



TOWN CENTER REJUVENATION



Rejuvenating our town center is more than just economic development. It's about building a vibrant heart for the community, where businesses thrive, neighbors connect, and visitors feel welcomed, creating a legacy of growth and pride for generations to come.



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INTRODUCTION

Problem Statement

The town centers in our communities lack the vehicle and pedestrian infrastructure, engaging streetscape, and business development needed to promote economic resilience and growth.

Theory of Change

By making improvements to the vehicle and pedestrian infrastructure, adding amenities, enhancing the streetscape, and developing businesses in the community town centers, the communities will realize more foot traffic and commerce leading to economic resilience and growth.

Overall Goal

- **Increase business resiliency in town centers:** Create an environment for businesses to establish, grow, and sustain.
- **Increase foot traffic:** Retail stores, restaurants, cafes, and other businesses benefit from the increased visits, which, in turn, can attract new businesses to the area.
- **Encourage longer stays:** The longer a visitor remains, the more money spent on various goods and services, including dining, shopping, entertainment, and accommodation.
- **Create more attractive town centers:** Encourages more visitation of both locals and tourists, boosting local revenue, attracting and retaining businesses, and increasing property value.
- **Foster a sense of place:** Encourage residents and visitors to feel a stronger connection to their community. Fostering local pride and a shared identity, which can encourage community engagement, participation, and retention.



NARRATIVE

Problem Identified

Tuolumne County faces critical issues that directly impact its economic development. The county is grappling with a significant revenue problem, struggling to maintain essential services for residents and businesses. This financial strain severely limits the potential for economic growth, raising the urgent question of how to achieve progress with such limited resources. Compounding this challenge, key industries like healthcare face difficulties in recruiting and retaining highly skilled employees, a problem further exacerbated by the ongoing housing shortage.

Despite being a popular year-round destination for visitors from across the state, nation, and even internationally, Tuolumne County lacks the structural and aesthetic appeal needed to create an inviting atmosphere. This deficiency discourages visitors from stopping, shopping, dining, and most importantly, returning. Over time, this lack of appeal also affects whether individuals choose to settle in the area long-term, which is essential for sustaining economic vitality.

For businesses, the location is a crucial product. When evaluating a place to establish themselves, they consider key metrics such as customer base, market potential, accessibility, labor market, and the overall community and business environment. If Tuolumne County cannot effectively demonstrate its strengths in these areas, businesses will inevitably look elsewhere, further hindering the county's economic development.

Opportunity

Tuolumne County has a unique opportunity to drive economic development by focusing on town center improvements, leveraging its existing assets with minimal capital investment. The county's natural beauty, nearby recreational options, and rich historical sites are significant attractions for both locals and visitors. By seizing the opportunities to improve existing conditions and using these enhancements as a catalyst for growth, Tuolumne County can create an environment that is inviting to tourists and locals, increase revenue and customer base, and foster a sense of place that encourages both immigration and visitor retention. These efforts will



also make the area more appealing to potential businesses, spurring further economic development and growth.

Community outreach meetings have shown strong support for this direction, with residents consistently emphasizing the need for basic structural enhancements such as sidewalks, lighting, directional signage, and welcoming artwork. These improvements would benefit not only the residents but also enhance the visitor experience, creating a more inviting environment.

Access is essential for the success of an area, as it ensures that customers can easily and safely reach businesses. For example, well-lit sidewalks provide safe passage for pedestrians, clear directional signage helps customers navigate the area effortlessly, reducing confusion and frustration, while ample and well-organized parking options remove one of the most common barriers to visiting a location. Together, these enhancements create a more inviting, user-friendly environment that attracts and retains customers, ultimately boosting business activity and economic vitality in the area.

Sense of place is a vital part of a person's well-being and can be considered an important ecosystem service that enriches life. It develops based on a person's place meanings and attachments to a particular setting. People can attribute different meanings to the same place based on its ecological, social, economic, cultural, aesthetic, or historical aspects. Sense of place evolves through personal experiences and defines how people view, interpret, and interact with the world.

For example, people may attribute details to a location, such as knowing where it is, what it looks like, and where it is in relation to their current location. Stories can also be an important aspect of how children learn about their place or home, teaching them about the history of the place and their relationship to it.

The connection between tourism and long-term economic vitality is clear. Also mentioned often in the community outreach meetings, many individuals who eventually relocate to Tuolumne County first discover it as tourists. The importance of tourism is further highlighted by the International Trade Administration, which notes its substantial impact on the U.S. economy, generating \$1.9 trillion in output and supporting 9.5 million jobs pre-pandemic.

Solution

Small towns that succeed do so by harnessing their physical, cultural, and economic assets, while also investing in community-driven visions. By incorporating town center improvements into their economic development strategies, they can create environments that attract both



tourists and locals to their commercial hubs. This approach not only boosts revenue and expands the customer base but also fosters a strong sense of place, encouraging both new residents and long-term retention. Additionally, it helps to draw repeat visitors and shapes an appealing environment for potential businesses, “honing our product” to attract businesses, creating more business growth.

Town center improvements offer far more than just economic development. They enhance the overall quality of life for the entire community. A more welcoming environment fosters social interaction and a sense of pride among residents. For example, when a town revitalizes its main street with inviting public spaces and pedestrian-friendly infrastructure, it not only attracts businesses and visitors but also becomes a hub for community events and gatherings, strengthening the social fabric and making the town a more vibrant and connected place to live.

Maura Gast’s, a Fellow, Certified Destination Marketing Executive and former chair of Destinations International, states of the “Destination Management Cycle”:

“If you build a place people want to visit, you build a place where people want to live. If you build a place where people want to live, you’ll build a place where people want to work. If you build a place where people want to work, you build a place where business needs to be. If you build a place where business has to be, you’ll build a place where people have to visit.”



ADDITIONAL BENEFITS

While not the primary goal of the strategy, town center rejuvenation may yield additional benefits beyond increased foot traffic and increased economic revenue. Such as:

- **Increased Community Engagement:** Rejuvenating the town center often involves input from residents, fostering a stronger sense of ownership and pride in the community. This engagement can lead to more active participation in local events and initiatives.
- **Attraction of New Residents and Talent:** A well-developed and attractive town center can draw new residents, including young professionals and families, contributing to population growth and a more dynamic local economy.
- **Enhanced Quality of Life:** Improved public spaces, better infrastructure, and increased safety can significantly enhance the overall quality of life for residents, making the area more enjoyable and livable.
- **Boosted Property Values:** A revitalized town center can lead to increased property values in the surrounding areas, benefiting homeowners and attracting new investments.
- **Cultural Preservation and Promotion:** Rejuvenation efforts often highlight and preserve historical and cultural aspects of the town, helping to maintain its unique identity and attract cultural tourism.
- **Environmental Benefits:** Town center improvements can include green spaces, sustainable building practices, and pedestrian-friendly designs, contributing to environmental sustainability and reducing the town's carbon footprint.
- **Social Cohesion:** A vibrant town center can serve as a hub for social interaction, bringing together diverse groups of people and fostering a stronger sense of community and belonging.
- **Strengthened Public-Private Partnerships:** Rejuvenation projects often involve collaboration between public entities, private businesses, and community organizations, strengthening these relationships and fostering a cooperative environment for future initiatives.



BUILD, TEST, RESPONSE MODEL

Many of the suggested action items are supported by implementation techniques using the “Build, Test, Response (BTR) Model,” which offers a powerful approach to creating and refining ideas, theories, or products through an iterative process. A pilot project is unsuccessful only if we do not learn anything, and it fails to provide information for informed decision-making. By encouraging this model, any entity implementing these action items can systematically arrive at the most effective and enduring solutions, ensuring that each step is thoughtfully tested and optimized for long-term success. Put colloquially, this will help guide us to “Eat the elephant one bite at a time.”

Build

“Building” refers to developing an idea, design, plan, product, etc.

- Create the Idea: Start by coming up with a theory or model based on what we already know and what we think might happen. This involves defining key concepts and how they relate to each other.
- Design an Experiment or Prototype: Plan how to test the idea, whether through an experiment, a survey, or a prototype.

Test

“Testing” refers to implementing and looking at the results.

- Conduct the Test: Carry out the experiment, survey, or prototype testing to gather data.
- Analyze the Data: Look at the data collected to see if it supports the idea or not. Use statistical tools to make sense of the results.

Response

“Responding” refers to expanding, refining, repeating, a build based on the test results.

- Refine the Idea: Based on the results, make changes to improve the theory or model. This might mean adjusting concepts or relationships between them.
- Repeat the Process: Test the improved version again. This cycle of building, testing, and responding continues until the theory or product is as good as possible.



STRATEGIES

To effectively address the challenges and capitalize on the opportunities, the following strategies should be implemented:

Strategy #1

Improve Access

Strategy #2

Business Attraction and Retention

Strategy #3

Develop Services and Amenities

Strategy #4

Create a Sense of Arrival and Place

Strategy #5

Marketing and Promotion

IMPROVE ACCESS

Problem statement: Limited access to businesses in the town center discourages people from visiting, reducing foot traffic and time spent in the area, ultimately impacting local economic growth and community vitality.

Theory of change: If strategic improvements are made to enhance accessibility in the town center, such as developing pedestrian-friendly walkways, adding clear signage, improving parking options, and upgrading lighting, then individuals will find it easier and more inviting to stop and spend time in the area.

Increased accessibility will encourage more visitors, who will be more likely to explore, shop, dine, and engage with local businesses and amenities. This, in turn, will lead to higher foot traffic, longer visit durations, and greater spending in the town center, fostering the local economy, strengthening community bonds, and creating a vibrant, attractive destination that supports sustainable growth.

A

Wayfinding Signs

Develop and install a series of wayfinding signage, with a unified, community determined, design, directing individuals to points of interest in the area.

Possible Build, Test, Response Framework

Temporary A-Frame Signage

BUILD

Design visually appealing temporary A-frame signs and place them in strategic locations to direct foot traffic to specific areas within the town center. Place QR codes with additional information.

TEST

Using *Placer.ai* foot traffic and heatmaps, review changes in movement and business engagement. Using *surveys*, collect feedback from both pedestrians and local businesses to the effectiveness of the signage. Track the *number hits on the QR codes and comments* left on the website.

RESPONSE

Based on the data and feedback, adjust the design and/or placement of the signs, and if successful, consider installing permanent signage in the most effective locations. Continue to monitor and make adjustments as needed to ensure long-term effectiveness.



Historic District Signage

BUILD

Design a series of signs that blend with the historic character of the town, using elements of the town's cultural heritage, such as symbols, colors, and languages relevant to the local community. Include maps, directional arrows, and brief descriptions of historic landmarks and key businesses. Install a few signs in strategic locations within the area. Place QR codes with additional information.

TEST

Using *Placer.ai* foot traffic and heatmaps, review changes in movement and business engagement. Using *surveys*, collect feedback from both locals and visitors on the clarity, aesthetics, and usefulness of the signs. Track the *number hits on the QR codes and comments* left on the website.

RESPONSE

Based on feedback, adjust the sign design for better visibility, clarity, or historical accuracy. If certain locations or information are more popular, add similar signs in those areas before rolling out the full signage plan across the district.



See **Tables B** and **C** for metrics on visitation amount and length of stay.

Tourist Information Signs with Local Business Highlights

BUILD

Create signs that not only direct visitors to key attractions but also highlight local businesses along the way. These signs could include a map showing nearby restaurants, shops, and points of interest with walking distances indicated. Install a few signs at popular entry points to the town.

TEST

Using *Placer.ai* foot traffic and heatmaps, review changes in movement and business engagement. Using *surveys*, collect feedback from both locals and visitors on the clarity, aesthetics, and usefulness of the signs. Track the *number hits on the QR codes and comments* left on the website.

RESPONSE

Adjust the placement of signs, the information displayed, and/or the businesses highlighted based on feedback. If certain signs lead to significant increases in foot traffic, replicate the strategy in other parts of town.

B

Sidewalk and Trails

Build sidewalks or trails throughout the town center connecting locations and providing safe paths to reach areas within the town center.



See **Tables D** for locations of sidewalks and trails.



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Pedestrian-Friendly Modern Sidewalks

BUILD

Develop wide, well-lit sidewalks with modern materials that ensure accessibility for all, including ramps, textured surfaces for the visually impaired, and seating areas. The design would prioritize pedestrian safety and convenience, connecting key areas like shops, cafes, and parks. Implement the sidewalk design in a busy part of the town center.

TEST

Using *Placer.ai* data, review the increase or decrease of foot traffic along the new paths of travel. Conduct surveys to assess safety, comfort, and usability. Pay particular attention to any areas where congestion or safety issues arise.

RESPONSE

Refine the design to address any identified issues, such as increasing the width of the sidewalk, improving lighting, or adding more seating. Roll out the refined sidewalk design across the rest of the town center.

Historic Pathway Network

BUILD

Design a network of trails that reflect the town's historic character, using materials like cobblestones or bricks that match the town's architecture. The paths would connect key historic sites, public spaces, and businesses. Construct a section of the pathway network in a central area and monitor its usage.

TEST

Using *Placer.ai* data, review the increase or decrease of foot traffic along the new paths of travel. *Conduct surveys* on how pedestrians interact with the path, whether it guides them effectively, and if it enhances their experience of the town's historic feel.

RESPONSE

Based on observations and feedback, adjust the design for better functionality, aesthetics, or historical accuracy. Extend the network to other parts of the town center using the improved design.

C

Lighting

Add lighting along the paths of travel within a town center.

Develop a Lighting Plan

BUILD

Engage the community by holding workshops, distributing surveys, and hosting public forums to gather input on preferred lighting styles, key locations, and any concerns they may have. This could include lighting fixtures that reflect the town's historic character. Using the comments, develop a comprehensive lighting plan for the town center, focusing on enhancing safety, aesthetics, and energy efficiency.

TEST

Present the plan to the community for final review and solicit feedback to shape the plan, ensuring it reflects the community's needs and preferences.

RESPONSE

Make any necessary adjustments based on their input before finalizing.



See **Tables E** for locations of streetlights and visitation by time of day.



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Modern or Historic-Themed LED Path Lighting

BUILD

Implement a lighting plan previously developed that uses energy-efficient LED lights along the main paths in the town center. These lights would be designed for maximum visibility, with options for dimming during late hours to reduce light pollution. The focus would be on creating a well-lit, safe environment for pedestrians and gathering spaces. Initially install LED lighting along a busy pathway.

TEST

Using *Placer.ai foot traffic data*, monitor the area during different times of day and night, before and after the installation. Conduct surveys to assess how the lighting impacts visibility, safety, and energy consumption.

RESPONSE

Refine the lighting plan based on data and feedback, perhaps adjusting the brightness, spacing of lights, or adding features like motion sensors. Roll out the improved LED lighting system across other paths in the town center.

D

Parking

Designate and/or build areas for parking.



See **Tables F** for locations of parking in the town centers.

Shared Parking Spaces with Businesses

BUILD

Collaborate with local businesses to create shared parking spaces that can be used by customers of multiple businesses during different times of the day. This would maximize the use of existing parking areas without the need for additional construction. Implement the shared parking system with a few businesses.

TEST

Using *Placer.ai foot traffic data*, track the visits of the locations near the parking spaces. *Gather feedback* from both business owners and customers on the availability and convenience of the shared parking.

RESPONSE

Refine the shared parking agreements based on usage patterns, possibly adjusting time allocations, or adding signage to clarify the availability of spaces. Expand the shared parking system to include more businesses across the town center.

Construct Parking

BUILD

Analyze current parking needs in the area, including peak usage times, demand from local businesses, and potential future growth, to draft an initial parking area design.

TEST

Consult with community stakeholders, local businesses, and residents to gather feedback on the proposed design and any additional features, such as lighting, landscaping, or EV charging stations.

RESPONSE

Refine the plan based on this input and construct a small pilot parking area to test the layout, ease of access, and impact on traffic flow. Monitor its usage and gather feedback from users, then adjust the design as necessary before constructing additional parking areas throughout the town center.

E

Transportation

Determine best transportation stop locations to encourage individuals to arrive in town centers and promote public transportation options.

Determine Popular Routes

BUILD

Using *Placer.ai Visitor Journey* data to identifying common places of origin, such as residential areas and workplaces, using data on traffic, population density, and commuting patterns to plan potential bus routes.

TEST

Create trial routes during peak hours, *monitoring ridership levels*, travel times, and *gathering community feedback*.

RESPONSE

Adjust based on usage and feedback. Refine and expand the route to other areas if the trial is successful.



See **Tables G** for locations of transportation stops in the town centers.

Centralized Transit Hub

BUILD

Design a centralized transit hub in the town center that integrates various modes of public transportation, such as buses and bike-sharing stations. The hub would be located near popular attractions, shopping areas, and public spaces to encourage easy access. Implement a pilot version of the transit hub by temporarily designating an existing central area as a transportation stop.

TEST

Monitor the usage of public transportation options and gather feedback from commuters.

RESPONSE

Based on the data, refine the hub's layout, improve signage, or add amenities like shelters and seating. If successful, develop a permanent transit hub with expanded services and promote it as the main entry point to the town center.



BUSINESS ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

Problem statement: The absence of a focused business attraction and retention strategy will undermine the vitality of the town center, leading to vacant properties, reduced economic activity, and a less appealing environment for both residents and visitors.

Theory of change: By developing a comprehensive business attraction and retention strategy for town centers, businesses will receive the targeted support they need to succeed and grow, creating a thriving local economy.

Conducting market analysis will identify viable business opportunities, while regular meetings with Chambers and community groups will ensure transparent communication and community alignment. Actively seeking businesses to fill vacancies, coordinating with groups to inventory commercial spaces, and providing a startup package will streamline support for new businesses. Pop-up shops and temporary installations will allow for low-risk testing of business concepts, reducing vacancy rates and creating a vibrant town center that supports economic growth and community engagement.

A

Viable Business Analysis

Perform Analysis of an Area to Determine Viable Businesses.

Conduct a Demographic and Market Study

BUILD

Design a demographic and market study that includes collecting data on the local population's age, income levels, spending habits, and preferences. Create a survey tailored for both residents and visitors to understand their needs and shopping behaviors. Additionally, map out existing businesses and competitors to assess market saturation and identify potential gaps. Distribute the surveys through various channels, such as online platforms, local events, and community centers.

TEST

Gather data on competitor presence by conducting site visits, analyzing business directories, and reviewing commercial real estate listings. Compile and analyze the data to identify trends, gaps, and opportunities in the market.

RESPONSE

Present the results to local stakeholders and potential investors, highlighting underserved market segments and specific business types that could thrive in the town center. Use this analysis to guide strategic planning and attract new businesses that align with community needs and preferences.



Perform a Void Analysis and Retail Leakage Study

BUILD

Develop a void analysis framework to identify what business types are missing or underrepresented in the town center. Additionally, design a "Retail Leakage" analysis to quantify the unmet demand in the area, showing where residents are spending money outside the town center. Gather data from local business directories, consumer surveys, and regional economic reports.

TEST

Map the existing businesses against industry benchmarks and community needs, identifying categories with little to no presence. Calculate the difference between local consumer spending and local business sales, pinpointing categories where significant outflows of spending occur.

RESPONSE

Refine the analysis by validating the findings with local business owners and community groups. Adjust the void and leakage findings to account for future trends or planned developments. Use the refined analysis to prioritize business recruitment efforts, targeting sectors with the highest potential to meet unmet demand and reduce leakage, thereby strengthening the local economy.

Possible Build, Test, Response Framework

B

Fill Vacant Locations

Create Program to Fill Vacant Locations





Develop a Property Inventory System

BUILD

Create a database that tracks vacant commercial properties within the target area, including details such as property addresses, ownership, zoning, square footage, current status, and rental rates. Document potential challenges or barriers to occupancy, such as required renovations, zoning restrictions, environmental issues, or high rental costs. Collaborate with local real estate agents, property management companies, and the Chamber of Commerce to gather accurate and up-to-date information about each property. Establish criteria for what qualifies as a "vacant" property, such as properties that are completely unoccupied, partially unoccupied, or properties that have been vacant for a specific period.

TEST

Use the inventory system to generate reports on the number and types of vacant properties, as well as the challenges associated with them. Share these reports with local stakeholders, such as the Chamber of Commerce and real estate agents, to gather feedback. Determine why properties remain vacant and what might be needed to make them more attractive to potential tenants.

RESPONSE

Based on the feedback and data analysis, improve the inventory system. This may include adding more detailed data fields, improving the user interface, or integrating the system with other local databases for broader access to information. Address any gaps in the data collection process, such as ensuring all vacant properties are identified and that any new vacancies are promptly added to the system. Expand the inventory system to cover the entire County. Ensure that the system is regularly updated and accessible to all relevant stakeholders.



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02



Create a Targeted Outreach Strategy

BUILD

Develop a targeted outreach campaign to attract businesses that align with the community's needs, using data on area demographics and foot traffic. Collaborate with local stakeholders to create incentive programs, such as tax breaks or grants, to make vacant properties more appealing.

TEST

Contact potential businesses and attending industry events, while assessing the effectiveness of the incentives offered.

RESPONSE

Based on feedback and rate of change in occupancy, refine the outreach strategy and incentives, then expand the campaign to attract more businesses and fill the vacant locations.

C

Continually Identify Needs

Develop Process to Continually Identify the Needs of the Commercial Area

Business Walk Program

BUILD

Establish a business walk program where representatives from local government, community groups, chambers, and economic development organizations visit businesses in the commercial area to discuss their needs and concerns. Conduct these walks regularly, noting common issues like infrastructure needs, customer traffic patterns, and support requests from business owners.

TEST

After each walk, review the feedback and track any recurring themes or urgent needs that arise.

RESPONSE

Adjust the program based on feedback from participants and business owners, refining the frequency, questions, or team composition to ensure it effectively captures the evolving needs of the commercial area.

02

OPEN
FOR
BUSINESS

Regular Stakeholder Meetings

BUILD

Schedule regular meetings with key stakeholders, including business owners, community leaders, and local government representatives, to discuss and identify the ongoing needs of the commercial area. Use these meetings to gather input on current challenges, emerging opportunities, and priorities for improvement.

TEST

Evaluate the effectiveness of the discussions by tracking any changes implemented based on feedback and monitoring their impact on the area.

RESPONSE

Adjust the meeting format, frequency, or participants as needed to ensure they continue to effectively address the evolving needs of the commercial area.

D

Allow Pop-ups

Allow pop-up businesses and temporary installations.





02

Pop-up Projects

BUILD

Identify and secure temporary spaces in high-traffic areas for pop-up shops or art installations. Collaborate with local artists, entrepreneurs, and community groups to plan and execute these pop-up events, using them to test new business or cultural concepts.

TEST

Collect data and feedback from visitors to assess the impact on foot traffic, community engagement, and overall viability.

RESPONSE

Use the insights gained to inform and guide decisions on more permanent developments in the area.

E

Start-up Package

Create and distribute start-up packages to new businesses in Tuolumne County.

Develop a Start-up Package

BUILD

Develop an easy-to-use startup package that includes information on local regulations, permits, available incentives, and community demographics. Include a list of available commercial properties with details on lease terms, amenities, and nearby businesses. Add a resource directory connecting new businesses with local service providers like accountants, lawyers, and marketing firms.

TEST

Distribute it to prospective businesses and gathering feedback from users on its usefulness.

RESPONSE

Refine the contents based on feedback, their needs, and questions.

DEVELOP SERVICES AND AMENITIES

Problem statement: The lack of essential services and amenities in a town center discourages people from stopping and spending time, ultimately weakening the area's economy by reducing foot traffic and limiting opportunities for local business growth.

Theory of change: If essential services and amenities are developed within town centers, then more individuals will be encouraged to stop and spend time in these areas, resulting in increased foot traffic and longer stays.

By providing amenities that cater to pedestrians and supporting businesses that serve specific needs, such as electric vehicle charging, town centers can attract a wider range of visitors. Additionally, creating public spaces and parks will offer inviting areas for locals and travelers to gather, fostering a vibrant community atmosphere and supporting sustained economic growth in the town center.

A

Electric Vehicle Chargers

Install EV charging stations to attract individuals to visit the location and stay a longer length of time.

Develop Process Workflow

BUILD

Create a detailed workflow that outlines each step required to obtain permits and install EV chargers, and how to secure possible funding including timelines and responsibilities for each phase.

TEST

Implement the workflow by installing EV chargers, tracking the process to identify any delays or obstacles encountered.

RESPONSE

Review the process to identify inefficiencies or areas for improvement, then modify the workflow to streamline future installations and ensure smoother execution.



Criteria for Optimal Locations

BUILD

Establish criteria for identifying the best locations for EV chargers, considering factors such as current and projected traffic patterns, proximity to commercial areas, and existing infrastructure.

TEST

Install chargers at the highest-priority locations based on these criteria and monitor their usage over a defined period. Analyze the usage data and feedback from users to evaluate the effectiveness of the criteria.

RESPONSE

Refine the criteria as needed to improve the selection of future locations.



See **Tables H** for locations of EV charging stations.

Place Mobile EV Chargers

BUILD

Deploy a solar-powered mobile EV charging station in a location based on established criteria and priority.

TEST

Monitor the change in foot traffic and user engagement with the charging station, tracking any increase in visits to nearby businesses. Evaluate the impact of the charging station.

RESPONSE

Based on evaluation of impact metrics, increase the number of chargers, adjust the location, or making the station permanent based on the observed results and community feedback.

B

Install Amenities

Install amenities such as benches and trash receptacles to encourage visitation and longer stays.

Publish a Community Guide

BUILD

Publish a comprehensive guide that outlines a step-by-step process for community groups to plan, fund, and install benches and trash receptacles in their town center. This guide should include best practices, materials selection, permit requirements, and potential funding sources.

TEST

Present the guide to various community groups and facilitate discussions on how they can use it to enhance their town center. Gather feedback on the guide's clarity, usability, and any concerns or suggestions for improvement.

RESPONSE

Update the guide based on the feedback and lessons learned from these discussions, ensuring it addresses any gaps or challenges identified by the community groups.





Seek Funding

BUILD

Identify funding opportunities from local government, grants, and private donors specifically for town beautification projects, such as adding benches, trash receptacles, and other enhancements. Apply for, or direct community groups to, these funding opportunities for their beautification plans using the guide. Support them in applying for and utilizing the funds to implement their projects.

TEST

Review the number and success of completed projects, assessing the impact of the funding on town beautification efforts.

RESPONSE

Use this information to refine future funding strategies and possibly expand the availability of funds for similar projects.

Strategically Place Seating and Trash Receptacles

BUILD

Design a series of benches, seating areas and trash receptacles strategically placed in high-traffic zones, near popular shops, parks, and public squares. They could be designed to complement the town's aesthetic, using materials that match the surrounding architecture.

TEST

Monitor their usage, noting how often they are occupied using foot traffic data, and for how long. Conduct surveys to gather feedback on the comfort of the seating, placement, and design of the benches and receptacles.

RESPONSE

Adjust the placement based on where they are most used or requested, improve the comfort (e.g., adding armrests or shade), and enhance the design if necessary. Expand the installation of benches to other parts of the town center, focusing on areas that could benefit.



C

Public Spaces

Develop, improve upon, and promote public spaces and parks to encourage locals and travelers to congregate.

Improve on Existing Parks

BUILD

Examine how the existing park is currently used, observing activities, peak usage times, and the areas that attract the most visitors. Draft an upgrade plan that prioritizes improvements based on observed needs, such as adding more seating in popular spots, updating playground equipment, or enhancing landscaping in high-traffic areas.

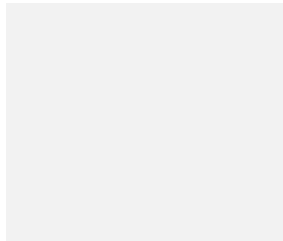
TEST

Gather community input through surveys and focus groups to validate these observations and refine the draft plan.

RESPONSE

Incorporate the feedback and implement a few initial upgrades to test their impact, then adjust the plan as needed before rolling out broader improvements throughout the park.





See **Tables I** for park locations in town centers.



Public Plaza

BUILD

Design a new public plaza in the town center, featuring open spaces for events, seating areas, greenery, and possibly a central fountain or sculpture. The plaza would serve as a gathering place for locals and visitors, hosting markets, concerts, and other community events. Construct a temporary or small-scale version of the plaza to test its layout, functionality, and appeal.

TEST

After holding a few events, observe how well the space accommodates crowds and whether it becomes a natural gathering spot, as well as foot traffic to particular areas.

RESPONSE

Adjust the design based on feedback and event outcomes, such as improving seating arrangements, enhancing the aesthetic appeal, or adding more shade. Build the full-scale plaza, incorporating these improvements, and promote it as a central hub for community activities.

CREATE A SENSE OF ARRIVAL AND PLACE

Problem statement: The lack of visual cues and a cohesive design theme in a town center diminishes its sense of arrival and place, making it less likely for people to stop, explore, and engage with the area, ultimately reducing foot traffic and economic activity.

Theory of change: If town centers are developed with distinct entry points, cohesive design themes, and engaging amenities, then individuals will be more likely to stop, explore, and spend time in these areas, leading to increased foot traffic and economic activity.

Creating visual cues that signal arrival, along with a unified aesthetic that showcases local culture, history, and natural beauty, will foster a strong sense of place and community pride. Enhancing the area with green spaces, well-maintained streetscapes, and special events will provide recreational opportunities and unique experiences, drawing both residents and visitors alike. This vibrant atmosphere will encourage people to visit regularly, support local businesses, and ultimately boost the town center's economic vitality and community identity.

A

Welcome Sign

Build or modernize a Welcome Sign visible when entering a town center.

Develop a Guide for Community Led Process

BUILD

Create a comprehensive guide that outlines a step-by-step process for community groups to design and build a Welcome Sign for their town center, including considerations for design, materials, permits, and fundraising. Present the guide to community groups and hold discussions to explore how they can use it to spearhead the Welcome Sign project.

TEST

Encourage the community to provide feedback on the guide's practicality, clarity, and usefulness.

RESPONSE

Update the guide with lessons learned from these discussions, incorporating suggestions, and addressing any challenges that community groups identified to make the process

Rendering of Welcome Sign**BUILD**

Develop a detailed rendering of a proposed Welcome Sign for the town center, incorporating elements that reflect the community's identity, culture, and aesthetic preferences. > Organize a focus group with community members, local business owners, and other stakeholders to review the rendering.

TEST

Record their comments, suggestions, and any concerns about the design.

RESPONSE

Revise the Welcome Sign design based on the feedback from the focus group, making adjustments to better align with community expectations and preferences before moving forward with final approval or construction.

B**Consistent Theme**

Develop historic theme and continuity.

Design of a Historic Town Center**BUILD**

Research architectural styles and community activities in the past and develop or update a plan to restore a historic town center. The plan should include design elements that reflect the town's original character, such as facades, street layouts, and public spaces. Implement the design in a small section of the town, gathering feedback from the community, historians, and planners.

TEST

Observe how people interact with the restored area.

RESPONSE

Based on feedback and observations, refine the design to better match the town's historic character and community needs. Expand the project using the improved design.

Traditional Craftsmanship

BUILD

Develop a program to revive traditional crafts (e.g., blacksmithing, pottery, basket weaving, etc.) in a historic district, including workshops and storefronts designed in a period-appropriate style.

TEST

Start with a few workshops and monitor participation, interest, and the economic impact on the district. Gather feedback from participants and local businesses.

RESPONSE

Improve the program by expanding popular workshops, refining marketing strategies, and enhancing the historic authenticity of the spaces. Scale up the program to include more crafts and storefronts.

Museum Exhibit

BUILD

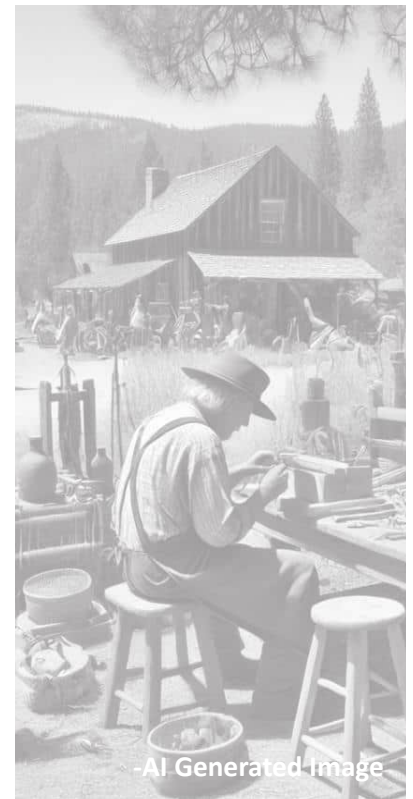
Create a concept for a museum exhibit that tells the story of a town's development through interactive displays and artifacts. Emphasize continuity by connecting past events to present-day culture. Open a temporary version of the exhibit to the public.

TEST

Modify the exhibit based on visitor feedback—perhaps adding more interactive elements or clearer links between historical events and modern life. Launch the improved exhibit permanently.

RESPONSE

Improve the program by expanding popular workshops, refining marketing strategies, and enhancing the historic authenticity of the spaces. Scale up the program to include more crafts and storefronts.





Heritage Tourism

BUILD

Develop a tourism strategy that highlights historic sites in a region while creating a narrative that connects them through a common historical theme. Launch the strategy with a series of guided tours and marketing campaigns.

TEST

Gather feedback from tourists and local businesses on the effectiveness of the theme in creating a cohesive experience.

RESPONSE

Refine the narrative and tour routes based on feedback, perhaps adding more context, or linking sites more clearly. Relaunch the improved strategy and continue testing.

Education Curriculum

BUILD

Design a curriculum for local schools that integrates local history into subjects like social studies, literature, and art, emphasizing the continuity of cultural traditions. > Implement the curriculum in a few classrooms as a pilot

TEST

Collect data on student engagement, comprehension, and retention of historical themes.

RESPONSE

Adjust the curriculum based on teacher and student feedback, adding more relevant examples or interactive lessons. Expand the revised curriculum to more schools.

C

Artistic Installations

Commission artistic installations throughout a town center.

Commission Artistic Installations

BUILD

Commission a series of artistic installations designed to reflect the town center's unique culture and identity, collaborating with local artists and stakeholders. Install these artworks in key locations.

TEST

Monitor their impact on foot traffic, community engagement, and the overall atmosphere of the area. Gather feedback from residents, visitors, and businesses to assess how well the installations resonate with the community and enhance the town center.

RESPONSE

Based on this feedback, refine the selection and placement of future installations to further strengthen the town's cultural appeal and vibrancy.



D

Façade and Beautification Improvements

Implement a façade improvement and beautification programs.

Façade Improvement Program

BUILD

Implement a façade improvement program that encourages property owners to adopt historically themed designs for their buildings, preserving the architectural heritage of the town center. Apply the program to a few key buildings and monitor the impact on the town's visual appeal, property values, and community pride.

TEST

Collect feedback from property owners, residents, and visitors to assess how well the improvements are received.

RESPONSE

Based on the feedback, refine the program, and expand it to more buildings, ensuring a cohesive and attractive historic look throughout the town center.

Beautification Program

BUILD

Invest in beautification projects such as landscaping, street art, and public spaces to enhance the aesthetic appeal of the town center. Implement these projects in selected areas.

TEST

observe changes in community engagement, visitor satisfaction, and foot traffic. Gather feedback from the community and businesses on the impact of these beautification efforts.

RESPONSE

Use the insights to adjust and expand the projects to other parts of the town, creating a more vibrant and inviting atmosphere.

E

Forum for Community Groups

Promote a forum for community groups to learn best practices and coordinate special events such as festivals, markets, or community gatherings.



Forum for Best Practices

BUILD

Establish a forum where community groups can come together to learn best practices and coordinate special events like festivals, markets, and community gatherings. Organize a few initial meetings, encouraging participation, and facilitating the exchange of ideas and resources among the groups.

TEST

Collect feedback from participants on the forum's usefulness and its impact on the planning and execution of events.

RESPONSE

Based on this feedback, refine the structure and content of the forum, then continue to promote it as a valuable resource for fostering collaboration and improving the quality of community events.

MARKETING AND PROMOTION

Problem statement: Without targeted marketing and promotion efforts to highlight the town's unique attractions and amenities, provide visitor resources, and create engaging experiences, other areas with stronger outreach will attract more visitors, leaving the town at a competitive disadvantage in drawing tourism and economic activity.

Theory of change: If targeted marketing and promotion efforts are implemented to showcase the town's unique attractions and amenities, provide comprehensive visitor resources, and create engaging experiences such as walking tours, then the town will attract more visitors, increase its competitive edge, and enhance local tourism.

Highlighting what makes the town distinctive and accessible will draw attention from both regional and broader audiences, fostering greater foot traffic and encouraging longer stays. These efforts will boost economic activity, support local businesses, and position the town as a sought-after destination in the tourism market.

A

Marketing Plan

Develop a comprehensive marketing plan for your town center.

Possible Build, Test, Response Framework

Develop a Marketing Plan

BUILD

Develop a marketing plan tailored to your town center, focusing on its unique attractions, businesses, and community events. > Launch targeted campaigns across various media channels.

TEST

Track metrics like visitor engagement, foot traffic, and sales in the town center. Gather feedback from local businesses and community members to assess the effectiveness of the marketing efforts.

RESPONSE

Refine the marketing strategies, adjust the messaging or channels as needed, and continue to optimize the plan to better attract visitors and support the town center's growth.



B

Self-Guided Tours and Itineraries

Develop self-guided tours and itineraries.

Develop a Self-Guided Tour

BUILD

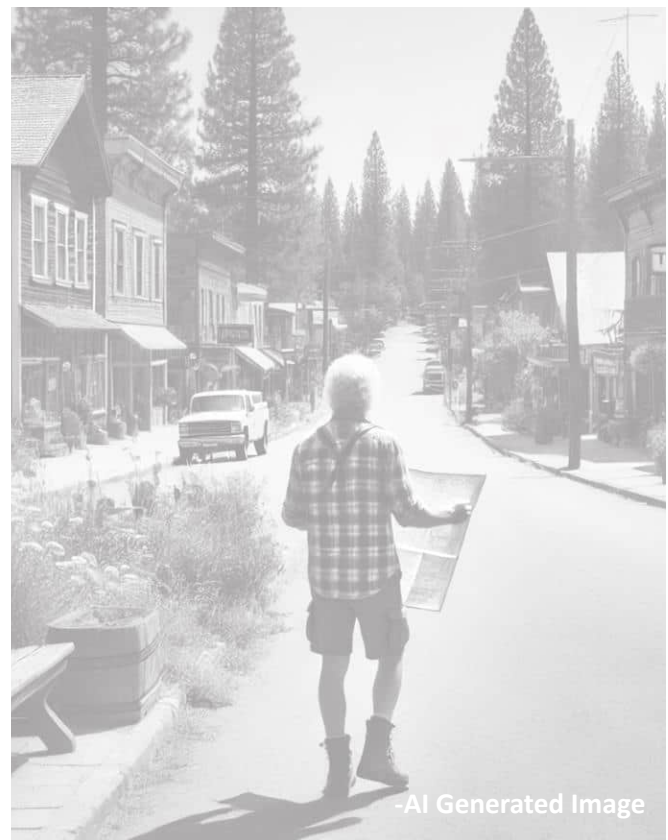
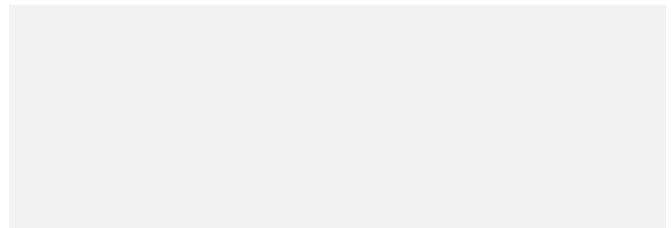
Develop self-guided tours and itineraries that highlight the key attractions, historical sites, and unique experiences in each town center. Distribute them through various channels, such as online platforms, visitor centers, and local businesses.

TEST

Track how many people use them and gathering feedback on their experience. Collect insights from users about the clarity, usefulness, and enjoyment of the tours.

RESPONSE

Refine the content, routes, and presentation of the tours to enhance their appeal and effectiveness in attracting and engaging visitors.



-AI Generated Image



C

App With Local Information

Develop and Implement an App Which List Local Information

App Development

BUILD

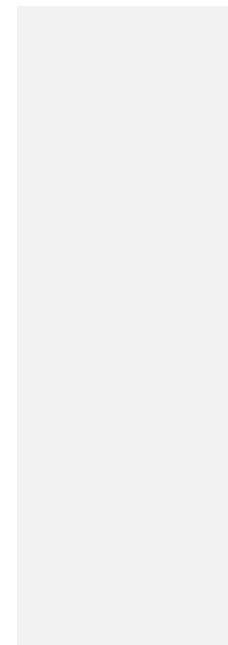
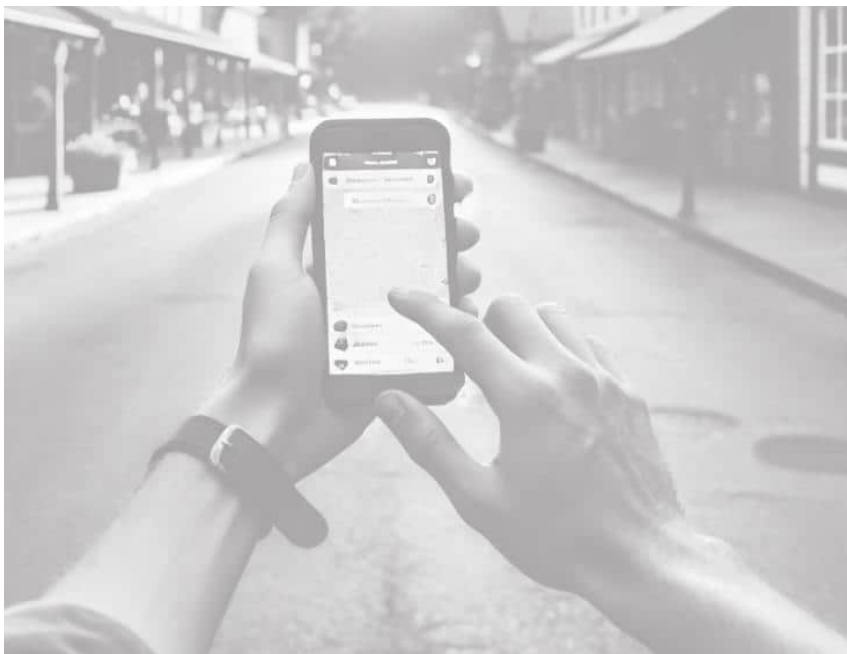
Develop an app that lists local attractions, historical markers, dining, and shopping options, and includes sample itineraries or allows users to create their own. Launch it to a pilot group, tracking user engagement, navigation ease, and the popularity of its features.

TEST

Gather feedback from users on their experience with the app, focusing on functionality, content accuracy, and user-friendliness.

RESPONSE

Refine the app's design, improve its features, and expand its content to better serve visitors, ensuring it becomes a valuable tool for exploring the town center.





D

Online Marketplace Platform

Provide an online marketplace connecting local businesses with customers by showcasing products and providing a way to locate shops and services, allowing individuals to shop locally even after leaving the area.



Online Marketplace

BUILD

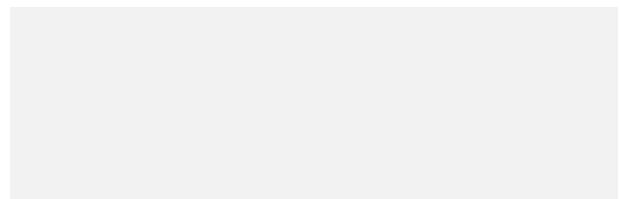
Develop an online marketplace showcasing local businesses, including searchable directories, product listings, shop locations, and online purchasing options.

TEST

Launch a beta version with a select group of businesses and customers, monitoring engagement and gathering feedback on usability and effectiveness.

RESPONSE

Use the feedback to refine the platform by improving features like navigation, search functionality, and promotional tools for businesses. Once optimized, expand the marketplace to include more businesses and promote it as a way for individuals to shop locally, even after leaving the area.





CURRENT AND RECENT PROJECTS

Numerous projects in Tuolumne County are either being implemented or have recently been completed, which align with this strategy.

Jamestown Gateway and Main Street Revitalization Project

This will enhance the accessibility, order, and cultural connection of Jamestown’s historic downtown Main Street. Planned improvements will include repairs to damaged sections of sidewalk, improvements to sidewalk connections and ADA access. To further protect the sidewalk, nuisance trees will be replaced with new shade trees, with additional trees planted. A mural will be installed on a highly visible building on Main Street to beautify the downtown core with local art, and a gateway sign welcoming visitors into Jamestown will be installed at the intersection of Main Street and Golden Chain Highway (SR 49/SR 108).

Groveland Chamber Beautification Committee’s Project

On June 30, 2024, the Groveland Chamber Beautification Committee's dedicated new ground and hanging planters, solar powered garbage and recycling receptacles, and reclaimed wood benches located along 120 in Downtown Groveland.

Jamestown Safe, Healthy, and Equitable Streets Improvement Project

The planned project will transform the two-lane state highway into a complete street with roadway and traffic signal improvements, sidewalks, cyclist facilities, additional transit stops, a Park and Ride facility with EV chargers, and the option of widening to reduce congestion or accommodate surges in traffic volumes from evacuations.



The Gold Rush Shared-Use Path

This will be a Class I facility that stretches over 14 miles to continuously connect the major, and historical, Tuolumne County communities of Jamestown, Sonora, and Columbia as well as the Chicken Ranch Tribal Lands. The path will improve active transportation continuity, encourage healthy and low emission travel behaviors, increase safety, maximize disadvantaged individuals' access to critical services, and enhance community identity.

Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Discretionary Grant Application

This grant will fund the purchase of EV charging stations to be installed at various locations in Tuolumne County. One possible solution is the EV ARCs, solar powered charging stations which require no infrastructure improvements.

Vision Sonora

The Vision Sonora Project provides recommendations to revitalize the local economy, enhance Sonora's unique historic character and improve quality of life. These recommendations fall into two major categories, Mobility & Community Design and Tourism, Local Economy & Community.

Welcome Sign at the Columbia State Park

Efforts are underway to build welcome signs both at the intersection known as the "Pedro Wye" and the ends of the historic state park.

Tourism Marketing District

A Tourism Marketing District, also known as a Tourism Improvement District, is a stable source of funding marketing efforts designed to increase occupancy and room rates for lodging businesses. Funds raised through a small assessment on lodging stays are used to provide services desired by and directly benefiting the businesses in the district. Visit Tuolumne County is currently exploring whether a TMD would be effective in our area.



Sierra Jobs First 2024 Strategic Plan

Though still in draft form, the strategy emphasizes similar initiatives, including efforts in placemaking and support for small businesses.

2024-2029 Central Sierra Economic Development Strategy

This strategy emphasizes similar goals, including regular communication and collaboration, and placed-based initiatives.



FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following list outlines funding opportunities available to support town center revitalization efforts. Identifying and understanding these funding sources is crucial, as they provide the financial resources needed to implement key improvements, drive economic growth, and enhance the overall appeal of the town center. Knowing where to look for funding ensures that revitalization projects are feasible and sustainable, enabling communities to achieve their development goals effectively.

USDA Rural Business Development Grants

Rural Business Development Grants (RBDGs) support targeted technical assistance, training, and other activities that promote the development and expansion of small and emerging private businesses in rural areas. Eligible businesses must have fewer than 50 employees and less than \$1 million in gross annual revenues. RBDG funding is separated into either enterprise or opportunity-type grant activities. Find more information [here](#).

EDA Economic Adjustment Assistance Program

The EAA program provides a wide range of technical, planning, and public works and infrastructure assistance in regions experiencing adverse economic changes that may occur suddenly or over time. These adverse economic impacts may result from a steep decline in manufacturing employment following a plant closure, changing trade patterns, catastrophic natural disaster, a military base closure, or environmental changes and regulations. Find more information [here](#)

Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) Grant Program

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) established the Safe Streets and Roads for All (SS4A) discretionary program with \$5 billion in appropriated funds over 5 years, 2022-2026. The SS4A program funds regional, local, and Tribal initiatives through grants to prevent roadway deaths and serious injuries. Almost \$2 billion is still available for future funding rounds. Find more information [here](#)



Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grants Program

The Paul Bruhn Historic Revitalization Grant Program, named in honor of the late preservation leader from Vermont, fosters economic development in rural communities through the rehabilitation of historic buildings in those communities. The program provides recipients (referred to as prime grantees) with a single grant that is then regranted in smaller amounts to individual projects (subgrants). Find more information [here](#)

Charging and Fueling Infrastructure (CFI) Discretionary Grant

The Charging and Fueling Infrastructure Grant Program provides funding to strategically deploy publicly accessible electric vehicle charging infrastructure and other alternative fueling infrastructure. Find more information [here](#)

AARP Community Challenge Grant Program

The AARP Community Challenge grant program is part of the nationwide AARP Livable Communities initiative that helps communities become great places to live for residents of all ages. The program is intended to help communities make immediate improvements and jump-start long-term progress. Find more information [here](#)

Visit Tuolumne County Community Investment Program

Visit Tuolumne County (VTC) has a long history of supporting non-profit and for-profit events within Tuolumne County either through marketing funds or sponsorships. The Visit Tuolumne County Community Investment Fund (VTCCIF) creates a formal avenue for VTC to support local events or other destination activities by reinvesting dollars into those activities that support the VTC mission. The VTCCIF is intended for projects that attract out-of-town visitors, drive overnight stays, and generate a strong visitor economy midweek and during off-peak times in addition to enhancing overall experiences for both visitors and locals. Find more information [here](#)



NAR Placemaking Grant & Resources

Placemaking Grants fund state and local REALTOR® association-led projects that create new, outdoor public spaces and destinations in a community on unused or underused sites. The goal of the program is to enable REALTORS® to strengthen ties with their community, to develop relationships with public officials, and to spur economic growth and development through the creation of new public gathering places. Support for benches, playground equipment, and signs within existing public spaces is permitted. Find more information [here](#)

T-Mobile Hometown Grants

This grant seeks to help fund projects that foster local connections, like technology upgrades, outdoor spaces, the arts, and community centers. They award up to \$50,000 for shovel-ready projects. Find more information [here](#)

Sonora Area Foundation

The Sonora Area Foundation is a community-focused organization that provides financial support through grants and funding opportunities to promote local initiatives and improve the quality of life in Tuolumne County. Find more information [here](#)



FEASIBILITY CHART

When discussing actions to take in any given strategy or project, we often focus on what should and can be done, but fail to talk about what can be done now. The chart helps to visually assess and prioritize projects for strategic development decisions. The following chart maps the feasibility of implementing each action item for the town center rejuvenation by comparing the difficulty to complete the item against the economic impact.

The Tuolumne County Economic Development Executive Team was given action items and asked to rank each item's perceived level of difficulty to implement and the estimated cost. The average of their responses was plotted on the chart.

The X-axis represents the difficulty to implement, incorporating criteria such as cost, time, legal barriers, permitting, funding, and collaboration needed. The Y-axis measures the projects' economic impact, ex. increased business activities. Projects in the top-right quadrant are highly feasible and have a high economic impact, making them ideal priorities.

Project Feasibility for Town Center Rejuvenation Action Items

