



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

TO: Honorable Planning Commissioners
FROM: Tracey Ferguson, AICP, Planning Director
MEETING DATE: April 15, 2021
SUBJECT: **PLANNING COMMISSION REVIEW OF 2035 GENERAL PLAN –**
Planning Commission Recommendation to Board of Supervisors of
Priority Economics Element Implementation Measures

BACKGROUND:

In October 2019 the Planning Commission began discussing a process by which they would review the 2035 General Plan, element by element. At the regularly scheduled meeting on June 20, 2020 the Planning Commission began its review of the Economics Element, and the reviews continued until November 5, 2020. Throughout the review process, the Commissioners and staff made notes and suggested action outcomes for the implementation measures. Upon conclusion of the review of the Economics Element, Planning staff created a summary table that documented the review.

At the regularly scheduled meetings on February 4, 2021 and March 18, 2021 the Planning Commission revisited the Economics Element implementation measures summary table for discussion, and members of the public were involved in providing feedback on ideas for investment in economic development. Such public feedback included expanding broadband telecommunications, installing electric vehicle charging stations, establishing community advisory boards (CABs), assisting in the creation of a regional economic development agency (REDA), working with and providing County funding to local chambers of commerce, inviting US Forest Service recreational tourism cooperation, growing revenue through the collection of TOT (transit occupancy tax), utilizing multi-media and virtual platforms to market Plumas County, working with the newly established Feather River Tourism Marketing District, and supporting the development of workforce training programs for job creation.

At the regularly scheduled meeting on April 1, 2021 the Planning Commissioners provided their recommendations to Planning staff regarding priority implementation measures to present to the Board of Supervisors for discussion and possible action. Those priorities are listed in Attachment 1, along with an inventory of Economics Element implementation measures that are complete, those implementation measures that are ongoing, and implementation measures that are yet to be prioritized for action.

It should be noted that many of the Economics Element implementation measures include responsible entities such as the Board of Supervisors and County departments such as Planning and Public Works, in addition to what is called the "County Economic Development Services Provider."

As defined in the 2035 Plumas County General Plan, the Economic Development Service Provider may include "a wide range of organizations, including government agencies and non-profit organizations specifically organized to promote business retention, expansion and attraction as well as other types of organizations, which may be important partners in economic development. This may include educational institutions, financial institutions, utilities and transportation providers, Chambers of Commerce and other types of organizations that can contribute resources towards local economic growth."

The incorporation of such wide-ranging entities responsible for economic development speaks to the need for countywide partnerships and collaboration in order to achieve economic development success in Plumas.

Some of the organizations, governmental agencies, and private businesses discussed as part of the Planning Commission meeting conversations that can contribute towards local economic growth include, but are not limited to the following:

- California Governor's Office of Business and Economic Development (GO-Biz)
- Plumas National Forest, Lassen National Forest, and Tahoe National Forest
- City of Portola
- Lassen County and Sierra County
- Chambers of commerce (Chester/Almanor, Quincy, Lost Sierra, Indian Valley, Loyalton, and Westwood)
- Feather River Tourism Marketing District
- Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative and other utilities
- Plumas Bank and other financial institutions
- Feather River College, Plumas Unified School District, Sierra-Plumas Joint Unified, charter schools, private schools, and other educational institutions
- Plumas Transit and other transportation providers
- Plumas County Museum, Indian Valley Museum, Portola Railroad Museum, Plumas Arts, Main Street Artists, West End Theatre, County libraries, and other museums and cultural centers
- Collins Pine, Sierra Pacific Industries, and other timber companies
- Sierra Institute for Community & Environment
- Recreation and Park Districts (Central Plumas, Eastern Plumas, Indian Valley, and Almanor)
- Special Districts (water, sewer, fire protection, hospital, groundwater, flood, and dry utilities)
- Alliance for Workforce Development
- Sierra Small Business Development Center

Previous County leadership in advancing economic development initiatives included former Supervisor Lori Simpson, former Planning Director Randy Wilson, former County Assessor Chuck Leonhardt, former Environmental Health Director Jerry Sipe, former Agricultural Commissioner Tim Gibson and others.

Current County leadership involved in continuing to direct and advance economic development includes, but is not limited to, the Chair of the Board of Supervisor Jeff Engel, Supervisor Greg Hagwood, County Administrator Gabriel Hydrick, Fair Manager John Steffanic, Planning Director Tracey Ferguson, Treasurer/Tax Collector Julie White, and Facilities Services Director Kevin Correira.

INFORMATION:

In 2002-2003 when Plumas Corporation was one of the primary entities leading economic development initiatives in the County, an Economic Development 5 Point Strategy was developed with goals, objectives, strategies, and success measures, and was funded, in part, through state Community Development Block Grants and County General Fund.

The 5 strategies included:

1. Tourism Marketing, Promotion, and Visitor Attraction and Tourism Infrastructure Development – visitor attraction, development of year-round recreational attractions
2. Product Development – infrastructure (including recreation – trail systems, campground, Forest Service activities), industrial land development, natural resource management and development, housing development, and workforce development
3. Business Retention and Expansion – business assistance, educational component, and capital access
4. Business Attraction – small to medium size businesses compatible with natural resources and culture
5. Public Policy Initiative – streamlining the permitting process, create a pro-business image

Later in 2016 into 2017, a small County committee was formed to revisit the 2002-2003 Economic Development Strategy with a focus on:

- Special events
- Creating a central County point of contact
- Improved customer service
- Building County relationships with economic development service providers through concierge service methods

RECOMMENDATIONS:

The overarching economic development priority themes the Planning Commissioners communicated include:

- Establishing an economic development advisory board to assist in the development of a current economic development strategy, acknowledging County staff time and resources will need to be dedicated that includes budgeting
- Establishing a central economic development County point contact as a key communication and organizational component, acknowledging the County may need to create, fund, and staff such a position where the job description should include proficiency in grant writing and knowledge of economic development funding streams
- Acknowledging recreational tourism, and tourism in general, is a leading economic driver in Plumas
- Growing businesses and jobs with development training and education to enter the workforce (for example, working with the schools, both public and private, and Feather River College regarding vocational training courses)
- Addressing the needs for affordable housing, cultural amenities, and childcare services which are directly linked to a successful economy and attraction of young families to make Plumas their home
- Supporting County infrastructure improvements (for example, County roads, certain parks to the degree in which Plumas County manages and maintains, public restrooms in County-owned public spaces)
- Establishing public/private partnerships
- Working with, and providing County resources including funding such as dedication of TOT, to local chambers of commerce
- Creating a vision, positive action, and continuous momentum for what Plumas County economic development will be

Specifically, the Planning Commission's Economics Element implementation measures priority recommendations to the Board of Supervisors include those action items directly tied to the establishment of an economic advisory body to develop an overall Countywide economic development strategy working with County economic development service providers (Attachment 1 – see section (1) Planning Commission Priority Implementation Measures for Recommendation to the Board of Supervisors).

ATTACHMENT:

1. 2035 GENERAL PLAN ECONOMICS ELEMENT IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS

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The following 2035 General Plan Economics Element implementation measures table documents the following: (1) Planning Commission priority implementation measures for recommendation to the Board of Supervisors, (2) completed implementation measures, (3) ongoing implementation measures, and (4) implementation measures not yet prioritized for action.

Economics Element Implementation Measure	Implements what Policy	Who is Responsible	2015-2020	2020-2030	On-Going
(1) PLANNING COMMISSION PRIORITY IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES FOR RECOMMENDATION TO THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS					
1. a. The County shall consider the establishment of an economic advisory body to assist in the development of an economic development strategy and workforce. Such a body should be appointed by the Board of Supervisors and should include representatives of key sectors, including but not limited to local business, forestry and timber products, energy, tourism, agriculture, banking and finance, health services and education. In addition, the County should seek participation from the United States Forest Service.	5.1.2	Board of Supervisors		X <i>Consider</i>	
b. The County shall manage the preparation and regular updates of an economic development strategy that will guide the overall development of Plumas County as a competitive location for existing businesses to remain and expand and for attracting new businesses, consistent with the General Plan vision. The County may prepare the economic development strategy itself with guidance from the economic advisory body or may delegate this responsibility to local economic development service providers for adoption by the County with review and input by the economic advisory body.		County Economic Development Services Provider		X <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>	

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2. When requested, and as County resources allow, the County shall work with existing or prospective businesses in industries targeted by the County's economic development strategy to secure financial assistance from such sources as Community Development Block Grants, Economic Development Administration or United States Department of Agriculture Rural Development.	5.1.3	County Economic Development Services Provider	<i>X</i> <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>
4. a. The County shall consider designating a County staff person or third party economic development organization to collect and disseminate information to existing and prospective businesses regarding demographics, labor-force characteristics, availability of sites, including both buildings and land able to be developed, with appropriate zoning and infrastructure, transportation, and services, and other factors relevant to business location and expansion decisions, in collaboration with the City of Portola, County Chambers of Commerce and local property owners and real estate representatives.	5.1.6	County Economic Development Services Provider	<i>X</i> <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>
b. As part of an overall economic development strategy, the County shall work with local partners to develop and implement an ongoing proactive business-retention program to support existing businesses and foster their expansion. As part of the business retention program, establish a business outreach program aimed at enhancing communication between existing businesses and the County, which could include convening business roundtable meetings for sharing information and concerns. The meetings should include representation from government and businesses and should provide a forum for any local business to share concerns.	5.1.7		<i>X</i> <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>

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- c. See policies and implementation programs in Agriculture and Forestry Elements, regarding ongoing support for these industries.
- d. As part of the larger economic development strategy, the County shall consider the establishment of a “local foods” initiative that will help to increase the supply of locally grown food. Elements of the initiative may include ensuring that existing policies facilitate greenhouse development on agricultural lands; expanding farmers market operations, working with local farmers to determine methods of extending the season, expanding number of vendors, increasing the days per week and considering other locations in the County; making it easier for farmers to establish farm stands for direct sales on agricultural property and supporting programs that promote and assist in the identification and marketing of local products, including outreach to the newspaper, Chambers of Commerce, businesses and any others seeking to improve the environment to foster an effective local foods initiative.

5. a. The County shall disseminate information on available sites. See Implementation Measure 5.1.6, above.	5.1.8	County Economic Development Services Provider	<p><i>X</i> <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i></p>
b. The County shall ensure adequate land supply. See Policy 5.1.6 above.			
c. The County shall strive to support efforts of local economic development service providers to coordinate in conducting outreach and assistance to prospective new businesses.			
d. The County shall encourage and support efforts to foster new economic activity in conjunction with established industry, such as linking forestry to renewable fuels production or leveraging the value of Plumas County’s “watershed			

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services" to downstream users in order to support local watershed maintenance and enhancement activities.			
e. The County shall conduct and disseminate economic research relating to emerging markets, innovations and opportunities in which the County may have a competitive advantage.	5.2.2	Public Works	
f. The County shall consider targeting Internet marketing, web design, video production and entertainment media firms for business-attraction efforts.			
g. The County shall encourage businesses and research that support sustainability and contribute to the emerging "green" economy, including agricultural and timber forestry enterprises.			
h. The County shall support appropriate home businesses, "cottage" industries, telecommuting and telepresence to link local businesses to the larger global economy and reduce fuel consumption.			
i. The County shall encourage public/private partnerships to market Plumas County as a business location.			
6. a. To the extent possible, the County shall prioritize development of basic public infrastructure for tourism, such as public restrooms and public gathering places.	5.2.2	Public Works	
b. The County shall encourage tourism development that emphasizes protection and enhancement of the natural scenic beauty of Plumas County.		County Economic Development Services Provider	<i>X</i> <i>review Public Works capital improvement program</i>
c. The County shall encourage and support lodging and food service facilities to support recreation and cultural and historic events and activities, including lodging and food facilities to support eco-tourism and agritourism needs, guest ranch facilities, campgrounds, bed and breakfasts, and event and business lodging.			

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7. a. To the extent possible, the County shall support public/private tourism industry marketing efforts.	5.2.2	County Economic Development Services Provider	<i>X</i> <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>
b. The County shall support the efforts of private and non-profit and other groups to increase local spending through tourism and "shop local" campaigns. See Policy 5.6.8.			
c. The County shall support Scenic Byways, Bucks Lake Wilderness area and other designated recreational areas on the National Forests to further the promotion of tourism in the County.			
8. a. The County shall support the development of recreational events and activities that attract visitors on a year-round basis, including but not limited to, athletic events and outdoor activities.	5.2.3	County Economic Development Services Provider	<i>X</i> <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>
b. The County shall encourage destination recreation and tourism through projects on private lands. On public lands, coordinate efforts with Federal and State agencies. Some examples of activities are:			
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Promoting motorcycle tourism, fishing, boating, golf, destination education facilities, viewing fall colors, ice fishing, and other outdoor activities during the four seasons• Developing snowmobile staging areas with parking and restrooms open in winter• Developing snowmobile trail network maps/web site• Establishing routes, an overnight hut system, parking and trailhead facilities, etc. for back-country ski touring/snowshoeing• Developing destination mountain biking and whitewater rafting/kayaking destinations within the County; including provision of parking and river put-in/takeout facilities			

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- Developing guidebooks for mountain routes, etc.
- Installing “Share the Road-Bicycles” signs to support organized bike rides and events and independent cycle touring as visitor activities
- Establishing bicycle touring routes and the pursuit of funding to widen shoulders to safe widths for cyclists on those routes
- Promoting agritourism and the development of specialty agricultural products.
- Promoting winter sports, destination hunting, fishing, and wildlife viewing.
- Coordinating the marketing message promoting recreational resources and the availability of lodging and food services to accommodate visitors.

9. a. As part of an overall economic development strategy, the County shall incorporate measures to encourage the development of the literary, performing and visual arts through programs and facilities which will support tourism and otherwise contribute to the retention and creation of job opportunities.

b. The County shall support development of cultural tourism attractions based on the interpretation of the County's history, including collaboration with local groups on projects relating to local Native American culture and history, and other historic themes such as mining, logging and railroads.

c. The County shall, where feasible, identify and support local groups in the performing and visual arts.

e. The County shall encourage protection, maintenance and restoration of historic facilities, structures, including barns, and venues used for cultural and art activities.

5.2.4

County
Economic
Development
Services
Provider

X
*with overall
Economic
Development
Strategy*

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10. The County shall consider strategic use of County assets, such as property, buildings, structures and rights-of-way to be used in partnership with service providers to expand broadband and other new technology networks.	5.3.2	Board of Supervisors	<i>X</i> <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>
11. As part of an overall economic development strategy, the County shall inventory and assess the County's existing assets for economic development and develop an action plan to maintain, improve, expand and re-use them for the benefit of economic development. Such an inventory could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Plumas County's three airports • Old mine sites • Abandoned mill sites and other key opportunity sites • Railroad lines and spurs • Power transmission infrastructure and other infrastructure • Support services and facilities, such as produce processing facilities, animal-processing facilities and dairies • Natural resources 	5.3.3	County Economic Development Services Provider	<i>X</i> <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>
12. a. The County will support the location of a satellite campus for Feather River College within the County and will also explore incentives and marketing programs to attract an accredited four-year college or university to the County. b. The County shall encourage Feather River Community College and the public school system to develop and offer courses that will help local residents develop skills that will position them for jobs in Plumas County's emerging industries.	5.4.1	County Economic Development Services Provider	<i>X</i> <i>with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>

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c. The County shall encourage collaboration between the public education system, non-profits and private sectors to promote education, vocational training, professional development, workforce development and lifelong learning in the workforce.

13. a. As part of an overall economic development strategy, the County shall strive to support economic development programs that promote and seek funding for workforce development and housing and provide technical and financial assistance, including capital, technical expertise, and training, to businesses starting up and expanding.

5.4.2

County
Economic
Development
Services
Provider

b. The County shall promote job training by coordinating with local non-profits, Feather River College, private sectors and agencies in placing unemployed residents, including youth, in appropriate skill-enhancement programs.

X
with overall
Economic
Development
Strategy

c. The County shall strive to facilitate networking among local entrepreneurs and potential mentors by working with local business organizations to establish a Plumas County entrepreneur's and potential mentor's forum involving a speaker's series that would serve as a venue to attract entrepreneurs and potential mentors. The purpose of the forum would be for networking and to begin building a database of local entrepreneurs and potential mentors and their interests and resources, which can be used to help match fledgling businesses with mentors and resources to support their success.

5.5.1

Planning

X
prepare
Zoning
Clearance
Certificate
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15. c. The County shall support efforts, including revisions to the Zoning Code to improve signage, displays and mapping for downtowns.

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e. The County shall modify the Zoning Code to facilitate commercial, industrial and/or mixed-use projects at sites near transit stops.			<i>review and revised Zoning Code as needed</i>
f. The County shall support efforts of local economic development service providers to coordinate and identify ways that local regulations and procedures could be improved in order to better support business within the County.			
20. The County shall coordinate with local businesses and Chambers of Commerce to create “buy local” campaigns to build local residents’ awareness of the options for and benefits of shopping locally.	5.6.8	County Economic Development Services Provider	<i>X with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>
23. a. The County shall develop and implement a program that analyzes the existing and potential public services and infrastructure available to vacant land zoned for commercial and industrial uses within Towns and Communities and take steps to strive to provide adequate public services and facilities to support their development with employment generating uses.	5.1.6 5.6.12	Public Works	<i>X with overall Economic Development Strategy</i>

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Economics Element Implementation Measure	Implements what Policy	Who is Responsible	2015-2020	2020-2030	On-Going
(2) COMPLETED IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES					
3. The County shall include designated mineral resource areas in Plumas County land-use maps and protect these sites from encroachment.	5.1.4	Planning		<i>X</i> <i>completed</i>	
9d. The County shall establish and implement a standardized permitting process and requirements to facilitate concerts (complete), festivals and other large visitor-attracting events while considering potential negative impacts on the surrounding community.				<i>X</i> <i>completed</i>	
15 a. The County shall implement a program that increases the efficiency of the development review, which may include amending the Zoning Code to streamline review of minor projects with minimal environmental impacts that enhance the County's economic base on sites suitable for commercial and industrial uses.				<i>X</i> <i>completed</i> <i>Telecommunications Ordinance (2019-1116)</i>	
b. The County shall facilitate build-out of digital infrastructure by amending the Zoning Code as necessary to facilitate the installation of digital communications infrastructure for businesses and industry, including expanded availability of broadband service options for home businesses.				<i>amended Code to include ministerial Administrative Use Permit process</i> <i>Code includes ministerial Site Development Review process</i>	

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Economics Element Implementation Measure	Implements what Policy	Who is Responsible	2015-2020	2020-2030	On-Going
(3) ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES					
14. a. The County will continue its outreach to local residents in filling vacant positions within County departments and agencies.	5.4.3	County Human Resources			<i>X as positions become available</i>
b. When considering any outsourcing of services to private enterprise, the County shall incorporate a preference for local firms, when financially feasible.					
15d. The County shall review parking in existing communities and explore solutions to identified parking problems.		Planning			<i>X generally not an issue</i>
18. The County shall provide mixed-use zoning in downtown and community core areas to allow a mix of housing, retail, offices, entertainment and public/civic uses.	5.6.3	Planning			<i>X current practice</i>
19. The County shall encourage preparation of Specific Plans or master plans and master environmental assessments for industrial parks in order to streamline the subsequent development process.	5.6.4	Planning			<i>X based on project applications</i>
22. The County shall encourage property owners to utilize programs such as Historic Preservation Tax Credits to rehabilitate and reuse historic buildings while maintaining their historic integrity.	5.6.11	Planning			<i>X based on project applications</i>
23. b. The County shall strive to coordinate County budget and capital-improvement programs with the Economic Element to ensure that public facilities and services are appropriately located and sized and properly timed to support the desired economic development.	5.1.6 5.6.12	Public Works			<i>X during CIP and budget cycles</i>

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Economics Element Implementation Measure	Implements what Policy	Who is Responsible	2015-2020	2020-2030	On-Going
(3) ONGOING IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES					
24. The County shall support the re-use of abandoned or underutilized facilities and buildings in existing communities and shall investigate the use of incentives or grants for the establishment of new productive uses.	5.6.5	County Economic Development Services Provider			<i>X based on project applications</i>
25. The County shall charter the Plumas County Coordination Council to be the forum responsible for the coordination of planning efforts between the County and other local, state and federal land managers.	5.1.9	Planning			<i>X PCCC meets quarterly</i>
21. The County shall support and implement Policies and Implementation Measures in the Housing Element that are designed to increase the supply of affordable housing within County, including providing adequate sites zoned to accommodate anticipated affordable-housing needs and Policies and Implementation Measures that call for the provision of incentives or other forms of assistance or public/private partnerships to develop and maintain affordable housing.	5.6.7 5.6.10	Planning			<i>X 2019-2024 Housing Element implementation</i>

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Economics Element Implementation Measure	Implements what Policy	Who is Responsible	2015-2020	2020-2030	On-Going
(4) IMPLEMENTATION MEASURES NOT YET PRIORITIZED FOR ACTION					
16. The County shall consider using the existing Modifications and Planned Development Permit process as a means of modifying development standards, reducing or waiving impact fee requirements, expediting permit processing, and providing other types of incentives in order to encourage transit-oriented development.	5.6.1	Planning		<i>X</i> review potential TOD incentives	
17. The County shall consider using the existing Modifications and Planned Development Permit process as a means of modifying development standards, reducing or waiving impact fee requirements, expediting permit processing, and providing other types of incentives in order to encourage infill development.	5.6.2	Planning		<i>X</i> review potential TOD incentives	