

ALPINE COUNTY GENERAL PLAN



VI. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

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Economic development is the process by which people, finances, physical and natural resources are mobilized to produce marketable goods and services. Unique local factors determine whether or not it is necessary for normal entrepreneurial activity to be assisted by government actions for the benefit of the entire community. In communities where economic activity is robust, government may not need to take any action and instead focus on other community concerns such as preserving or improving the environment. Other communities may need to take actions to stimulate economic growth to maintain community balance if government revenues are not keeping pace with community service needs. Alpine County needs to both promote economic development and preserve its environment. The alpine environment of the County is not only a primary reason for the high quality of life enjoyed by residents, but also the most important economic resource of the County due to its attraction of tourism and recreation which are the strongest components of the economy.

Two economic studies have been completed for the County which are included in the General Plan Data Base 11.4 and 11.5. These studies document a lack of industry and declining retail businesses in the County. Consequently, dependence upon urban centers outside the County for goods and services cause a significant drain of local economy dollars. This leakage hinders attempts to expand local business activity and, as a result, local government revenue is also declining. Cutbacks in Federal and State funding and reduction of timber revenues add to the problem of providing services for a small population which generates correspondingly low property tax revenues. Summary results of the studies which characterize Alpine County economic activity follow:

1. The proportion of tax revenue the County receives from property taxes predominates at more than 68%. Room Taxes contribute 17%, with mining approximating 10% and retail sales providing only 5%.
2. More than 70% of County employment is in services, primarily associated with tourism/recreation. Most of this employment consists of seasonal, minimum-wage and low-benefit jobs.
3. The potential for residential or commercial growth is restricted due to limited sewer and water systems. Expansion of all other County services are also problematic due to low revenues.
4. There are no serviced industrial sites available in the County, including at the County airstrip. This lack of infrastructure inhibits both business attraction and improvement of the airstrip by private developers or operators.
5. There is a high rate of small business failure. Unemployment ranges from 5% to 27% following the employment cycle of the ski resorts. Business activity in Markleeville recedes to a minimal amount during the winter when closure of Monitor and Ebbetts Passes prevents through traffic.

6. Dependence on one economic sector - tourism/recreation, makes the economy susceptible to extreme fluctuations due to weather conditions affecting segments of the winter tourism industry and road closures which isolate Markleeville.

ELEMENT VI

G.P. GOAL NO. 34

ESTABLISH A BALANCED ECONOMY THAT IS CONSISTENT WITH SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL PRESERVATION

OBJECTIVE NO. 34a

Identify programs to help diversify the economy.

OBJECTIVE NO. 34b

Identify programs to help reverse the trend of failing or stagnating businesses and recruit new businesses.

OBJECTIVE NO. 34c

Identify programs to improve services to support economic growth.

IMPLEMENTATION MEASURE: Establish an Economic Development Advisory Committee to identify and recommend appropriate programs to the Board of Supervisors. Members should include a Supervisor, a Planning Commissioner, a Chamber of Commerce representative, the BOS Assistant, the Planning Director and the Public Works Director.