportunity to attract businesses that align more closely with local skills, helping to shorten commutes, reduce traffic and emissions, and improve quality of life.





Town Fiscal Health

Current

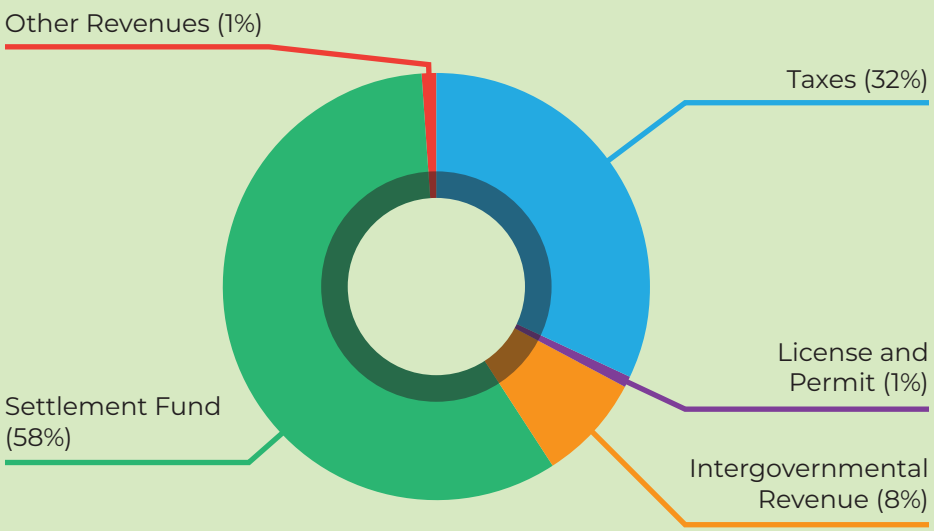
Since the Camp Fire, the Town's General Fund revenues have not been sufficient to cover the cost of providing municipal services. Paradise—including its roadway network and other public infrastructure systems—was built to serve a much larger population. The loss of a significant portion of the Town's tax base due to property destruction and the departure of residents and businesses has weakened the Town's fiscal health. Meanwhile, service responsibilities remain high and overall expenditures have increased by 46 percent since the Fire, after adjusting for inflation.

The Town is currently supported by $219M in settlement funds from PG&E. In the latest Town budget, the PG&E settlement fund accounts for about 60% of the General Fund budget, allowing the Town to continue to provide needed services despite its lower tax base.

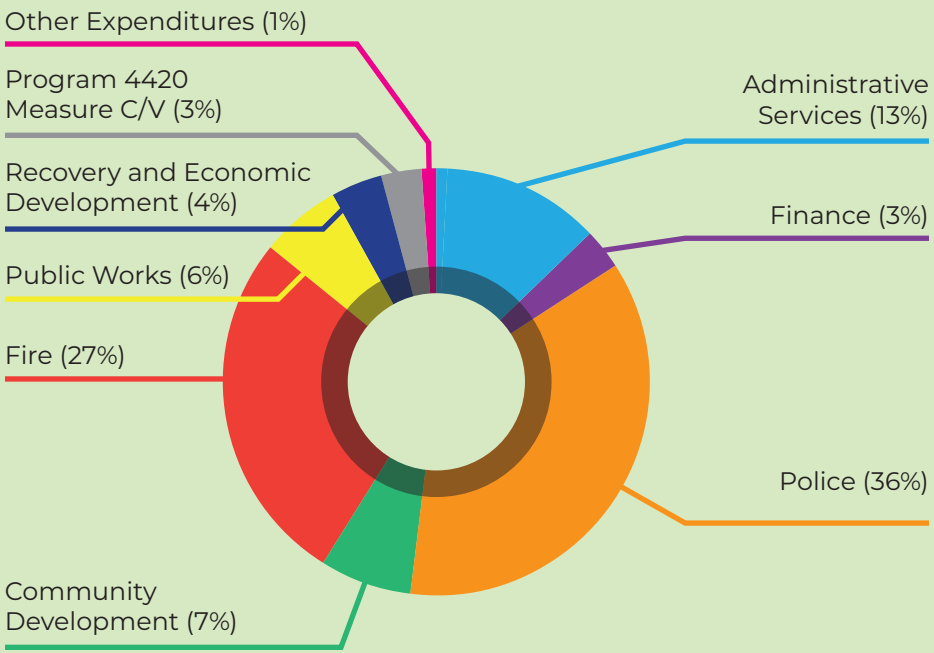
Outlook

Town staff have worked with municipal financial advisors to develop a long-term financial sustainability model to manage the settlement funds, with the goal of growing General Fund revenues to align with expenditures, while maintaining sufficient emergency reserves for future years.

Fiscal Year 2025-26 Revenues ($23,413,041)



Fiscal Year 2025-26 Expenditures ($23,413,041)





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