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# LAKE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

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## 1. PLANNING PROCESS AND COMMUNITY FORUMS

### **Overview**

EFA approached this project by trying to answer four questions for Lake County:

- What businesses (or sectors) will come to, stay and grow in Lake County?
- Who will these businesses employ?
- How will government help these evolutions?
- What infrastructure investments are needed to help Lake County remain a sustainable (earth and people = place) community?

The process included data analysis, community forums, considerations of peer and aspirant communities, workforce development opportunities and challenges, infrastructure needs and foci versus projects already underway, government (at all levels) as a partner in any strategy going forward.

In June 2018 and October 2018, five community forums were held in Lake County. There was one for each supervisorial district. The forums focused on gathering community voices on specific questions in a World Café style: all participants were able to provide feedback on all questions asked. Final feedback became themes from each forum; those themes are reported below with raw notes and all feedback available as an appendix the overall strategy.

### **Recommendations**

- Hold annual community forums as a way to update residents by supervisorial district;
- Consider stories that come from residents that are positive voices; and
- Consider quarterly updates on the strategy's movement to be send to all in Lake County.

# Process

## Phase I: Assets and Realities

The initial data-gathering phase of this project was two parts. The first was quantitative data gathering, including a recent WANB report, the recent CEDS report done by the County of Lake, strategic plans done by the cities of Lakeport and Clearlake, and many other data points from EMSI and the Caltrans/Economic Forecast Project joint venture.

It is important that this plan not be only about past data. This plan must be about how those data, and some forecasts that exist about both Lake County's communities and its employment levels, provide signposts along the path to a better Lake County. Historic data are just that: the past. Forecasts are only as good as their assumptions. But the data tell stories that others can see quickly, and may substantiate or dispel generally-accepted perceptions about Lake County, thus helping to shape this plan's final recommendations and key performance metrics.

## Phase II: Planning and Reporting

The report is meant to identify what Lake County can and cannot be from the data, but also identify what metrics are the most significant to both measure progress but also forecast concerns and reasons to change direction.

Workforce development/training programs alignment is very important. Jobs growth is unlikely to change quickly in Lake County in any strategy, due to housing and transportation constraints. Much like other assets, simple questions need to be considered with workforce development:

- How important is labor in some industries in 10 years?
- Does Lake County rely on outside education and training programs to prepare workers?
- Can Lake County prepare workers that stay local even after trained?

The planning phase was assisted by community forum meetings to gain broad community feedback and hear residential and local business voices. Planning for public relations and outreach is just as important as planning for jobs growth. Five (5) town-hall meetings allowed for public engagement:

- Meetings were held in a World Café style to engage all who came; and
- These meetings help with community buy-in and positive momentum.

## Phase III: Finalize and Execute the Plan

The final has initiatives and realism about what Lake County can actually do. There is a two-year window to start, as anything more than that is unrealistic given all the effects the county faces on a daily basis. A strategy and path to complete tasks is provided in the "Strategy" document of this project. This is an economic development and workforce development integrative strategy, with specific tactics and a schedule for the community to monitor. The "path" is guidance in a step-by-step way to get the effort started and linked to investments, community support, and ultimately telling more stories about Lake County as a place to live and work.

## Project Guidance: Task Force

A task force of community leaders guided this process, met regularly, provided communications links and insight for each community in Lake County, and also provided their own feedback and expertise as Lake County residents. All task force members (see the Appendix) are either Lake County residents or lead businesses and organizations in Lake County. In meetings throughout this process, opportunities and challenges were identified and used in finalizing the strategy and plan.

### Task Force Members

First	Last	Affiliation
Kaj	Ahlmann	Six Sigma Ranch
Stephanie	Ashworth	Bank of the West
Robin	Bartolow	North Coast Builders Exchange
Stacey	Caico	Workforce Alliance of the North Bay
Brock	Falkenberg	Lake County Office of Education
Alan	Flora	City of Clearlake
Greg	Folsom	City of Clearlake
Melissa	Fulton	Lake County Chamber of Commerce
Carol	Huchingson	County of Lake
Kevin	Ingram	City of Lakeport
Judith	Kanavle	Mendocino College
Annette	Lee	Yuba-Woodland Community College
Andy	Lucas	Lake County EDC
Jeff	Lucas	Lake County EDC
Ernesto	Padilla	County of Lake, Tribal Health
Monica	Rosenthal	Lake County EDC
Michelle	Scully	County of Lake
Wilda	Shock	Lake County EDC
Margaret	Silveira	City of Lakeport
Moke	Simon	Lake County Supervisor
Brenna	Sullivan	Lake County Farm Bureau
Bruce	Wilson	Workforce Alliance of the North Bay
Keith	Woods	North Coast Builders Exchange

One of the initial, key challenges of this group was to consider how important Clear Lake itself is as a tourist attraction in drawing residents and businesses. Perhaps surprisingly, the task force felt initially it was not that important. We see in the strategy document Clear Lake is a major asset, but has a specific set of purposes beyond an identifying, **differentiable** asset for Lake County.

This task force helped to shape the community forums held in the early stages to provide broader community feedback and guidance for this strategy.

# Community Forums

The five (5) community forums were set up as “World Café” gatherings as described above, where four questions were asked at the three forums held in three different place in Lake County:

- What would draw a business to Lake County?
- What would draw a resident to Lake County?
- What challenges does Lake County face?
- What is the most important improvement Lake County can make for businesses?
- What types of businesses can thrive in Lake County long-term?
- What are your top three concerns about Lake County long-term?

These data from the community forum helped this plan do three things:

- Provided qualitative data on perceptions, knowledge, behaviors and attitudes of local residents and business owners;
- Acted like a survey instrument, but did so by gathering together people that are wanting to see Lake County improve; and
- Provided a way to talk about this plan and what it can and cannot do, and the philosophy behind the plan.

Conclusions and themes from the forums are as follows:

## June 21 Community Forum in Middletown/Twin Pine Casino

<p>What about Lake County draws businesses to come, stay and grow in Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development potential</li> <li>• Cost of Doing Business</li> <li>• Quality of Life</li> <li>• Lack of Competition/Ease of Market Entry</li> <li>• ROI as a general theme, both monetary and non-pecuniary</li> </ul>	<p>What concerns do you have if more tourists come to Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Where will they stay, shop and eat?</li> <li>• Transportation</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Residential Impact: Quality of Life <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traffic, adequate roads, law enforcement, housing</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Will they come back? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Did they get what they wanted while in Lake County?</li> <li>• Were they pampered?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Impact on general resources: workforce and natural resources</li> </ul>
<p>What is missing in Lake County that can help businesses stay and grow?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communications Technology</li> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Quality Workforce</li> <li>• Transportation</li> </ul>	<p>Why do people come to live and stay in Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality Environmental Aspects</li> <li>• Quality/Family/Small Town/Safe/Affordable</li> <li>• Centrally located to large urban areas by not impacted</li> <li>• Agricultural attributes</li> </ul>

### June 26 Community Forum in Lakeport

<p>What about Lake County draws businesses to come, stay and grow in Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability (land and labor)</li> <li>• Demographics that fit their business model</li> <li>• Lifestyle</li> <li>• Room for growth</li> </ul>	<p>What concerns do you have if more tourists come to Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• We're not ready to serve or accommodate more tourists</li> <li>• Impacts on traffic, parking and housing availability</li> <li>• Stress on public services and infrastructure</li> <li>• Negative impacts on the lake</li> </ul>
<p>What is missing in Lake County that can help businesses stay and grow?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Broadband</li> <li>• Roads</li> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Airport</li> <li>• Code Enforcement</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Workforce <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruit/Retain</li> <li>• Training, Skills, Education</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Vibrant, artistic community <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education system with arts programs</li> <li>• Marketing</li> <li>• Venues</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Major Conference Center</li> </ul>	<p>Why do people come to live and stay in Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability</li> <li>• Outdoor Recreation/Natural Environment</li> <li>• Lifestyle/Sense of Community</li> </ul>

### June 27 Community Forum in Clear Lake

<p>What about Lake County draws businesses to come, stay and grow in Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordability</li> <li>• Natural beauty and resources</li> <li>• Lifestyle: Small town and community</li> <li>• Growth potential</li> </ul>	<p>What concerns do you have if more tourists come to Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Balance and steady: the choices available</li> <li>• Local, local involvement</li> <li>• Communicate to locals and residents: re Tourism</li> </ul>
<p>What is missing in Lake County that can help businesses stay and grow?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Technology: Broadband and WI-FI</li> <li>• Business infrastructure: Clean-up community</li> <li>• Employee and Business/Employer Development: Customer service</li> <li>• Policies: Business friendly, clear and consistent, environment advantages</li> </ul>	<p>Why do people come to live and stay in Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Environment: Lake, Night Sky, Nature and Wildlife, Weather, Location</li> <li>• Economic Benefit: Low-cost housing, Veteran's Support, Affordable, Big Fish in Little Pond</li> <li>• Agriculture: Land, wine, cannabis, GMO-Free and Organic potential</li> <li>• Community: Friendliness, education, pride, small size, history</li> </ul>

### October 24 Community Forum in Upper Lake

<p>What types of businesses can thrive in Lake County long-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agriculture and food system</li> <li>• Wine, pears, development of grocery co-ops, etc.</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• Outdoor activities, arts</li> <li>• Call Center/Telecom Support</li> <li>• Data and tech otherwise (not city dependent)/science</li> <li>• Urgent care</li> <li>• Light manufacturing</li> </ul>	<p>What concerns do you have if more tourists come to Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Things to do for visitors not here</li> <li>• Branding for the “right” kind of visitor</li> <li>• Limited labor force</li> </ul>
<p>What is missing in Lake County that can help businesses stay and grow?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Water/sewer, airport, access to capital, housing</li> <li>• Educated labor force</li> <li>• Medical and health care services availability</li> <li>• Place making and value-added products</li> <li>• Tourists: general</li> </ul>	<p>What are your top three concerns about Lake County long-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Won’t get a handle on fire season: more fires</li> <li>• Won’t band together to change image, utilize all assets</li> <li>• Won’t proactively address lack of infrastructure (need a lot and need to start, but where?)</li> <li>• Safety: losing officers every day (crime high)</li> </ul>

### October 25 Community Forum in Kelseyville

<p>What types of businesses can thrive in Lake County long-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Services (incl construction)</li> <li>• Tourism</li> <li>• Agriculture/Nat Resources</li> <li>• Technology/Distance Work</li> </ul>	<p>What concerns do you have if more tourists come to Lake County?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Public Safety</li> <li>• Support services</li> <li>• Maintain the ecology</li> <li>• Marketing: positive messaging pre and positive feelings post</li> </ul>
<p>What is missing in Lake County that can help businesses stay and grow?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nurture to increase skill set of workers to meet the demand of businesses</li> <li>• Marketing (county and businesses develop a partnership to market together or separate, with a common vision)</li> <li>• Utilities: broadband, transportation (public), facilitation to work through the process (licensing, permitting, etc.)</li> <li>• More engagement faster</li> <li>• Quicker processing (utilize technology in process)</li> </ul>	<p>What are your top three concerns about Lake County long-term?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Infrastructure</li> <li>• Roads, parks, etc.</li> <li>• Business Dev</li> <li>• Growth, deal with downturns, seasons, etc.</li> <li>• Environmental</li> <li>• Preservation of ecology, Lake, air quality, global warming mitigation, etc.</li> <li>• Defining what Lake County is or can be?</li> </ul>

**Three meta-themes stood out from the forums:**

- Infrastructure to support businesses and residents a major concern;
- Concerns over fires and repeating annually becoming real in resident's minds; and
- As the economy changes, residents concerned over quality of life changing negatively.

**Summary**

The planning process, the community forums and the final strategy were all meant to be collaborative processes with inclusion of many voices. Many of the task force members participated in the community forums; the forums had over 120 in attendance in sum. Going forward, it is critical that all in Lake County participate in making their voices heard, speaking positively about Lake County where possible, and recognize that everyone needs to be involved in economic development to succeed.