

CHAPTER 10: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of economic development is to raise the standard of living for everyone in a region by optimizing human, financial, natural and cultural capital to produce income, goods and services to support the region and for export. Well planned economic development should in so far as possible include: (1) improve employment and business opportunities for local citizens; (2) stimulate business activity; (3) increase revenues for public agencies through expansion of the tax base; (4) encourage private investment in the local economy; (5) improve overall quality of life in the region; (6) recognize and act on opportunities for economic expansion; (7) take advantage of domestic and international markets; and (8) integrate natural and cultural resources into new development projects. Economic development activities within a region are broad based and include the public, private and non-profit sectors and their involvement in retail, wholesale, recreational, agricultural, health care, manufacturing, service, tourist and industrial activities.

Recognizing the need to exert proactive leadership in helping the County develop a healthy and diversified economy, the Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors and Sonora City Council adopted a joint Economic Development Policy in 1990. Through that policy, the County of Tuolumne made a commitment to promote a positive image of the County and a positive attitude and support towards economic development among other local organizations and agencies outside of Tuolumne County. The County also pledged to act as a catalyst for the divergent segments of the local economy, and offer a forum and mechanism for the identification of problems and associated solutions. One mechanism identified in the Economic Development Policy for addressing these issues was an Economic Development Element to be added to the County's General Plan. Another mechanism is the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority (EDA), a joint powers authority created by the County of Tuolumne and the City of Sonora in 2009, whose mission is to facilitate a local economy that is innovative, resilient and diverse. The EDA accomplishes this by assisting in formation, retention and expansion of existing businesses, and attraction of new businesses to Tuolumne County.

In addition to committing to the formulation of an Economic Development Element, the Board of Supervisors also pledged to support studies to evaluate the County's attributes and liabilities related to economic development. Those studies include the Tuolumne County Community Assessment completed in September, 1991, and the Tuolumne County Target Industry Study released in October, 1991. The Tuolumne County Economic Development Strategy Plan, completed in 1994, consists of several different components, including the Regional Plan, Permit Process Analysis, Entrepreneurial Support Plan, Education and Training Opportunities, Business Retention and Expansion and Business Attraction Plan. The findings and recommendations contained in those studies are reflected in this Element.

The purpose of the Economic Development Element is to outline a policy framework and implementation measures whereby economic development benefits local citizens, businesses, public, private and non-profit sectors and our quality of life while taking place in a region with important natural and cultural resources.

GOALS, POLICIES AND IMPLEMENTATION PROGRAMS

GOAL 10.A Develop and maintain a favorable environment for conducting business in the County by providing a consistent, efficient and positive regulatory climate.

Policies

10.A.1 Project a pro-business image through a pro-active planning and regulatory policy framework.

- 10.A.2 Strive to make the development process more user-friendly, efficient and effective by streamlining the processing of business related entitlements.
- 10.A.3 Focus the permit process on regulatory intent while recognizing that an effective customer service program seeks solutions that are within the law and public interest.
- 10.A.4 Review and amend, where appropriate, County codes and regulations to address provisions that have the potential to deter the retention of local businesses or the attraction of new businesses.
- 10.A.5 Provide a more stable and sound blueprint for investment and business decisions by providing consistency in developmental requirements.
- 10.A.6 Actively support and cooperate with local economic development organizations, such as the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority, a joint powers authority, in their efforts to retain and expand existing businesses, attract new business and industry, and encourage entrepreneurship in Tuolumne County.
- 10.A.7 Promote an open line of communication between the Board of Supervisors, clientele, and all agencies or departments which issue permits related to commerce.
- 10.A.8 Maintain an ongoing relationship with business, industry, tourism, agriculture, recreation, cultural, and historic preservation groups, such as the Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce, Yosemite Chamber of Commerce, Tuolumne County Farm Bureau, Tuolumne County Visitor's Bureau, Tuolumne County Association of Realtors, Tuolumne County Building Industry, Central Sierra Arts Council, Tuolumne Band of Me-Wuk Indians, and Chicken Ranch Band of Me-Wuk Indians, to assist the County in its efforts to develop and maintain a favorable environment in which to conduct business.

Implementation Programs

- 10.A.a Support Political Efforts Which Promote Business

Support or initiate appropriate political efforts which will promote local economic development or business activities.
- 10.A.b Prioritize Economic Development Projects

Continue to prioritize land development applications for the expansion of existing or construction of new facilities for commercial, industrial or recreational enterprises.
- 10.A.c Streamline and Improve Permit Processing

Assist businesses by streamlining application and permit review processes by identifying a single point of contact for each development project and continuing to coordinate improvements in the efficiency of the respective development departments. Establish a priority for responses by staff to requests for data and assistance pertaining to land development projects that entail the creation of new jobs.
- 10.A.d Cross-train Staff and Review Staffing Levels

Reduce processing times for project review within County departments by cross-training and integrating staff from different departments to encourage a broad understanding of the various application review processes. Review staffing levels to determine if adding staff will reduce delays in permit processing.

- 10.A.e Improve Customer Service and Communications Skills
- Provide training in customer service and communication skills to all County staff.
- 10.A.f Maintain and Enhance the Permit Tracking System
- Maintain and enhance the County's automated computer tracking system, which is used by all development departments, to enable applicants to access information regarding project status online and to improve the efficiency of the respective departments through automation.
- 10.A.g Simplify Development Entitlement Applications
- Continue to provide a single countywide land development application form, where practical, that would enable an individual to apply for all necessary permits for a development project on a single form. Post these forms on the Tuolumne County website and enhance the website by providing online submittal of these forms and applications,
- 10.A.h Provide Handouts to Assist Businesses
- Continue to update and provide easy to understand visual aids, flow charts and handouts explaining the County's various land development permitting processes, with a minimal amount of technical jargon, to local Chambers of Commerce, trade associations, service clubs, business leagues and other government offices where potential applicants would be likely to review these materials and post this information on the Tuolumne County website. Include information on the requirements, processes and fees for obtaining licenses, permits and other entitlements. Update all handouts to reflect changes in ordinances, policies and procedures whenever necessary to incorporate current information.
- 10.A.i Conduct and Respond to Customer Service Surveys
- Conduct customer service surveys; for all development departments, including follow-up questionnaires for specific development entitlements, to gauge customer satisfaction and implement changes to improve permit processing in response to customer comments.
- 10.A.j Maintain and Publish Standardized Development Requirements
- Continue to maintain and publish a well defined set of standards that are to be required for each generalized type of development, such as commercial or industrial, to provide greater certainty to applicants of the regulations and conditions that can be anticipated for the respective types of development projects.
- 10.A.k Survey Development Costs in Other Jurisdictions
- Review and evaluate on a periodic basis, any County fees related to land development projects for comparability with similar fees in neighboring jurisdictions and base recommendations for fee adjustments on keeping development fees favorable to economic development land uses that stimulate the economy.
- 10.A.l Develop Dialogue on Economic Concerns
- Continue to meet with local business owners, the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority, the Business Alliance of Tuolumne County, the Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce, Yosemite Chamber of Commerce and other interested parties at the Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce's Governmental Affairs Committee's meetings and at other forums to discuss and address business and economic concerns affecting Tuolumne County.

- 10.A.m Emphasize Benefits of Economic Development
- Provide education to County staff, commissions, elected officials and the public regarding the benefits and importance of economic development.
- 10.A.n Consider Impact on Economy
- Include an Economic Development Section in staff reports submitted to the County's Planning Commissions and Board of Supervisors on commercial, recreational and industrial development projects and proposed policy decisions, that address the proposed action's impacts upon, or implications for, the County's economy.

GOAL 10.B Promote the improvement of the infrastructure, such as water and sewer lines, roads, power, railroads and airports, and communication facilities throughout the County to increase the marketability of the County for the retention, expansion, and attraction of business and industry.

Policies

- 10.B.1 Actively work to maintain, improve and expand where appropriate the transportation system to facilitate economic development.
- 10.B.2 Support the efforts of the utility providers to maintain, improve, enhance reliability, and expand where appropriate their infrastructure and service within the County.
- 10.B.3 Protect flight corridors into and out of Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports from incompatible development which could adversely impact operations of the respective airports.
- 10.B.4 Support efforts to install state of the art communication facilities throughout Tuolumne County.

Implementation Programs

- 10.B.a Support Reasonable and Justified Mitigation Fees
- Support a schedule of reasonable and justified mitigation fees for new development to pay its proportional share of the cost of expanding services and infrastructure.
- 10.B.b Support Improvements to Regional Transportation Facilities
- Work cooperatively with Caltrans and neighboring counties to improve regional transportation facilities by engaging in public dialogue through the Tuolumne County Transportation Council.
- 10.B.c Designate Land with Railroad Access for Business Related Development
- Designate land along the Sierra Railroad with rail access for commercial, industrial or business park development on the General Plan land use diagrams and zone the property accordingly to increase the inventory of land zoned for business related development with the option of utilizing rail transportation.

- 10.B.d Support Improvements to Communications Facilities
- Support the efforts of communications companies to identify the key facilities and technology required to facilitate increasing business needs for communications services and to keep Tuolumne County competitive in attracting new businesses which depend on such services.
- 10.B.e Protect Flight Corridors and Encourage Airport Facilities Expansion
- Protect flight corridors into and out of Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports from the encroachment of incompatible development by revising land use designations where needed and enforcing density standards. Support expansion and improvement of facilities at Columbia and Pine Mountain Lake Airports.
- 10.B.f Support Proposals for Public Air Service
- Support proposals for a public air carrier service whose purpose would be to provide frequent flights to bring Tuolumne County closer, in terms of travel time, to other areas.
- 10.B.g Support Efforts to Improve Water and Wastewater Infrastructure
- Support water and wastewater agencies in identifying areas zoned for commercial use that are lacking adequate infrastructure, support agency designs for infrastructure of adequate size and types to meet current and future business service needs, and support the efforts of agencies that are filing grant applications to fund upgrades to water and wastewater facilities.

GOAL 10.C Support business development in Tuolumne County.

Policies

- 10.C.1 Encourage local business organizations to provide programs that assist local start-up enterprises, such as the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority's business incubator facility.
- 10.C.2 Support the efforts of the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority and other local organizations in providing education and employment placement programs to assist the entrepreneurial efficiency of existing retail and service businesses.
- 10.C.3 Support the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority's Small Business Development Center and its partnership with the Business Alliance of Tuolumne County and the Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE), and other business and educational organizations.

Implementation Programs

- 10.C.a Maintain a Business Inventory List
- Cooperate with the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority in creating and updating a business inventory list to facilitate the tracking of new business starts and home based businesses which may need assistance and other small business support services. Additionally, the list could be utilized to update the inventory of manufacturing firms so the directory may be used to organize venture forums, bringing together similar businesses to discuss technologies, ideas and other opportunities.

10.C.b Review the County's Entitlement Programs

In cooperation with the business and economic development organizations in the County, develop a proactive effort to identify policies, regulations, fees and other issues related to the County's programs for the issuance of various permits, licenses and other land use entitlements that are problematic or represent obstacles to businesses and develop solutions, such as adjusting, replacing, or eliminating the regulations to be more amenable to the economic development interests of the County.

10.C.c Provide Technical Assistance for Economic Development Workshops

Provide technical assistance to and participate in local seminars and workshops sponsored by local organizations, such as Chambers of Commerce or the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority, to provide information to entrepreneurs on local government regulations.

10.C.d Maintain Small Business Resources at County Library

Continue to maintain a section at the Tuolumne County Library to have visual, auditory, and electronic resource materials to assist entrepreneurs and small businesses.

GOAL 10.D Identify financial sources which could be obtained for economic development purposes.

Policies

10.D.1 Provide financial support to the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority's programs and activities.

10.D.2 Support the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority's programs for assisting development and support micro-enterprise activities in Tuolumne County.

Implementation Programs

10.D.a Support Continued Provision of a Business Revolving Loan Fund

Support the continued provision of a countywide revolving loan fund, currently through the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) program, to assist local businesses in expansion or retention activities.

10.D.b Continue to Support the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority and Visitor's Bureau

Continue to allocate funds to the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority and the Visitor's Bureau on an annual basis.

10.D.c Support Assistance Programs for Local Micro-Enterprises

Encourage and support Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority's individual and collaborative efforts to develop funding and technical assistance sources for local micro-enterprises.

GOAL 10.E Promote the development of commercial, industrial, agricultural, and recreational facilities to provide jobs for County residents and diversify the local economy.

Policies

- 10.E.1 Identify areas within the County which will be appealing to, and capable of accommodating, the amount of industrial and other employment-generating development required to meet the County's needs over the planning horizon of this General Plan.
- 10.E.2 Encourage the development of commercial uses and community facilities in each community to meet the needs of the County's growing population.
- 10.E.3 Promote a balance between commercial, industrial, recreational and residential land uses in each community in the County so as to optimize the community design for travel distance and the use of alternative modes of transportation to work and to other services and facilities.
- 10.E.4 Encourage small businesses, home occupations and cottage industries throughout the County.
- 10.E.5 Encourage and promote the development of housing for all income levels in direct response to the market place demand.
- 10.E.6 Encourage the development of business activities that are considered particularly well-suited to Tuolumne County.
- 10.E.7 Promote a diverse, countywide tourist industry that relates to the agricultural, historical, cultural, recreational, and natural attractions of the County.
- 10.E.8 Encourage the development of agritourism enterprises in the County.

Implementation Programs

- 10.E.a Maintain Suitable Lands Inventory

Maintain a database inventory of suitable sites in Tuolumne County for industrial, commercial, and recreational development based on land use designations, zoning, infrastructure availability, transportation, proximity to labor and market and other factors utilizing the County's computerized mapping system. This inventory will address ownership, zoning, infrastructure capacities and other site attributes and constraints.
- 10.E.b Designate and Prezone Land for Business Related Development

Continue efforts in determining the amount of land needed for commercial, industrial and recreational development to meet the County's needs during the 25-year planning horizon of this General Plan and, utilizing the computerized database inventory of suitable land for such uses, designate the respective amounts of land needed for each use on the land use diagrams. Prezone the land in accordance with the land use designation to make it more available for development.
- 10.E.c Provide for Home Occupations

Continue to allow home occupations and cottage industries within residential areas subject to specific criteria. Provide guidelines on home occupations to be included in the business start-up packet. Include information on the criteria for determining whether or not a business qualifies as a home occupation.

10.E.d Provide for Housing for All Income Levels

Identify areas of the County suitable for development of housing for all income levels and designate adequate amounts of land for such development on the General Plan land use diagrams.

GOAL 10.F Encourage the retention and expansion of existing businesses, attraction of new business and industry and assist in entrepreneurial programs to generate local employment opportunities, reduce retail leakage out of the county trade area and diversify the local economy, while maintaining its environmental and cultural integrity.

Policies

10.F.1 Encourage the retention and expansion of existing businesses.

10.F.2 Encourage and support regional and local business recruitment efforts initiated by the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority and other business organizations.

10.F.3 Encourage the building of the local economy and its associated new commercial and industrial development in a manner which recognizes the importance to wisely conserve, utilize and promote the County's scenic beauty, natural and cultural resources, environmental setting and educational assets.

10.F.4 Encourage the expansion of the tourist industry by supporting new development that serves that industry.

10.F.5 Encourage improvement of the physical appearance of the County, while promoting retention of structures and other features which contribute to the County's character.

10.F.6 Enhance and promote the position of Tuolumne County as a regional trade center for the Central Sierra Nevada region.

10.F.7 Enhance and promote the position of Tuolumne County as a regional recreational center for the Central Valley and Bay Area regions.

10.F.8 Promote and support the film industry through such means as "fast-tracking" film permits and preserving natural and cultural resources that provide backdrops for filming.

10.F.9 Through the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority, the Tuolumne County Chamber of Commerce, Yosemite Chamber of Commerce, and other business organizations, promote the concept of "doing business locally" and assist in the promotion of purchasing local goods and services.

Implementation Programs

10.F.a Create Urban Buffers

Maintain the County's rural character by utilizing transitional land uses around urban areas as buffers between communities and agricultural areas and timberlands, including rural density development, recreation areas, cluster developments, and natural features such as streams, ridgetops and large stands of trees.

- 10.F.b Consider Topography in Development Proposals
- Encourage commercial, industrial, and recreational development to be designed to blend with the existing topography and vegetation.
- 10.F.c Consider Architectural Design in Development Proposals
- Encourage commercial development to be designed in an architectural style that reflects the County's indigenous materials or is compatible with the historic Mother Lode design features or is consistent with the architectural guidelines in communities with design review zoning.
- 10.F.d Encourage Screened Parking Areas
- Conserve the scenic qualities of the County by encouraging parking areas for commercial and industrial establishments to be located behind buildings or screened by vegetation or topography from view from scenic routes and major and minor collector roads.
- 10.F.e Encourage Native Vegetation in Landscape Proposals
- Encourage commercial and industrial developments to retain native vegetation by incorporating existing stands of trees into their site designs and include native species in their landscape plans.
- 10.F.f Encourage signage to be visually appealing
- Regulate signage in terms of size, quantity and location in commercial and industrial portions of the County in order to improve the visual attractiveness and appeal of the County to new business, and to protect and enhance its visitor-serving and recreational activities.
- 10.F.g Continue to Offer Tax Incentives for Historic Preservation
- Continue to offer property tax incentives for historic preservation efforts through implementation of the Mills Act and update Resolution 171-92 to reflect legislative changes to the Mills Act when necessary. The Mills Act program will aid in encouraging the adaptive reuse of historic structures for business enterprises.
- 10.F.h Maintain Inventory of Sites and Buildings Suitable for Business Related Uses
- In cooperation with the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority encourage the attraction of businesses and industries by maintaining a database of available sites and buildings, fast tracking permit processing and pre-zoning suitable sites.
- 10.F.i Promote Recreation Opportunities
- Coordinate with the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority, the Visitor's Bureau, and other organizations to include the County's recreation opportunities and tourism potential in their promotional activities.
- 10.F.j Encourage Development of Recreation and Tourist Facilities
- Encourage and support private sector initiatives to develop recreational and tourist-oriented facilities.

10.F.k Fast-track Film Permits

Continue to "fast-track" film permits through the permitting process in order to expedite movie, television, commercial and other cinematic or video productions.

10.F.l Continue to Give Preference to Local Vendors

Continue to incorporate language into County invitations to bid for goods and services indicating preference for local vendors and suppliers, other factors being equal; exercise such preference in selecting vendors and suppliers; develop a list, by type of goods and services, of local vendors for County acquisitions and purchases.

GOAL 10.G Link human resources development and services programs and agencies with economic development agencies.

Policies

10.G.1 In cooperation with the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority support the local high schools, Columbia Community College, Mother Lode Job Training and other agencies that provide job training and career counseling in offering the type of training that local employers need and want.

10.G.2 Assist and support the Tuolumne County Economic Development Authority's programs and private employers in efforts to obtain job training aid through State and Federal Programs.

Implementation Programs

10.G.a Provide Assistance to Agencies Applying for Job Training Funding

Provide technical assistance and data to other local agencies and organizations that require such support to apply for job training and employment development grants and allocations.

10.G.b Participate in Mother Lode Job Training Program

Participate in the Mother Lode Job Training program, and the internship programs at Columbia Community College and Tuolumne County's high schools, by providing job training sites in various County agencies.

Responsibility for Programs: Administration of the Implementation Programs listed in this element is the shared responsibility of the Board of Supervisors and all Tuolumne County governmental agencies with the Community Development Department serving as the primary administrator under the direction of the County Administrator's Office (CAO) and Board of Supervisors.

Funding Sources: Administration of Implementation Programs listed herein will be funded through the County's various funds.

Time Frame for Implementation: The target date for implementation of the programs listed in this element related to revising County regulations and procedures is FY 2011-2015; all other programs are ongoing. [Comprehensive Update; Resolution 40-11, adopted May 3, 2011]